



SS6 : ST-LÉGER-LES-MÉLÈZES / LA BÂTIE-NEUVE 2

Date :	26.01.2024		
Day :	2	Flash N° :	11
Special Stage :	6	Distance :	16,68 km
Weather :	13°C – Sunny		
Road conditions :	Dry road, a few damp sections		

SS6: Neuville, 2 stage wins as well

The three main players on the 92nd edition of the Monte-Carlo Rally are all on equal terms: two stage wins each. Thierry Neuville (Hyundai), who had already set the fastest time on SS3 early this morning, was again the fastest on SS6 early this afternoon. But he was only a second and a half ahead of Seb Ogier, who had just set two fastest times (SS4, SS5). His Toyota team-mate, Elfyn Evans, is still the overall leader, having totally dominated Thursday evening (SS1, SS2).

This was the 6th special stage of this rally, as a second run of 16.68km between the ski resort of Saint-Léger-Les-Mélèzes and the village of La Bâtie-Neuve. It was much quicker, as the ice had melted, and the gap was just 1.6s between Neuville and Ogier, and 2.6s between the Belgian Hyundai driver and Evans.

"I've always been quick on this stage, it's beautiful, but it's difficult to know how far you can push the tyres (so as not to overheat them), but I think we set a good time," said Neuville, still in contention for a win, while Tänak has dropped back a little, over a minute behind the leader. Still the same leader though, Evans, but whose margin for error has shrunk to less than ten seconds, chased by Ogier.

Under the eyes of his former great rival, the "other Seb" Loeb, who was present at the side of the road as a simple spectator, Ogier once again defended himself well: *"We're trying not to hit the tyres too much, and for the moment it's been a pretty good day"*, said the local hero, still in striking distance of his Welsh team-mate.



A big fight also in WRC2

The situation is totally clear in the Top 8: the four leaders at the front, i.e. two Toyota drivers (Evans, Ogier) ahead of two Hyundai drivers (Neuville, Tänak), and the other four further back: Fourmaux, 12 seconds behind the Estonian, Mikkelsen, Munster and Katsuta, much further back. The Japanese driver lost five minutes this morning in a ditch on SS3, in the same curve as Tänak.

In WRC2, the battle is also raging, with twice more car manufacturers represented (6) than in Rally1 and quite a great mix of enthusiasm and experience. A third of the way through the rally, the WRC2 leader is Russia's Nikolay Gryazin (Citroën C3), competing under a Bulgarian licence, ahead of Spain's Pepe Lopez (Skoda Fabia RS) and France's Yohan Rossel (Citroën C3), who was crowned in WRC3 at the end of the 2021 season. All grouped within 5 seconds, and only two stages to go before returning to Gap on Friday evening...



Quotes

33. EVANS-MARTIN

« It's pretty fast coming down to the end of the stage, with a lot of loose gravel. It's quite OK but, I don't know, let's see what we're able to do. It's muddy in places. »

11. NEUVILLE-WYDAEGHE

« It was an OK stage but it's hard to know how much you can push on the tyres. I tried to be smooth and it worked." »

8. TÄNAK-JÄRVEOJA

« A clean stage from us, no trouble this time. All is good. »

17. OGIER-LANDAIS

« It's an OK stage from us, I think now the battle [between drivers] is really starting, we have more equal [road] conditions, I believe. »

18. KATSUTA-JOHNSTON

« The [road] conditions improved [related to the first loop], of course, I had to still be careful, I am not fighting anything for at the moment, just trying to have an OK pace and see if I can gain any position, but I am focusing on Sunday. »

9. MIKKELSEN-ERIKSEN

« It is better now. The feeling is coming, definitely. I am still a bit on the safe side and there are so many places where we can go a lot faster, but I want to take my time and not push anything. »

16. FOURMAUX-CORIA






« It's really getting muddy [the stage] and there was a lot of water on the road, all the cuts are really muddy. I just wanted to be careful because this stage is quite tricky. I had a clean stage. »

13. MUNSTER-LOUKA



« A bit better, but we went with the crossed tyres and I think the super soft was not a good option here. »



Classifications SS6

POS	DRIVER	STAGE TIME	DIFF 1st	DIFF PREV	CAR No.
1	 Thierry NEUVILLE	9:09.0	-	-	#11
2	 Sébastien OGIER	9:10.6	+1.6	+1.6	#17
3	 Elfyn EVANS	9:11.6	+2.6	+1.0	#33
4	 Ott TÄNAK	9:14.6	+5.6	+3.0	#8
5	 Takamoto KATSUTA	9:19.8	+10.8	+5.2	#18
6	 Andreas MIKKELSEN	9:22.9	+13.9	+3.1	#9
7	 Adrien FOURMAUX	9:23.5	+14.5	+0.6	#16
8	 Grégoire MUNSTER	9:28.9	+19.9	+5.4	#13

After SS6

POS	DRIVER	TOTAL TIME	DIFF 1st	DIFF PREV	CAR No.
1	 Elfyn EVANS	1:05:04.3	-	-	#33
2	 Sébastien OGIER	1:05:14.0	+9.7	+9.7	#17
3	 Thierry NEUVILLE	1:05:26.2	+21.9	+12.2	#11
4	 Ott TÄNAK	1:06:08.3	+1:04.0	+42.1	#8
5	 Adrien FOURMAUX	1:06:20.5	+1:16.2	+12.2	#16
6	 Andreas MIKKELSEN	1:07:24.2	+2:19.9	+1:03.7	#9
7	 Grégoire MUNSTER	1:07:54.9	+2:50.6	+30.7	#13
8	 Takamoto KATSUTA	1:11:37.1	+6:32.8	+3:42.2	#18