



SS1 : TOUDON / SAINT-ANTONIN

Date :	22.01.2026		
Day :	1	Flash N° :	2
Special Stage :	1	Distance :	21,90 km
Weather :	3°C – Rain		
Road conditions :	Foggy, damp road		

SS1: Toyota gets off to a flying start!

The two leading drivers for Toyota Gazoo Racing, Sébastien Ogier and Elfyn Evans, reigning world champion and runner-up respectively, got off to a flying start in the 94th Monte Carlo Rally by setting the two fastest times in the very first special stage on Thursday afternoon between Toudon and Saint-Antonin in the Alpes-Maritimes. However, the Welshman beat the Frenchman in this opening stage, fair and square.

'It was difficult to find the right pace in these difficult conditions,' said Ogier at the finish line of SS1, which was 21.9 km long and took place on a very narrow and completely wet road. The Frenchman, ten-time winner of his favourite event, was beaten by a dozen seconds by his Welsh teammate. 'I did my best, but it wasn't easy with this tyre choice,' said Evans, who had made the same tyre choice as the WRC benchmark: two Hankook super-soft tyres combined with two studded tyres, while their main rivals had opted for snow tyres in addition to their studded tyres.

At Hyundai Motorsport, Belgian Thierry Neuville lost 43 seconds on this first special stage, his two snow tyres logically performing less well than the two super-soft tyres of Ogier and, above all, Evans. But the rally was only just beginning and 16 more special stages were scheduled until Sunday lunchtime, in road conditions that promised to be very difficult to manage, as often in a Monte Carlo Rally.

The other French factory driver, Adrien Fourmaux, at Hyundai, limited the damage better than his teammate Neuville, finishing 19.9 seconds behind Evans and only 8 seconds behind Ogier, who had a successful first season with the Korean manufacturer and could have won in Saudi Arabia at the end of 2025 with a little more luck.



Another driver who attracted a lot of attention in this opening stage was Oliver Solberg, son of 2003 rally world champion Petter. In his first Monte-Carlo stage in an official Toyota Yaris, on a narrow and slippery road, the Swede (on his mother's side), last year's WRC2 world champion, set a spectacular time and finished the 22 kilometres in 2nd place, 5 seconds behind Evans.

Quotes

1. OGIER-LANDAIS

2 Super Soft, 4 Studs

"It is difficult in these conditions to know where the limit is. I was definitely on the safe side. It's going to be a long weekend."

33. EVANS-MARTIN

2 Super Soft, 4 Studs

"I tried to go with a good rhythm definitely, I was just trying to be as smooth as possible and it was obviously not easy with crossed tyres to get a good feeling. It is only the beginning, don't get too excited yet."

11. NEUVILLE-WYDAEGHE

2 Snow, 4 Studs

"I was struggling a lot. Zero confidence, nothing. I can't trust the grip. I just follow my feeling. We need to work to find more confidence, that's for sure. There is a lot of work for the weekend. We need to understand everything with these conditions. It's really challenging and so are the tyres. We expected a bit more rain. We need to see over the whole loop. There was a lot of risk of punctures. It will be difficult to catch back the time."

18. KATSUTA-JOHNSTON

2 Snow, 4 Studs

"For sure not the ideal choice of tyres for this stage. I don't know, I was very careful. There were so many tarmac and grip stages. The next one is more important; I don't care how much time I lose here."

16. FOURMAUX-CORIA

2 Snow, 4 Studs

"I did my best with what I had in this stage. It was clean but I was struggling a bit with the feeling of braking with the tyres. Elfyn [Evans] did a really good stage with the cross slicks."

5. PAJARI-SALMINEN

2 Snow, 4 Studs

"It's very tricky. It wasn't tricky only for us! There were many surprises and some pollution in places. It didn't feel great at all."



99. SOLBERG-EDMONDSON

2 Snow, 4 Studs

"There are a lot of muddy corners. I tried to be careful on the studded tyres but it was hard. It was not too bad."

13. MUNSTER-LOUKA

2 Snow, 4 Studs

"It was really tricky. We didn't test so I didn't know much about how the winter tyres would behave in such conditions. I can now see it. I think we are on the same one as Thierry [Neuville] and we are faster. It was tricky, the car was not turning."

55. MCERLEAN-TREACY

2 Snow, 4 Studs

"I decided to go quite safe on tyres. It is obviously a long way to Sunday. We take it safely this Thursday."

20. PADDON-KENNARD

2 Snow, 4 Studs





























"It was good to get it underway. Man... oh man.... Even though, there is no snow or ice it is so slippery. There is zero grip or feel with the car. I know it was very slow."

95. ARMSTRONG-BYRNE

2 Super Soft, 4 Studs

"We had a cross-tyre package in here and it was working okay. It was not optimal but it felt like a quite okay start. For sure, the rhythm was not where it needed to be in this condition but it was my first time driving in a wet tarmac with a cross choice. It is a start and we are just happy to be here."

Standings

POS	CAR No.	DRIVER	CO-DRIVER	CAR	ELIGIBILITY	PENALTIES	TOTAL TIME
1	# 33	 Elfyn EVANS	 Scott MARTIN	 GR Yaris Rally1	M	-	16:05.7
2	# 99	 Oliver SOLBERG	 Elliott EDMONDSON	 GR Yaris Rally1	M	-	16:11.3
3	# 1	 Sébastien OGIER	 Vincent LANDAIS	 GR Yaris Rally1	M	-	16:17.7
4	# 16	 Adrien FOURMAUX	 Alexandre CORIA	 i20 N Rally1	M	-	16:25.6
5	# 18	 Takamoto KATSUTA	 Aaron JOHNSTON	 GR Yaris Rally1	-	-	16:32.8
6	# 95	 Jon ARMSTRONG	 Shane BYRNE	 Puma Rally1	M	-	16:40.1
7	# 13	 Grégoire MUNSTER	 Louis LOUKA	 Puma Rally1	-	-	16:48.0
8	# 11	 Thierry NEUVILLE	 Martijn WYDAEGHE	 i20 N Rally1	M	-	16:49.2
9	# 5	 Sami PAJARI	 Marko SALMINEN	 GR Yaris Rally1	M/T	-	16:50.2
10	# 20	 Hayden PADDON	 John KENNARD	 i20 N Rally1	M	-	16:54.7
11	# 55	 Joshua MCERLEAN	 Eoin TREACY	 Puma Rally1	M	-	16:55.1