**STAGE FLASH**

**Date: 19 April 2024
Day: 2
FlashN°: 4
Special stage: SS3 Ravna Gora - Skrad 1
 SS4 Platak 1
Distance: SS3 10.13 km
 SS4 16.63 km
Weather: Sunny but cool
Road conditions: Dry with melting snow in forested areas
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**Car #11. THIERRY NEUVILLE/MARTIJN WYDAEGHE (HYUNDAI I20 N RALLY1)**

SS3: Mixed conditions with melting snow at the side of the road provide the sort of conditions in which Neuville usually performs strongly. He crashed out of the lead on this stage in 2023 but in 2024 it is business as usual, setting a time of 5m 49.6s.

SS4: A clean run for the rally leader to close out the morning loop with a time of 8m 47.5s “It’s probably the cleanest stage but I don’t know. I can’t attack. I have to be so smooth and clean and there’s no way or me to push otherwise it doesn’t work. I would like to go a bit faster but it is what it is and it’s still tricky conditions so I try to be as careful as I can but if the feeling isn’t there it’s tough.”

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

SS3: Drops time in the opening sector but then regains some pace to drop 3.5s to Neuville at the stage end.

SS4: One or two moments where the car looked nervous but just 0.2s slower than the rally leader. “Probably suited our tyre choice a bit more. It wasn;’t actually a very clean runon that downhill but okay.”

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

SS3: A clean run but the Frenchman is finding the conditions tricky, dropping 8.5s to Neuville.

SS4: One or two moments where the car looked nervous but just 0.2s slower than the rally leader, dropping more than 10s further back from Neuville and Evans. ”I have done a really, really good stage but with the tyres I had I couldn’t do more. We needed definitely some hards for this one. I think I can be happy with our pace because I just try to keep the tyre every time and be clean – it’s soft – so I’m happy with my driving by the time for sure cannot be good. We’ll see, the rally is still really long but are not so far to the others so we stay close and this is the main goal for now.”

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

SS3: Some lurid moments as the Estonian negotiates the water and mud thrown onto the surface by preceding cars but safely through – albeit dropping 3 seconds from his advantage over Fourmaux, the gap shrinking to 1.Xs.

SS4: Re-establishes his position over Fourmaux by reclaiming the 3 seconds dropped on the previous stage. “No commitment today, I have somehow struggled a lot more than in Monte so very hard to make it work.”

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

SS3: Exercising caution on the snowy, forested sections and dropping considerable time as a result.

SS4: “Yeah it’s drying up quite a lot change obviously. Still not easy stage. For sure no service so cannot really make any big change at all, but also if you got damage in this morning loop it was going to be a big problem so now we don’t have any issue on the car, just be smart this afternoon.”

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

SS3: Continues to deliver on his promise of pushing as hard as he can, being the fastest of all except Neuville at the halfway point of the stage. Drops a little time at the end of the stage to finish 0.1s behind team-mate Evans but still firmly in third place overall at the end of the morning loop.

SS4: A clean road in the latter part of the stage sees a vintage Ogier drive to slot in just 0.3s behind Neuville’s benchmark time despite his road position. “It’s been a good run, I think I can be happy with my loop. Unfortunately like expected we lose some ground but hopefully will be a bit better in the afternoon. Soft (tyres) was definitely the wrong choice but I’m happy with my mixed choice this morning.”

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

SS3: Neat and tidy despite the deteriorating road surface, bringing the Norwegian through safely 16.3s adrift of Neuville’s benchmark.

SS4: Struggling for front end grip relative to the fastest runners but safely through the stage 16 seconds adrift. “It’s a well-known stage, missing the experience in that one to go really committed. Maybe a little bit less in that one (SS4) than we done in the previous stages because there’s not so much shit on the road here but still the car is not easy to drive. I’m fighting. (The road conditions) still will be a disadvantage starting at the back (this afternoon) but will be a little closer.”

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

SS3: Sideways and spectacular through the worst of the conditions, the Belgian entertains the crowds royally with his car control but the gap to Mikkelsen widens.

SS4: Still entertaining the crowds in a car that seems to lack some grip, another 6s lost to Mikkelsen. “This one was a bit better as well but in general the road position is just crazy. I’ve never seen that on Tarmac but that’s also being in Rally1. Normally I’m used to the first Rally2 car being the tenth car and now you really see the difference between the first car and the eighth. A lot to learn!”

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

SS3: Through the stage cleanly and pace-setter for WRC2.

SS4: An uneventful run for Rossel sees him maintain contact with the WRC2 leader, Nikolay Gryazin. “It’s nice for the moment, my driving is not natural but it’s like that. Maybe in the beginning I sleep a bit, I don’t know! But it’s clean, no problem for the moment but it’s really tricky with the notes (to) cut. (On SS2 incident where he jumped into the bushes) I am a bit slow on the jump but before that we have a compression and I am happy to be here!”

**Car #31. GUS GREENSMITH/JONAS ANDERSSON**

SS3: Keeps Rossel in sight, dropping 1.9s, but the conditions provoke plenty of Finnish-style ‘Oy-oy-oys’ over the intercom.

SS4: A solid finish for the Englishman. “I just had a bad run down the hill (on SS4). I had the softs on the rear so they were moving around a lot so it definitely wasn’t clean. No regrets (not to be nominated for scoring points in Croatia), I’d be losing 10 points.”