



Rally Italy, Sardinia

5th – 8th May

5th of 13 rounds of the FIA World Rally Championship

Preview.

Munich, 28th April, 2011. Sardinia, an island steeped in history, is where the MINI WRC Team will make its historic debut in the FIA World Rally Championship next week. With its two MINI John Cooper Works WRCs driven by Kris Meeke (GB) and Dani Sordo (ES) the team will start the Rally Italy, Sardinia on Friday (6th May) and begin a new era for this iconic brand.

The MINI Countryman was the car chosen for this exciting project and its development has been in the hands of Prodrive, the Banbury, UK based company that has a wealth of experience in the world of rallying, in close cooperation with MINI. The new programme for the brand was announced last July and since then the team has covered thousands of kilometres of testing. Meeke from Northern Ireland will be co-driven by Paul Nagle from Southern Ireland in car number 52, while sitting beside Sordo will be fellow Spaniard, Carlos del Barrio, in car number 37.

David Richards, Team Principal:

"The comeback of the MINI has created a real sense of anticipation within the team and yet, at the same time, an acute awareness of the enormous responsibility that rests on our shoulders. We've undertaken over two years of intensive development and testing and it will be an historic moment for everyone involved when we finally put those famous numbers 37 & 52 on the doors of the cars and start competing. The MINI has performed better than we dared hope in testing and the S2000 car's debut in Portugal was very encouraging. However, we are all too aware of the challenges ahead of us and take nothing for granted, but whatever the outcome, Sardinia will be an historic event for the entire team and everyone who has supported us to get this far."

Dirk Hollweg, Head of MINI Motorsport:

"This has been an enormously exciting project for MINI and a lot of hard work has been put in by everyone involved. Since our initial announcement that MINI was returning to the world rallying stage, interest in what has been happening from both fans of our cars and the rallying community has been exceptional. It is a very important venture for the brand and it will be a very proud moment when the cars leave the starting ramp in Sardinia."

Dani Sordo:

"It is a tricky rally with narrow roads that can be very slippery. Some are twisty and some are fast. Also there is a lot of loose gravel on top of the surface and, once the early cars have been over, there is usually just the one line you can take. Often there are also large stones on the side of the road. I am very excited, like everyone in the team, but also quite nervous as we don't know what to expect. It is really great to be starting the new programme with the new car."

Kris Meeke:

"I have relatively recent experience as I was lucky enough last year to do this event when it was in the IRC and also did the Rally Costa Smeralda on the island. This is particularly good for me





when going there in a new venture with a new rally car. We obviously have lots to learn about the WRC car. It is a tough rally to start out with the new car and will be a big test for the new team. At the end of the day only time will tell.”

“MINI powered by BMW Motorsport”: The heart of the MINI John Cooper Works WRC is the 1.6-litre, four-cylinder Di turbo engine, which is also available in the MINI production models. The production engine was further developed by BMW Motorsport for the use in various categories according to FIA Super 2000 regulations. The power transmission takes place via an Xtrac 6-speed, sequential gearbox. For its outings on the rally stages, the MINI Countryman chassis has been fitted with a roll cage developed by Prodrive, which exceeds the strict safety requirements of the International Automobile Federation (FIA).

Overview of the 2011 FIA WRC Calendar.

Date	Event
10-13 February 2011	Rally Sweden
3-6 March 2011	Rally Mexico
24-26 March 2011	Rally Portugal
14-16 April 2011	Rally Jordan
5-8 May 2011	Rally Italy*
26-29 May 2011	Rally Argentina
16-19 June 2011	Rally Greece
28-31 July 2011	Rally Finland*
18-21 August 2011	Rally Germany*
8-11 September 2011	Rally Australia
29 September-2 October 2011	Rally France*
20-23 October 2011	Rally Spain*
10-13 November 2011	Rally Great Britain*

* participation by the MINI WRC Team

History and Background:

This is the fifth round of the 2011 championship and it sees the return of the WRC to the Mediterranean island after an absence of a year. The competitors will take part in the shakedown on Thursday morning and then there will be an opening ceremony on the seafront of the port town of Olbia, where the rally's service park, parc ferme and headquarters are based.

The three day rally on the 6/7/8 May will cover a total of 1,183.52 kilometres, with 339.70 kilometres over the 18 gravel special stages. The eight stages in the Oristano region to the west of the island on day one are new to the rally, with the first car leaving Olbia at 07.00hrs and returning at 20.00hrs after completing eight stages. On day two the action is to the south of Olbia in the Monti, Alà dei Sardi and Buddusò districts. For this the first car leaves at 08.00hrs and returns at 17.45hrs after completing six stages. The competitors then head north for day



MINI WRC TEAM

Press release



three, which includes the Power Stage in Gallura. The first car leaves at 06.00hrs and returns at 13.10hrs after completing the final four stages.

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