

MINI WRC TEAM

Press release



5th – 8th May, Rally Italy, Sardinia 5th of 13 rounds of the FIA World Rally Championship

Day Three.

Olbia, 8th May, 2011. The MINI WRC Team has taken a lot of positives from its first ever event. In Rally Italy, Sardinia Dani Sordo (ES) and Carlos del Barrio (ES) brought their MINI John Cooper Works WRC to the ceremonial finish in Olbia in sixth. Sadly Kris Meeke (GB) and Paul Nagle (IR) didn't re-start this morning, as the team felt it was safer not to risk a recurrence of the problem they had encountered on the first two days. However, the cars both showed a turn of speed that bodes well for the future.

On the 1st May Dr Kay Segler was appointed Senior Vice President Brand Management MINI. The 56-year-old previously held this position between 2004 and 2008. Segler, a passionate Motorsport fan, visited the MINI WRC Team on Saturday in Sardinia and summed up his thoughts about this programme : "Sport lies in the genes of all BMW Group vehicles – regardless of whether we are talking about the BMW M3 or a MINI. Obviously it is fantastic that the MINI brand will be able to prove the sporting qualities of its products at the highest level via the MINI John Cooper Works WRC from this season onwards. I have followed the preparations for this project closely over the past few months, and am thoroughly looking forward to being with the team during its debut season in the FIA World Rally Championship. But we are realistic, our opposition has a massive experience advantage. However, in conjunction with our partner Prodrive we are able to compete with a team that knows rallying backwards, and has already proven it knows how to win. Add this to the MINI and the know-how of BMW Motorsport, and we have an extremely promising mix that should enable us to move up very quickly."

David Richards, Team Principal:

"I think we have shown the performance of the car. We have proved what we can do and I think it has set the mark and set the standard. I wish Kris could have carried on the way he was in the early stages. If he had carried on like that I think we would have been in a very strong position, but that is life, this is testing and we are learning as we go along. All signs are really encouraging and we have no real reliability problems at all that we are concerned about. We have to take a lot of positives from the event.

"This morning we had to take the decision not to re-start with Kris. We know what the problem is but we didn't have a solution to it here, and anything we did would have been compromised and may have resulted in a recurrence of the problem. I just didn't believe it was worthwhile taking that risk. We know how to fix it and it can be fixed in a few weeks' time with the right components.

"What has come out of this weekend very strongly is that we have a real team effort and all members of the MINI WRC Team have instantly gelled together. I want to thank everyone for the hard work to get us to this point. It has been an amazing effort and the outcome has been very encouraging for all of us. It was also nice to see our efforts recognised as the team has been given the Abu Dhabi Spirit of the Rally Award."



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Dave Wilcock, Technical Director:

“Obviously from a team perspective we are very, very happy that we have got Dani home. Throughout the rally he has been performing competitive sector times and from that we can see where we are fast and where we need some work, which is all very positive. We are very disappointed for Kris. Having checked over the data last night, with Kris’s small issue we decided not to run him today. We really needed his data today so we could compare the two drivers. The special stages today were exceptionally low grip and Dani was struggling in the low grip sections, so with their two driving styles it would have been really nice to have Kris’s feedback and data as well. It is disappointing in that respect, but we are very pleased with the team’s performance and where we are right now for our first rally.”

Dani Sordo:

“I am happy to finish, the car is good and so is the team. I think the weekend was very positive and after many kilometres on the rally we have learnt more about the car, which is important. Also the team has taken a lot of data and are now working hard for the future. In the fast parts of the stages we were close to the top times. The positive is the chassis is really good and it is really nice to drive on the fast road. If you have a good chassis this is most important.”

Kris Meeke:

“We said before the rally we wanted to see the speed of the car and we showed we have entered at a very good level in terms of speed. Obviously Dani’s car has worked faultlessly and he has had very good reliability. I have had a minor technical glitch and it appeared on both days and we didn’t want to take the risk running again today. We know the solution for that but we can’t do it this weekend but we will put that right in the coming weeks. Everyone is very positive so we just have to take it from here and go forward. We have to start our tarmac development now as we have three tarmac rallies coming up towards the end of the year. We have to start to learn the car on all different surfaces so we have a lot of development testing coming up. We just have to make sure we are strong in every area.”

For further information on the MINI WRC Team 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

Ann Bradshaw, MINI WRC Team on-event Press Officer,
Mobile: +44 (0) 7713 317 006, abc@annieb.co.uk

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