

24 June 2016

DAY REPORT: 2016 FIA European Rally Championship, round 5 of 10
Kenotek by CID LINES Ypres Rally 2016
Leg one, Friday 24 June

Bouffier leads a close fight for Ypres Rally victory

Bryan Bouffier holds a narrow lead after the first seven stages of the Kenotek by CID LINES Ypres Rally, round five of the FIA European Rally Championship.

Driving a MICHELIN-shod Citroën DS3 R5 under the Gemini Clinic Rally Team banner in his first ERC appearance of the season, Bouffier has just 6.9 seconds in hand over local legend and 10-time event winner Freddy Loix.

French driver Bouffier, looking to avenge his defeat by Loix in Belgium 12 months ago, headed the field throughout the day, choosing to run first on the road after topping Thursday evening's Qualifying Stage.

Rather than Loix, it was another ŠKODA Fabia R5-driving Belgian that was keeping Bouffier honest at the end of the opening loop of stages, with Vincent Verschueren just 6.4s adrift after winning SS3 Mesen 1. Loix made changes to his car in service though and promptly reclaimed second place on SS4 Langemark, cutting Bouffier's lead to 4s in the process. Bouffier responded to win the second run over Dikkebus, before he and Loix tied for the best time on Wijtschate 2 and were split by just a tenth of a second on Mesen 2.

By winning Mesen again at the end of the day, Verschueren arrived back in Ypres only 17.8s off the lead, while Kris Princen is only six seconds further back after a consistent day in his Peugeot Belgium Luxembourg-entered 208 T16, despite problems with the intercom system.

Though a pre-event engine change had forced French star Stéphane Lefebvre to miss the Qualifying Stage and therefore run 24th on the road at the start of the leg, he set two fastest stage times during the day. The 2014 ERC Junior champion lost 20s to Bouffier on the very first stage when he got a warning over gearbox temperature, but fought his way back to fifth place as the day went on, ending it 31.8s behind compatriot and fellow Citroën driver Bouffier.

Bernd Casier sat third after the opening stage, and although he has slipped back to sixth in his Ford Fiesta R5, he and Dutch Fabia R5 driver Hermen Kobus remain within a minute of the lead. Jaroslav Orsák is having another good run in the Kimi Racing Ford Fiesta R5 he debuted in the Azores three weeks ago and is eighth, just ahead of fellow Czech driver Jaromír Tarabus (Fabia R5). Claudie Tanghe is 10th ahead of fellow Belgian Fiesta R5 driver Pieter Tsjoen, the eight-time national champion falling back after he bent a wheel on SS4. Davy Vanneste (Fiesta R5) is 12th and Melissa Debackere (Fabia R5) is 13th, on course for ERC Ladies' Trophy honours. Behind Antonín Tlustý (Fabia R5) and in 15th is 1994 ERC champion Patrick Snijers, who spun his 208 T16 on SS6.

Alexey Lukyanuk came to Ypres for the first time with the aim of scoring a strong haul of points towards his ERC title fight with Kajetan Kajetanowicz, who left the event out of his 2016 programme. However, the Russian was caught out by Belgium's fast, ditch-lined roads on the very first stage, running wide and

hitting a bank, launching him into a 360-degree spin through the air. He was forced to retire from the first leg at the end of the stage with broken suspension and it remains to be seen whether he will restart.

Lukyanuk's H-Racing team is running a second Fiesta R5 in Belgium for local driver Cédric Cherain, but he crashed out on SS2. His compatriot Guillaume Dilley was running ninth until stopping with a mechanical problem on the penultimate test of the day, while fellow DS3 R5 promise Kevin Demaerschalk lost over three minutes to a puncture on the first stage but has posted good times since.

The brand new Hyundai i20 R5 appeared on a rally for the first time as a VIP car running at the front of the field, driven by official test driver and ERC graduate Kevin Abbring.

Griebel and Ingram fight over ERC Junior glory

The story of the ERC Junior on day one has been the ultra-close battle between Opel team-mates Marijan Griebel and Chris Ingram. Points leader Ingram won the first stage before Griebel moved ahead on SS3, but a mere tenth of a second separated the pair at service. Since then, Griebel has eked out a bigger advantage, but has only 8.4s in hand as he looks to secure a long-awaited maiden win in the Pirelli-supplied category. Julius Tannert is currently making it a one-two-three for the Opel Rallye Junior Team, 40s behind his team-mates. Callum Devine has made a strong impression on his ERC Junior debut in a privately-entered Opel Adam R2, holding fourth throughout the first loop and finishing the day only 5.8s behind Circuit of Ireland winner Łukasz Pieniążek. Finn Joonas Tokee is sixth on his less favoured surface, followed by Dominik Brož and another newcomer, 18-year-old Catie Munnings. Azores category winner Diogo Gago exited after a first-stage off, while Nikolay Gryazin found one of Flanders' many ditches on SS1. Mechanical issues forced Kristóf Klausz and Marco Cid out of action.

Érdi makes fast start to his bid for ERC2 repeat

Tibor Érdi Jr is attempting to take ERC2 honours in Ypres for a second year running and made a great start towards that aim. The Hungarian Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X driver was the quickest man in his category on all seven stages and had gradually opened up a lead of 1m44.8s over rival Giacomo Scattolon (Evo IX) before the young Italian failed to complete the final test of the day.

Guesens fighting for an ERC3 podium at home

Belgian driver Polle Geusens is competing for an ERC3 podium on home ground in his Ford Fiesta R2T, sitting 7.3 seconds ahead of ERC Junior driver Tannert overnight. Acropolis Rally category winner Murat Bostanci (Castrol Ford Team Türkiye Fiesta R2T) was fifth after the first loop but later slipped to eighth – just ahead of László Német – after being caught out by several of the rally's challenging junctions.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Leg two on Saturday consists of 10 stages, totalling 169.9 kilometres and split into four loops, with each stage being run twice. The day includes the longest of the event, the 23.23-kilometre Hollebeke.

MEDIA EVENTS AND INFORMATION (all timings local for Saturday 24 June)

Prize-giving ceremony: 22h30, Podium, Grote Markt, Ypres

Post-event press conference: 23h15, Media Centre, Novotel, Ypres

Colin McRae ERC Flat Out Trophy presentation: Immediately following the post-event press conference, Media Centre



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EVENTS**

ENDS

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