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1. EVENT SUMMARY

Prokop becomes FIA Junior World Rally Champion* with victory on Neste Oil Rally Finland

Martin Prokop (CZ, Citroën) is the 2009 FIA Junior World Rally Champion, after winning the category on the Neste Oil Rally Finland in his Czech National Team Citroën C2 S1600. Co-driven by Jan Tománek, Prokop led from start to finish (as he did earlier this year in Cyprus) and joins an elite list of J-WRC champions which dates back to Sébastien Loeb in 2001 and includes the likes of Dani Sordo, Per-Gunnar Andersson and Sébastien Ogier – all of whom have gone on to drive factory World Rally Cars in the WRC.

Having made his J-WRC debut in 2005, J-WRC victory in Finland this year was Prokop's 10th of his career. The 26-year old driver from Jihlava had previously finished 3rd in the last two J-WRC seasons and describes winning the title at his fifth attempt as "the biggest sporting moment of my life".

Starting Rally Finland for the fifth time, Prokop pushed hard throughout the event; knowing that with Rally de España to go, a high points-scoring finish would be a huge step towards him taking the title. Save for a heart-stopping moment on SS15, when ruts in a braking area after a high speed section almost bounced his C2 off the road, Prokop drove with great maturity and without risk to win the J-WRC award by 55.5 seconds and claim a well deserved title.

Having contested the series in 2006 and '07, guest J-WRC entry **Kalle Pinomäki** (FIN, Renault) was aiming for victory in his Clio R3. The 29-year old driver from Turku in southern Finland had been Finnish Junior Champion in 2005, and he was Prokop's nearest challenger as the top two pulled away from the rest of the field. Despite a brake problem on SS3, less than 10 seconds separated them for most of Day 1, and no matter how hard the champion-elect pushed, Prokop could not shake off his Finnish shadow. With three fastest times to his name, Pinomäki was just 14.6sec behind Prokop when a front right brake pipe broke and he was left with only the handbrake to slow him down for the last few kilometres of SS13. He dropped 19.4secs and from then on the gap remained around the 30 second mark, until Pinomäki eased off on Day 3 to secure a fantastic 2nd position, happy in the knowledge that he'd shown the J-WRC regulars his true capability.

Michal Kosciuszko (POL, Suzuki) arrived in Finland as joint J-WRC leader, but unlike Prokop, who had nominated the final Rally de España as a points-scoring event, this was to be his last appearance in this year's series. Kosciuszko needed to win in Finland to keep his title hopes afloat, after crashing out of a secure 2nd place (and losing eight points) just two stages from the end of his home event, Rally Poland. A long brake pedal on SS2 wasn't the confidence-boosting start he was hoping for, and he immediately dropped 15.6 seconds to his great adversary. Worse was soon to follow, as Kosciuszko hit a rock and punctured a front right tyre on SS7, losing almost a minute and dropping him from 3rd to 5th. He still doesn't know why he picked up a rear puncture on SS8, but he lost another 43 seconds and dropped to 6th. He battled back up to 5th by the end of Day 1, but by then he was 2min 15.3sec behind Prokop and the title looked all-but lost. The battle for 3rd place was not what he was expecting to be embroiled in, and when Prokop survived the two runs over Myhinpää – a stage Kosciuszko considered to be the most difficult of the entire J-WRC, and one he was particularly pleased to end Rally Finland on with fastest time – he had to settle for a podium finish and congratulated the new champion with the sporting grace that has given Kosciuszko many admirers in the J-WRC paddock.

