

Media Information



27.10.2023

Thrilling special stages in Czech Republic deliver top-class racing

- **Kalle Rovannerä (Toyota) moves into the lead in the Central European Rally**
- **Big fan zones planned for Saturday in Passau (Dreiländerhalle) and in Peilstein, Austria**
- **To find all the information about the rally and buy tickets for the stages on Saturday and Sunday, go to centraleuropeanrally.eu**

Changeable conditions, challenging courses, thrilling motor racing: the second day of the Central European Rally (26 – 29 October) delivered everything that rally fans were after. Championship leader Kalle Rovannerä (Toyota) benefited from his position as first starter on a spotless course at the six special stages in the Czech Republic, some of which were affected by rainfall. The Finnish driver produced a commanding performance in the morning to reel in Thierry Neuville (BEL, Hyundai), who had taken an early lead, and finish the day in top spot. Behind him, Neuville and Elfyn Evans (GBR, Toyota) enjoyed a tight battle for second place, which ended with the Belgian driver coming out on top. The WRC will continue on Saturday with six stages in Germany and Austria, featuring a total of 111.5 full-throttle kilometres. If you would like to witness the fight for the world title live, tickets for the individual special stages (25 Euro / stage) are available on-site or at the service park in Passau. Peilstein in Austria will be a key fan hotspot, boasting a large spectator area and a host of attractions. You can find visitor information and news from the Central European Rally online at centraleuropeanrally.eu.

The teams racing after Rovannerä had to come to terms with an ever more slippery surface that turned the racing on the tight stages, many of which run through wooded areas, into a nerve-racking experience. Hyundai star Esapekka Lappi (FIN) was initially unfazed by the conditions, twice posting the second-fastest time behind Rovannerä as the day began. Lappi was then left high and dry on the third stage after an accident tore his roof open, allowing Evans and Neuville to challenge the title favourite. However, he was determined not to surrender his position as overall leader on the three remaining stages, reaching the service park in Passau with a 36.4-second advantage. “It really was super tricky,” was how Rovannerä summarised the course conditions. “This time, the weather was on our side for a change. Starting first provided us with great stage conditions. We are very pleased with how our day went.”

During the afternoon stages, the focus was more on the battle for second place between Evans and Neuville. The two were separated by just fractions of a second at times and the Hyundai driver prevailed on the final special stage of the day. “The rain started to get heavier again towards the end and I actually thought we would lose time,” reported the Belgian driver. “But maybe the rain cleaned the surface up a bit in some spots. In any case, we were always driving right on the edge.” The second day of the Central European Rally once again saw the WRC thrill fans with superb action. Despite the weather conditions, plenty of fans still made their way to the stages, attracted by the prospect of competitive action and scenic locations. However, their reactions were sometimes a little too



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enthusiastic, with the failure of some careless spectators to leave the safety areas causing the abandonment of the first afternoon stage after just six participants had passed through.

Drama in WRC2

Two WRC2 leaders fell victim to the treacherous conditions on the slippery surface. Leading after Thursday, the French Citroën pairing of Yohan Rossel / Arnaud Dunan endured an accident on the third stage that interrupted proceedings. One stage later, it was the turn of Andreas Mikkelsen (NOR, Škoda), who had inherited the leading position. He was able to drive on in his damaged Fabia RS, but a defective shock absorber put paid to his participation for the rest of the day. This meant that Sweden's Emil Lindholm (Hyundai) moved to the top of the WRC2 standings, having triumphed in his duel with Czech driver and local hero Erik Cais (Škoda Fabia RS).

Saturday schedule featuring the "stage of stages"

On Saturday, the Central European Rally action will move to the border region between Germany and Austria. As well as the spectator zones at the stages, there will be two main attractions for visitors: the day starts and ends at the service park in Passau, which will also be the location for the midday service, while the covered fan arena at the Dreiländerhalle will feature infos, entertainment and live music. There will also be a large fan zone in Peilstein, Austria, boasting plenty of activities for fans. The competition will take place on three attractive stages. Ending in Peilstein, the "Mühlta" stage deserves special attention: the 27.83-kilometres stage is the longest of the weekend and will be raced in the morning and in the afternoon, potentially playing a decisive role in the battle for the title.

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