**STAGE FLASH**

**Date: 21 April 2023**

**Day: 2 Flash N°: 6**

**Special stage: Mali Lipovec - Grdanjci 2 Distance: 1 19.20 km**

**Weather: Dry and largely sunny**

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

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

With making up lost time following his SS2 delay Ogier’s priority, the 2021 Croatia Rally winner completes in 12m06.8s. “Of course, more dirty roads like expected, but I think the biggest question is more how the weather will develop this afternoon. We still have some soft tyres but we will see.”

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

Rally leader Neuville clocks as 12m14.0s. “I felt a bit better in the car but we have two softs on the rear so the car was moving quite a lot, but we expected that. The weather is very unstable this afternoon so we have to see. I did what I could.”

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

The defending world champion scores a 12m12.6s. “Definitely better than in the morning. Now the car is somehow how it should be in the start. For sure we made a mistake with the set-up to start how we started. Anyway, with the puncture it was not so big loss with the set-up. Now we know where we should be it’s a bit better.”

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

Following the fitting of a new steering system in service, Tänak matches Rovanperä, the driver who beat him to Croatia Rally glory in 2022, on time . “I wish [all the problems from this morning were resolved] but we are definitely better, step by step. All kinds of [problems] but we are improving.”

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

Evans makes it through the first stage of Friday’s afternoon loop in a time of 12m11.6s. He’s now 13.7s behind leader Neuville. “It was all pretty okay, obviously very dirty as to be expected.”

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

Lappi sets a 12m14.7s. “It was nice and now the gravel marks made sense, so much, much, much nicer than in the morning. You can see from the tyre choice we have no idea [about the weather forecast].”

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

Katsuta records an off-form 12m31.3s. “It’s a bit easier but we spun and lost a bit of time, I don’t know, it’s still a tricky section. We got some small rain but not so much so quite lucky. After midway through I spun in a very narrow section and I had to back up and go. There was very small rain but it didn’t effect.”

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

Loubet registers as 12m19.8s. “Too much in the apex, I tried to go too fast but it’s not working yet. It was tricky.”

**COMMENTS**

The afternoon loop begins with a fourth fastest stage time for Ogier, who ends up going 4.8s faster than Toyota team-mate Elfyn Evans. Neuville still leads but Evans is now 13.7s behind. A spin for Katsuta provides the main action, while there’s considerable discussion about the weather and the prospect of rain for later in the day.

**ENDS**

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