**STAGE FLASH**

**Date: 21 April 2023**

**Day: 2 Flash N°: 3**

**Special stage: Stojdraga - Hartje 1 Distance: 25.67 km**

**Weather: Dry, mainly sunny, 13°**

**Road conditions: Dry with some muddy sections in corners**

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

Ogier takes 16m50.7s to complete the first pass of Croatia Rally 2023’s longest stage after he stops approximately 12 kilometres into the run with a damaged front-left tyre, possibly caused by a heavy impact with a hole through a cut. Ogier and co-driver Landais are stopped for 1m07s while they rush to fit a replacement wheel. “I avoid the cut, I really avoid as much as I could but still just the fact this compression made the puncture. What can I do?”

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

Neuville suffers a moment nearing the stage finish when he hits a haybale and briefly goes off the road through a chicane. His time is a 15m18.1s. “In a chicane I hit the bale and I immediately slowed down. Many, many surprises, many surprises. We keep going, to be honest if it’s going to be tricky like this and hard to drive the car like this for the whole weekend it won’t be easy.”

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

Rovanperä strikes the same hole as Ogier and stops at the 11.9-kilometre mark to change a damaged front-left tyre. He’s stationary for 1m58s and reaches the stage finish with a time of 17m35.5s. “Stupid place to get a puncture. It’s always too slow [the wheel change], hopefully we didn’t lose too much.”

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

Tänak takes 15m30.2s to complete SS2. He’s 12.1s down on Neuville. Asked about the problems he encountered on SS2, the Estonian says: “They are not going any better unfortunately. We will work our way back to service and hopefully we can make it better.”

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

With his Toyota team-mates Ogier and Rovanperä delayed, Evans climbs from fifth to second in the overall order as live TV images show a black cat crossing his path. His time is a 15m22.3s, which is 4.2s slower than Neuville. “Really difficult to be honest, the grip is really difficult to trust. There are so much of these loose chippings on the surface so very tricky.”

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

Lappi completes in a time of 15m23.7s and moves up for fourth position overall. “It was a bit better than the first one but still I need to build up the confidence a bit on the dirt. Challenging. I should find a new word for that because I guess everyone is saying the same so I need to discover some new words.”

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

Katsuta’s time is a 15m35.2s. “New section is a bit with some nasty cuttings and rocks inside. We had to change the pacenotes.”

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

Loubet completes SS2 in 15m35.9s. “Tricky condition, it wasn’t so, so easy. We tried but the conditions was tricky.”

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

Solberg’s stage time is a 16m08.3s.

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

Rossel goes faster than Rally2 rival by 14.8s.

**COMMENTS**

Ogier loses the lead after stopping to change a damaged tyre, Neuville moves in front despite briefly going off at a chicane. He’s 13.9s ahead of Evans with Tänak remaining in third, despite reporting myriad issues. Rovanperä hits the same hole as Ogier and is also forced to stop to switch to a new front-left wheel. Greensmith stops for an unspecified amount of time but continues. Lindholm has a possible technical issue. Live TV coverage shows Fourmaux going slowly.

**ENDS**

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