**STAGE FLASH**

**Date: 19 April 2024
Day: 2
FlashN°: 9
Special stage: SS8 Krašić – Sošice 2
Distance: 23.63 km km
Weather: Sunny but cool
Road conditions: Dry
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**Car #11. THIERRY NEUVILLE/MARTIJN WYDAEGHE (HYUNDAI I20 N RALLY1)**

A big push by the erstwhile rally leader in his bid to take back the rally lead and the most favourable road conditions for Saturday’s stages. The result is a 1.6-second advantage putting him on a joint time with Evans at the top of the leaderboard. “I did what I could but it wasn’t a great day for us. Never really find a good feeling and struggle a bit with the handling. Was a bit better in the last one but lots of cleaning in there as well, lots of cuts where there was no line where we made the line so there was not much more we could do.”

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

An equally big push to retain the lead from Neuville but in the end not enough to hold him off. “It was a difficult stage to be honest, I didn’t have a good feeling at the end of it, it’s really tricky with all these cuts. People are cutting a lot more than we’d anticipated from the recce to be honest or really wanted to from the recce so that’s difficult to manage when it’s full of dirt like this on the second pass.”

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

The Frenchman sets a time 0.2s faster than Neuville to go to the top of the leaderboard for the stage. “It’s good to finish on a really positive stage. I have changed a little bit the setup on this one because I wasn’t so confident on the previous one and it seems to be working so it’s really nice to finish the day like this, especially on the longest one. It’s been a good day so far.”

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

Once again, Tänak gets himself towards the pace of the top three runners after the changes he has effected to the differential have made the handling closer to his liking. “Like last three stages we had consistent times so, difficult to really push, not really confident in the balance but at least it’s been more consistent. So not great but better than the morning so in the end not too bad day.”

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

The most convincing stage of the day for the Japanese driver, who appears relieved to have rediscovered his form. “I tried, I don’t know why the time was quite okay, also I don’t know why I was so slow on the other stages. Very, very strange but at least good to finish the day and tomorrow will be another tricky day so need to focus now.”

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

A full-blooded attack from the French veteran delivers a crushing stage win and pulls him back into the conversation for the rally lead, winning the stage by 9.2 seconds. “It’s been a good run, I am happy with that one for sure. It’s been a tough day for us with the road position, we expected that, so being able to close the gap that much tonight is really positive. But tomorrow is the start of another rally with the weather forecast so might be much slower, much slippier and even more tricky.”

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

Relieved to reach the end of the longest stage and to have the overnight service halt to address some of the issues. “It’s been a tough day, fighting a bit, just can’t really get the proper speed and commitment. We just have to keep on working but it’s tough because for sure we want to be up there but I’m fighting with the car too much at the moment for that to be possible.”

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

Another fast run from the young Belgian takes back 5.5 seconds from Mikkelsen, closing to within half a minute at the end of the day.