



### SS1 : THOARD / SAINT-GENIEZ

Date :	25.01.2024		
Day :	1	Flash N° :	2
Special Stage :	1	Distance :	21,01 km
Weather :	5°C – Night stage		
Road conditions :	Dry, some damp portions		

#### SS1: Evans opens in style!

**World Rally Championship three-time runner-up Elfyn Evans struck a blow from the outset by setting the fastest time in the first special stage of the 92<sup>nd</sup> Rally Monte-Carlo on Thursday evening between Thoard and Saint-Geniez (SS1, 21.01km).**

Equipped with four soft tyres and two spare wheels in the boot of his Toyota Yaris, the Welshman started first, thanks to his world ranking at the end of last year. He took advantage of an ultra-clean road, dry from start to finish, to set a time of 12:12.9 on this special stage run in the opposite direction to the 2022 edition, via the famous Col de Fontbelle, at an altitude of 1,300 metres. *"It was surprising to have such a high level of grip at the start of the rally. I don't know if I managed to make the most of it, but overall it went well"*, commented the Toyota driver.

The best resistance to Evans came from the most capped driver in the Hyundai camp. Estonia's Ott Tänak, the 2019 world champion, lost just 5.2 seconds to the Welshman, thanks to having set off, like his team-mate Thierry Neuville, with just one spare wheel in the boot, to save a little weight. And although he encountered some problems with his main pedal sometimes staying in full throttle, which is always annoying.



## Ogier ten seconds behind Evans on a dirty road

"It was the right solution," said Neuville at the stop, not too disappointed at having lost 8.3 seconds to Evans because he wanted above all to avoid overheating, and therefore damaging his soft tyres, before attacking the next stage, 25km long between Bayons and Bréziers. The Belgian, who won here in 2020, knows that Rally Monte-Carlo is always "a very long event" and that it's important not to get carried away early. He will have plenty of other opportunities to shine, throughout the 17 special stages until Sunday morning's grand finale.

Last but not least, Sébastien Ogier, the ultimate favourite, lost 9.8 seconds to his team-mate Evans, with a very simple explanation: "The road was very dirty, so the first on the road (Evans) really had a big advantage", summed up the eight-time world champion, winner of the 2023 edition. "I was expecting it, so I'm not surprised," added the driver from the Hautes-Alpes, before setting off towards his native region.

The other Frenchman competing in Rally1, Adrien Fourmaux, was delighted with the first stage of his comeback to the top category. "There were lots of spectators and lights, and I love driving at night," said Adrien Fourmaux, on whom rest the main hopes of M-Sport. But he had to slow down in places at the wheel of his Ford Puma: "The road was so dirty that in some bends I couldn't see the trajectory, there was dirt and stones everywhere, so I had to slow down". But that didn't stop him from setting the 5<sup>th</sup> fastest time on the stage, 16.2 seconds behind Evans. Quite a good start.



## Quotes

### 33. EVANS-MARTIN

« The grip is really high in there, to be honest I wasn't sure whether I'd used enough of it. It's tricky with such high grip to start but [it was] all okay. No problem. »

### 11. NEUVILLE-WYDAEGHE

« I wouldn't say [I was] very cautious, but the tyre is moving a lot. I tried to not overheat it from the beginning. I think I could have done a little bit more but it's the first stage and it's a long rally. We need to see how the tyres look now. »

### 8. TÄNAK-JÄRVEOJA

« The stage itself was very consistent, a nice stage. We are really like [a] snow [set-up], not dry Tarmac. In the middle of the stage, I started to have an issue with the throttle... When we are lifting, it's full gas. »

### 17. OGIER-LANDAIS

« It was kind of expected. There were so many cuts full of gravel for us on the road already, so it's not really a surprise. »

### 18. KATSUTA-JOHNSTON

« [after losing 23.4 sec to the frontrunners] For sure, it's getting more and more dirty. There's still a long way to go in this rally and it's not like in every stage you are pushing [to the] maximum. We need to improve step by step across all the stages. »

### 9. MIKKELSEN-ERIKSEN

« It was not easy. Really struggling with the engine mapping - every time I slow down, the car starts to accelerate. I had to change the map a bit but it was really annoying. »

### 16. FOURMAUX-CORIA

« It's really, really nice. I really like to drive in the dark, and with this car it's such a great feeling. We can see a lot of spectators with the lights and the fires. I had a really clean stage but in some places there is so much dirt and I had to slow down. »








### 13. MUNSTER-LOUKA

« Quite a bad stage from my side. We had no testing in the dry and it was very difficult to feel the car. »



## Classifications

### After SS1

POS	DRIVER	STAGE TIME	DIFF 1st	DIFF PREV	CAR No.
1	 <u>Elfyn</u> <u>EVANS</u>	12:12.9	-	-	#33
2	 <u>Ott</u> <u>TÄNAK</u>	12:18.1	+5.2	+5.2	#8
3	 <u>Thierry</u> <u>NEUVILLE</u>	12:21.2	+8.3	+3.1	#11
4	 <u>Sébastien</u> <u>OGIER</u>	12:22.7	+9.8	+1.5	#17
5	 <u>Adrien</u> <u>FOURMAUX</u>	12:29.1	+16.2	+6.4	#16
6	 <u>Takamoto</u> <u>KATSUTA</u>	12:37.2	+24.3	+8.1	#18
7	 <u>Grégoire</u> <u>MUNSTER</u>	12:43.3	+30.4	+6.1	#13
8	 <u>Andreas</u> <u>MIKKELSEN</u>	12:45.8	+32.9	+2.5	#9