



Name: Martin Semerád
Date of birth: 24.05.1990
Nationality: Czech
Started rallying: 2007
Co-driver: Bohuslav Ceplecha

Rallying: a family affair

Motor sport is a family tradition for the Semeráds. Having watched his father compete in rallies at home in the Czech Republic, Martin couldn't wait to follow in his footsteps. So he didn't. Unable to compete on the stages until he was 16 years old, Martin took the opportunity to gain competitive experience as early as possible by taking to the race tracks, aged 15. He drove a Ford Fiesta at two races, before making it to the start of the 2007 Rally Lužické Hory shortly before he celebrated his 17th birthday. Despite his inexperience of rallying, Martin finished second in the Junior Cup element of the event, driving a 1400cc Volkswagen Polo.

A solid start at 17

Martin spent his first full year of rallying in the Czech Junior Cup. After the highlight of collecting a runners-up spot on his debut behind the wheel of a rally car, he suffered his very first retirement on the next event. He finished the following three, with ever-improving results. The pinnacle of his season was the Rally Prachatice, where he scored his first ever motor sport win. A retirement on the last round of the season, caused by a drunk-driver colliding with his rally car on the liaison section, contained his year-long position in the series to fourth.

Double the traction, triple the power

With six rounds of the Czech Junior Cup under his belt in year one of his career, Martin returned to the series the following season (2008) and won two of the four rounds he started. Such was the upturn in his speed, he finished second on the other two Junior rallies. It was becoming clear that Martin had outgrown the diminutive Volkswagen Polo; the time had come to move on. A Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution IX was the next step. He tackled eight rallies in the more

powerful, four-wheel-drive car last season, collecting his first overall podium place on the Rallysprint Jeseniky.

The biggest moment of his short career came at the end of the year, when he was selected to represent the Czech Republic in the FIA European Rally Championship Pirelli Star Driver Shoot-out. He impressed judges – including Michèle Mouton and Walter Röhrl – sufficiently to pick up one of the two season-long Pirelli-backed World Rally Championship drives this season.

Sporting and studious

Given that Martin is still only 18 years old, it's not surprising that he's still studying in his native city of Prague, where he lives. His college has granted him dispensation to compete in this year's Pirelli Star Driver programme, but he aims to continue with his studies as closely as possible through the season. Beyond school and rallying, Martin also finds time for his other passions: photography, music and films. He's also a keen snowboarder.

Career highlights

2008 won one of two FIA European Rally Championship Pirelli Star Driver places
2008 Voted 'Talent of the Year' by FIA European Rally Championship Middle Zone
2007 won a round of the Czech Junior Cup in his first season in the sport