



SS3 : AVANÇON / NOTRE-DAME-DU-LAUS 1

Date :	23.01.2025		
Day :	1	Flash N° :	5
Weather and road conditions :	1°C, muddy road, some icy sections	Distance :	13,97 km

SS3 : Ogier hands over the lead to Neuville!

World Champion Thierry Neuville (Hyundai) was leading the 93rd Monte-Carlo Rally when he reached Gap Service Park on Thursday evening, at the end of a first evening dominated by the Toyotas, in terms of pure performance: 2 best times for Sébastien Ogier and the third for Elfyn Evans. And by the resilience of the Belgian driver, always at the top of the standings and eventually leading when it was time to go to bed.

Thursday's third and final special stage, between Avançon and Notre-Dame-du-Laus (SS3, 13.97 km), was marked by a superb performance from Elfyn Evans (Toyota), the runner-up in the previous World Championship. *"I didn't feel confident in the first two stages, but I felt much better in the third,"* said the Welshman at the end. And with good reason: he had just beaten Neuville, by 5.4 seconds, and Rovaniemi, by 10.7 seconds, on a relatively short, bumpy stage that was very dirty in places.

"I didn't think it would be so slippery. I got trapped, but it's not so bad at the end," conceded Ogier, who made his first small mistake of the rally. A big slip midway through the stage almost sent him down an embankment, but his experience spoke for itself. The Gap native stopped his Yaris just in time to get back on the road and finish 23.5 seconds behind Evans. All his efforts on the first two stages had been undone, but that's the Monte Carlo law. The slightest error is paid for in cash, especially in the evening, when road conditions are very difficult to guess.

As expected, the end of the stage was lit up by a host of smoke bombs and fireworks, as the fans were very numerous in this very fast section. Another driver to lose ground on SS3 was Adrien Fourmaux (Hyundai): 27.8 seconds down on Evans, after being hot on his heels after the first two stages. *"I was very careful with the ice patches. It's a very long rally..."* said the 29-year-old Frenchman, recruited this winter by the South Korean brand.



In the overall standings, Neuville is in the lead after the first evening and will continue to lead the way tomorrow morning, around Gap. Behind him, two Toyota drivers, Evans at 2 seconds and Ogier at 12.8 seconds, will lead the chase. They will be closely followed by the other two Hyundai drivers, Ott Tänak and Adrien Fourmaux, at 27 and 30 seconds respectively. In WRC2, the suspense is also intact, but Nikolay Gryazin, in his Skoda Fabia RS, dominated the first evening, despite a burst of pride from Oliver Solberg (Toyota Yaris Rally2), the fastest on SS3.

This SS3 was interrupted, then definitively neutralized after the start of Eric Camilli, entered in WRC2. This was due to a few unruly spectators, who were finally deprived of the passage of some fifty competitors on the most spectacular stage of the evening.

Quotes

1. NEUVILLE-WYDAEGHE

4 Z215 WRC9 Supersoft, 2 SR20 WRC5 Non-studded

"The first part, I am painting the road. In the last part, I was cleaning the road. There was so much little gravel, there were no line at all, it was super tricky to keep the car on the road. I am happy with my first day, considering I didn't drive with the tyres on those conditions, overall, we are discovering and have met the target to finish the day."

33. EVANS-MARTIN

6 Z215 WRC9 Supersoft

"Moderately [happy]. Few slides in that middle one early on, I lost my confidence and couldn't see, couldn't seem to read the grip anymore. Here it was very difficult. So mixed in terms of grip. Feeling was fine. Obviously, happy to be at that point, let's see what the others do."

8. TÄNAK-JÄRVEOJA

5 Z215 WRC9 Supersoft

"I am happy to be here. There are so many places where we don't expect to be that slippery. Just happy to be here. The car is all good."

17. OGIER-LANDAIS

5 Z215 WRC9 Supersoft

"Difficult, of course, lot of mud on the road, we got surprised. We hit a pole sideways. For sure, we're always lucky to get away with that."



