



MINI returns to Monte Carlo with old and new models.

Monte Carlo, 2nd February, 2011. MINI is back in Monte Carlo and this time it is the iconic version that won the famous rally in the sixties meeting up with the latest MINI WRC that sees the brand back on the world rally stage. Rauno Aaltonen (FI) was driving the 1960s version when he was greeted at the end of the Rallye Monte Carlo Historique in the early hours of the 2nd February by Kris Meeke (GB) and Dani Sordo (ES), the drivers who will revive the brand's rallying tradition this year.

For Meeke and Sordo this is a stop on what is a busy schedule leading up to the first appearance of the MINI WRC on selected FIA World Rally Championship events in 2011, prior to a full assault on the championship in 2012. However, before that they will be heading from Monaco to Spain to put their brand new test car through its paces. Then on the 13th April comes the official launch of the MINI WRC Team at the plant in Cowley, Oxford (GB) where MINI models are produced.

Aaltonen, who won the 1967 Monte Carlo Rally in a works Mini, covered 4,101 kilometres on the rally that took him and his co-driver, Helmut Artacker, from the start in Marrakech on the 26th January to the principality's harbour for the finish in the early hours of the 2nd February. His comments on the event were: "It has taken us a long time to get here and it was a good trip. In the old days a Mini in rallying form was rather uncomfortable, but in this Mini we had modern shock absorbers and it was so comfortable that after over 4,000 kilometres I am not tired at all. There was snow in places, but we were not told about this so we did not have the appropriate tyres and so lost over a hundred places. It was really busy on this last leg, we were really fighting hard and it was a great atmosphere."

Also in Monte Carlo to greet Aaltonen was another famous Mini driver, Paddy Hopkirk from Northern Ireland, who won the Monte Carlo Rally in 1964. Remembering that time he said: "It is very interesting to be here and I was delighted to see Rauno looking so well and the car looking so good. It is just great to see it all being revived. When we won it was not just motorsport news, but front page news and I even got a telegram from the Beatles and the Prime Minister and I was given the keys to Belfast. I do admire the talents of these guys. Kris took me around the Prodrive test track in the MINI WRC and it was absolutely fantastic."

Meeke and Sordo are both keen to start their rally programme. "It is great for Dani and me to be competing for MINI and taking up that legendary spirit. Everything is going extremely well and I think the fundamental DNA of the car is very, very good. At this early stage of the development everyone is really excited as it seems to be hitting all the targets that were set out in the development phase," said Meeke.

Sordo was also relishing the task ahead of him: "I have driven the car less than Kris but I have been on both tarmac and gravel. Honestly the feel of the car was really good. We still need to improve in certain areas, but this is normal because the car is new. Our MINI is new to rallying but in Prodrive we have a lot of experience and they have achieved many things in the sport. Kris and I will try to do the best we can. At the moment the car is really good and getting better and better."



MINI WRC TEAM

Press release



The MINI WRC is based on the MINI Countryman and is powered by a 1.6-litre turbo engine derived from the MINI production models that has been developed by BMW Motorsport for use in series running to the FIA Series2000 Regulations, which also includes the FIA World Touring Car Championship. The MINI WRC has been developed by Prodrive, one of the most experienced and respected operations in rallying. This UK based company from Banbury has no less than six World Rally Championship titles to its name.

For further information please contact:

Heike Bartsch, BMW Group Corporate Affairs, Sports Communications, MINI WRC,
Office: +49 (0) 89 382 33115, Mobile: +49 (0) 176 601 33115, heike.bartsch@mini.com
Ben Sayer, Prodrive Ltd.,
Office: +44 (0) 1295 754320, Mobile: +44 (0) 7785 575053, bsayer@prodrive.com

Media website: www.press.bmwgroup-sport.com

