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WRC stars Thierry Neuville and Seb Ogier battle for the lead at the Central European Rally

- **Neuville on world championship course: WRC leader holds slender lead after Friday's leg**
- **123 stages of special stage through Germany and Austria on Saturday**
- **Tickets available on site at spectator points**

Munich. The Central European Rally took a tour of the Czech Republic on Friday: day two of the event featured a total of 111 kilometres across six special stages, as the drivers were really put through their paces: mixed road conditions, with some unpredictable circumstances and many changes in surface, made for plenty of sporting drama. Thierry Neuville coped best with the challenging conditions. He ended the second leg at the top of the standings, with a lead of 6.4 seconds over Sébastien Ogier. On Friday evening, the WRC teams assembled in the Bavarian town of Bad Griesbach, which will be the central hub for the second and third full days of the rally. From tomorrow, the drivers will leave here to travel to the remaining ten stages in Germany and Austria. Anyone wishing to follow the action live at the rally can purchase tickets on site at all spectator points. Important information and the latest news and quotes can be found on the official homepage at centraleuropeanrally.eu.

World championship title contender Thierry Neuville (Hyundai) and Toyota spearhead Sébastien Ogier were initially embroiled in a thrilling duel for the lead on Friday, with the French Toyota driver able to defend his slender lead on the opening stages. However, Neuville made up ground and moved to the top of the standings on SS 5. Despite this, he was never able to shake off his rivals in the battle for the championship: Ogier and Neuville's team-mate Ott Tänak remained hot on the Belgian's heels. In fact, no driver was able to dominate the exciting battle, which played out on varying surfaces on the densely wooded Czech stages: the fastest times on Friday's first four stages went to four different drivers, with Elfyn Evans (Toyota) and Takamoto Katsuta (Toyota) joining Neuville, Ogier and Tänak as the day's stage winners. "It was a really good day – I was amazed how well it went today," said the happy leader Neuville at the evening service in Bad Griesbach. "Our rhythm was right, the performance was there at all times, and we were able to open a slender lead. Although it is only 6.4 seconds – that is better than nothing. We now have the most difficult routes and conditions behind us. That is the good news. But the weekend is a long one. Tomorrow will be very technical with a lot of junctions and ditches, which you have to stay clear of. We will just try to take today's good feeling into the new day."

Even more rally action on Saturday

Saturday takes the WRC teams to Bavaria and Austria: with over 123 kilometres against the clock, the six stages form the 'royal leg' of this year's Central European Rally. It could also be here that we witness the first key results, as the overall leader on Saturday evening receives 18 points towards the championship. The "Beyond Borders" special stage, on which the WRC acers start in Bavaria and finish in Austria, is one of the day's big highlights. Second-placed Sébastien Ogier will be fully motivated: "We are within striking distance of the leader and battling for the victory," said the eight-time WRC champion. "Different routes await us on Saturday to the ones we faced today. It is also important that



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we have similar starting positions at the back of the field, because the WRC1 drivers start in reverse order on Saturday. However, we know that Thierry is quick on tarmac special stages like here at the Central European Rally. The challenge is to put him under as much pressure as possible.”

The competitors in the World Rally Championship will be joined on Saturday and Sunday by starters in the ADAC Opel Electric Rally Cup. The first fully-electric rally cup will start on the “Granit und Wald” and “Beyond Borders” stages. The participants will thus make for even more action on the stages – and bring that unique WRC atmosphere to Hauzenberg: this weekend, the town in the south of the Bavarian Forest is the starting point for the Cup, which will also complete a time check, including driver interviews, in the town hall square (Rathausplatz), as shops make an exception to open their doors on Sunday for a change.

Always up-to-date: comprehensive information on the Central European Rally

The official homepage at centraleuropeanrally.eu is the perfect place for anyone wishing to stay up to speed with events at the Central European Rally. It offers information and news, as well as links to much more information. Newsflashes and emotional highlights from the WRC race through Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic can also be found on the event’s social media channels (facebook.com/wrccer | instagram.com/cerwrc | tiktok.com/@cerwrc). The action is always within reaching distance with two impressive smartphone apps: the “TW Sportsoft” app offers spectator information like the locations of fan zones, standings, traffic news, and much more. It is free of charge, as is the award-winning ADAC Pendlernetz app. The latter makes it simple to connect and share lifts with fans from all over the world. This helps to reduce the event’s carbon footprint and relieves the situation on the road, in the interest of all visitors. Sharing lifts also has its rewards, with valuable prizes up for grabs every day in the app.

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