**STAGE FLASH**

**Date: 18 April 2024
Day: 1
FlashN°:
Special stage: Shakedown Okić
Distance: 3.65 km
Weather: Sunny but cool
Road conditions: Dry
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**Car #11. THIERRY NEUVILLE/MARTIJN WYDAEGHE (HYUNDAI I20 N RALLY1)**

With all the Hyundai entries carrying a special tribute livery to Craig Breen to mark one year since his passing, points leader Neuville takes 1m57.7s to complete his first pass of the 3.65-kilometre Shakedown run. “It’s not much to say, you’re going to see it throughout the weekend – hopefully in a good way. That was a proper stage to wake up this morning. I took it carefully just to get back the feeling of the car on Tarmac again. Some small adjustments (now) and go again.”

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

The 2023 Croatia Rally winner’s first pass through shakedown is at a conservative pace, 1.7 seconds off that of Neuville. “It’s much the same (as 2023) but I would say generally, like always, it’s very dirty. Very challenging. A lot of low grip changes, so it’s not going to be easy.”

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

A revised aerodynamic package aiming to improve the consistency of lateral grip sees the Frenchman. “I think this is why rally is so interesting. We are in the middle of nowhere in the Safari Rally, rather rough, and now here it’s all about precision on the slippery Tarmac, many cuts etc. It’s a bit the ‘calm before the storm’ of the rally but I’m sure it’s going to be interesting to follow it. I think it’s not too bad, I’m quite happy, I have good lines in front so it’s all good.”

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

Fastest through the stage relative to the opening trio, “Maybe it’s not the moment to be really confident considering the start of the year so, yeah, for sure we try to be efficient this weekend. Our first target is to have a clean weekend but it was the same in Kenya so let’s see how it goes now but we will give our go.”

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

Completing the stage five seconds off the target time of Tänak, the Japanese driver is aiming to keep on top of the changing conditions over the days to come. “Not feeling so good so need to check a few things but all okay otherwise. To manage the situation, to be without mistakes would be nice this weekend. Could be a good old mess I would say.”

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

Returning to the cockpit for the first time since the opening round in Monte Carlo this season, the eight-time WRC champion plays himself in to the Croatia weekend with the third fastest time and the target of his 100th career WRC podium ahead. “Two and a half months is a very long time (since Monte Carlo), so actually the first run of the test was like ‘okay, I have to get back to the rhythm, it’s really fast’! But it was a very useful test: now I feel really happy to be here and excited to start this race.”

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

On his second event since returning to the premier class of the WRC and his second Croatia Rally start, WRC2 champion Mikkelsen slides wide off the road but recovers without damaging the car. “It’s really nice to be back, the car felt really nice. I was stuck a bit in a junction in the stage so I stalled, I had to restart, but the car feels good. It should be an interesting weekend.”

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

On his third visit to Croatia, the Belgian is on his most familiar surface but promises no heroics, setting a first run time four seconds off that of team-mate Fourmaux. “I found Croatia Rally very difficult in Rally2 so in Rally1 everything is coming even faster! Not such a bad feeling with the car, I was a bit too careful, but quite confident. The target is having a trouble-free event.”