**Hyundai Shell WRT ready for debut on loose surface at Rally Mexico**

* Hyundai Shell World Rally Team tackles its first gravel event at Rally Mexico this weekend and aims to complete the event with both cars to continue learning
* Australian Chris Atkinson will drive the second Hyundai i20 WRC (#8), on his first outing with the team, partnering lead driver Thierry Neuville (Hyundai i20 WRC #7)
* The team has prepared for the unique conditions of Rally Mexico with two tests in Almeria, southern Spain.

Alzenau, Germany

March 3, 2014 – After competing on tarmac, ice and snow at Rallye Monte-Carlo and Rally Sweden, the Hyundai Shell World Rally Team is set for a new challenge: Rally Guanajuato México – round three of the 2014 FIA World Rally Championship – the first overseas event for the team and the debut on gravel for the Hyundai i20 WRC.

The Hyundai Shell WRT will tackle the León-based event with lead crew Thierry Neuville and Nicolas Gilsoul driving the Hyundai i20 WRC #7 and Australia’s Chris Atkinson – and loyal co-driver Stéphane Prévot – starting Rally Mexico with the #8 car.

With altitudes at Rally Mexico reaching up to 2,700 meters above the sea level, the thin air and lack of oxygen at altitude brings additional challenges for both drivers and cars alike. With the objective of seeing both Hyundai i20 WRC cars at the finish, Rally Mexico represents an additional opportunity to continue to build the team’s experience and assess the behaviour of the Hyundai i20 WRC on the Mexican roads.

Preparation for Rally Mexico started last year, when the team travelled to the region of Almeria in the South of Spain to test on similar conditions to the ones that the drivers at the weekend. The team returned to the same region for an additional test session ahead of the event with both Neuville and Atkinson. The Belgian drove the Hyundai i20 WRC on gravel for the first time on this test.

Team Principal Michel Nandan commented: *“Mexico is a new challenge for us – it will be the first rally on gravel of the Hyundai i20 WRC and first overseas event for the team, which represents a major challenge from the logistical point-of-view. High altitude will be something new for us. We prepared for it with two test sessions in the south of Spain but Rally Mexico is unique so we don’t really know where we are going to be in those conditions – we will have to wait and see. It will be also our first summer event, with high temperatures and dust, so it will be interesting to see how the car behaves and how Thierry and Chris will perform. As for the previous two rallies of the season, we will make the most of Rally Mexico to continue our development process of both the car and the team and our objective remains the same – to see both Hyundai i20 WRC at the finish on Sunday.”*

On his only second outing at Rally Mexico last year, Neuville scored his maiden WRC podium – making the event one of his favourites of the season: *“I can’t wait to go to Rally Mexico – it’s a fantastic event which I really like and enjoy every time I go there. It’s also a special rally for me as I had a very good result there last year, scoring the first WRC podium of my career. The main challenges in Mexico are the high altitude – which means the engine loses power and you need to carry more speed into the corners – and the high temperatures which make it demanding for us drivers from a physical point of view. We drove the Hyundai i20 WRC on gravel for the first time on a recent test session and in general we had a good feeling with the car. We had the chance to rack up some good mileage and also to make the set up adjustments for the rally. For us of course it will be very important to finish the event untroubled and give as much feedback as possible to the team to continue our development process”* he said.

Hyundai Motorsport 2013 test driver Atkinson will join the team at Rally Mexico on his first event in the Hyundai Shell WRT colours: *“I’m really looking forward to join the Hyundai Shell WRT for the first time this season at Rally Mexico. I have had several good results in Mexico before including a second place in 2008, so I have some great memories of this rally and the fans in Mexico. It is a unique rally with the high altitude and the varied terrain, which makes it a great challenge for the drivers and the cars. Being in good physical shape will be very important in Mexico, I’ve been doing some training in the middle of the day during the Australian summer when it’s 35 degrees and I’ve also done some exercise in the sauna to be as much prepared as possible. I think it is important to get to the finish with no problems, if we can do this we will get a good result. Being the first gravel rally of the year, it will be interesting to see how well the i20 WRC performs in these conditions”* he commented.

