**STAGE FLASH**

**Date: 21 April 2023**

**Day: 2 Flash N°: 2**

**Special stage: Mali Lipovec - Grdanjci Distance: 19.20 km**

**Weather: Dry and sunny, 12°**

**Road conditions: Dry with some muddy sections in corners**

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

The world championship leader starts Croatia Rally 2023 with an 11m57.7s. “Challenging because the grip is low, we expected it a bit. After recce we bring already some dirt on the road so general grip is pretty low but so far so good.”

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

Neuville is through in 12m00.3s, 2.6s slower than Ogier. He describes the stage as being “tough”. “I was fighting the car through the whole stage so it wasn’t easy. I had a big job to do in that stage. I was kicked around all the time, it was not easy.”

**Car #69. KALLE ROVANPERÄ/JONNE HALTTUNEN (TOYOTA GR YARIS RALLY1)**

The world champion is a whole 11.3s off Ogier’s pace with a 12m09.0s. Asked what wrong, the Finn says: “I don’t know, to be honest nothing special happened. It was surprisingly dirty and slippy. It was not easy to drive so clean. I was pushing quite well without mistakes but it was not so fast. It was really difficult to be clean. I tried my best.”

**Car #8. OTT TÄNAK/MARTIN JÄRVEOJA (FORD PUMA RALLY1)**

After stalling at a hairpin left, Tänak stops the clocks in a time of 12m08.2s. “I was losing the boost, then I stalled. After I really struggled with many things. We got some steering issue already on the road section. That was a big job.”

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

It’s a 12m10.0s from the 2021 Croatia Rally runner-up. “It was brilliant to be honest, it was quite okay but of course the road is getting very dirty behind. There’s only so much you can do but, okay, it still needs to be better than that.”

**Car #4. ESAPEKKA LAPPI/JANNE FERM (HYUNDAI I20 N RALLY1)**

Lappi completes SS1 considerably off the pace with the Finn recording a time of 12m20.7s, which is 23.0s slower than early pacesetter Ogier. “It’s very challenging for me at least. Too much dirt for me so I’m not confident.”

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

Japan’s finest registers a 12m26.9s. “It’s full of gravel on the road and I was not able to trust the pacenotes so much because it was more dirty than expected. It’s going to be tough today but we need to survive and see tomorrow.”

**Car #7. PIERRE-LOUIS LOUBET/NICOLAS GILSOUL (FORD PUMA RALLY1)**

Loubet’s time is a 12m28.0s. “It was quite tricky honestly, I struggled a bit. It was more dirty than expected so not perfect but okay.”

**Car #20. OLIVER SOLBERG/ELLIOTT EDMONDSON (ŠKODA FABIA RS RALLY2)**

Solberg is the first of Rally2 drivers through the stage although the Swede has elected not to nominate Croatia Rally as one of his WRC2 scoring rounds. He sets a time of 12m52.8s.

**Car #21. YOHAN ROSSEL/ARNAUD DUNAND (CITROËN C3 RALLY2)**

Driving an upgraded Citroën C3 Rally2, Rossel’s time is 12m39.2s.

**COMMENTS**

Ogier makes a flying start to Croatia Rally 2023 with the fastest time on SS1. The eight-time world champion profits by running first on the road, which becomes increasingly ‘dirty’ as more and more cars complete the run. Tänak drops time with a stall on a hairpin and is 10.5s slower than Ogier with Neuville second quickest, 2.6s down on the best time.

**ENDS**

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