16. FOURMAUX-CORIA

4 Z215 WRC9 Supersoft, 2 SR20 WRC5 Non-studded

"The ice is coming now, it's really difficult to see where exactly. I had not a good feeling, I was scared to be trapped by black ice. It's part of the rally, it's still a long long rally."

18. KATSUTA-JOHNSTON

5 Z215 WRC9 Supersoft

"I feel all good. I'm happy to go to service now and the team will fix the car. This stage is quite horrible to drive."

69. ROVANPERÄ-HALTTUNEN

5 Z215 WRC9 Supersoft

"Only the last stage now, the performance is on the level where it should be with our starting place but the previous two were proper bad. Interesting to be honest, wanting a bit more."

13. MUNSTER-LOUKA

2 Z215 WRC7 Soft, 4 Z215 WRC9 Supersoft

"It was really tricky, with our road position. We can be really pleased with the fourth fastest time in here. I always like these conditions, but it is not good because I do not have much hair so if I lose it all in this because of stress, then it is no good!"

5. PAJARI-SALMINEN

6 Z215 WRC9 Supersoft

"It was really tricky. I was really cautious in so many places. I tried to drive really carefully in so many places. I wanted to finish in one piece. Let's see what tomorrow brings, if we are happy with the rhythm or just making it in one piece."

55. MCERLEAN-TREACY

6 Z215 WRC9 Supersoft

"Difficult. A lot of learning, a big shoutout to everyone at home watching. It's been an exciting two weeks since we got the news. It's a big step up and there's lot of work to do. Let's bring it on again!"



Classifications SS3

POS	DRIVER	STAGE TIME	DIFF PREV	DIFF 1st	CAR No.	CO-DRIVER	TEAM/CAR
1	Elfyn EVANS	10:06.3	-	-	#33	Scott MARTIN	GR Yaris Rally1
2	Thierry NEUVILLE	10:11.7	+5.4	+5.4	#1	Martijn WYDAEGHE	i20 N Rally1
3	Kalle ROVANPERÄ	10:22.4	+10.7	+16.1	#69	Jonne HALTTUNEN	GR Yaris Rally1
4	Grégoire MUNSTER	10:23.5	+1.1	+17.2	#13	Louis LOUKA	Puma Rally1
5	Ott TÄNAK	10:24.1	+0.6	+17.8	#8	Martin JÄRVEOJA	i20 N Rally1
6	Sébastien OGIER	10:29.8	+5.7	+23.5	#17	Vincent LANDAIS	GR Yaris Rally1
7	Adrien FOURMAUX	10:34.1	+4.3	+27.8	#16	Alexandre CORIA	i20 N Rally1
8	Sami PAJARI	10:56.2	+22.1	+49.9	#5	Marko SALMINEN	GR Yaris Rally1
9	Joshua MCERLEAN	11:11.2	+15.0	+1:04.9	#55	Eoin TREACY	Puma Rally1

After SS3

POS	DRIVER	TOTAL TIME	DIFF PREV	DIFF 1st	CAR No.	CO-DRIVER	TEAM/CAR
1	Thierry NEUVILLE	32:58.8	-	-	#1	Martijn WYDAEGHE	i20 N Rally1
2	Elfyn EVANS	33:00.8	+2.0	+2.0	#33	Scott MARTIN	GR Yaris Rally1
3	Sébastien OGIER	33:11.6	+10.8	+12.8	#17	Vincent LANDAIS	GR Yaris Rally1
4	Ott TÄNAK	33:25.8	+14.2	+27.0	#8	Martin JÄRVEOJA	i20 N Rally1
5	Adrien FOURMAUX	33:28.8	+3.0	+30.0	#16	Alexandre CORIA	i20 N Rally1
6	Kalle ROVANPERÄ	33:42.7	+13.9	+43.9	#69	Jonne HALTTUNEN	GR Yaris Rally1
7	Grégoire MUNSTER	33:47.6	+4.9	+48.8	#13	Louis LOUKA	Puma Rally1
8	Sami PAJARI	34:23.2	+35.6	+1:24.4	#5	Marko SALMINEN	GR Yaris Rally1
9	Joshua MCERLEAN	35:52.7	+1:29.5	+2:53.9	#55	Eoin TREACY	Puma Rally1