



Press Office

PETTER SOLBERG AMBASSADOR OF THE RALLY D'ITALIA SARDEGNA 2009 IN THE WORLD

" This is a beautiful land, with the right atmosphere, sun,
nice people and wonderful gravel roads"

Olbia May 19th 2009 – A special presence for **Petter Solberg** in Rally di Sardegna 2009 . The Norwegian, world champion in 2003 and winner of the first edition of the Rally d'Italia on the island's roads in 2004, is this year the official testimonial of the Rally d'Italia in the world. A tribute to the sporting and human qualities of the champion, without doubt one of the most spectacular drivers of the World Rally Championship, but also a sign of the growth of the Italian round of the series in the opinion of the world that rotates around international rallying.

Solberg is not only in Sardinia to act as an ambassador of the event in the world, but moreover to be a protagonist. The Norwegian has tested extensively with his 2006-spec. Citroen Xsara. He staged a show on the gravel roads in the San Giacomo area he gave a show, looking in great shape. "This is a beautiful land – he claimed - with the right atmosphere, sun, nice people and wonderful gravel roads. I am here with the new car, I am looking for the correct set-up, I will also have Thursday morning to fine tune it. The event's special stages will tell if the new car will allow me to keep the pace of the best drivers. The differences between this new version of the Xsara, with the 2006 technical specs, and the 2005 version which I used in Argentina, are essential and this surely will give me many more chances". After winning in 2004 and finishing second in 2005 on the Subaru Impreza, Petter Solberg would like to perform well in 2009. "My goal is to climb on the third step of the podium, should the car respond accordingly and be faster I could do even better".

The Rally d'Italia Sardegna will be a crucial point in the season of many drivers. Amongst these will surely be **Jari-Matti Latvala**, second driver of the **BP Ford Abu Dhabi World Rally Team**. In a season where he has been a protagonist, albeit often in the wrong way, Latvala now has the chance to take his revenge, aiming at victory. Confident, though extremely concentrated, Jari-Matti Latvala attended the pre-event test and the Sunday afternoon session at Monte Moro and found time for his local supporters, signing autographs and having pictures taken with the fans. "Sardinia is a wonderful place, I like it and it is also one of my favourite events together with Finland and Wales. This rally is fast and technical at the same time, it has that mixture of conditions which I prefer. Besides, I have many supporters here, maybe because the local fans like my aggressive and spectacular driving style". Latvala's childhood hero was Henri Toivonen, a Finnish unforgotten champion, who performed on the gravel roads of the Gallura region in the 80s. "Yes, Henri was my favourite driver – said the 24-year old driver from Tuuri – I was a child when he passed away, but I have read and seen a lot about him, and last year I also went to see the place where he went off on the Isuledda stage. I also know that he had a lot of supporters here in Sardinia". Last year Latvala finished third, and this year he is aiming to win. "I have had a difficult start to the season, and in Portugal I have had a bad accident, fortunately without consequence. I did not hear a note well, as it was too long. So starting from Argentina I changed my way of writing pace notes, these now being shorter, and the event went well apart from some mechanical problems. I would honestly like to finish on the podium again, here the fight will be between Mikko and Sébastien, and I believe that this time my team mate Mikko Hirvonen must at any cost beat Loeb to keep the championship open".

Rally d'Italia Sardegna

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