**STAGE FLASH**

**Date: 22 April 2023**

**Day: 3 Flash N°: 17**

**Special stage: Platak 2 Distance: 15.63 km**

**Weather: Dry, fading sunlight, 16°**

**Road conditions: Dry, some damp sections and many gravel patches**

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

It’s an 8m28.7s to round out leg two by the world champion. “Always if there’s a fight we give everything we’ve got. The beginning of the stage was really tricky to get the hard tyre working, I don’t know if I lose some time there. Otherwise it was quite good. It was a bit tricky lines after the pace cars and small cars, many cuts I had to go in but I only had gravel on the Tarmac. Not easy but we tried.”

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

Loubet’s time is an 8m42.5s. “It wasn’t so easy, I’m a bit surprised by the time, I’m very slow. It’s difficult to understand but from the previous stage I’m losing a lot of performance so we’ll have to see what I’m doing wrong.”

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

It’s an 8m38.8s for Katsuta, who grows his advantage over Loubet to 6.6s. “It’s nice to be here. It was quite a tricky day. The weather was not so bad but still the conditions were quite demanding. I need to find out what I need to improve and hopefiully on the first stage I can push with a good feeling.”

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

Ogier’s time is a stage-winning 8m28.0s. “The first section is just about risk-taking and I know Kalle is just going flat into the cut. I am a bit more careful in those sections and that’s costing time. The last section is fast and just about driving. It’s not for a great position but it’s still a battle.”

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

Lappi’s time is 8m31.9s. “Yesterday was a better day for us to be honest. I’ve never been really good on the dirty Tarmac and today was one of the days and I struggle a lot when there is a lot of pollution on the road. When there’s a decent amount I can manage somehow. Like the previous stage I don’t know how I should drive it.”

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

Tänak completes with an 8m42.4s. “I don’t know, I don’t know, difficult to say. It’s terrible to drive and not for me, I don’t know what is happening, happy it’s over.”

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

With a time of 8m33.8s, Evans leads Croatia Rally 2023 by 25.4s. “I can’t say I was so happy with the way I drove in there and if Ott has had problems I wouldn’t wish that on him. It’s not nice to inherit a gap like that but there’s still a long way to go.”

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

Crashed out of the lead on a right-hand corner 5.2 kilometres from the start of SS11. Both Neuville and Wydaeghe are uninjured but their car is too badly damaged to continue after the left rear strikes a large boulder when the car slides wide on loose gravel.

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

“It’s just the condition is not the same to yesterday, it’s quite similar to a gravel loop. On this stage I had no problem and I don’t know why. The feeling is quite good when it’s completely dry or in a fast section. But when we have a lot of mud it’s impossible to drive for me. Of course [I am confident], the race is not finished and we will see tomorrow.”

**Car #24. NIKOLAY GRYAZIN/KONSTANTIN ALEKSANDROV (ŠKODA FABIA RS RALLY2)**

“Tomorrow will be a tough day. This stage was quite demanding. In the first part you want to take the cuts but inside something says… but you need to be really like caution a little bit but still trying to take the edge a little bit. No problems, no big hits and the roundabout was quite okay this time. With this set up it was nice.”

**Car #30. NICOLAS CIAMIN/YANNICK ROCHE (VOLKSWAGEN POLO GTI R5)**

Crashed out 16.8 kilometres from the start of SS13.

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

“This one is okay because it’s short corners, faster, the car is more okay. I am very frustrated because it’s my mistake. I chose this set-up for the race. It was not a good one so for sure I’m frustrated. But you live and learn. It’s still very enjoyable.”

**Car #36. ALEJANDRO CACHÓN/ALEJANDRO LÓPEZ (CITROËN C3 RALLY2)**

Stopped 4.2 kilometres from the start of SS9. The Spaniard, who is making his Croatia Rally debut this year, had been in fourth position in WRC2.

**Car #26. SAMI PAJARI/ENNI MÄLKÖNEN (ŠKODA FABIA RS RALLY2)**

“Okay, I don’t know how this was but some places I was still a bit careful but I am trying to get better. Overall it’s been really positive. There’s one day to go and anything can happen.”

**Car #22. EMIL LINDHOLM/REETA HÄMÄLÄINEN (ŠKODA FABIA RS RALLY2)**

“It’s a bit dirtier and slower in the dark, I took it quite easy. Today has been good and somehow we kept the pace in the morning. Since there is a big gap front and rear we try to keep the car and the tyres in one piece and bring it home. It’s been good.”

**Car #25. ADRIEN FOURMAUX/ALEXANDRE CORIA (FORD FIESTA RALLY2)**

“It’s a good end for the day, I am really happy about our pace for the day. We were pushing in every stage, except this one on the first loop but we had some mechanical issues so it was okay. This time we had a much better set-up for this stage.”

**COMMENTS**

Leg two of Croatia Rally 2023 ends with a stage win for Ogier and a boost for Evans in his battle for victory after Tänak drops time. Ogier’s margin over team-mate Rovanperä is 2.0s.

**ENDS**

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