

## CITROEN VS. FORD IN A RALLY D'ITALIA SARDEGNA WITH A REMARKABLY UNCERTAIN FORECAST

Tomorrow at 9.33 the seven times world champion Sebastien Loeb, Citroen DS 3 Wrc, will official open the event starting in the opening special stage. Behind him, the Finn Mikko Hirvonen, Ford Fiesta Wrc.

Olbia, May 5<sup>th</sup> 2011 - The success of Sébastien Ogier with his Citroen Ds3 WRC in Jordan, beating in the very last stage Jari-Matti Latvala, Ford Fiesta WRC, by just two tenths of a second, is the confirmation of the great balance of the 2011 World Rally Championship. A very interesting start to the season, which has so far seen three different winners in four races, in which the Citroen Ds3 and the Ford Fiesta are proving to be equivalent, especially on gravel. After the first four events of the season, four drivers are held in just eight points in the championship standings, with Loeb in the lead with 74 points, followed by Hirvonen with 72, Ogier with 69 and Latvala with 66, while in the manufacturers' championship Citroen and Ford are joint leaders with 130 points.

This great balance could be broken by the arrival of the new Mini Cooper Wrc, that will make its WRC debut in Sardinia driven by Spanish Dani Sordo and Northern Ireland's Kris Meeke. In the Super2000 World Championship two events have already been held, and the surprise leader is Estonian Karl Kruuda, a pupil of Markko Martin, who has so far collected 30 points thanks to fourth place in Mexico and second position in Jordan. Nasser Al-Atthiyah, a big favourite, is still without points after the disqualification in Mexico and retirement in Jordan, while Czech Martin Prokop is joint second in the standings along with Portuguese Sousa with 25 points, and Finn Juho Hanninen is third with 18 points. The Wrc Academy has so far run only one event in Portugal, where the surprise winner was young Estonian Egon Kaur. The one-make series where drivers use the Ford Fiesta R2, fitted with Pirelli tires, has replaced this year the JWRC and will see 18 crews start in Sardinia, among which Italians Andrea Crugnola and Matteo Brunello.

Quotes before the start:

Sébastien OGIER : "I know the route, because I did the last two legs in Sardinia two years ago, while last year I effectively only took part in the reconnaissance, because I had to stop in the first stage (for an engine failure of my Peugeot 207 S2000 ed.) The first leg in the Oristano area is difficult for its changes of rhythm, but it will certainly not make a difference, I think that in those stages it is impossible to build such a great advantage to be preserved until the end".

Jari-Matti LATVALA: "I have seen the route and I can say that I know the last two legs well, because they are stages that I have already done in the past. I do not know the stages of day one in the Oristano area, they are new for everybody except for Kris Meeke. But as Meeke and the Mini will be at their debut, I think it is difficult for them to join the fight for the win. I am fourth on the road on the first day, I therefore have to take advantage of the roads being already cleaned by the first three, namely Loeb, Hirvonen and Ogier, to get the maximum advantage on my opponents. We will be five to fight for victory, but beside me and my team-mate Hirvonen, we must not forget Loeb, Ogier and also Petter Solberg".

Sébastien LOEB : "The first leg is completely new for all of us all, the stages are nice, I liked them. Despite the rain, the surface coped well, and I believe that ultimately the fact of starting first will penalize me, because by Friday the stages will be completely dry again. I think the race will be won on Saturday and Sunday, because as always there will be a bit 'of tactics on Friday, and here in Sardinia the roads are usually swept a lot by those starting in the first positions. As my main opponents for the final victory I especially rate Ogier, Hirvonen, Latvala and Petter Solberg, and obviously I hope to be there among those fighting for the win".