



FORD REVEALS NEW TEAM FOR NEXT SEASON IN WRC

- **Hirvonen and Lehtinen take up the challenge following Grönholm and Rautiainen retirement**
- **Jari-Matti Latvala and Miikka Anttila join driver line-up for 2008 season**

LONDON, 17 December 2007 – Ford of Europe plans to keep the WRC as its front line Motorsport activity from 2008. Today Ford announced some important developments designed, in the first instance, to maintain the competitiveness of the BP-Ford Team from the start of the coming championship season.

The retirement from the team of Marcus Grönholm and Timo Rautiainen, who have led its campaign in superb fashion over the past two seasons, has posed quite a challenge. However, Ford's WRC strategy has been based also on a programme to develop new, exciting talent. Fresh from their win in the final WRC event this month, in Rally GB, Mikko Hirvonen and Jarmo Lehtinen now are stepping up into the role vacated by Marcus and Timo. Further, Ford is pleased to confirm that Jari-Matti Latvala and Miikka Anttila will also be promoted, as their team-mates, to complete Ford's official line-up for 2008.

Lewis Booth, Executive Vice Chairman for Ford of Europe and Premier Automotive Group, said: "The man who so convincingly kept the BP-Ford team at the top of the leader board throughout the year is Marcus Grönholm. We couldn't have won "two in a row" without Marcus and Timo delivering results so consistently. We're really fortunate to have had them both on the team, and we're proud of what they have achieved for Ford. Marcus and Timo have been one of the sport's most successful pairings of all time - in fact their 30 victories have earned Marcus second place on the list for all-time rally wins. Such is Marcus' standing in the sport that we did not want to lose him entirely from our team. We are asking Marcus to take an ambassadorial role for Ford of Europe next year."

Ian Slater, Vice President Communications of Ford of Europe and Premium Automotive Group, said the team's new driver line-up is a key aspect of Ford's strategy. "Ford of Europe is planning for a long-term success in the WRC. Our young but experienced team,

with Mikko Hirvonen and Jari-Matti Latvala, is a clear statement of intent. We believe these two young Finns will become stars of the sport and we're delighted to offer them the opportunity to grow and develop with Ford over the next few seasons, while providing all-important stability and consistency within the team."

"Jari-Matti is only 22, but already he has started more than 50 WRC events and his level of experience is higher than many older drivers. He has developed greatly under Malcolm's guidance in a privately-entered Focus RS World Rally Car during the past two seasons. Towards the end of the 2007 season Jari-Matti has shown he is ready to step up to a full works drive: witness his outstanding third place in Rally Ireland last month. They will debut for us in January's Monte Carlo Rally."

Malcolm Wilson, managing director at M-Sport, gave his views on the season just ended. "First of all I'd like to thank Ford for the trust and confidence. I also would like to thank Stobart for their commitment to run Jari-Matti this year. He has gained confidence by the day and has developed into the most promising driver in the WRC this season. His performances on the second half of the season put him in pole position for the drive. Knowing that he will now be doing a large part of the testing, gives me confidence that his performance will only improve."

"Marcus and Mikko have worked wonderfully together and I hope that Mikko will pass on to Jari-Matti the experience he has learned. If I look back, I'm proud to say that they both came to M-Sport for evaluation five years ago and now they are going to be partnered for the 2008 season," he added.

Mark Deans, Ford of Europe's new Motorsport director, who will head the company's programme from the start of next season, is not hiding his enthusiasm. "With this incredible car and team we look forward for a 2008 full of successes."

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