**STAGE FLASH**

**Date: 21 April 2023**

**Day: 2 Flash N°: 9**

**Special stage: Pećurkovo Brdo - Mrežnički Novaki 2 Distance: 9.11 km**

**Weather: Dry and sunny**

**Road conditions: Mainly dry with some gravel and mud patches**

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

Ogier reports a puncture at the completion of the final stage of leg one, which he completes with a time of 5m05.6s. “On three tyres it was not so great. Puncture again. Just driving with Pirelli basically.”

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

Neuville’s time is a 4m59.0s. He says: “It was a bit better at the end of the day. I’m really happy we had a bit more fun in the car this afternoon. Hopefully we’re going to finish the first day in the first place and that will already be a great achievement for all the team and for us. I think we have done a decent job, it hasn’t been easy at all to be honest. At the end it was fun.”

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

The world champion finishes day one with a 4m57.2s. “Definitely it will be better to finish like this compared to how we started today. Of course now when the car and set-up is like it should be it’s much easier to enjoy the driving and be on the pace. Hopefully everything works out the same tomorrow.”

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

It’s a 4m57.9s from Tänak. “The tricky part was to start, to start like this is always a bit challenging. But luckily we were able to bring it a bit more together in the second half of the day. Hopefully it will be a bit more positive day tomorrow.”

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

A 4m56.3s from the Welshman secures the fastest stage time and cuts Neuville’s lead to 5.7s heading into Saturday’s leg. “It wasn’t really the strongest start to the day, there was a lot of pollution on that first one this morning but after we kept building and building and it’s been pretty okay. Of course it’s not an easy rally with a long way to go. It’s going to be an interesting fight hopefully for the rest of the weekend. I didn’t quite win it, I should have won it before but I didn’t quite win it.”

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

Lappi’s time is a 4m59.8s, which means he’s now 3.4s behind Tänak in the battle for third. “Quite steady, for sure where there was dampness I was a bit careful. I am feeling quite okay but something… I would like change something but I don’t know what. I can’t say what I want to change to make it easier. It’s not bad but as we are talking about tenths of a second all the time it could be easier. It’s the small things and we will see if we can find something.”

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

After going fourth quickest with a 4m58.7s Katsuta says: “Let’s say I thought it was going to be more wet or something but it was not so bad and now it’s working well. I was not full of confidence with many cuts and things but this is where I need to improve this weekend and I try to focus for this. Tomorrow is going to be another challenging day.”

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

Loubet completes in a 5m06.4s. “I was on hards on the front and unfortunately the car was very tricky to drive. I’m struggling, we lose the hybrid and on the rear left we had a damaged tyre or something like that.”

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

“Very slippery, I had a proper slide. There was a big jump, fully sideways, so it was cool anyway, good show. Hard tyres on this one so probably it’s not going to be a good time. It was a consistent day and there’s not much we can do with the car, unfortunately, so we need to hope for full rain and proper shit weather.”

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

“It was not bad, it was not easy, very slippery on this stage. It’s like that, it was a good day for me and we will see tomorrow.”

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

“It was fine, honestly in the damp places I should have been more brave and gone for it. It was good, the car feels actually pretty good. It is a nice rally, it could have been a better one but there’s two days to go.”

**Car #23. GUS GREENSMITH/JONAS ANDERSSON (ŠKODA FABIA RS RALLY2)**

“It’s been okay, honestly fine. Two hard tyres in there wasn’t so pleasant to be fair. Apart from that it’s okay. Me and Adrien [Fourmaux] are really good friends and we’re just 50 seconds apart and that sounds like a good target for the rest of the weekend.”

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

“It was quite okay, we were expecting that it would be more wet. But finally it’s wet in some places but it’s drivable but the last part and the beginning is fully dry. The tyre choice is quite okay and we need to focus on the next two days and do our job.”

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

“Unfortunately, there is no fight for us. It’s too far in front and too far behind. I don’t know what to do actually so I just drive through this stage just to finish the day. It’s a bit frustrating but it’s like that.”

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

“To be honest I was not sure what to really expect before the rally. Somehow I am happy with the driving now. In the afternoon it was quite good I would say but still something is maybe still missing for what I would like to achieve. At least from the morning we made a good improvement and I should be happy for that.”

**COMMENTS**

Evans completes leg one in style, scoring his first Croatia Rally 2023 stage best to cut the gap to leader Neuville. After 130.18 kilometres of timed action, the margin between the top two is 5.7s. Katsuta takes sixth from Loubet after going fourth quickest. Ogier keeps fifth but he reports dropping time with a puncture.

**ENDS**

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