

PRESS RELEASE no. 35

Feedback from the leading crews after 5 special stages

The challenging first passes through the four special stages on Saturday have been completed at the **53rd BARUM CZECH RALLY ZLÍN 2024**. Especially the local racers set the fast pace, but did not avoid problems as well as foreign drivers. We asked the leading drivers about all this after reaching the service zone in Otrokovice.

Erik Cais (CZE, Škoda Fabia RS Rally2, starting number 11):

"It's not a comfortable to go first as there's a big difference in grip compared to those who go later. We try to fight it and do what we can. The Bunč was really nice, but it was really difficult on the gravel."

Simon Wagner (AUT, Škoda Fabia RS Rally2, starting number 10):

"True Barum rally, always expect the unexpected. Erik and Dominik are very fast, but anyone can make mistakes. I hope for a long and exciting duel."

Miko Marczyk (POL, Škoda Fabia RS Rally2, starting number 7):

"I would say we are slowly improving. But at Rajnochovice I made a small mistake and lost ten seconds due to a puncture. Driving is good. At Bunč I felt good, but the handbrake broke and released the differential. So the car became 2WD only. But I'm enjoying the drive more stage after stage. I hope we can fight for good positions."

Filip Mareš (CZE, Toyota GR Yaris Rally2, starting number 12):

"The feelings are more or less good. We struggled through the morning part, but we are in contact. We're not losing that much on the trophy and we'll keep fighting. The Bunč was tough, it could have been better but we didn't choose the ideal tyres."

Efrén Llarena (ESP, Škoda Fabia RS Rally2, starting number 2):

"We went off the track at Bunč but we were lucky to be able to get back. It's a crazy track. There was a cut that wasn't on the schedule and when I went into it it was full of mud."

Mathieu Franceschi (FRA, Škoda Fabia RS Rally2, starting number 4):

"There's about a nine-second gap between me and Hayden. It's good for the race and the championship. But we still have a long way to go, we have to stay focused and adjust the schedule. It's crazy on the track, lots of mud, cuts and gravel. I can't make any mistakes."

Dominik Střítecký (CZE, Škoda Fabia RS Rally2, starting number 15):

"It's challenging, especially Bunč. We had a puncture just like Honza. Luckily for us he was slow, about four kilometres before the finish. Erik is very fast, we lost more than we would like, but the competition is all in front of us and nothing is clear."

Jan Kopecký (CZE, Škoda Fabia RS Rally2, starting number 16):

"The morning was good, we fought with the young guys, but I really don't want to take any risks in the fast turns at the speed of 140. There was something on the track at Bunč and we got a

puncture. The exchange was slow, we should probably practice it more. I don't think we'll change anything for the afternoon section, we won't gain anything on the fast guys up front. Maybe we'll try a riskier tyre choice."

Adam Březík (CZE, Škoda Fabia RS Rally2, starting number 17):

"I hit a piece of concrete on Troják, tried to get behind a concrete bar like that, maybe too early and got a puncture. My mistake. At Bunč I overturned after another mistake, so that's for the first section."

Hermann Neubauer (AUT, Škoda Fabia RS Rally2, starting number 25):

"Good performance, I haven't been here for a long time. I could have gone faster in the curves. I was careful at Bunč because I had a puncture on the previous SS and I was carrying only one spare tyre. I'm struggling a bit with the schedule, sometimes it's slow, sometimes it's fast. We will try to find a balance."

Hayden Paddon (NZL, Hyundai i20 N Rally2, starting number 1):

"To be honest, I don't even know what times we have, we just go. With our starting position we don't have very good conditions, the tracks are very dusty, but we are trying to enjoy it."

Martin László (HUN, Škoda Fabia RS Rally2, starting number 14):

"It was better than I expected. The forecast didn't come true for Bunč, we'll see how it is tonight. The car is not working well, it's too soft for this type of asphalt. We'll make a few changes in the service and edits in the schedule. I watched Erik's onboard as he went through the curves, I guess I'll have to take some inspiration."

Andrea Mabellini (ITA, Škoda Fabia RS Rally2, starting number 8):

"From the third turn on the gravel section we got a slow puncture. That's it. We're coming back to the service saying we're out. It's a pity, sorry to everyone. There was a rock on one of the turns that I couldn't see and there was nothing we could do."

Albert von Thurn und Taxis (GER, Škoda Fabia RS Rally2, starting number 24):

"The weather is great, I can't complain about that, but I'm not in shape. I'm not in the so called zone, since the first stage. I don't dare to push myself. But maybe it's good to stay safer. I'm not happy with the times, but we're just trying to enjoy the stages."

Václav Pech (CZE, Škoda Fabia R5, starting number 18):

"The Bunč was beautiful before we made a puncture on the gravel, but we found it out on the downhill with no chance to change. It's good to drive in the gravel, but the starting position is not good, there's a lot of sand and it's slippery."

More information available at www.czechrally.com and don't forget to follow the Barum rally on the official Facebook, Instagram, and X accounts as well as the other press information.

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