



### SS4 : SAINT-MAURICE / AUBESSAGNE 1

<b>Date :</b>	<b>24.01.2025</b>		
<b>Day :</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Flash N° :</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Weather and road conditions :</b>	<b>5°C, frost on some sections</b>	<b>Distance :</b>	<b>18,68 km</b>

#### **SS4:** Rovannerä wide awake, Evans leader

Kalle Rovannerä (Toyota), the two-time Finnish World Champion, was wide awake on Friday morning and won the day's first special stage, between Saint-Maurice and Aubessagne (SS4, 18.6 km), in the Hautes-Alpes, with a time of 11'38"3. As a direct consequence of this tricky stage, another Toyota driver, Elfyn Evans, took the lead of the 93<sup>rd</sup> Rallye Monte-Carlo from reigning world champion Thierry Neuville (Hyundai) by just eight-tenths of a second.

*"I may have made the best tire choice for these conditions,"* said Rovannerä at the end of the stage. *"The beginning was quite icy and at the end, the road was dirty,"* added the young Finn. He took advantage of his starting position, several minutes after Neuville and Evans, to set a significant time, on a road that was increasingly dirty but also increasingly dry. And he made a fine comeback in the overall standings, in just ten minutes. Rovannerä is still 6<sup>th</sup>, but 22 seconds only behind the leader, instead of 43 seconds on Thursday night when he went to bed.

Two other drivers took advantage of the rising sun and more favourable road conditions by the minute: Luxembourg's Grégoire Munster (Ford Puma) and another Finn, the talented Sami Pajari (Toyota), last year's WRC2 champion. They took 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> places on SS4, ahead of all the other competitors, starting with Ott Tänak (Hyundai), in much better form than on Thursday evening, and the two Frenchmen, Adrien Fourmaux (Hyundai) and Sébastien Ogier (Toyota).

*"I had a clean stage, I had a lot of fun with the car, I enjoyed myself. I just had to guess where the ice was melting,"* Fourmaux analyzed at the stop. *"The conditions were tricky, it was more like a Monte Carlo, with ice in places, than last night with all the mud on the road,"* admitted Ogier, still clinging on to 3<sup>rd</sup> place behind Evans and Neuville, and just four seconds behind the Welsh leader.



In WRC2, the battle was on again, with Oliver Solberg (Toyota Yaris Rally2) setting his second fastest time in a row, in the category, ahead of Russian-Bulgarian Nikolay Gryazin (Skoda Fabia RS). He also managed a Top 4 overall on this stage, less than five seconds behind Rovannerä, taking advantage of better road conditions, almost an hour after the leaders had set off.

With the top three within 4 seconds of each other and the top six grouped in 22 seconds, Day 2 of the rally is shaping up to be a great one. But SS5 has been cancelled after several spectators had to be rescued on the stage. The third stage of the morning loop, SS6, remains scheduled for the end of the morning, between La Bréole and Selonnet (18.31km).

## Quotes

### 1. NEUVILLE-WYDAEGHE

2 SR20 WRC5 non-studded, 4 SR20 WRC5 studded

"It is not easy. First on the road, no lines. Lots of surprises. I did get some rhythm but the car did not have a lot of grip. I was always losing the balance, I couldn't really trust it, so not easy. Sometimes [the ice] was gone or still there, but even in some new places. It was not easy."

### 33. EVANS-MARTIN

2 Z215 WRC9 supersoft, 4 SR20 WRC5 studded

"Very difficult I'll be honest, very hard to know where the grip was good or not. So difficult to read, not ideal, but it is what it is. I think the tyre choice was reasonably okay but the conditions are more challenging than the tyre choice."

### 8. TÄNAK-JÄRVEOJA

5 SR20 WRC5 studded

"Super difficult conditions, I must say the information [from the gravel crew] this time was good, but still. In many places it's difficult to know how fast I can go. In Monte-Carlo you are not surprised about anything, it is normal [to take large chunks of time out of rivals]."

### 17. OGIER-LANDAIS

1 Z215 WRC9 supersoft, 5 SR20 WRC5 studded

"You cannot be surprised with these conditions [to lose time to Ött Tanak]. Tricky conditions, but it is more looking like Monte at least, with the ice and frost, not too muddy like yesterday. [For the next stage] I expect a little bit of the same."



### **16. FOURMAUX-CORIA**

*2 Z215 WRC9 supersoft, 4 SR20 WRC5 studded*

"I had a clean stage, to be fair. I really tried to play with the car and enjoy the stage which I did, to be fair! I'm really happy with my pace. It's getting dirty also and the ice is melting in some places. It is quite hard to know and we need to guess where [the ice] is melting or not."

### **18. KATSUTA-JOHNSTON**

*2 Z215 WRC9 supersoft, 4 SR20 WRC5 studded*

"All okay, just had a bit careful in the icy places, had to make sure the grip was okay. It's getting messier and messier so it's hard to when it can be slippery or when it can be muddy."