Aaron Burkart (D, Suzuki) completed Day 1 in 3rd, but he was 1min 16.7sec behind the leader and with hindsight felt he

had been a little too cautious. He'd spun on SS3 and lost his rhythm, but apart from that he was at a loss as to why the gap to Prokop was so big. Day 2 was going well until a right rear puncture on SS15 cost Burkart 50 seconds and allowed Kosciuszko to close the gap to 7.4 seconds. Driving on the puncture damaged a rear damper, but despite this a great drive through SS16 saw Burkart increase the gap once more to 10.3 seconds. The final three stages of Day 2 were shaping up to be a great battle between the two Suzuki drivers, but the new damper which had been fitted to Burkart's Swift made it understeer and oversteer wildly, and by the end of the day he had dropped to 4th, 36 seconds behind the Pole. Both rear dampers were replaced at final service and the car was perfect again for Day 3, but by then the damage had been done. With Prokop leading, Burkart needed to finish 2nd to keep his J-WRC title hopes alive, and despite setting the fastest time first time through Myhinpää (SS21) he had to settle for 4th. With the title in Prokop's hands, Burkart aims to attack in Spain to secure 2nd place in the series.

In order to gain more international rally experience in preparation for a full J-WRC programme in 2010, **Mark Wallenwein** (D, Renault) made his first J-WRC start of the season in Finland, taking over the TRT team entry of Alessandro Bettega. The 22-year old from Stuttgart overshot a junction and ran up an escape road on SS4 and then hit a rock and picked up a puncture on the last corner of SS9 – but he was happy that his pace was getting closer to the J-WRC leaders after each stage. The rear right brake calliper seized on SS13, but once again he was fortunate that it happened just 1km from the flying finish and service followed – although his real good fortune came on the following test when he survived a sixth gear spin without even putting a scratch on his Clio. He started Day 3 in an excellent 5th position, and had to drive carefully over the final four stages as a bracket on the cylinder head had broken, and he was worried that a heavy landing would mean instant retirement. He survived to finish an excellent 5th.

Having rolled out of Rally Finland on the opening stage of Day 2 last year, not only had **Simone Bertolotti** (I, Suzuki) got further this time, but he was enjoying a fantastic run. He had a flirt with disaster on SS8, when an off-line approach to a big jump saw him land at an angle and spin into a ditch in fifth gear. Spectators pushed him back onto the road and he continued with the loss of 90 seconds. He was in 5th when a driveshaft broke on the final stage of Day 2 (SS19) and he lost over six minutes limping to the end of the test. He continued to push hard, and a minor off into a ditch on SS21 didn't prevent him finishing 6th and moving up one place to 5th in the J-WRC standings.

The start of Rally Finland didn't go to plan for **Hans Weijs Jnr** (NL, Citroën), as the 22-year old from Elst in The Netherlands dropped 30 seconds on the first forest stage, SS2, when the brakes failed. He bled the system before SS3, but on SS4 a bracket on the front bumper came loose, bent in and pierced the radiator. With another stage between him and service, there was no option but to radio his team for rescue. Having collected penalties for missing the day's remaining stages, Weijs restarted on Day 2 and was delighted to find his C2 was working to his liking and he enjoyed one of his best days of the season. Another good final day saw Weijs finish 7th and record his third championship points-finish in a row.

Kevin Abbring (NL, Renault), who last time out in Poland became the youngest ever winner of a J-WRC event, arrived in Finland for only the second time. The talented 20-year old Dutchman found his pace notes were too slow for the wider roads of SS2 and 3, but moved up to 5th after the next two stages. He picked up a front left puncture on SS6 and, having decided to drive on, was forced to stop when the tyre began to fall apart and it was damaging the suspension. As he replaced the wheel he noticed a bolt had come out of the track control arm, and with a loose wheel and the steering a little out, Abbring lost a total of five and a half minutes before reaching the end of the stage. Eager to learn the technically difficult Finnish roads, he pressed on and made adjustments to his Clio R3 – and one adjustment to the rear suspension was to contribute to more problems. He'd been a little too cautious over a jump on SS11, so when the Leustu stage was repeated as SS14, he took it a little faster. However, the adjustment to the suspension and the increased speed saw the rear of his Clio kick high into the air and the car land on its nose, breaking the radiator. Abbring tried to complete the stage, but as the water drained out the engine temperature rose, and he stopped four kilometres later, retiring from 8th place. He restarted on Day 3 for the experience and to score a point that would have given the KNAF Talent First Team Holland the ASN title. However, a front brake calliper seized on the road section to SS20 and he was forced to return to Jyväskylä without seeing a forest road.

