

Driver Profile

Petter Solberg



Date of Birth:	18 November 1974
Place of Birth:	Askim, Norway
Lives:	Spydeberg, Norway
Marital status:	Lives with Pernilla Walfridsson and son Oliver
First rally:	1996
WRC debut:	1998 Sweden
Hobbies:	Cycling, squash, films
Website:	www.pettersolberg.com

Career Highlights:	2000 Signed by Subaru World Rally Team
	1998 Group A Norwegian Rally Champion
	1997 Norwegian hillclimbing Champion
	1996 Norwegian rallycross and hillclimbing Champion
	1995 Norwegian rallycross and hillclimbing Champion

Petter Solberg is widely regarded as one of world rallying's ascendant stars. He joined the Subaru World Rally Team in 2000, and the effervescent Norwegian looks set to follow in the footsteps of previous talented newcomers like Richard Burns and Colin McRae, who became World Champions with Subaru.

A tough act to follow?

Like last year's team-mate and reigning World Champion Richard Burns, Petter started his driving career at the same age and in similar fashion. From eight years old he was driving cars on the fields around his parents farm in Spydeberg, 50 km east of Oslo. Petter's parents were both keen rallycross drivers, and naturally Petter and his older brother Henning inherited their fascination with cars. The 11-year old Petter helped his parents build and maintain their autocross cars. Still far too young to compete himself, Petter raced radio-controlled cars and was Norwegian Champion at 13.

Second race, first win

His competition debut came in a round of the Norwegian Autocross Championship the day after he passed his driving test at the end of 1992. His second race took place the following year and he won! He quickly progressed from autocross to rallycross and then to hillclimbing, using a Ford Escort MK2 which his brother had given him.

From events to championships

In 1995, Petter acquired a Volvo 240, also from big brother Henning, and became the Norwegian Champion in both rallycross and hillclimbing, a feat he was to repeat in 1996, winning 19 of the 21 events he started. In September 1996, Petter made his rally debut using another car handed down by his brother, this time a Toyota Celica ST165. Unfortunately his first rally was cut short when he crashed and damaged the car badly. The following season, however, he had acquired another car, this time an ex-Thomas Rådström Toyota Celica ST185, which he used to once again win the Norwegian Hillclimb Championship, and to finish fifth in the Norwegian Rally Championship.

World Championship debut

Petter moved on to a Toyota Celica ST205 in 1998 and with it he won the Norwegian Rally Championship outright. This was the season where he finally made his World Rally Championship debut, finishing 14th in the Swedish Rally but crashed out of the Rally of Great Britain at the end of the season.

Call-up from Ford

By now Petter was getting noticed and, in 1999, signed to drive for the Ford World Rally Team, making his works debut in Sweden with an Escort WRC and Phil Mills as his new co-driver. Soon afterwards, Petter's career received a surprise boost thanks to the misfortune of a team mate. When Thomas Rådström was injured just before the Safari Rally, Petter flew out as a last minute replacement and despite having no experience of the event, or the new Focus WRC car, he finished an excellent fifth place overall. With Radstrom still sidelined Petter kept his drive for Portugal where he finished 11th before rounding off his year with ninth in the Rally of Great Britain. Petter stayed with Ford for the first half of the 2000 season, again displaying his maturity with another fifth place in Kenya to secure fifth place. This was followed by a sixth place in Argentina and on his New Zealand debut he only narrowly missed out on a podium finish.

Shining star at Subaru

Petter joined the Subaru World Rally Team in August 2000 and quickly established himself as a vital member of the team. Despite some early setbacks he has maintained a level-headed and cheerful approach and his efforts were rewarded in Greece with a superb career-best second place on one of the World Rally Championship's toughest events. For 2002, Petter is teamed with Tommi Makinen in one of the most exciting line-ups the 555 Subaru World Rally Team has ever fielded, the perfect blend of youth and experience that should give him every opportunity to capitalise on his talents.