**Anticipation High for Croatia Rally 2024**

**Zagreb, 18 April 2024** – Croatia Rally, the fourth round of the 2024 FIA World Rally Championship, began with pageantry when the Ceremonial Start was held in front of the National and University Library and Fountains in Zagreb this evening.

The nation’s capital thronged with crowds eager to see the contenders take their place on the start ramp before they start three days of asphalt action in the Croatian countryside tomorrow morning. In cool but clear conditions, the crews and cars from the World Rally Championship, WRC2, WRC3 and the Junior WRC formed a colourful centrepiece for the city and a teaser for what those venturing out to spectate on the stages can look forward to.

All of the cars competing in Croatia Rally this year also carry branding for the Craig Breen Foundation, a charity established in memory of the Irish star who perished in a pre-event test during the run-in to last year’s running of the event. The foundation aims to raise funds in order to nurture young rally talent.

Taking the stage to flag the contenders away were a host of dignitaries from the Croatian government, the administration of Zagreb and the national sporting bodies, including Minister of Tourism and Sport, Nikolina Brnjac, Head of office for education, sport and youth of the City of Zagreb, Luka Juroš, State's secretary for Sport, Tomislav Družak, and Croatian Olympic Committee President Zlatko Mateša.

Current WRC points leader Thierry Neuville was the last car to cross the ceremonial start, and the Belgian driver shared the excitement displayed by all the crews as they look forward to an event that enjoys fabulously challenging stages and passionate crowds throughout the route.

“It’s definitely an enjoyable rally but like everybody mentioned probably one of the most challenging Tarmac events,” he said.

“So not easy but we are looking forward, we have, I would say, a good start position normally tomorrow. The weather’s going to be tricky this weekend so tyre choice will be crucial again so basically nothing much different to what we have seen here the other years. That’s what makes it so challenging.”

Croatia Rally’s competitive action begins on Friday with the longest stage of the event, the 25.67 kilometre Krašić - Vrškovac test, with the first car due to start at 08:28. The route then continues for two short stages at Jaškovo – Mali Modruš Potok (09:41) and Ravna Gora – Skrad (10:39) before a first pass through Platnak to end the loop starting at 11:45.

With no mid-day servicing, a tyre fitting zone will be held in Cernik from 14:30 before the loop is repeated with the stages in reverse order, starting with Platak at 15:58.

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