



STAGE FLASH

Date: 2019-02-14
Day: Thursday **Distance:** 1,90 km
Special Stage: SS1
Weather: The sun set at 1656hrs and it's a cold and clear night in Karlstad. There's the odd cloud in the sky, light winds and a temperature of 3°C.

1- BERGKVIST VS FLODIN

Goes Bergkvist's way by 1.3sec. The Swede lays down a benchmark time of 1m48.6s. "It was a good start for us, no mistakes, but the stage was so, so slippery. I didn't expect that!"

2- ERIKSSON VS LINDHOLM

Another all-Swedish clash goes Lindholm's way by 13.9sec. He's the first driver to try and avoid the ruts on the racing line and claims a new fastest time of 1m45.3s. "It's an amazing atmosphere. A really nice landing for me on my first Rally Sweden," he says.

3- MONELIUS VS GRYAZIN

Gryazin takes the heat win by 3.6sec. "It's our first start in WRC 2 so it's interesting for us. This is tough racing and we want to learn it. We will start slow and increase our pace. Very slippery here."

4- KATSUTA VS VEIBY

Last year's WRC 2 winner in Sweden Katsuta edges this clash, Veiby - who finished third in 2018 - is 0.5sec slower. Takamoto is smiling as he reaches the media zone. "I forgot to switch on the extra lights. Even though everyone was reminding me before the stage! A good stage, but the real rally starts tomorrow."

5- KRISTOFFERSSON VS BRYNILDSEN

Kristoffersson wins this heat with the fastest time overall: 1m40.7s. That's no surprise for the World RX champion. "I should be quick here" he jokes.

6- H. SOLBERG VS PIENIAZEK

That's joint quickest time so far for Henning. "I have a good car now, I felt that straight away. I'm going to push on this rally for sure!" he says.

7- OSTBERG VS PIETARINEN

The first WRC 2 Pro contest is won by Pietarinen in a new fastest time of 1m39.3s. Mads is not a happy man. "Not so nice. Okay, the the category is good but the conditions are not nice and the car is not right."

8- GREENSMITH VS ROVANPERA



Rovanpera takes this one. He slots third quickest so far. Monte Carlo WRC 2 Pro winner Greensmith slots seventh.

9- BERTELLI VS TUOHINO

The World Rally Cars are here! This first heat is won by Finn Tuohino. He's not quickest though - he slots ninth quickest. Bertelli is back for his first WRC rally since Argentina 2017. "I'm very happy to be back but this stage was much more slippery than I expected," says the Italian.

10- EVANS VS LAPPI

Lappi wins heat 10 and bags the quickest time so far 1m37.9s. "My approach hasn't changed since Monte Carlo. We'll go flat-out and then we'll see where we are."

11- LATVALA VS SUNINEN

Jari-Matti goes quickest so far it's a double hurrah as he celebrates becoming the most experienced driver in WRC history with 197 starts. "Now I can relax. I can start my rally," he says. "There was a bit of pressure to get through this stage. Now we can focus on the real action!"

12- MIKELSEN VS TANAK

We're approaching the sharp end now and the stage times are tumbling. Mikkelsen thumps in another fastest time, 1m36.0s, while Tanak slots second, eight-tenths adrift. "An okay stage. Very difficult conditions. We had a clean run," says Mikkelsen.

13- MEEKE VS TIDEMAND

Meeke heads local hero Pontus Tidemand and slots his Yaris seventh quickest so far. "Not so much fun here, but tomorrow's stages in Norway should be a lot better," he says.

14- NEUVILLE VS OGIER

That's the heat win for Neuville who is quickest of the night so far with 1m34.9s. He was quickest in shakedown too. Ogier is eight-tenths slower. "This weekend is going to be tricky," says Neuville. "We're second on the road tomorrow so maybe good conditions in the morning. I feel comfortable in the car, that's important. I hope to be able to fight for lots of points."

15- LOEB VS GRONHOLM

Double champion Marcus Gronholm slots eighth-quickest. More importantly, he wins this battle of the two WRC legends after a couple of hairy laps. "Yeah, yeah, yeah, that's okay but we hit the big tyres, and the steering wheel is not straight. I was worried but it's okay," he says. Nine-time champ Loeb also had issues. "In these conditions the car is undriveable for me," he says. "I was not able to keep it straight in the ruts."

COMMENTS

(The news from the stage)