

PRESS RELEASE no. 38**Kopecký keeps leading, for Padden the competition is over**

It is far from being decided. The first half of the second leg of the 52nd Barum Czech Rally Zlín 2023 has indicated that the victory could be fought for until the last kilometres. Nothing has changed in the lead - Jan Kopecký (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2) continues leading. However, his biggest rival Miklós Csomós (Škoda Fabia Rally2 Evo) from Hungary has moved from fifteen to eleven seconds. On the other hand, the competition weekend ended for Hayden Padden (Hyundai i20 N Rally2) from New Zealand, who broke a wheel in Halenkovice.

Alexey Lukyanuk (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2), competing with a Cypriot licence, was at the front on Saturday, but due to technical problems in the seventh stage he took a loss and did not enter Sunday's second leg of the Barum Rally at all. Erik Cais (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2), who after a puncture in Kateřinice a day earlier is aiming for at least a top ten, was the fastest of all on the first pass through SS Semetín.

A good start of the day was performed by Miklós Csomós from Hungary, who was less than two seconds behind and most importantly he erased part of the margin of leading driver Jan Kopecký. The ten-time Barum Rally champion started Sunday's stage slower and finished seventh in Semetín, five seconds behind the fastest crew.

On the SS Pindula, the second Sunday section and the ninth one measured section overall, the crews faced changing track conditions and especially in the forest passages the roads were really slippery. In these tricky conditions, the Czech drivers took advantage of their knowledge of their home environment and took five of the first six places. Only Miklós Csomós of Hungary managed to keep up and thanks to the second fastest time he reduced the overall gap to the leader Jan Kopecký to ten seconds.

Erik Cais was again the winner of the stage, flying on the track and leaving the other competitors behind by five seconds or more. Adam Březík (Škoda Fabia Rally2 Evo) finished third, improving his position in a close battle with Filip Mareš (Škoda Fabia Rally2 Evo) for the position as Czech runner-up in the overall standings.

The last morning SS Halenkovice knocked out the leader of the entire European Championship Hayden Padden from New Zealand, who failed to keep the car straight on the road and broke a wheel. At that moment, the experienced driver was fighting for the fourth position at the Zlín rally. On the other hand, Dominik Stříteský (Škoda Fabia R5) drove very well and set the third fastest time of the stage.

Jan Kopecký was fighting another duel with the second Hungarian Miklós Csomós, this time defeating him by more than a second and slightly improving his position before the afternoon finale of the competition. Csomós, however, will be a strong rival who may not give him a chance to breathe. Third place in the overall standings is now held by Austrian Simon Wagner (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2).

Among the juniors, the German Timo Schulz (Opel Corsa Rally4) is leading with a big lead over Jaromír Tarabus (Peugeot 208 Rally4). Even though Schulz is leading in the ERC4 and 2WD categories too, the Czech driver beat the German rival in all three stages this morning and reduced his deficit to less than eight seconds.

Standings after 10th special stage

1. Kopecký, Hloušek (CZE, Škoda Fabia RS Rally2)	1:28:10,9 min
2. Csomós, Bán (HUN, Škoda Fabia Rally2 Evo)	+ 11,1 s
3. Wagner, Winter (AUT, Škoda Fabia RS Rally2)	+ 36,0 s
4. Březík, Krajča (CZE, Škoda Fabia Rally2 Evo)	+ 48,6 s
5. Mareš, Bucha (CZE, Škoda Fabia Rally2 Evo)	+ 50,3 s
6. Stříteský, Hovorka (CZE, Škoda Fabia R5)	+ 52,8 s
7. Llarena, Fernandez (ESP, Škoda Fabia R5)	+ 1:12,0 min
8. Cais, Bacigál (CZE/SVK, Škoda Fabia RS Rally2)	+ 1:15,9 min
9. Franceschi, Malfoy (FRA, Škoda Fabia RS Rally2)	+ 1:26,3 min
10. McErlean, Fulton (IRL, Hyundai i20 N Rally2)	+ 1:43,1 min
15. Schulz, Wenzel (DEU, Opel Corsa Rally4), 1. místo ERC4, ERC4J, 2WD	+ 7:26,8 min
26. Widlak, Pawlowski (POL, Ford Fiesta Rally3), 1. místo ERC3	+ 13:17,9 min

Total number of SS victories: 4 – Kopecký, 4 – Cais, 1 – Wagner, Lukjaňuk, Csomós (note: Kopecký and Cais won SS 7 with identical time)

More information available at www.czechrally.com and don't forget to follow the Barum Rally and Star Rally Historic on the official Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts and the other press information.

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