

WRC: The best is yet to come

The new world champ is already feeling ready to take more titles. By **Anthony Peacock**

A new world rally champion Marcus Gronholm and his Peugeot took World Rally Car will be an even stronger force next year, according to the people in the team who are closest to him.

The Finn's co-driver Ilmar Rautavaara said: "Marcus has driven very well this year, but I don't think he's at his best yet. There's more." Peugeot Sport boss Corrado Provera added: "That's true of Marcus, but it's also true of the car. We say that very humbly, we have made some mistakes and we can improve a lot on the car we have made this year."

Although Gronholm would make no predictions as to his prospects next year he admitted that he was in a strong position to defend his title.

"It will be easier for me next year. I think it will be more relaxed, so maybe our chances are quite good. But the competition was incredibly difficult. There was one time we nearly went off the road, and a couple of other moments. It won't be any easier next year."

Gronholm finished second to Subaru's Richard Burns in the Rally Great Britain last weekend, giving himself a five-point advantage in the final standings. The Finn took four victories, in Sweden, New Zealand, Finland and Australia.

"It's a fantastic feeling to win the title," said the 32-year-old after the finish of the Rally GB. "Even now I can't believe it. I never thought at the start of the year that there was even a possibility of doing this well."

For the moment, I do not know quite what to say. In the next few days, I think it will be easier for me. But the feeling is just incredible."

With Burns winning Britain's round of the world championship, Gronholm needed only to finish fifth or higher to catch the leader. Having led the rally over the full day he ducked his pace to secure a finish.

"I was not really thinking of the title during the rally," he said. "Of course, I was driving in the middle of the road and not so quickly to make sure I finished, but it was not easy. It is much easier to drive a road that to drive a road."

Gronholm was originally drafted in by the Ford team as a gravel expert, and was not even scheduled for a full world championship campaign at the start of the season.

He said: "The only time I really began to think we could win the championship was after Corsica. I knew that we had some experience of all the other events from there onwards, so we would have a chance of getting some strong results."

Four-time world champion Teemu Mäkinen put him in his countryman, saying: "It is good for Finland and good for rallying to have a new champion. Of course I am a little bit disappointed not to have a fifth title, but I have been well prepared for this moment. Marcus has driven very well all year. I congratulate him."

Provera has urged the team to focus on the 2001 season: "From the hunters we become the hunted. We will keep our concentration."



"It will be easier for me next year. I will be more relaxed." MARCUS GRONHOLM



Delecour no longer working for Peugeot

DELECOUR OUT

FRENCH veteran Francois Delecour has been sensationally dropped from next year's driver line-up at Peugeot.

Next season's Peugeot team will consist of Gronholm and Frenchman Didier Auriol, who will contest all 14 rounds of the championship.

Peugeot will run a third 2000 World Rally Car on all rounds of the world series in 2001, which will be shared between Gilles Panizzi and former SEAT driver Henri Rovaniemi. The Finn will drive on at least seven gravel rallies, whereas Panizzi will save the car on the four asphalt rounds of the world series.

In addition to his factory programme, Panizzi will drive a 2000 WRC run by Italian satellite team Scuderia Forze Gravel rounds of the series.

Peugeot Sport boss Corrado Provera announced that next year's driver line-up will allow the team to defend both of its championships.

"As a result of this year's success, we are going to be seen as the team to beat in 2001," he said. "So we decided that Didier Auriol, with all his previous experience of the world championship and his proven speed would be the perfect team-mate for Marcus. We nearly made a deal with Didier for last year, but did not manage to sign him."

Panizzi will be nominated for manufacturer points on the asphalt rounds of the 2001 season, but Rovaniemi is unlikely to be a design team points scorer.

"We do not think we will put that sort of pressure on Henri," said Provera. "His role instead will be to take away points from Marcus and Didier's rivals."

Provera expressed regret that Delecour was leaving the team, but said that he felt he was "in the best interest of our future success."

He added: "François has done a very good job. I am not saying that because I have to, but because I mean it."

Delecour was unavailable for comment at the time of going to press.

Burns and co-driver Robert Reid took the title to the win, and went to go one better in 2001



Burns knuckles down for 2001 title challenge

SUBARU star Richard Burns has promised to be challenging for the championship again next year after being beaten to his year's title by Marcus Gronholm.

