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Kopecký has a new car, Lukyanuk wants points and victory

This year's 49th Barum Czech Rally Zlín promises a big fight. Czech star Jan Kopecký strives for the eighth overall victory. Alexey Lukyanuk from Russia, the reigning ERC champion and current leader, wants to be the one who puts on an end to Kopecký's victory streak. Both favorites met at the pre-start press conference at the seat of the Regional Office of the Zlín Region.

As for his work at the Barum Czech Rally Zlín, Jan Kopecký recalls all his starts whether he won or suffered defeat. **"When I raced at the Barum Rally in 2009, it was, of course, the most. The second such strong experience I had three years ago when Alexey Lukyanuk and I chased each other to the last meter,"** revealed Kopecký.

This year, Kopecký and his co-driver Pavel Dresler will start in the cockpit of the new Škoda Fabia R5 Evo. He is curious as to how the car will behave on the demanding track. **"We have focused a lot on chassis adjustments, in some things the Barum Rally will be new for us,"** admitted the factory driver of the Škoda Motorsport team.

His great rival Russian Alexey Lukyanuk arrived in Zlín with two goals. The first is to score the highest possible number of points in the ERC ranking and to increase his lead on Lukasz Habaj from Poland. **"This is the most important thing for us. We will pay maximum attention to this goal. But it would also be good if we won the Barum Rally,"** Lukyanuk did hold back. **"We'll see about that. I can't talk about some things in my car in detail. We have new tires and shock absorbers. We are still tuning the car to the optimum condition. It is not easy for us, but we will try to achieve the best possible result,"** promised the Russian driver from the Sainteloc Junior Team.

During Friday's qualification, he got out off the road for a while and ended up in a ditch. Luckily, nothing happened to him or his co-driver Alexey Arnautov and their Citroën C3 R5. **"I was pushing too much in one section and was too optimistic for one turn,"** explained Alexey Lukyanuk during a meeting with journalists.

Zelindo Melegari from Italy wants to confirm the leading position in the ERC2. **"It will be a tough fight, but I believe we can defeat the great adversary Dariusz Polonski and the others. We want to make it,"** said firmly Melegari.

Erik Cais from Fryšták, ACCR Czech Rally Team rider, cannot wait for the rally in his home region. **“I feel the great support of fans. However, I am not able to say what I aim for before the start of the Barum Rally. There are different types of rallies, but the Barum Rally is a chapter for itself. It has many aspects that make it difficult to tackle,”** said the talented rider who celebrated the twentieth birthday at the beginning of August.

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