**STAGE FLASH**

**Date: 20 April 2024
Day: 3
FlashN°: 13
Special stage: SS14 Stojdraga – Gornja Vas 2
Distance: 20.77 km
Weather: Overcast
Road conditions: Dry
\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Car #13. GRÉGOIRE MUNSTER/LOUIS LOUKA (FORD PUMA RALLY1)**

A faster time in the afternoon with hard tyres than he achieved in the morning on soft rubber, despite a wet surface at the start of the stage. “Actually the rain that was in the first stage had passed this stage before and so the first five kilometres are a bit damp so you have to trust the hard (tyre) and then from 5 km to the end it was much better for sure.”

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

Slid wide in the closing sector of the stage but escaped from the foliage without significant damage. “Just understeered out in the corner, I just arrived a bit too quickly into that one and it was a lot of gravel but I was way too careful in the beginning because it looked damp and I was on the hards and I was braking so early, but after a while I understood that it was not bad and it went better towards the end but the balance of the car now is very nice, driving well, so it’s more about the driving itself now.”

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

The provisional stage lead passes to Katsuta who is far happier with his run on this occasion. “It’s a bit more let’s say half-damp on the beginning of the stage so now it’s drying up quite a lot, I mean getting more dryer and dryer because obviously you have no rain at the moment. For sure guys will be quicker and quicker but still felt pretty good with the car so I’m quite happy that we took this tyre choice.”

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

A very business-like Fourmaux trades sector times with Tänak in their battle for fourth place. “The first part of the stage was damp but really, really damp in some places so not so easy to find the confidence but for the rest it was a good stage.”

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

None of the drama seen on his first run through the stage this morning, eking out his advantage to more than 17 seconds. “Obviously if (the rain) is dropping like this it’s no effect, so the road is fine but let’s see what happens with the next ones. We really expected rain here and we have been driving in full wet setup but it is still better without the rain so I prefer it this way.”

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

A trouble-free run for Ogier to take the top of the stage times. “Not that much (rain) but it start to affect a little bit so very, very hard to know what’s happening with the weather. It’s okay, we have the right tyres for the conditions at least but the grip are changing quite often.”

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

Falling short of Ogier’s target time by 0.4s, Evans offers a chink of opportunity to Neuville in his bid to reclaim the lead. “I don’t know, it’s pretty tricky in there, I didn’t have the best feeling in all fairness but okay, we’ll see how it is.”

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

A captain’s innings from Neuville as he seeks to wrest the lead back from Evans in order to maximise his points haul from the event. Four seconds up on Evans at the final split, he beats Ogier’s benchmark by 3.9s to go back into the overall lead by 2.3s. “I was flat-out. When I knew there was 50% chance that there would be rain at the end we just went for it – it was a controlled drive but I was really pushing to keep the temperatures in the hard tyres but obviously we got like 1.5 – 2 km of rain at the end so we must have dropped a bit of time. It looks like we didn’t have the optimal (tyre) choice so far and it won’t be any easier for the upcoming stages but we’re going to try hard.”

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

Another huge time loss for the rally leader in WRC2 compared to his team-mate. “I don’t know, we have different tyre choice. Maybe I just made a mistake in this one. But okay, we have some gap but anyway I try my best but sometimes this kind of mistakes with the tyre choices killing everything, so…”

**Car #20. YOHAN ROSSEL/ARNAUD DUNAND (CITROËN C3 RALLY2)**

Another big push from the Frenchman brings him closer to the WRC2 lead, taking 14.4s out of Gryazin on the stage. “I hope a little bit more rain but I think the conditions help him because if you have a little bit more rain I think he is dead. The plan is to do no mistake, take the points, but for sure my plan is to keep the pressure for the moment.”