**Press release**

**Meet the Crews at Croatia Rally: Thursday**

**Zagreb, 20 April 2023** – The fastest three drivers from Shakedown, Kalle Rovanperä, Ott Tänak and Sébastien Ogier, spoke to the fans ahead of the third Croatia Rally to count for the FIA World Rally Championship and the fourth event of the 2023 WRC season.

**Q:**

Kalle, Croatia has been a happy hunting ground for you, certainly last year with the result being decided on the Power Stage. How is it going to go this year, will the tyre choice be an easy one if it stays dry?

**KR:**

I think the tyre choice can be really tricky this weekend. It seems the weather is not so straightforward and I think it can be quite a big play actually on what happens and what you can do on the stages. After last year my feelings of this rally have been good.

**Q:**

The route is pretty familiar but there are some new stages. What do you think of it this time around?

**KR:**

The stages seem really similar to last year and most of the rally is fully the same. Some of the places and cuts are a bit more rough than last year at least from what I remember. Already in the recce there were a lot of surprises and we need to change the notes a bit on the cuts. Again, it makes the rally a bit more tricky. There will be a lot of mud and dirt on the road all the time from the cuts and you need to take always… there is always risks when you do the cuts because of the punctures. There is some risk when you try to be fast here.

**Q:**

It's still a new rally on the world championship calendar but what is the biggest challenge?

**KR:**

I think overall it’s the level of grip here which is usually changing a lot, we have a lot of different Tarmac on the rally changing all the time. Mainly the grip level is really low also so it’s quite tricky with the grip changes and usually a lot of cuts and pollution on the road. That is maybe the most tricky part of the rally.

**Q:**

Turning to Ott, we always remember the battle with you and Kalle on the Power Stage last year. Is it a bit of unfinished business for you this year?

**OT:**

I can’t say no, it’s definitely going to be a challenging one like Kalle explained in great detail. Obviously during the recce it was quite wet and rainy and obviously with the weather like it is now and will change things quite a bit. What it will be like we will only see tomorrow.

**Q:**

Even when it’s dry and sunny there is not a huge amount of grip out there?

**OT:**

Anyway in Croatia it is always quite low-grip, it is not a normal Tarmac rally where you can really have the grip you would expect. It’s actually a fun event and it’s challenging with all the cuts and dirt. Quite a rallying event.

**Q:**

Is there a particular day or a particular stage that stands out as being really challenging or are they all quite similar?

**OT:**

They are not similar because they are changing quite a bit from stage to stage. But the long stages are a bit more demanding.

**Q:**

Leading the championship coming into Croatia which you didn’t expect during a partial season but quite amazing to see five drivers so close in terms of points. We haven’t seen it that close for many years, it’s exciting, right?

**SO:**

Everybody is enjoying seeing that. We’ve done only three rallies so it’s not so far into the season yet. But so far the two events I have done have run perfectly for me and of course I am happy with that. The plan is to try and carry on this weekend but obviously we are a few drivers capable of being fast on this surface and two are beside me here and some others are not far so I think it can create again a good show and a good battle this weekend. The risk again of punctures is there and I hope it won’t play a role and we can really fight together without any drama. But the two last editions have proved to be quite dramatic and I am not sure what is going to happen this weekend. It’s fun to drive these roads, they mention it, a lot of cuts and grip changes so a lot of action in the car and you need to be really focused and fight quite a bit with the car. But if you find a good rhythm it’s quite exciting. I’m looking forward and happy to be here.

**Q:**

Given you’ve said all that, Croatia is a good addition to the championship calendar?

**SO:**

I think so. In terms of driving it’s a challenging event and different from any other, that’s what is nice in rally. I’ve mentioned during my career what I like most from this sport is every single weekend is different and it’s a new challenge, you need to adapt again and trust your feeling. That is what is great. I am sure from outside with these tricky conditions it’s nice to watch.

**ENDS**

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