



Press information
For immediate release

2008 FIA World Rally Championship
Round 2: Uddeholm Swedish Rally
Shakedown and SuperSpecial Stage

Day: 1
Date: Thursday 7 February
Weather: Cloudy becoming sunny, 0°C climbing to 4°C
Stages: Shakedown, 2.87Km
SS1 - Karlstad SuperSpecial, 1.9Km

Results:	Hirvonen	Latvala	Al Qassimi
SS1	3rd	2nd	14th
Overall	3rd	2nd	14th

Summary

The second round of the 2008 FIA World Rally Championship, the Uddeholm Swedish Rally, got underway today, as the teams finalised their preparations at the pre-event shakedown. The evening also saw the first run of the Karlstad SuperSpecial Stage, in front of thousands of rally fans.

The BP Ford Abu Dhabi World Rally Team drivers completed a limited number of runs at shakedown, since the relatively high temperatures, well above freezing, meant that the road close to the base of Karlstad was soft and began cutting up almost instantly. Mikko Hirvonen and Jari-Matti Latvala were both instantly at home in the conditions, having grown up on snow-covered gravel tracks. Abu Dhabi's Sheikh Khalid Al Qassimi was less comfortable with the conditions and used his three runs to familiarise himself with the conditions and the right technique to gain maximum grip.

The SuperSpecial Stage saw spectators turn out in their thousands for the short run around the track in Karlstad. The BP Ford Abu Dhabi WRT drivers were instantly on the pace, Latvala and Hirvonen setting second and third fastest times on the short timed test. Al Qassimi adopted a cautious approach and recorded a time 14th fastest on the opening stage.





Quotes

Sheikh Khalid Al Qassimi:

"It was an interesting morning today! I had a small test at the beginning of the week and that helped me to understand a little the driving technique on these conditions. I tried initially to approach it like driving on tarmac by using smooth lines but that certainly didn't work. The right technique seems to be similar to driving on gravel but sliding the car even more and keeping the wheels spinning so the studs can grip."

"You have to set the car up well before the corner and drive it through in a slide. But even then, the car behaves differently in some corners to others, depending on the amount of ice on the road and how hard it is. By the time we went out for a third run this morning, the shakedown road was very muddy and there was lots of gravel on the surface. There were also big ruts developing and we could hear the underside of the car hitting the ground."

"The SuperSpecial stage this evening was good. We were cautious since as so many drivers have said, you can't win the rally on a stage like this, only lose it. But of course, the real action starts tomorrow."

Abu Dhabi Fact of the Day

According to the organisers of the Swedish Rally, a figure equivalent to 1/5 of the population of Karlstad attended the SuperSpecial stage, opening the rally. The population of Karlstad, approximately 75,000, is roughly ½ of the expected population that will eventually inhabit Saadiyat Island, Abu Dhabi's flagship cultural and leisure island development project and home to the Louvre Abu Dhabi and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi.

