



## Friday wrap: Loeb holds top spot in Trier

Sebastien Loeb holds an advantage of 20.4s in his pursuit of a ninth ADAC Rallye Deutschland victory heading to the overnight halt at the end of a thrilling opening day of action in the vineyards north east of host city Trier.

Loeb, winner of the FIA World Rally Championship for the last eight years, was fastest on four of Friday's six all-asphalt stages in his Citroen DS3 WRC. Petter Solberg is second with factory Ford team-mate Jari-Matti Latvala third, 9.0s down on the former world champion.

"For sure I am happy," said French legend Loeb. "We are leading, that's really good and we started to increase a little bit our lead. I am pushing hard because I am feeling comfortable in the car and I am able to make some differences so that's good."

Solberg was hampered slightly by a brake issue in the morning, while Latvala - who outlined the pace of Ford's Fiesta RS WRC on asphalt with a brace of stage wins in the afternoon - lost precious time in the morning with a few wrong calls on tyre compound choice and set-up.

Despite the recurrence of the gearshift problem that plagued him in the morning, Thierry Neuville completed day one in a strong fourth overall for the Citroen Junior World Rally Team, 5.1s behind Latvala.

Dani Sordo, in a Prodrive WRC Team MINI, snatched fifth from Mikko Hirvonen on the day's final stage with the third fastest time even though the Spaniard said he struggled to change from sixth to fifth gear. "I had to be careful because of this but the time is coming better and better and that is the important thing," he said.

Hirvonen, meanwhile, lacked confidence in the morning and then reckoned he had been overdriving so backed off in an attempt to improve his performance.

Ott Tanak is seventh after surviving several overshoots in his M-Sport Fiesta. The Estonian had been faster than Loeb at one point on stage four only to miss a junction and lose time.

Mads Ostberg overcame brake problems in the morning to hold eighth overnight for the Adapta World Rally Team with Chris Atkinson ninth on his debut for WRC Team MINI Portugal. "It's been good, it's been a 100 per cent learning experience but it's been good fun," said Atkinson. "The team are great, of course I want to be faster but I've not been on Tarmac for three years so I know my times can be a lot faster."

Sebastien Ogier completes the top 10 in his Volkswagen Motorsport Super 2000-specification Skoda Fabia as a right-rear puncture slowed team-mate Andreas Mikkelsen on day one's final stage and dropped him behind Nasser Al-Attiyah. Sepp Wiegand, in a third Volkswagen-run Skoda, is 14th and the top German driver.



Martin Prokop's hopes ended when fire destroyed his Fiesta on stage three. Evgeny Novikov damaged the rear of his similar car on the opening test, while an off on stage three resulted in Daniel Oliveira's retirement from the day. Paulo Nobre failed to get beyond stage two in his MINI.