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THE 2011 RIS BEGINS

They will all be there, none of the top drivers will be missing at the start of the 2011 Rally d'Italia Sardegna. This will be the first time of the new 1600cc turbo world rally cars in our country, and the curiosity arises to know who will win the fifth round of the 2011 World Rally Championship, which so far has seen three different winners in four races, and where the Citroen Ds3 WRC and the Ford Fiesta WRC are proving to be equivalent.

Yes, since in the manufacturers' championship Citroen and Ford are joint leaders with 130 points, while in the drivers' series the four works drivers of the two teams are enclosed in just eight points. Loeb is leading with 74 points, followed by Hirvonen with 72, Ogier with 69 and Latvala with 66, followed far away in fifth place by privateer Petter Solberg with 31. The world debut of the new Mini Cooper Wrc, however, could break this balance right in Sardinia. Dani Sordo and Kris Meeke will in fact try to do well on the new Wrc "made in BMW and Prodrive".

Another important return which will be announced in Olbia on Thursday, May 5th, will be the one of Volkswagen which will unveil in Sardinia its programmes in preparation for their return to the world rally championship in 2012. Meanwhile, Citroen has started this week in Gallura with Sebastien Ogier, who recently won in Jordan, the series of pre-event tests, which all the teams will undertake on the island gravel roads ahead of the race, scheduled in two weeks.

"I know the last two legs - said Ogier - as I raced on these stages two years ago, while I know less the first day because last year I practically only took part to the reconnaissance, since I retired in the first stage. The first leg in the Oristano area is difficult for its changes of rhythm but will not make a difference. It will be impossible to obtain in those stages such a great advantage as to be able to administer to the end".

The only significant absence in Sardinia will be the one of Kimi Raikkonen, who will not take part in the Rally d'Italia nor in Argentina as he prepares for his upcoming debut in Nascar. On the sardinian gravel roads there will also be room for the Super 2000 World Championship and for the WRC Academy. Prokop, Al Attiyah, Hanninen and the championship leader, young Estonian Kruuda, will all be at the start amongst the Super 2000. Among the WRC Academy drivers the other Estonian, Kaur, after his victory in Portugal will have to defend himself from the attacks of Irishman Breen and Spanish Lemes, while amongst those to follow will be locals Crugnola and Brunello.