**STAGE FLASH**

**Date: 21 April 2024
Day: 4
Flash N°: 16
Special stage: SS17 Trakošćan – Vrbno 1
Distance: 13.15 km
Weather: Bright and cold
Road conditions: Dry
\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

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

First out into the final day’s stages, Munster attempts to capitalise on the clean road surface while taking big bites out of the cuts. He result is 7m 2.1s. “It’s quite clean, all dry, a bit of slippy Tarmac in some sections. Last 2 km are new asphalt with a lot of gravel in the cuts so I really try to keep a good pace and make it very dirty for the others.”

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

A smooth run for Mikkelsen belies some drama as he wrangles hard compound tyres on cold, smooth asphalt. “I try to start driving fast but I had some moments in the beginning because my pace was a bit aggressive in some corners and I had understeer and I was heading towards the forest so I just trying to adjust the notes now for the second pass but you have to be so committed in there to go fast and discovering it for the first time… But a clean enough stage trying to get heat into my hard tyres was a bit on the limit.”

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

The circuit racing pedigree of Toyota’s Japanese ace comes to the fore on this stage and he sets a new benchmark of 6m 55.9s that is 6.1s faster than Mikkelsen. “I’m pretty surprised already, lot of pollutions (on the road surface), quite slippy actually especially at the end of the stage, there’s no lines yet because only two cars have been in front of me. It’s not easy because you need to guess what is the condition-wise but overall the car is quite good.”

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

The Frenchman is fast and smooth on a surface and an event that he enjoys enormously, slotting in just 1.8s adrift of Katsuta’s time. “Well the points that we had to take was yesterday so now I’m only focused on the Super Sunday (bonus points) and we’ll see what we can do we had a really clean stage, it’s getting dirty and dirty so we’ll see if it’s the same for the others and they lose time but I had a good stage.”

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

A good clean run for the Estonian but his hard tyres are likely to be more effective on the second stage of the loop. Provisional third place. “Nothing happened: all okay. Full gravel so a bit tricky but okay, it’s a bit sketchy in the dirt, if I push a bit I go straight so not interested to do any mistake like I did yesterday.”

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

Ogier falls short of Katsuta’s target time and is likely to drop back from the lead battle. “Getting very dirty like we expected. Not the ideal sage for us. No the perfect feeling. No idea.”

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

A super committed run from the Welshman limits the damage done by the increasingy dirty road service. Third place on the stage behind Katsuta and Fourmaux results. “Obviously, thanks to the other guys I think the road is getting very dirty, it was a good run from us but let’s see now for the next one.“

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

With the harder tyres, the rally leader drops 2.3s to Evans, leaving his advantage standing at just 2.6s. “Yeah but we have different tyre choices so this one will be really dirty on the second pass and also for the next one I think we have the better tyres. That’s the choice we made this morning! It’s okay, I mean there are 12 points to take, it will be tough with the dirty road in the morning we are losing a bit of time but we are going to push hard.”

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

A relaxed approach to the day for the rally leader now that he is all-but assured of victory if he can reach the finish. “We have to keep the position, that’s only the target, so try to drive ‘flow’, not to make any mistakes.”

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

A time penalty added overnight for lateness into time control puts the Frenchman beyond any realistic hope of making the ground back to Gryazin on the four remaining stages. “It’s clean stage, no problem, not easy with soft tyres but let’s see on the next. No mistakes.”