The 25-year-old said: "I will be aiming to go when the new season starts in Monte Carlo in January."

The Subaru driver will get his first taste of Prodrive's 2001-spec Impreza next week, over a five-day gravel and asphalt test in Spain. Although the recently launched Impreza has a new shape bodyshell, around 80% of the running gear from the existing WRC2000 will be carried over to the new model. Team boss David Lloyd has said that the move also forwards in



"I will be raring to go when the new season starts in Monte Carlo"

RICHARD BURNS

terms of the car's aerodynamics and weight distribution.

"I've driven next year's car yet, but I'm looking forward to it," said Burns.

The Englishman was also quick to praise world champion Gronholm: "Marcus made fewer mistakes than we

did this year, so next year we will have to be better. All credit to him—he's had a fantastic year."

But he won the Rally Great Britain given him a task of home victories, and he is the only man since Timo Salonen in the

mid 70s to achieve this.

"I'm satisfied with the win, but obviously with different emotions because of the championship success," he said. "However, I certainly mean a lot to win my third Rally Great Britain and it's an excellent way to start next season."

"Realistically, I'm not depressed because to come to this rallying point behind and expect to win the title is a tough optimistic. I did not just lose the title here, because there are 14 rounds in the championship."

"Although I had some mechanical faults earlier in the year, I was beaten by a better driver, you've got to make almost no mistakes to win the title next year, and I made three."

"I'm not saying that because I have to, but because I mean it."

Driver Signed 1:18 Rally Replicas



In the last week, upon their return from Australia, both Colin McRae and Richard Burns have signed a limited number of 1:18 die-cast metal replicas exclusively for Grand Prix Legends.

Colin's Ford Focus, from leading German endemaster Mithras, is a replica of the car in which he competed in 1999.

Richard's Subaru Impreza, made by rally specialist Auto Art, is from Monte Carlo that year.

Both cars feature opening doors, bonnet and boot, in addition to highly impressive engine and interior detail. They are signed in indelible ink on the roof.

Only 200 examples of each car have been signed by their respective drivers, ensuring that they will become highly collectible and valuable pieces.

Of course, both cars are also available unsigned. The signed versions cost £79.99. The unsigned cars are £49.99.

1:18 Burns signed Subaru Impreza (AA899925) £79.99

1:18 McRae signed Ford Focus (AA899151) £79.99

1:18 Unsigned Subaru Impreza (AA89992) £49.99

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Tommi Mäkinen's 1999 Mitsubishi Lancer EVO VI in 1:18

Currently in stock is Tommi's 1999 second Championship winning car, the car in which he secured his fourth championship victory.

Die-cast in metal in 1:18 scale, the replica features opening boots, bonnet and doors, in addition to highly impressive interior and engine detail.

We also do the road car in blue, white and silver.



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Silver road car (AA77153) £39.99

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1:43 2000 rally cars

In stock already are these rally cars from this season - Great detail. Good value. The good news is that we have just received Richard Burns' Subaru from Trefeu. The bad news is that the Peugeot is sold out and won't be back in until after Christmas. Order now to avoid missing out, however.

McRae Ford Focus (SKW018) £22.99
Grönholm Peugeot 206 (SKW017) £22.99
Mäkinen Mitsubishi Lancer (SKW019) £22.99
Burns Subaru Impreza (AA69991) £25.99



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1:10 scale radio controlled rally cars

We do four cars from three different manufacturers in this series. Mounting some 17" in length these cars are all pretty much ready to roll right out of the box. Full suspension, right and left steering and reverse. These cars are tough as old boots and go like the breeze. They're brilliant.

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controlled Mini Cooper

This is a real limited edition and quite a rarity. It is a really built Tamiya remote controlled model of the 1984 Monte Carlo rally Mini. Designed as an exclusive for the Japanese market, only 500 are being brought into the UK and we have shipped up 30. It measures 52 cm in length and weighs nearly 4 kg. The body is made of polycarbonate, the frame from an ABS monocoque construction. The suspension is independent on each wheel with a flexible wishbone system.

Impressed yet? You should be. With a S40-type motor, it spins like a top. It's just gone out of production, this very rare unique car is going to take a long time to get right after.

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Great toys for kids of 4 years and over. These 1:20 scale cars have a range of up to 30' and can be used indoors or out. The cars are about 7" long.

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