**STAGE FLASH**

**Date: 20 April 2024
Day: 3
FlashN°: 8
Special stage: SS9 Smerovišće – Grdanjci 1
Distance: 15.72 km
Weather: Overcast with light rain
Road conditions: Dry with light sheen in patches
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**Car #13. GRÉGOIRE MUNSTER/LOUIS LOUKA (FORD PUMA RALLY1)**

A full set of soft tyres on the car with two wets in the boot for the Belgian who leads the way on the road following the new road order. A trouble-free run results in a time of 10m 34.2s. “I didn’t benefit enough (from the road position) because I was just used to being cautious in every corner and here everything is clean, it’s like proper road, I was struggling a bit with the tyres getting overheated so not the perfect stage.”

**Car #9. ANDREAS MIKKELSEN/TORSTEIN ERIKSEN (HYUNDAI I20 N RALLY1)**

The former Pirelli test driver takes a gamble to put two hard compound tyres on the front and use them on the opening stage of the day beating Munster by 11.4s. “I have a bit better feeling today but I just have so many pacenotes and sometimes I don’t remember so I have to brake so it was really difficult. But we try to keep a better rhythm than yesterday, a bit more playful the car today, a bit more reactive, so it felt easier but my road position is better as well.”

**Car #18. TAKAMOTO KATSUTA/AARON JOHNSTON (TOYOTA GR YARIS RALLY1)**

Elects to run a mix of three soft tyres and one hard on the dropping 3.6s to Mikkelsen’s time. “It’s quite okay, quite dry of course, obviously next one might be dry again, so we didn’t focus so much on these two stages to gain time so should be okay but moving along quite a lot. It helped quite a lot so it’s okay, I need more for sure but let’s see what weather is coming now.”

**Car #16. ADRIEN FOURMAUX/ALEXANDRE CORIA (FORD PUMA RALLY1)**

A huge effort from the Frenchman as he attempts to make the most of the increasingly dirty road surface that will greet the top runners and get ahead of the light precipitation. “I feel really good, I wanted to really enjoy that stage because I think during the day it’s going to be really tricky conditions. I had a clean stage, I was pushing for sure, I could have been a little smoother sometime but I was enjoying.”

**Car #8. OTT TÄNAK/MARTIN JÄRVEOJA (HYUNDAI I20 N RALLY1)**

Tänak is the first driver to obviously struggle with the surface, losing 1s to Forumaux who remains fastest. “It’s getting more (dirty) than expected to be honest and it’s quite bumpy as well so it’s a surface where we struggle with the damping. It’s similar (weather to yesterday) so we were expecting quite rainy weather today so not optimal but okay.”

**Car #17. SÉBASTIEN OGIER/VINCENT LANDAIS (TOYOTA GR YARIS RALLY1)**

The same mix of three soft and one hard tyre taken by team-mate Katsuta for the French legend, who also struggles to equal Fourmaux’s time and drops 1s. “It was okay, it’s a dirty stage like expected, maybe not pushing hard enough but okay. (The tyres) was my choice, yes, let’s see if it works out at the end!”

**Car #33. ELFYN EVANS/SCOTT MARTIN (TOYOTA GR YARIS RALLY1)**

A clean drive from Evans but 1.3s slower than Fourmaux at the finish. “A little bit steady just in a few sections but generally it was clean.”

**Car #11. THIERRY NEUVILLE/MARTIJN WYDAEGHE (HYUNDAI I20 N RALLY1)**

A huge push on soft tyres sees Neuville eclipsing Fourmaux’s time through the splits but drops a little time at the finish to go second by 0.5s. “It was tough, the road is really, really dirty so I was fighting with the traction. Obviously less rain than expected to be honest but it’s a few more stages to go so we need to keep it up. I mean our tyre choice says it all (with two wets on board) so let’s see.”

**Car #34. NIKOLAY GRYAZIN/KONSTANTIN ALEKSANDROV (CITROËN C3 RALLY2)**

The WRC2 leader has a clean run, with no wet weather tyres in his package for the morning loop. “From my weather crew it should be (dry) Even if it’s drizzle like this but it should not be rainy so I hope it should work, the tyre choice. Even for this one I go with the softs but I feel like it’s too soft. The grip was more than expected. It’s dirty but the grip was good.”