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## **SRT Motorsports - RallyCross Travis Pastrana Q&A - X Games Preview**

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Travis Pastrana (No. 199 Red Bull/Discount Tire Dodge Dart)

WHAT HAS IMPRESSED YOU ABOUT THE NEW DODGE DART GLOBAL RALLYCROSS CAR? "Honestly, to be as competitive as we have been so quickly with so little testing against heck, literally world rally champions. We just started testing the car a month before the first race and to have a chance going out there and being third trying to pass second at the main event. That was pretty exciting.

"What's really exciting about it though is the enthusiasm from the manufacturer. Everyone has been following the Dart program and for me, to be able to be kind of a team manager and run my own program, it's been a lot of fun. We have a lot of enthusiasm. I kind of call the Dodge Dart the muscle car of the rallycross world. There are a lot of go-kart type cars out there but with Dodge being a little bit bigger, we're going to really shine, I believe, on the dirt, on any kind of slicker surfaces, anything that's a little different. So far, the first two rounds were all pavement. So, I'm really looking forward to X Games coming up where I think the Dart will really shine."

WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS HEADING INTO X GAMES THIS YEAR? "What's really neat about the Global RallyCross this year is that before, I shouldn't say the U.S. was the redheaded stepchild of rally and off-road car racing, but this year everyone that's the best in the world has been coming over. The all-time winningest rally driver who is currently winning the WRC championship, Sebastien Loeb, is coming over to the X Games. It gives us in North America a chance to run against the best. It's no longer 'Oh yeah you guys are over here but.' Everyone wants to be a part of the X Games. Everybody wants to be a part of Global RallyCross. To have this rallycross and to have this series in the U.S. now is an opportunity that I couldn't pass up, for sure. It was awesome to start working with the guys at Dodge and really kind of build a program from the ground up. I think we're definitely ready to be competitive; we're ready to win some races. We're looking forward to it."

YOU ENTERED A SECOND DODGE DART WITH BRYCE MENZIES FOR X GAMES. HOW IMPORTANT IS IT TO HAVE TWO CARS? "The biggest thing, honestly, is the feedback right now. We brought in a second driver, Felipe Albuquerque, who is one of the best all-around drivers and a great test driver. His feedback helped us out so much. We were able to dial in some of the fine-tuning parts on the car after the race in Texas. This next race is going to be great. Bryce has a different background. To have someone that's not necessarily going to give you any slack but someone that's not going to intentionally take you out, rally is a really aggressive sport, really helps to have an ally, especially if we both make the final. And it's just good because he might be faster somewhere, I might be faster somewhere and I can say 'Okay, here's what I'm doing with the car here to make the car go faster' and he might say 'Here's what I'm doing with the car to make it go faster there' and you work together. The Fords usually have five factory guys in the final. Those guys all work with each other the first couple of laps and definitely leave the rest of us hanging. Even if you are a better car and a better driver, it's nice to have a teammate out there. You know, the last lap, hey, push comes to shove, he can push me out of the way, and I can push him out of the way. You've got to do what you've got to do to win but it'll be really good."

I BELIEVE THIS IS YOUR FIRST X GAMES THAT DOESN'T CONSIST OF A BOARD, A BIKE OR A MOTORCYCLE. DOES THAT SEEM STRANGE FOR YOU? "Without a doubt. You know, everyone expects to see me on motorcycles. From last year's X Games, I haven't even really ridden because of my ankle. I'm just taking some time to heal up and really making a focus on the cars. For me, it was always about competition. Not to say that there's not competition in the other sports because there definitely is. No matter what you're doing, there's always competition. It's almost as hard to stay at the top as it is to get there. But for me, I can be doing a backflip over a

250-foot jump and I'm thinking what's for lunch (laughs). And when I drive the car, there's still that rush. It's not an extension of my body. It's still something that's a challenge. With the cars, you really have to work with the team and work with the setup. With motorcycles, your body was the setup. It's been fun; it's been a great challenge. We've been successful with the rally but you know with the NASCAR stuff, it's been a tough road. I'm looking forward to putting all my effort into it."

WHAT WOULD A VICTORY IN THE GLOBAL RALLYCROSS RACE AT X GAMES MEAN TO YOU? "The team needs it, without a doubt. When we went with Dodge, we really took our time with the whole program. We felt the car out and it was like this is a good platform and we can work with it. I told the guys look, we can win with the car. We will win with this car. The X Games would make that statement a reality. I feel like X Games is my home. I'm really looking forward to going out there and, at the very least, putting on a good show and showing everyone and all the doubters that the Dodge is the car to beat."

HOW DID THE SEBASTIEN LOEB CHALLENGE COME ABOUT? "It is interesting. For me, to go against the best, it's all about competition. That's my whole life. Everyone is like 'Oh, you're a daredevil.' No, I want to race the best. I want to go against the best. We want to put ourselves up there and see what there is. With (Marcus) Gronholm coming over and a lot of guys, Tanner (Foust) obviously is thinking world championship as well, let's reach out and talk to Red Bull a little bit and what are the chances of getting Loeb? Sebastien has always been a big fan of X Games. I talk to him every year. I got to the Race of Champions so I thought it'd be really cool for Red Bull and really cool for American rally. I think it's going to be great because in Europe, people don't look to the U.S. in rally. They look for motocross, for free-style, for every other sport America is where everyone wants to be but for rally, everyone kind of wants to be in Europe. Now with X Games going global, I think it's huge for them to really include everybody. If you're going to say it's the best in the world let's have the best in the world there. All the people on Facebook and everything replied and they were like 'Well that was the dumbest thing you've done' (laughs). So that's going to be a bigger challenge. But I love it and it'd going to be fun. Either way, you know you're going up against the best and all the best are there. It's going to be fun."

CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THE RIVALRY BETWEEN INTERNATIONAL AND U.S. DRIVERS IN RALLYCROSS?

"Think of motocross back in the late 70s and early 80s. No one thought anybody could touch the Europeans and then the U.S. went and won something like 15 Motocross of Nations titles straight. After that, everyone wanted to be over here in the U.S. For me, for the U.S. to have GRC (Global RallyCross Championship) and really make it a legitimate attempt at having the biggest rallycross series in the world and having those guys come over here is huge for not only the sport of rally but the sport of rally in the United States and North America where NASCAR is pretty much the only form of car racing that everyone really knows about. I think it's going to be great. There's going to be a lot more kids involved and the action sports guys all have some kind of all-wheel drive car and they're getting into it. You're showing them motorsports. It's a challenge but it's been fun."

"The rivalry is definitely not overblown. Everyone wants to win it for themselves, everyone wants to win it for their teams and their sponsors and whatever. The bottom line is the Europeans are basically saying we're crap. The Americans are like we're going to show you. Gronholm has won the first two races but X Games is our event. When Colin McRae came over everyone said oh, he'll dominate. He had a rollover right at the last second and finished the race. I ended up beating him by like a quarter of a second or something at the finish line. And then last year when Gronholm came over and everyone said 'oh, Gronholm will dominate' and Brian Deegan stepped up and won, coming from X Games with a motocross background. The X Games are one event a year that I'd say anything can happen. That's why I'm excited to go there."

YOU HAVE HAD MORE THAN YOUR SHARE OF FRUSTRATIONS TO START THE 2012 GLOBAL RALLYCROSS SEASON. HAVE YOU BEEN ZAPPED BY BAD RACING LUCK? WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO TO TURN THIS SEASON AROUND? "I've always been a firm believer you make your own luck. You know first round, we knew we were a little off in practice. When they put in the water (water obstacle), our Dart was so good at getting traction when the other cars couldn't. We made up all our time there and I actually thought we had a great shot at winning that event. One of the younger drivers, and it's an aggressive sport, (Toomas) Heikkinen came in and he took me out. He took (Dave) Mirra out. He ended up getting black flagged and he actually got black flagged in the next race as well. He's a really good, good driver. He's a young driver and he's going to be great but, I guess you could say, he went for the full take out. That's what rallycross is all about. I'm a very aggressive driver as well. I wouldn't say do the same thing but I would do very similar."

"In the next round, we broke our car in half in practice and had to use our backup car for qualifying that my friend was using too so we both qualified pretty poorly. I actually dislocated my shoulder in the car after the jump. We've got a better shoulder brace now. That was something I never thought would ever happen in a car (laughs). I've got that problem sorted. We were leading that LCQ (Last Chance Qualifier) over Ken Block so I was thinking we still had a pretty good chance for a finish. Everything that can go wrong seems to have gone wrong but we're ready to turn it around. We've got a good car, got a good crew for the X Games."

THE NEXT EVENT FOR GLOBAL RALLYCROSS IS X GAMES IN LOS ANGELES. WOULD IT BE FAIR TO SAY THAT EVENT IS TO ACTION SPORTS WHAT THE DAYTONA 500 IS TO NASCAR? "Without a doubt, it is the Daytona 500. It's the Indy 500 for the Indy car guys. Like for me with the motorcycles and stuff, the X Games, you can be the best in the world, you can win every other event all year but if you have a bad X Games, people think you had a bad year. Just the opposite is true if you have a bad year and you win X Games. It's the one event that there's no one really thinking about points. There's still points involved but no one is going to go 'Oh yeah, I settled for second because I was thinking about points.' The X Games is the one event that you win. Second isn't an option. Third isn't an option. You do everything you can to win that event. When that much pressure and high stakes are on the line, you know if you can put your car on top of that podium on that day, you were the best driver. That's a pretty cool feeling."

HOW CHALLENGING ARE THE GLOBAL RALLYCROSS RACES THIS SEASON? SINCE MOST OF THE COURSES ARE COMPRISED OF ASPHALT ("TARMAC" CONDITIONS), HAS THAT CHANGED THE WAY YOU GUYS SETUP YOUR DODGE DARTS? "For me, I'm beginning in NASCAR too. I need to learn how to be a better pavement driver. I grew up on dirt. I love the dirt. I can set the car up a lot easier but I'm working on it. It's been a fun challenge. For us, we set the Dart up thinking that they were going to have more diversity with the courses. To get there and have pretty much parking lot races has been very challenging. We went back to the drawing board to make sure we get the car setup and get a little more testing on the pavement. Yeah, it's been frustrating but looking forward to getting the full experience here at X Games."

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