



Botka carries the lead into day two, Prodan forced to retire

Following the first day of the 44th Croatia Rally, the Hungarian crew David Botka and Mark Mesterhazi is in sole possession of the lead. The crew in their Škoda Fabia R5 set the fastest time in both of today's special stages and will enter tomorrow's leg of the event with a 13,8 second lead ahead of Czechs Ondrej Bishaha and Jiri Hovorka (Ford Fiesta R5). Ranked third are Hungarians Andras Hadik and Krisztian Kertesz driving an R5 Škoda Fabia, who are 15,8 seconds behind their countrymen.

What left a large mark on Friday was the crash of Croatian crew Viliam Prodan and Zoran Raštegorac. They crashed their Peugeot 208 T16 R5 right ahead of the finish line and due to the damage on the car, they were forced to retire from the rally, while currently ranked second in the Croatian Championship.

„Well, a heavy crash, unfortunately right at the finish of the second special stage. As a matter of fact we crashed across the finish line, which meant the end for us. During the first SS, we took that corner at full speed, the second time, well.. Now we know that it's not going. We're OK, the car is damaged, not severely. We expected a lot from ourselves, we gave it our best effort, we had a good run, we ranked fourth during the first SS, second SS we were also going at a strong speed, for sure we would have been in the top three, four, but what can you do. Only onwards from here on out“, told Viliam Prodan after retirement.

Leading the pack in the Croatian national championship are Krisztian Hideg and Istvan Kerek in a Škoda Fabia R5. A total of 63 crews have begun the event on Friday, of which 15 were in R5 category vehicles. Three crews did not finish. Saturday's itinerary holds eight special stages driven around the core of Istria. The first crew on the finish podium in Poreč is expected at 8PM.