



SS15: LA BÂTIE-DES-FONTS / ASPREMONT 2

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| Date: | 25.01.2025 | | |
| Day: | 3 | Flash N°: | 20 |
| Weather and road conditions: | 7°C, dry road, some portions are damp and dirty | Distance: | 17,85 km |

SS15: Tänak unstoppable, Ogier in his sights...

The penultimate day of the 93rd Rallye Monte-Carlo ended with another fastest time from Ott Tänak (Hyundai), his fourth in the six stages contested on Saturday. Sébastien Ogier (Toyota), still the leader, now has a lead of just 20.3 seconds over team-mate Elfyn Evans, back in 2nd place overall ahead of the final three stages scheduled for Sunday morning, on the way back to Monaco. Suspense guaranteed, because the final podium will be coveted by four drivers, including two World Champions, and there will only be three places available at the top of the Col de Turini.

'I found it a bit difficult to enjoy the stage,' said Ogier, who was a little tired after limiting the damage once again in the face of an unleashed Tänak. The Estonian completed this ultra-fast special stage at an average speed of 100 kph, driving at 190 kph on a plateau very popular with fans, between La Bâtie-des-Fonts and Aspremont (17.85 km).

Once again on Saturday, Adrien Fourmaux (Hyundai) had to give up 2nd place to Evans, but nothing is lost for Sunday. The biggest risk for the rally's top three, after 15 out of 18 stages, is that Tänak will be as 'hot' on Sunday morning as he was all day on Saturday: *'I've found some new settings and I'm starting to get used to the new tyres, and they're working pretty well,'* said the Estonian, who was crowned champion in 2019, but has never yet won in Monaco.

'The conditions are really complicated and I had a bit more trouble with the feeling this afternoon, but that's fine. It's my first weekend in the car in the WRC, so it's really positive,' admitted Fourmaux before returning to Gap. One thing is already certain: he has negotiated very well his first outing in a works Hyundai, until now. All that remains is for him to score some big points in the championship, especially as the Korean team leader, Neuville, is having a tough weekend.



Tänak is capable of catching Ogier on Sunday, as he is only 27.1 seconds behind the eight-time world champion, but the Frenchman remains confident: *'It's better to be 20 seconds ahead (of Evans) than behind, before the final day, but there are still some tricky stages to negotiate'*, he stressed, before setting off again for Gap, his home town.

The top four in the overall standings are grouped together in 27 seconds, and behind them it's a different story: the three other Toyota drivers, Kalle Rovanperä (4th at 55 seconds), Takamoto Katsuta (5th at 1 minute 43) and Sami Pajari (6th at over 4 minutes), don't have much left to hope for, apart from the bonus points on Sunday.

That's exactly what Thierry Neuville, the winner last year and 2024 World Champion, is aiming for: *'We've made a few more adjustments. We're moving in a better direction. Will that be enough for tomorrow? I don't know, we'll see what the conditions are like tomorrow. If the conditions are complicated, that could be an advantage or a disadvantage for us. The aim is to take a few points tomorrow and then turn the page on this weekend, because there will be more interesting weekends for us.'*

Most of the competitors fitted headlamp ramps to the front bonnet of their cars before the start of SS15. They will need them again on Sunday morning, as the first stage is scheduled shortly after 6.30am, between Avançon and Notre-Dame-du-Laus (13.97km). It's a stage that was already covered on the opening night on Thursday, but in very different conditions. We look forward to Sunday!

Quotes

13. MUNSTER-LOUKA

3 Z215 WRC7 soft, 3 Z215 WRC9 supersoft

"The thing is, most of these stages we have never done before. They have been done in the past. It's really good that they [the team] managed to fix the car and we are able to do it [today]. It's big learning curve because the previous stage I knew I shouldn't have crossed and now I didn't cross. It's the new tyre, so it's important to have this mileage."



55. MCERLEAN-TREACY

3 Z215 WRC7 soft, 3 Z215 WRC9 supersoft

"It's a good step compared to Thursday night! We are improving a second a kilometer, maybe we can find more overnight. It's been some experience learning this car on these roads. Seeing the fans here, it does make you feel like a superstar. There is so much to take in with the car, the team, Eoin [Treacy] is a new co-driver as well. Everyone has done a top, top job."

1. NEUVILLE-WYDAEGHE

4 Z215 WRC7 soft, 2 Z215 WRC9 supersoft

"Did couple more changes. We are getting to a better direction. Is it enough for tomorrow? I don't know, we will have to see what will be the conditions tomorrow. If it is tricky conditions for tomorrow then it will be an advantage or disadvantage for us. The target is to take some points from tomorrow and then put this weekend behind us because there will be more exciting weekends for us."

5. PAJARI-SALMINEN

3 Z215 WRC7 soft, 3 Z215 WRC9 supersoft

"We did a wheelie on a crest, at like fifth gear. It was on the limit. Good fun! We enjoyed it yeah! The time isn't too bad as well, why not smiling [he laughs]. But for the main first stages, I wasn't."

18. KATSUTA-JOHNSTON

2 Z215 WRC7 soft, 4 Z215 WRC9 supersoft

"Bit more difficult in the beginning, it was enjoyable but quite slippery."

8. TÄNAK-JÄRVEOJA

2 Z215 WRC7 soft, 4 Z215 WRC9 supersoft

"We have been working far too long on the setup. I didn't get any kilometers on the slick tyres. It didn't work for me in the beginning but this afternoon it started to click and we found the rhythm. It's been much better at the end. This one again, many surprises. Super tricky stage."

