



SS8 : ST-NAZAIRE-LE-DÉSERT / LA MOTTE-CHALANCON 2

Date:	23.01.2026		
Day:	2	Flash N°:	11
Special Stage:	8	Distance:	28,70 km
Weather:	3°C – Light rain		
Road conditions:	Damp road, muddy cuts.		

SS8: Ogier pushes hard, Solberg manages

The one but last stage on Friday (SS8), between Saint-Nazaire-le-Désert and La Motte-Chalancon, allowed Sébastien Ogier to set his first fastest time of the 94th Monte Carlo Rally in his Gazoo Racing Toyota Yaris and to close half of the gap on his teammate Elfyn Evans, who remained in second place overall. The leader, Oliver Solberg, started SS8 a few minutes after Ogier and Evans and suffered from poor visibility as night was falling over the Drôme region.

‘I couldn’t see anything at first because it was raining, and then because night was falling,’ Solberg summed up at the stop point. ‘I hadn’t put on my extra headlights,’ lamented Ogier, who for the first time in the rally managed to gain over 15 seconds on Evans (16.2 to be precise) and Solberg (17.6) in a single stage. It was the longest stage of the day, covering 28.7 km.

Behind the leading trio, Thierry Neuville (Hyundai) fought hard throughout the stage but couldn’t understand why he had lost another 35 seconds to Ogier at the end. As for Adrien Fourmaux, his French teammate, he lost another 37 seconds to his compatriot after arriving late following repairs to his hydraulic handbrake between the two stages.

The ordeal continued for Takamoto Katsuta, who had two punctures in a row on Friday morning and had to compete in SS8 without power steering, with a Toyota Yaris that was very difficult to turn on the very slippery road. The Japanese driver dropped down the rankings and lost his 8th place overall to Léo Rossel: the 2024 French champion remains the leader in the WRC2 category at the wheel of his Citroën C3, ahead of his compatriot Eric Camilli (Skoda Fabia), who has moved back up to 2nd place after a tricky morning.



Quotes

55. MCERLEAN-TREACY

2 Super-soft, 4 Studs

"It is wet in general with a lot of pollution. It's all ok."

5. PAJARI-SALMINEN

2 Studs, 4 Snow

"I'm trying some things and trying to find some pace. Not easy conditions for this Monte I must say."

1. OGIER-LANDAIS

2 Studs, 4 Snow

"I made a mistake, I didn't put the extra light on [the car] so it was pretty dark."

33. EVANS-MARTIN

2 Studs, 4 Snow

"It didn't feel so bad. I was struggling in the thick mud to turn the car, Seb [Ogier] is really good at that. So, I'm sure that is where I lost it [the time]."

11. NEUVILLE-WYDAEGHE

2 Studs, 4 Snow

"Nothing [went wrong]. I don't know. I was fighting through the stage and did what I could."

18. KATSUTA-JOHNSTON

2 Studs, 4 Snow

"Steering is so demanding, it's harder than pulling 100 kilograms of stones."

16. FOURMAUX-CORIA

2 Studs, 4 Snow

"I don't think it is fully sorted [the electrical / handbrake issue] but we can go. We had an issue on the road section. I can only say thanks to Jon Armstrong who helped us a bit. He's a fair sportsman so I can only say thank you."

99. SOLBERG-EDMONDSON

2 Studs, 4 Snow

"It's dark and dusk light, it is very unfair. I couldn't see anything compared to him [Ogier]. It was raining like crazy in the beginning and the middle of the stage and I didn't see a thing."



13. MUNSTER-LOUKA

2 Studs, 4 Snow

"Really muddy, one or two big slides in there. Tricky to judge, it's a new stage. With the puncture before and the strange tyre choice it's tricky to make it through, but otherwise it was a clean run."

20. PADDON-KENNARD

2 Studs, 4 Snow

"I saw Jon [Armstrong] pull out [ahead of them], he obviously had a puncture. He was quicker though, I'll give him that. I don't like all this mud."

95. ARMSTRONG-BYRNE

2 Super-soft, 2 Studs, 2 Snow

"Quite biblical weather in there. Somewhere in the narrow section, we had a slow puncture. Because I had a cross-tyre choice on, it took me some time to realize. I thought the tyre alarm would be more obvious. We could've stopped earlier to change it. That's just the way it goes. I just assumed it was very slippery and there was a lot of water. [About his puncture] Front right was a winter without studs."



Classifications

SS8

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	STAGE TIME	DIFF PREV	DIFF 1st
1	S. OGIER		18:05.1	-	-
2	E. EVANS		18:21.3	+ 16.2	+ 16.2
3	O. SOLBERG		18:22.7	+ 01.4	+ 17.6
4	S. PAJARI		18:39.7	+ 17.0	+ 34.6
5	T. NEUVILLE		18:40.2	+ 00.5	+ 35.1
6	A. FOURMAUX		18:42.9	+ 02.7	+ 37.8
7	G. MUNSTER		18:53.4	+ 10.5	+ 48.3
8	H. PADDON		19:15.3	+ 21.9	+ 01:10.2
9	J. MCERLEAN		20:01.7	+ 46.4	+ 01:56.6
10	T. KATSUTA		21:08.5	+ 01:06.8	+ 03:03.4
11	J. ARMSTRONG		21:17.9	+ 09.4	+ 03:12.8



After SS8

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	TOTAL TIME	DIFF PREV	DIFF 1st
1	 O. SOLBERG		01:58:54.5	-	-
2	 E. EVANS		02:00:00.1	+ 01:05.6	+ 01:05.6
3	 S. OGIER		02:00:18.7	+ 18.6	+ 01:24.2
4	 T. NEUVILLE		02:01:26.0	+ 01:07.3	+ 02:31.5
5	 A. FOURMAUX		02:03:17.5	+ 01:51.5	+ 04:23.0
6	 J. ARMSTRONG		02:05:22.7	+ 02:05.2	+ 06:28.2
7  1	 H. PADDON		02:05:37.5	+ 14.8	+ 06:43.0
8  1	 T. KATSUTA		02:07:08.2	+ 01:30.7	+ 08:13.7
9	 G. MUNSTER		02:07:49.5	+ 41.3	+ 08:55.0
10	 S. PAJARI		02:22:58.4	+ 15:08.9	+ 24:03.9
11	 J. MCERLEAN		02:25:01.6	+ 02:03.2	+ 26:07.1