### **69. ROVANPERÄ-HALTTUNEN**

*2 Z215 WRC9 supersoft, 4 SR20 WRC5 studded*

"I don't know to be honest, there are not very much differences with the car. Maybe everything starts to be better with the studded tyres. I would say at the end, there were more difference with the tyres than at the beginning. The beginning wasn't icy, and it was changing a lot. The road is getting a lot of mud. That's the trickiest part."

### **13. MUNSTER-LOUKA**

*2 SR20 WRC5 non-studded, 2 SR20 WRC5 studded, 2 Z215 WRC9 supersoft,*

"I'm not sure it was the right tyre choice. I tried to not lose [time] as much as possible. In some sections, it was ok. Really tried to push in this one. Someone from the gravel crew told me [the stage] it could be done without studs. It was tricky, everyone was taking studs. I think you needed for sure at least 2, four would be better. One or two times, I was really closed [to have a moment]."

### **5. PAJARI-SALMINEN**

*2 Z215 WRC9 supersoft, 4 SR20 WRC5 studded*

"It's really tricky to say, I was sure I had a puncture halfway through the stage. I backed off a lot and felt like I was going really slow. It was strange. For me, it was not so bad, quite consistent, slippery. Not so many big surprises, actually quite fun sliding around. A big shame that I thought we had something wrong."

### **55. MCERLEAN-TREACY**

*2 Z215 WRC9 supersoft, 4 SR20 WRC5 studded*

"It was surprisingly okay, it's cleared up a lot since the info from the gravel crew, it went [OK]. It's good fun sliding around in the daylight. We're quite far back in the road, so we had a fair idea of what everyone is going on [tyre-wise]. We trusted the teams information as well. It was a quite easy process when you make things simple."



## Classifications SS4

POS	DRIVER	STAGE TIME	DIFF PREV	DIFF 1st	CAR No.	CO-DRIVER	TEAM/CAR
1	<b>Kalle ROVANPERÄ</b>	11:38.3	-	-	#69	<b>Jonne HALTTUNEN</b>	GR Yaris Rally1
2	<b>Grégoire MUNSTER</b>	11:39.7	+1.4	+1.4	#13	<b>Louis LOUKA</b>	Puma Rally1
3	<b>Sami PAJARI</b>	11:41.9	+2.2	+3.6	#5	<b>Marko SALMINEN</b>	GR Yaris Rally1
4	<b>Ott TÄNAK</b>	11:45.0	+3.1	+6.7	#8	<b>Martin JÄRVEOJA</b>	i20 N Rally1
5	<b>Adrien FOURMAUX</b>	11:46.4	+1.4	+8.1	#16	<b>Alexandre CORIA</b>	i20 N Rally1
6	<b>Sébastien OGIER</b>	11:51.0	+4.6	+12.7	#17	<b>Vincent LANDAIS</b>	GR Yaris Rally1
7	<b>Elfyn EVANS</b>	11:57.8	+6.8	+19.5	#33	<b>Scott MARTIN</b>	GR Yaris Rally1
8	<b>Thierry NEUVILLE</b>	12:00.6	+2.8	+22.3	#1	<b>Martijn WYDAEGHE</b>	i20 N Rally1
9	<b>Joshua MCERLEAN</b>	12:05.1	+4.5	+26.8	#55	<b>Eoin TREACY</b>	Puma Rally1
10	<b>Takamoto KATSUTA</b>	12:06.7	+1.6	+28.4	#18	<b>Aaron JOHNSTON</b>	GR Yaris Rally1

## After SS4

POS	DRIVER	TOTAL TIME	DIFF PREV	DIFF 1st	CAR No.	CO-DRIVER	TEAM/CAR
1	<b>Elfyn EVANS</b>	44:58.6	-	-	#33	<b>Scott MARTIN</b>	GR Yaris Rally1
2	<b>Thierry NEUVILLE</b>	44:59.4	+0.8	+0.8	#1	<b>Martijn WYDAEGHE</b>	i20 N Rally1
3	<b>Sébastien OGIER</b>	45:02.6	+3.2	+4.0	#17	<b>Vincent LANDAIS</b>	GR Yaris Rally1
4	<b>Ott TÄNAK</b>	45:10.8	+8.2	+12.2	#8	<b>Martin JÄRVEOJA</b>	i20 N Rally1
5	<b>Adrien FOURMAUX</b>	45:15.2	+4.4	+16.6	#16	<b>Alexandre CORIA</b>	i20 N Rally1
6	<b>Kalle ROVANPERÄ</b>	45:21.0	+5.8	+22.4	#69	<b>Jonne HALTTUNEN</b>	GR Yaris Rally1
7	<b>Grégoire MUNSTER</b>	45:27.3	+6.3	+28.7	#13	<b>Louis LOUKA</b>	Puma Rally1
8	<b>Takamoto KATSUTA</b>	45:58.8	+31.5	+1:00.2	#18	<b>Aaron JOHNSTON</b>	GR Yaris Rally1
9	<b>Sami PAJARI</b>	46:05.1	+6.3	+1:06.5	#5	<b>Marko SALMINEN</b>	GR Yaris Rally1
10	<b>Joshua MCERLEAN</b>	47:57.8	+1:52.7	+2:59.2	#55	<b>Eoin TREACY</b>	Puma Rally1