



SS11: PELLAFOL / AGNIÈRES-EN-DÉVOLUY

Date :	27.01.2024		
Day :	3	Flash N° :	18
Special Stage :	11	Distance :	21,37 km
Weather :	7°C – Sunny		
Road conditions :	Dry road, with a few damp patches		

SS11: Neuville consolidates

By again setting the fastest time on SS11 (Pellafol-Agnières-en-Dévoluy, 21.37km), the same as his team-mate Ott Tänak, Thierry Neuville consolidated his position as provisional leader of the 92nd Monte-Carlo Rally. He also continued to show that the 2024 version of the Hyundai i20N has everything it takes to do well against the Toyota Yaris this season.

"It's an unfamiliar stage, so I didn't take too many risks. And I couldn't hear my co-driver's notes very well, especially in the last section," explained Neuville, who seems to be, more and more, in control of the rally after a cautious start on Thursday evening. The Belgian, five times runner-up in the World Championship, returned to the Gap service park at midday with a 5.1 second lead over Elfyn Evans and a 7.7 second lead over Sébastien Ogier.

Both Toyota drivers - one of whom, the Welshman, will be aiming for the world title, while the other, the Frenchman, will be content with a few official outings - may well have found someone to talk to, this season. Particularly if the new version of the Hyundai i20N, developed by technical director François-Xavier Demaison, an exceptional engineer from Citroën and then Volkswagen, continues to prove as reliable as it is efficient.



Hyundai on a high

The good performances this week by Neuville show that this new Hyundai is healthy and easy to drive, and that it could be the pleasant surprise of the start of the 2024 season, against the ogre Toyota. In the meantime, there are still three stages to go this afternoon (SS12 to 14), the same as this morning, and three more on Sunday morning (SS15 to 17) on the way back to Monaco.

In WRC2, the battle is as fierce as ever. After SS10, Russia's Nikolay Gryazin (Citroën C3) was leading the way again, ahead of Spain's Pepe Lopez (Skoda Fabia RS) and Frenchman Yohan Rossel (Citroën C3), the 2021 WRC3 champion. The three drivers are all within 9 seconds of each other, on another planet compared to their rivals. Same as in Rally1.



Quotes

18. KATSUTA-JOHNSTON

« It was an amazing stage, very tricky, challenging, and some grip changes. I didn't take too much risks, but I enjoyed a lot this stage. »

13. MUNSTER-LOUKA

[Regarding his morning] « It has been really good. In the second one, I could have benefited more from the tyre package, but I am still getting used to the aero and everything. In this one, I had one or two small moments with damp patches and we took it quite easy. »

9. MIKKELSEN-ERIKSEN

[Regarding the stage conditions] « It was changing quite often. Not very easy, but I tried to drive where I feel comfortable. I feel a step-up in feeling with the car from yesterday, but still there is much more to get. »

16. FOURMAUX-CORIA

« I need to follow the team orders, so I just want to get through the stages. There is no push, it's like that. We are happy where we are now. I don't want to catch Ott [Tanak] and behind is quite far so I just want to avoid punctures or make mistakes. »

8. TÄNAK-JÄRVEOJA

« Tricky stage, and I guess the [road] conditions are getting more and more dirty. Some sketchy places but we had quite a clean run. »

11. NEUVILLE-WYDAEGHE

« It was no risk. Sometimes I couldn't really understand the [co-driver] notes and then I hesitated, and I lost a bit of time there. My pace was a bit slow towards the end but it's a new stage and we did what we could. »

17. OGIER-LANDAIS









« It would be better if we didn't give away so much time this morning [in the previous stages] but we need to look forward. »

33. EVANS-MARTIN









[About fitting his two super-softs in the car] « I don't think it made all that difference. Obviously, the roads are getting dirtier and dirtier. Maybe the feeling was not perfect. It's like that. [About his issue at the previous stage] No hybrid, again. »



Classifications SSX

POS	DRIVER	STAGE TIME	DIFF 1st	DIFF PREV	CAR No.
1	 Sébastien OGIER	11:27.2	-	-	#17
2	 Thierry NEUVILLE	11:29.3	+2.1	+2.1	#11
3	 Takamoto KATSUTA	11:29.5	+2.3	+0.2	#18
4	 Ott TÄNAK	11:30.3	+3.1	+0.8	#8
5	 Grégoire MUNSTER	11:33.4	+6.2	+3.1	#13
6	 Andreas MIKKELSEN	11:33.8	+6.6	+0.4	#9
7	 Adrien FOURMAUX	11:35.6	+8.4	+1.8	#16
8	 Elfyn EVANS	11:36.7	+9.5	+1.1	#33

After SSX

POS	DRIVER	TOTAL TIME	DIFF 1st	DIFF PREV	CAR No.
1	 Thierry NEUVILLE	1:49:26.8	-	-	#11
2	 Elfyn EVANS	1:49:27.7	+0.9	+0.9	#33
3	 Sébastien OGIER	1:49:31.9	+5.1	+4.2	#17
4	 Ott TÄNAK	1:50:45.4	+1:18.6	+1:13.5	#8
5	 Adrien FOURMAUX	1:51:22.1	+1:55.3	+36.7	#16
6	 Grégoire MUNSTER	1:52:56.1	+3:29.3	+1:34.0	#13
7	 Andreas MIKKELSEN	1:53:00.8	+3:34.0	+4.7	#9
8	 Takamoto KATSUTA	1:56:25.3	+6:58.5	+3:24.5	#18