

PRESS RELEASE no. 32

The ceremonial start took place in front of the Zlín Town Hall

The **54th BARUM CZECH RALLY ZLÍN** has begun. The ceremonial start took place, as is tradition, in front of Zlín Town Hall, where the competing crews symbolically drove through the starting ramp and greeted the excited fans. Once again, large crowds filled Náměstí Míru Square, where the organizers and partners had prepared an interesting accompanying program for them this year as well.

The regional capital was buzzing with motor racing excitement from early afternoon, when the competition cars drove through the starting ramp as part of the accompanying Star Rally Historic. This was followed by a meeting with the drivers in front of the Zlín Town Hall. Moderator Petr Suchoň interviewed three of the favorites – the leader of the European Championship standings, Mike Marczyk, eleven-time Barum Rally winner Jan Kopecký, last year's winner Dominik Střítecký, and the leader of the junior championship standings, Sweden's Calle Carlberg.

"I was really looking forward to Barum rally. I think we got into the right frame of mind for it at the last race in Rome, and we believe it was a turning point for us in terms of the whole season. The conditions will be tough, I'd say even tougher than last year, and not just because of the hot weather. We are looking forward to the start and believe that we will enjoy this year's event together with the fans again," said Dominik Střítecký, the reigning Czech champion, greeting the present fans.

Marczyk, the biggest contender for this year's European title, is also looking forward to the atmosphere of the Zlín rally. **"This competition is one of the nicest I've ever driven. We have nice races at home in Poland, but few can match the Barum rally. It's not so far to Zlín, and I'm glad that lots of Polish fans have come again. We'll try to make them as happy as possible,"** smiled the 29-year-old Polish driver, who will start the competition with start number 1.

The important points in the battle for the European championship title will not only be fought for in the overall standings in Zlín, but also in the junior category, where competitors race in 2WD vehicles. Calle Carlberg, who is making his debut in the Czech Republic, currently leads the standings. **"I've heard a lot about Barum rally, so I know that it won't be easy for us here. It's a big challenge for me, one that I'm definitely taking seriously,"** admits the 25-year-old Swede, who has won three of the four Junior ERC competitions he has entered this season. In addition to sporting and organizational supervision, this year's rally will also have spiritual supervision. Even before the cars of the biggest favorites drove up the ramp, the Archbishop of Olomouc and Metropolitan of Moravia, Josef Nuzík, climbed onto it and symbolically blessed the 54th edition of the Zlín competition.

For more information, visit www.czechrally.com and don't forget to follow Barum rally on the official Facebook, Instagram and the X accounts, and in other press releases.

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Vojtěch GARGULÁK
Press Office
Barum Czech Rally Zlín