



SS2 : BAYONS / BRÉZIERIS

Date :	25.01.2024		
Day :	1	Flash N° :	3
Special Stage :	2	Distance :	25,19 km
Weather :	4°C – Dry conditions, damp portions		
Road conditions :	Night stage		

SS2: Evans doubles up

Two fastest times in two stages, 15 seconds clear of the quickest Hyundai driver in the overall standings: in the middle of the night, on narrow roads, in front of thousands of delighted fans, reigning world vice-champion Elfyn Evans (Toyota) took control of the 92nd Rallye Monte-Carlo on Thursday evening.

After putting Ott Tänak 5.2 seconds back in SS1, Evans punished the other Hyundai top driver, Thierry Neuville, in SS2: a 6.8-second gap on the Belgian on the 25.1km Bayons-Bréziers stage, and therefore a 15-second margin in the overall standings, at the end of a long evening of rallying. The public was out in force. There were campfires, fireworks, flags in abundance and lots of people lining the roads of the Alpes de Haute-Provence and Hautes-Alpes departments.

"There were portions where things went better than in others. I have no idea how the others are going to cope", said Evans at the stop point of SS2. One more time, he had dominated the stage, head and shoulders, in his superb black Yaris.

One Hyundai driver after another. Ott Tänak, the 2019 world champion, had even more throttle problems than in SS1, so he lost out big time: 17.6 seconds down on Evans, while Neuville limited the damage rather well. *"I had a small problem, so I was careful"* summed up the Belgian as he emerged rather relieved from this tricky first evening.



It was also an evening that cost Andreas Mikkelsen dearly, as he returned to Hyundai in the Rally1 category that he left at the end of 2019, with a 6th place at Rally GB: *"I need to get used to this (hybrid) car, it keeps accelerating when I enter the corners. And at the start of this stage, I stalled because the procedure is a bit complicated,"* said the Norwegian.

Ogier on the provisional podium

"It was OK, but it's difficult to go as fast as the frontrunners because the road is dirty," explained Seb Ogier at the stop-off point on SS2. The eight-time world champion, who turned 40 in December, put his experience to good use throughout the evening, on roads that he knows very well. He will start Friday's long day (6 stages) in 3rd place overall, 21.6 seconds behind Evans, ahead of Tänak (4th) and Adrien Fourmaux (5th). On his return to Rally1, the young Frenchman did much better than Mikkelsen and, above all, enjoyed himself without damaging anything on his Ford Puma.

"We may have gone a bit too far with the set-up. In the second stage, the road was even dirtier than in the first. I'm still learning how this car behaves", Fourmaux summed up. He is in a waiting position, behind four major players of the WRC, as a big day of rallying looms on Friday in the Hautes-Alpes.

There will be two loops of three stages, totalling 105km of timed sections, and there could be a few surprises on the way, early in the morning: *"Maybe there will be a bit of ice on the road on Friday morning,"* warned the M-Sport driver.



Quotes

33. EVANS-MARTIN

« Difficult... Really difficult to judge how quickly to go. Conditions were very, very mixed, but we need to wait and see how the others have done. Some bits good, some bits not so good. We'll see. »

11. NEUVILLE-WYDAEGHE

« It was ok but I had some small trouble in this stage so I needed to be careful. »

8. TÄNAK-JÄRVEOJA

« It's got really bad now. To be honest, I am very happy to be here. That's all we can say. This throttle issue is incredible, but let's see. »

17. OGIER-LANDAIS

« It seems that it's difficult for us, but we expected that a bit. With these conditions it's better to be at the front. We had a decent run - I have a rhythm but, like I said, the road is getting very dirty very quickly. »

18. KATSUTA-JOHNSTON

« I was too careful in the damp corners. There's still a long way to go, so let's focus and try to be better tomorrow. »

9. MIKKELSEN-ERIKSEN

« Step by step. It's a big difference to be in this car and I have to get used to things. It's still accelerating on the entry to the corners so it's hard to trust it. »

16. FOURMAUX-CORIA









« It was definitely dirtier in this stage than the previous one. Already in the previous one, there were a lot of dirt, but in this one, there were a lot of mud in the corners. The conditions were quite tricky so I was trying to understand the feeling of the car. »

13. MUNSTER-LOUKA









« It was a bit better in terms of the set-up, but we maybe went a bit too far in the wrong direction. This one was a bit more muddy with more damp patches around the stage and so the tyres could not keep its temperature. »



Classifications SS2

POS	DRIVER	STAGE TIME	DIFF 1st	DIFF PREV	CAR No.
1	 Elfyn EVANS	14:00.0	-	-	#33
2	 Thierry NEUVILLE	14:06.8	+6.8	+6.8	#11
3	 Sébastien OGIER	14:11.8	+11.8	+5.0	#17
4	 Ott TÄNAK	14:17.6	+17.6	+5.8	#8
5	 Takamoto KATSUTA	14:22.0	+22.0	+4.4	#18
6	 Adrien FOURMAUX	14:22.8	+22.8	+0.8	#16
7	 Grégoire MUNSTER	14:35.6	+35.6	+12.8	#13
8	 Andreas MIKKELSEN	14:35.9	+35.9	+0.3	#9

After SS2

POS	DRIVER	TOTAL TIME	DIFF 1st	DIFF PREV	CAR No.
1	 Elfyn EVANS	26:12.9	-	-	#33
2	 Thierry NEUVILLE	26:28.0	+15.1	+15.1	#11
3	 Sébastien OGIER	26:34.5	+21.6	+6.5	#17
4	 Ott TÄNAK	26:35.7	+22.8	+1.2	#8
5	 Adrien FOURMAUX	26:51.9	+39.0	+16.2	#16
6	 Takamoto KATSUTA	26:59.2	+46.3	+7.3	#18
7	 Grégoire MUNSTER	27:18.9	+1:06.0	+19.7	#13
8	 Andreas MIKKELSEN	27:21.7	+1:08.8	+2.8	#9