



Ufficio Stampa – Press Office

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TOMORROW IS THE FIRST RACE DAY OF RALLY D'ITALIA SARDEGNA

After today's ceremonial start in Cagliari the serious things will begin

Olbia, June 4th 2010 – The first day of Rally d'Italia Sardegna 2010 will be a tough one. The event, organised by the Automobile Club d'Italia and counting as the fifth round of the Intercontinental Rally Challenge and as fourth act of the Gravel Rally Trophy. Tomorrow at 06.10 the 43 crews entered will set off from Cagliari for the long first day which will last 15 hours, ending in the Olbia service park, where the arrival is scheduled for 21.00. A real marathon which will see the competitors climb up the western coast of Sardinia, heading towards Oristano, with a service area in Simaxis. From there the crews will tackle the first two stages, the 28,66 km Monte Grighine, and the 14,53 km Gonnosnò. Two demanding roads which will immediately make a selection. Straight after, another halt in Simaxis and another pass on the first two stages, to then head further north for the double pass on the 11,89 km Monte Lerno stage, with the Pattada regroup in between. After the last two tests the drivers still in the race will drive to Olbia to end the first day of the event. At that time, 583 km will have been done, with 6 special stages for a total of 110 km, all on gravel. The tests of the cars took place today with the team doing the last changes to the set-ups chosen for the Sardinian gravel. Here is what some of the favourites declared after the shakedown.

n.1 Sebastien Ogier (Peugeot 207 Super 2000)

Most of the stages are new and to be honest it's not the race that best suits my driving style. The stages are quite slow, difficult, very narrow with a lot of stones and it will be easy to have a puncture. It will be a difficult race for me but it's a chance to gain experience in this event since next year it will be back in the World Championship. It's therefore important to be here.

n.2 Juho Hanninen (Skoda Fabia Super 2000)

The stages are nice with variable characteristics, sometimes slow and sometimes very fast. The ground is mainly quite hard and therefore better than in the previous years, it will be an interesting race. I would like to win but it will be difficult, against Meeke, Wilks, Kopecky, Andreucci; there are several good drivers, it will be difficult to win, but it's the only result that I want to do here.

n.3 Kris Meeke (Peugeot 207 Super 2000)

I love this island, the place is beautiful and the weather is fantastic. I've already done the rally twice, the last time in 2005 and so it was some time ago: Day 2 stages are the traditional Sardinian roads, very tricky as we already know, narrow and with some rocks. Hanninen had a great start to the season, in Argentina he was untouchable and this rally is similar to that one so he will surely do well.

n.11 Paolo Andreucci (Peugeot 207 Super 2000)

The stages are very nice and the opponents very strong; as we have seen Ogier is winning in the World championship so the level is very high, there are also Meeke, Hanninen and Kopecky who we already know from the Italian championship where he is performing very well. It will be a difficult race long and full of dangers. It will be necessary to wait for the second pass on the stages to see the real classification. The new stages are nice, especially Monte Grighine, very twisty.

n.12 Andreas Mikkelsen (Ford Fiesta Super 2000)

The stages are very nice and I had already done this event two years ago, although some stages are different: especially the first Saturday stage is fantastic. I think the stages suit my driving style and we can't wait to begin the rally. It's difficult to name a favourite between Ogier, Hanninen, Meeke or Wilks and it's difficult to say where we will be. It's a new car, new tyres (Hankook) but we hope to be there and fight with the best.



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The race is also valid, with coefficient two, for the Gravel Rally Trophy, the series for specialists of this surface. The fight in this championship is between Teemu Arminen, Subaru, Mauro Trentin, Peugeot 207 Super 2000, "Dedo" Peugeot 207 Super 2000, and Alex Bruschetta, Subaru.

n.14 Teemu Arminen (Subaru Impreza)

We were here last year and the roads were harder than this year; there is some loose gravel and I don't know how much of it will be left on the road. Maybe the second lap is going to be tougher but at first impression it looks nicer. The new stages are absolutely fantastic, there is everything, fast, twisty, I like them a lot. the surface will be hard for Group N cars: we already broke a driveshaft at the shakedown. For what concerns the championship, my rivals will be Bruschetta, Trentin and Dedo: this rally awards double points and we must think about the Trophy and we might not be able to fight against the IRC drivers.

n.16 Mauro Trentin (Peugeot 207 Super 2000)

I raced here in 2008, I'm back this year and the stages are still fascinating, varying, with a fast, compact surface, with many changes in rhythm. The stages are long and concentration cannot be lost even for a second as it is very easy to make mistakes. For the trophy, the only strategy is to try to be in front of Arminen, otherwise it's going to be tough for the championship.

n.19 Alex Bruschetta (Subaru Impreza)

I've never done this race before. I did Costa Smeralda twice but the stages are completely different. These have more gravel, ruts will come out and the y are a lot faster. My opponent in the Gravel Trophy will be Arminen, who is very fast. We are mid-season, and the points here are double: It will be a tough race, on two legs, it will be easy to break something or have a puncture and therefore the event will be very different from the others.

Thanks to an agreement between Automobile Club d'Italia and Eurosport the event will benefit from a vast Tv coverage. Four main broadcasts, the two passes on the Monte Grighine stage in the first day and on the Coiluna stage in the second, with over 4 hours of coverage. Every day the highlights of the day will be shown, and the news will follow the evolution of the rally.

LIVE BROADCAST AND FINAL REPORT TIMES

SATURDAY JUNE 5TH 08h30 / 09h45 : first pass on the Monte Grighine stage live (27,80 km) 12h00 / 13h00 : second pass on the Monte Grighine stage live (27,80 km) – **SUNDAY JUNE 6TH** 08h30 / 09h45 : first pass on the Coiluna stage live (26,00 km) 11h45 / 12h45 : second pass on the Coiluna stage live (26,00 km) – **TUESDAY JUNE 8TH** - 23h30 / feature on the Rally di Sardegna

IRC drivers' standings after four rounds

Drivers 1. Juho HANNINEN 32 pts.; 2. Jan KOPECKÝ 25; 3. Guy WILKS 25; 4. Kris MEEKE 15; 5. Bruno MAGALHAES 13; 6. Mikko HIRVONEN 10; 7. Nicolas VOUILLOZ 6; 8. Stéphane SARRAZIN and Gabriel POZZO 5; Federico VILLAGRA 4

Manufacturers; 1. Skoda 64 pts.; 2. Peugeot 33; 3. M-Sport 15; 4. Mitsubishi Ralliart 8; 5. Subaru 5

Gravel Rally Trophy standings

1. Arminen 28 pts.; 2. Trentin 18; 3. Dedo 16; 4. Bruschetta 15; 5. Ceccoli 8; 6. Isik 7

For any further information please visit the www.rallyitaliasardegna.com website