Luca Griotti (I, Renault) was hoping that his favourite rally would turn the tide on what has been a very unlucky season for the London-based Italian. Rally Finland started well, although he had to drive carefully for two stages on Day 1, having used his only spare to replace a puncture at the end of SS6. He was driving well, his Clio R3 was running faultlessly and despite Griotti feeling a little disappointed that his times weren't as good as he thought they should be, he was in a fine

5th place when he crashed SS14, sliding off the road and breaking the car's rear sub-frame.

Yoann Bonato (F, Suzuki) had a new engine fitted to his Swift and was holding a strong 4th position, despite hitting a rock in the middle of SS9 and losing 35 seconds with a front left puncture. His second attempt at Rally Finland was going well until the opening stage of Day 2, when he rolled on a slow corner mid-way through SS11. Unfortunately there were no spectators nearby and he was stranded, and elected not to restart the following day.

* Subject to the official publication of the results by the FIA.

2. DRIVER QUOTES

1st – Martin Prokop, Citroën C2 S1600:

"This is the biggest moment in my sporting career. I have been doing the Junior World Rally Championship for five years, and we have been very close to winning it in the past – in fact, last year we were ready to win the title, but didn't because of some mistakes and some problems with the car. This year we have had absolutely no problems, I had good experience of all the rallies, I had confidence with the car and everything just went right. Of course this year hasn't finished yet and we want to do well in Spain, but I am very happy to be champion!"

2nd – Kalle Pinomäki, Renault Clio R3:

"I'm happy; second on Rally Finland is a good result. It's a shame that I couldn't fight for victory, but anyway I'm satisfied with my performance. I made no mistakes and the car has been very good during the whole weekend."

3rd – Michal Kosciuszko, Suzuki Swift S1600:

"Battling for third place in Finland was not my dream, but winning the J-WRC was not to be. I have made some good rallies and score a lot of points and I believe I have made a good impression this year. My mistake in Poland has cost me a lot, but that is rallying and you cannot dwell on the past. This has been my final rally of 2009, but I have been thinking about next year day and night and I hope that with a good support I can continue to compete at the top level. I would like to congratulate Martin on winning the J-WRC title. I have enjoyed a great fight with him this year and I think it has been a good season for both of us."

3. RESULTS (EVENT) *subject to scrutineering and routine fuel analysis

POS	CAR#	DRIVER	CO-DRIVER	CAR	TIME	POINTS
1	38	Martin Prokop (CZ)	Jan Tománek (CZ)	Citroën C2 S1600	3:17:03.1	10
2	59	Kalle Pinomäki (FIN)	Matti Kaskinen (FIN)	Renault Clio R3	+55.5	8
3	32	Michal Kosciuszko (POL)	Maciek Szczepaniak (POL)	Suzuki Swift S1600	+3:20.9	6
4	31	Aaron Burkart (D)	Michael Kölbach (D)	Suzuki Swift S1600	+3:50.4	5
5	39	Mark Wallenwein (D)	Stefan Kopczky (D)	Renault Clio R3	+13:25.5	4
6	33	Simone Bertolotti (I)	Luca Celestini (I)	Suzuki Swift S1600	+17:15.9	3
7	36	Hans Weijs Jr. (NL)	Bjorn Degandt (B)	Citroën C2 S1600	+34:14.7	2

4. RETIREMENTS (EVENT)

CAR#	DRIVER	CO-DRIVER	CAR	STAGE	REASON
35	Yoann Bonato (F)	Benjamin Boulloud (F)	Suzuki Swift S1600	SS11	Accident
34	Luca Griotti (I)	Corrado Bonato (I)	Renault Clio R3	SS14	Accident
37	Kevin Abbring (NL)	Erwin Mombaerts (B)	Renault Clio R3	SS20	Brake calliper (on road section)

