

July 11, 2008

Pre-event Media Conference

PRESENT:

Cody CROCKER and Ben ATKINSON (MOTOR IMAGE RALLY TEAM)

Katsuhiko TAGUCHI and Mark STACEY (MRF TIRES)

Dean HERRIDGE and Chris MURPHY (CUSCO RACING)

Question: Question to the drivers. Recce is already finished and the rally starts tomorrow.

How is your mood?

Crocker: We are very much looking forward looking to having a good rally here. We had some great rallies to start the championship and managed to get the championship lead, Also it's important for us being Subaru's home event. We want to win this event for Motor Image and for Subaru so very important not only to score good points for the championship but we want to win this event as well.

TAGUCHI: Like Cody said, this is the home event for Mitsubishi too, so we want to win and turn the score. I wasn't feeling well during the test and it let me down. But the shake down was good because I was running with average speed and it matches the course's speed. So it was better. I am better now and I am looking forward to it.

Herridge: It is also important for us because it is Cusco Racing's home event, but saying this is a bonus rally for me. In the start of year I was racing in Pacific cup with Cusco and after seeing the results we are here in Japan to get another good score on the board. We're looking forward to it, hoping for no pressure in this event and just drive.

Question: Question to Cody Crocker. APRC has seven events in a year, do you like the Hokkaido round?

Cody: Rally Hokkaido for us, the drivers is very technical, very challenging and we saw this in shakedown. The roads are very very narrow but also very very fast. With the rain now it's double challenging. We're the first car on the road now so we are also sweeping the surface away for these drivers to get a big advantage on us in the stage, but hopefully we can be competitive. For us, from a challenging point of view these are the most challenging roads in the championship.

Question: Mr. Taguchi, you won the first round this season, what do you think about past three rounds? By winning last year's Rally Hokkaido Crocker had three consecutive victories, that granted him the championship. Don't you think it is time to change this?

TAGUCHI: We've competed in three events so far. But in Canberra, we retired due to mechanical troubles. We could have been first but now we are two points behind. Unlike last year, the roads are different; there is a lot of grass along the edge of the roads so it is hard to see. Many drivers have driven this course for years, so I'm sure that everybody is pushing hard and I should push from the beginning not to fall behind.

Question: Dean as you said you have no pressure really for this event. However these two guys are competing with each other what is your strategy for this event, are you going flat out to win it

Herridge: I think everybody tries to win it. Maybe it's better to sit back and try to pick some pieces, potentially. But it's like Cody said, very technical, probably the most difficult stages in this championship, so from that point of view we'll see some drama over the weekend, long stages, 20km, 30km so everyone will be pushing but the person who is fast and strong will have the least problems.

Question: This question is for Chris, Mark, Ben. So let's start with Ben. The question is : "what do you think of your driver's condition for this rally, are they ready?"

Murphy: Absolutely, first year with Cusco with Dean and It's been very successful, so I have no doubt that in Dean and especially his experience, he's done this event having done these roads in the WRC and also the car given to us by Cusco. The car is up to the challenge. Last year I did this in a 1,3l Yaris, so I am looking forward to it.

Stacey: It's a pleasure to be back in Japan, and Obihiro. It's very technical but quite fast so Katsu enjoys that, he's very good on these roads. He is known as Mitsubishi king. We had very good run for the world rally last year, winning group N in that event so our experience of the last year and on these roads is feeling superbly.

Atkinson: I think people quote up and say you are loosing motivation with winning. Having won you hate loosing more, so we are very motivated for this event. We've done the preparations. Cody and myself probably have done them for 3 or 4 years now, so we've done our homework so I think we're ready to go.