**Press release**

**WRC stars hoping for added Power in Croatia**

**Zagreb, 23 April 2023** – Leading drivers from the FIA World Rally Championship will be going for double glory when Croatia Rally 2023’s Wolf Power Stage takes place from 13:15 CET.

As well as chasing strong overall finishing positions, with bonus points up for grabs for the fastest five drivers, there’s added incentive to push to the line on the Zagreb-based event.

Using the 14.09-kilometre Zagorska Sela - Kumrovec test, the Wolf Power Stage marks the deciding action after four days of intense competition in Croatia when points will be handed out to the top five runners on a descending 5-4-3-2-1 scale. The three fastest WRC2 drivers will also pick up additional points (3-2-1).

Having crashed out of the lead on Saturday morning, the Power Stage represents on opportunity for Thierry Neuville to salvage some points from the third Croatia Rally to count for the WRC. “The feeling isn’t great but we are going to push as hard as we can,” the Hyundai Shell Mobis World Rally Team star said following the penultimate stage, having going quickest on the Power Stage rehearsal earlier. “With only five points we can take from the weekend we need to go for it. But it won’t be an easy task.”

Croatia Rally 2021 winner Sébastien Ogier also plans to push hard on the Power Stage for Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT. “The final stage is a different story, it’s the Power Stage and for sure points are counting for the team so we will have to keep pushing.”

While pushing will be the priority for a number of drivers, Elfyn Evans, the Croatia Rally leader by 28.1s after 19 stages, has been quick to point out the challenge that lies ahead – and therefore the need to find a balance between all-out attack and maintaining his tenure at the top of the overall order. “It’s one of the more technical stages with lots of changes of direction but a lot of blind crests also so there’s a lot of going on,” he said. “It’s very, very busy on the pacenotes but the corner cutting is quite massive so we expect it to be quite polluted.”

Ott Tänak, currently second overall for the M-Sport Ford World Rally Team, said: “The stage is actually unique through all the rally, it’s really narrow and the cuts are deep but every corner has some cut, so many grip changes, a lot of dirt on the road and a big challenge.”

Ogier, who defeated Evans on the Croatia Rally Power Stage in 2021 to take the overall victory by 0.6s, said: “It’s one of the nicest stages on this rally, very narrow, a lot of cut but a lot of rhythm, very challenging but good to drive with a couple of jumps. Pretty spectacular and it offered in the last two years some interesting drama. It’s definitely a highlight of this rally.”

The Power Stage has decided the previous two editions of the Croatia Rally. In 2021, Ogier was 3.9s behind at the start but came out on top by 0.6s at the expense of his Toyora team-mate Evans. Last season, Kalle Rovanperä began the Power Stage trailing Tänak by 1.4s but finished first with a winning margin of 4.3s following a charging drive.

As well as the battle for the outright win, Yohan Rossel will aim to defend a lead of 13.4s in WRC2 with Nikolay Gryazin continuing to chase.

**ENDS**

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