5. LEADERS (EVENT)

CAR#	DRIVER	CAR	STAGE
38	Martin Prokop	Citroën C2	SS1-23

6. FASTEST STAGE TIMES (EVENT)

CAR#	DRIVER	CAR	WINS	STAGES
38	Martin Prokop	Citroën C2	13	SS1-4, SS6-8, SS11, SS13, SS16, SS18, SS20, SS22
59	Kalle Pinomäki	Renault Clio R3	7	SS5, SS9, SS12, SS14-15, SS17, SS19
38	Kevin Abbring	Renault Clio R3	1	SS10
31	Aaron Burkart (D)	Suzuki Swift S1600	1	SS21
32	Michal Kosciuszko (POL)	Suzuki Swift S1600	1	SS23

7. FASTEST STAGE TIMES (SEASON)

CAR#	DRIVER	CAR	IRL	CY	P	RA	I	POL	FIN	E	TOTAL
38	Martin Prokop	Citroën C2	3	7	0	0	13	3	13		39
32	Michal Kosciuszko	Suzuki Swift	0	7	7	14	3	5	1		37
37	Kevin Abbring	Renault Clio R3	9	0	1	0	0	10	1		21
39	Alessandro Bettiga	Renault Clio R3	0	0	6	8	1	0	0		15
G	Kalle Pinomäki	Renault Clio R3	0	0	0	0	0	0	8		8
35	Yoann Bonato	Suzuki Swift	1	0	3	0	0	0	0		4
31	Aaron Burkart	Suzuki Swift	3	0	0	1	0	0	1		5
36	Hans Weijs Jr.	Citroën C2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0		2

8. SPRINTER STANDINGS (EVENT)

		Total	SS TOT	AV			Total	SS TOT	AV		Total	SS TOT	AV	
	DRIVER					DRIVER					DRIVER			
1	Prokop	188	22	8.55	5	Abbring	56	13	4.31	9	Bertolotti	44	22	2.00
2	Pinomaki	176	22	8.00	6	Bonato	38	10	3.80	10	Wallenwein	28	22	1.27
3	Kosciuszko	127	22	5.77	7	Weijs	48	16	3.00					
4	Burkart	111	22	5.05	8	Griotti	34	14	2.43					

The J-WRC Sprinter Standings are an unofficial method of ranking drivers based on individual stage performance. To calculate the Sprinter Score, drivers are awarded points for each stage classification (10-8-6-5-4-3-2-1) and the total points are divided by the number of stages completed by the driver. This average score gives an indication of the drivers' relative performance against his opponents on special stages, while limiting the impact of time loss due to technical problems on stage and penalties incurred.

9. SPRINTER STANDINGS (SEASON)

CAR#	DRIVER	CAR	IRL	CY	P	RA	I	PL	FIN	E	TOTAL
38	Prokop	Citroën C2	7.06	8.75	pass	pass	9.41	7.33	8.55		8.15
37	Abbring	Renault Clio R3	8.92	pass	6.47	pass	4.00	8.78	4.31		7.90
32	Kosciuszko	Suzuki Swift	pass	8.71	8.35	8.91	7.76	8.27	5.77	pass	7.88
39	Bettiga	Renault Clio R3	pass	pass	7.40	8.19	6.41	DNS	-		7.40
31	Burkart	Suzuki Swift	6.81	6.43	pass	7.24	4.24	pass	5.05		5.93
35	Bonato	Suzuki Swift	5.07	pass	6.88	pass	4.00	4.83	3.80		4.76
36	Weijs	Citroën C2	6.91	pass	4.53	pass	3.41	3.89	3.00		4.16
34	Griotti	Renault Clio R3	2.67	pass	5.20	pass	3.00	3.33	2.43		3.39
33	Bertolotti	Suzuki Swift	3.75	pass	3.50	pass	2.38	2.61	2.00		2.75
39	Wallenwein	Renault Clio R3	pass	pass	-	-	-	-	1.27		1.27

10. DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP STANDINGS

2009 FIA JUNIOR WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP (FOR DRIVERS')

* subject to the official publication of the results by the FIA ® = denotes eligibility for Rookie Award

POS	#	DRIVER	CAR	IRL	CY	P	RA	I	POL	FIN	E	PNTS
1	38	Martin Prokop (CZ)	Citroën C2 S1600	8	10	pass	pass	10	8	10		46
2	32	Michal Kosciuszko (POL)	Suzuki Swift S1600	pass	8	10	10	8	R	6	pass	42
3	31	Aaron Burkart (D)	Suzuki Swift S1600	10	6	pass	8	6	pass	5		35
4	37	Kevin Abbring (NL)	Renault Clio R3	4	pass	8	pass	R	10	R		22
5	33	Simone Bertolotti (I)	Suzuki Swift S1600	6	pass	3	pass	2	4	3		18
6	35	Yoann Bonato (F)	Suzuki Swift S1600	5	pass	R	pass	5	6	R		16
7	36	Hans Weijs Jr (NL)	Citroën C2 S1600	R	pass	6	pass	3	5	2		16
8	39	Alessandro Bettega (I)	Renault Clio R3	pass	pass	4	6	4	DNS	-		14
9	34	Luca Griotti (I)	Renault Clio R3	3	pass	5	pass	R	2	R		10
10	G	Kalle Pinomäki (FIN)	Renault Clio R3	-	-	-	-	-	-	8		8
11	39	Mark Wallenwein (D)	Renault Clio R3	pass	pass	-	-	-	-	4		4
12	G	Radoslaw Typa (POL)	Citroën C2 S1600	-	-	-	-	-	3	-		3

11. CO-DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP STANDINGS

2009 FIA JUNIOR WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP (FOR CO-DRIVERS')

* subject to the official publication of the results by the FIA ® = denotes eligibility for Rookie Award

POS	#	DRIVER	IRL	CY	P	RA	I	POL	FIN	E	PNTS
1	38	Jan Tománek (CZ)	8	10	pass	pass	10	8	10		46
2	32	Maciek Szczepaniak (POL)	pass	8	10	10	8	R	6	pass	42
3	31	Michael Kölbach (D)	10	6	pass	8	6	pass	5		35
4	37	Erwin Mombaerts (B)	4	pass	8	pass	R	10	R		22
7	33	Luca Celestini (I)	6	pass	3	pass	2	4	3		18
5	35	Benjamin Boulloud (F)	5	pass	0	pass	5	6	R		16
6	36	Bjorn Degandt (B)	R	pass	6	pass	3	5	2		16
8	39	Simone Scattolin (I)	pass	pass	4	6	4	DNS	DNS		14
9	34	Corrado Bonato (I)	3	pass	5	pass	R	2	R		10
10	G	Matti Kaskinen (FIN)	-	-	-	-	-	-	8		8
11	39	Stefan Koczyk (D)	pass	pass	-	-	-	-	4		4
12	G	Maciej Wislawski (POL)	-	-	-	-	-	3	-		3

12. ROOKIE STANDINGS

2009 FIA J-WRC ROOKIE CLASSIFICATION

#	DRIVER	CAR	IRL	CY	P	RA	I	POL	FIN	E	TOT
	No eligible entrants										

13. NATIONAL SPORTING ASSOCIATIONS (ASN) STANDINGS

2009 FIA J-WRC ASN CLASSIFICATION

#	DRIVER	IRL	CY	P	RA	I	POL	FIN	E	TOT
1	36/37 KNAF Talent First Team Holland	8	pass	18	pass	8	16	8		58
2	38 Czech National Team	10	10	pass	pass	10	8	10		48