69. ROVANPERÄ-HALTTUNEN

2 Z215 WRC7 soft, 4 Z215 WRC9 supersoft

"I found myself again quite slow. I have no more answers, I don't know [what to do]."



16. FOURMAUX-CORIA

3 Z215 WRC7 soft, 3 Z215 WRC9 supersoft

"Really tricky conditions, I was struggling a little bit more with the feeling this afternoon, but it's okay. It is my first weekend in the car in the WRC, so it is really positive."

33. EVANS-MARTIN

3 Z215 WRC7 soft, 3 Z215 WRC9 supersoft

"Obviously getting dark now, but all pretty okay. Pretty bad muddy places, but that's normal for this rally. Not stressful. It's easy to know what to do."

17. OGIER-LANDAIS

3 Z215 WRC7 soft, 3 Z215 WRC9 supersoft

"For sure, like always [tricky]. Very muddy, difficult to enjoy this one. It's always better to have an advantage, but of course there are still some tricky stages to go."

Classifications SS15

| POS | DRIVER | STAGE TIME | DIFF PREV | DIFF 1st | CAR No. | CO-DRIVER | TEAM/CAR |
|-----|-------------------------|------------|-----------|----------|---------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | <u>Ott TÄNAK</u> | 10:41.5 | - | - | #8 | <u>Martin JÄRVEOJA</u> | i20 N Rally1 |
| 2 | <u>Elfyn EVANS</u> | 10:43.5 | +2.0 | +2.0 | #33 | <u>Scott MARTIN</u> | GR Yaris Rally1 |
| 3 | <u>Takamoto KATSUTA</u> | 10:43.7 | +0.2 | +2.2 | #18 | <u>Aaron JOHNSTON</u> | GR Yaris Rally1 |
| 4 | <u>Thierry NEUVILLE</u> | 10:44.5 | +0.8 | +3.0 | #1 | <u>Martijn WYDAEGHE</u> | i20 N Rally1 |
| 5 | <u>Sébastien OGIER</u> | 10:48.3 | +3.8 | +6.8 | #17 | <u>Vincent LANDAIS</u> | GR Yaris Rally1 |
| 6 | <u>Kalle ROVANPERÄ</u> | 10:48.3 | - | +6.8 | #69 | <u>Jonne HALTTUNEN</u> | GR Yaris Rally1 |
| 7 | <u>Adrien FOURMAUX</u> | 10:48.5 | +0.2 | +7.0 | #16 | <u>Alexandre CORIA</u> | i20 N Rally1 |
| 8 | <u>Sami PAJARI</u> | 10:49.3 | +0.8 | +7.8 | #5 | <u>Marko SALMINEN</u> | GR Yaris Rally1 |
| 9 | <u>Grégoire MUNSTER</u> | 10:53.5 | +4.2 | +12.0 | #13 | <u>Louis LOUKA</u> | Puma Rally1 |
| 10 | <u>Joshua MCERLEAN</u> | 11:08.4 | +14.9 | +26.9 | #55 | <u>Eoin TREACY</u> | Puma Rally1 |



After SS15

| POS | DRIVER | TOTAL TIME | DIFF PREV | DIFF 1st | CAR No. | CO-DRIVER | TEAM/CAR |
|-----|-------------------------|------------|-----------|----------|---------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | <u>Sébastien OGIER</u> | 2:42:48.2 | - | - | #17 | <u>Vincent LANDAIS</u> | GR Yaris Rally1 |
| 2 | <u>Elfyn EVANS</u> | 2:43:08.5 | +20.3 | +20.3 | #33 | <u>Scott MARTIN</u> | GR Yaris Rally1 |
| 3 | <u>Adrien FOURMAUX</u> | 2:43:12.8 | +4.3 | +24.6 | #16 | <u>Alexandre CORIA</u> | i20 N Rally1 |
| 4 | <u>Ott TÄNAK</u> | 2:43:15.3 | +2.5 | +27.1 | #8 | <u>Martin JÄRVEOJA</u> | i20 N Rally1 |
| 5 | <u>Kalle ROVANPERÄ</u> | 2:43:43.2 | +27.9 | +55.0 | #69 | <u>Jonne HALTTUNEN</u> | GR Yaris Rally1 |
| 6 | <u>Takamoto KATSUTA</u> | 2:44:31.9 | +48.7 | +1:43.7 | #18 | <u>Aaron JOHNSTON</u> | GR Yaris Rally1 |
| 7 | <u>Sami PAJARI</u> | 2:46:58.1 | +2:26.2 | +4:09.9 | #5 | <u>Marko SALMINEN</u> | GR Yaris Rally1 |
| 8 | <u>Thierry NEUVILLE</u> | 2:48:05.7 | +1:07.6 | +5:17.5 | #1 | <u>Martijn WYDAEGHE</u> | i20 N Rally1 |
| 9 | <u>Joshua MCERLEAN</u> | 2:51:13.6 | +3:07.9 | +8:25.4 | #55 | <u>Eoin TREACY</u> | Puma Rally1 |
| 10 | <u>Grégoire MUNSTER</u> | 2:54:33.2 | +3:19.6 | +11:45.0 | #13 | <u>Louis LOUKA</u> | Puma Rally1 |