The first of six consecutive gravel rallies this season, Rally Mexico is part of the WRC since 2004 and it has become a favourite for fans and drivers alike. The León-based event features one of the most exciting itineraries of the WRC season with four monster stages of 43, 44, 54 and 56km respectively. It’s also one of the most compact rallies of the season with just over 600km of road sections and almost 400km of special stages totalling a massive 39% of competitive route.

The rally will get underway on Thursday 6 March with the traditional start ceremony in Guanajuato, followed by a Super Special Stage through the city’s tunnels and cobbled roads. The route will then continue over the weekend covering the familiar territories of the Sierra de Lobos around the city of Léon – base of the Service Park and Rally Headquarters of the event.

**Hyundai Shell World Rally Team Crews’ Info**

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| **Hyundai i20 WRC #7**  Chassis number: 003 |  |  |
|  | **Thierry Neuville** | **Nicolas Gilsoul** |
| DOB | 16 June 1988 | 5 February 1982 |
| First WRC event | 2009, Rally Catalunya | 2007, Rallye Monte-Carlo |
| WRC starts | 35 | 30 |
| WRC podiums | 7 | 7 |
| WRC wins | - | - |
| Rally Mexico starts | 2 | 2 |
| Rally Mexico previous results | 2012: 13th (10th WRC), 2013: 2nd | 2012: 13th (10th WRC), 2013: 2nd |

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Hyundai i20 WRC #8**  Chassis number: 001 |  |  |
|  | **Chris Atkinson** | **Stéphane Prévot** |
| DOB | 30 November 1979 | 7 January 1969 |
| First WRC event | 2004, Rally New Zealand | 1989, Rally Great Britain |
| WRC starts | 75 | 157 |
| WRC podiums | 6 | 17 |
| WRC wins | - | - |
| Rally Mexico starts | 6 | 6 |
| Rally Mexico previous results | 2006: 7th, 2007: 5th, 2008: 2nd, 2013: 6th, 2005 & 2012: retired | 2004: 2nd, 2008: 2nd, 2013: 6th, 2005,2011&2012: retired |

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**About Hyundai Motor Company**

Established in 1967, Hyundai Motor Company is committed to becoming a lifetime partner in automobiles and beyond. The company, which leads the Hyundai Motor Group, an innovative business structure capable of circulating resources from molten iron to finished cars, offers top-quality best-sellers such as Elantra, Sonata and Genesis. Hyundai Motor has seven manufacturing bases and seven design & technical centers outside of South Korea and in 2013, sold 4.73 million vehicles globally. With over 90,000 employees worldwide, Hyundai Motor continues to enhance its product line-up with localized models and strives to strengthen its leadership in clean technology, starting with the world[s first mass-produced hydrogen-powered vehicle, ix35 Fuel Cell.

More information about Hyundai Motor and its products can be found at: Twitter : @hmcglobalpr,

<http://worldwide.hyundai.com> or <http://www.hyundaiglobalnews.com>

**About Hyundai Motorsport GmbH**

Established on 19 December 2012, Hyundai Motorsport GmbH is responsible for Hyundai’s global motorsport activities and primarily for its World Rally Championship programme. Based in Alzenau on the outskirts of Frankfurt in Germany, the company is embarking on its debut season in the FIA World Rally Championship in 2014 with a bespoke team of skilled staff and a brand new car, the Hyundai i20 WRC.

Further information about Hyundai Motorsport is available at: <http://motorsport.hyundai.com>

To download high resolution photos for editorial use, full driver’s profiles, audio podcasts as well as other useful press information about the team please refer to:

[www.hyundai-ms.com](mailto:media@hyundai-ms.com)

Username : HyundaiWRC

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