14. WHAT IS THE FIA JUNIOR WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP?

The FIA Junior World Rally Championship (For Drivers') is a support championship to the FIA World Rally Championship for upcoming young drivers aspiring to reach the highest level of the championship, with 2009 seeing nine drivers representing at least six countries. The cars they compete in are B-segment cars or the 'hot hatchbacks', are front-wheel drive and have a total length of 3.6m and 4.15m. In the first seven years of the J-WRC we have seen many manufacturers produce cars eligible for the category including Citroën, Fiat, Ford, Honda, Peugeot, Renault and Suzuki. Eligible cars must be homologated in one of four technical classes: Super 1600 (1600cc), Group N cars (2000cc), Group R cars and selected Group A cars (1600cc).

NEXT ROUND

MOVISTAR RACC RALLY DE ESPANA www.rallyracc.com

1 – 4 OCTOBER 2009

FIA JUNIOR WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP (FOR DRIVERS)

ROUND 8 OF 8

For more information visit: www.wrc.com

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MARTIN PROKOP – BIOGRAPHY

Date of Birth: 4th October 1982 (26-years old)

From: Jihlava, Czech Republic

J-WRC car: Citroën C2 S1600

Team: Czech National Team

Co-driver: Jan Tománek (CZ)

Career highlights

2009

FIA Junior World Rally Champion

1st – Cyprus, Sardinia, Finland

2nd – Ireland, Poland

Currently 5th in P-WRC, after finishing 2nd – Portugal and 3rd – Norway

2008

3rd, FIA Junior World Rally Championship

1st – Finland, Spain, Corsica

1st – Rally New Zealand, 4th – Rally Sweden (P-WRC, Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX)

2007

3rd, FIA Junior World Rally Championship

1st – Deutschland, Corsica

2nd – Spain; 3rd – Sardinia

1st A6 – Rallye Monte Carlo (Citroën C2 S1600)

2006

9th FIA Junior World Rally Championship

1st – Spain

1st A6 – Rallye Monte Carlo (Citroën C2 S1600)

2005

6th J-WRC – Rally Finland

1st – Jänner Rally, Valašská Rally, SEAT Rally Český Krumlov

2003

1st overall – Mogul Šumava Rally (Škoda Octavia WRC)

2002

1st in Gp N – Rally šou Blovice

2001

Rally debut – Rally Vysočina (Czech Republic)

MARTIN PROKOP – Q and A**What does winning the FIA Junior World Rally Championship title mean to you?**

“This is the biggest moment in my sporting career. I have been doing the Junior World Rally Championship for five years, and we have been very close to winning it in the past – in fact, last year we were ready to win the title, but didn’t because of some mistakes and some problems with the car. This year we have had absolutely no problems, I had good experience of all the rallies, I had confidence with the car and everything just went right. Of course this year hasn’t finished yet and we want to do well in Spain, but I am very happy to be champion!”

Having finished third the last two years, did you think you’d ever win the title?

“I really thought I would be champion last year, but I wasn’t – and I started this year thinking that if I don’t win the title now, something really is wrong. With the experience I have, I had a lot of confidence and believed this would be my year.”

By becoming J-WRC Champion, you join an elite list of drivers that include Sébastien Loeb, Dani Sordo, Per-Gunnar Andersson and Sébastien Ogier. How does that make you feel?

“When I started rallying, I could not even dream that I would ever be included in a list of drivers alongside the likes of Loeb, Sordo and the other great J-WRC champions. For me, coming from a relatively small country like the Czech Republic, this really is amazing. I only started rallying eight years ago and now I am Junior World Champion. I really can’t believe it.”

What are your plans now?

“I am contesting the FIA Production Car World Rally Championship, so in the last two rounds of the series I will do my best and try to win it, but I think we only have a very small chance. Next season we want to find something new, but for the moment we don’t know what it is. For sure we will stay in the World Rally Championship.”