



Saturday wrap: Loeb in control

Sebastien Loeb is three stages away from winning ADAC Rallye Deutschland for a ninth time after he completed day two of the FIA World Rally Championship round with his overall lead firmly intact.

Loeb, in a Citroen DS3 WRC, was more than 20s in front following Friday's six stages and doubled that margin on Saturday's opener after making it through the run with the fastest time before the light rain falling on the stage intensified and slowed several of his rivals behind.

When closest challenger Petter Solberg crashed out on the first Arena Panzerplatte stage this morning, Loeb was left in the clear to the extent his advantage out front stands at 1m42.9s at the overnight halt in Trier. "We have finished the second day with a good lead so it's looking good for tomorrow," said Loeb.

With Solberg retiring after breaking the right-rear wheel of his Ford Fiesta RS WRC on a rock on stage nine, it has been left to Jari-Matti Latvala to uphold the factory team's honour in second place, although the Finn had dropped to as low as fifth spot following an overshoot on Saturday's second stage. Mikko Hirvonen is third in the second factory Citroen after the Finn reported an upturn in confidence during the afternoon.

Dani Sordo was up to third following his fastest time on stage two when a puncture on Arena Panzerplatte dropped him back to sixth. There was more frustration for the Spaniard when his Prodrive-run MINI John Cooper Works WRC stopped on the final stage with a loss of cooling fluid following an off. It's unclear whether Sordo will be able to restart on day three.

Ott Tanak shone with a brace of stage wins in his M-Sport Fiesta this afternoon but then blotted his copybook when he took a rear wheel off striking a Hinkelstein, a giant boulder, on the second run through Arena Panzerplatte. The Estonian driver's woe means Mads Ostberg is fourth overnight following a solid showing by the young Norwegian in his Adapta Fiesta.

The problems that befell Sordo and Tanak mean Chris Atkinson has climbed to fifth place for WRC Team MINI Portugal on his first start on asphalt since 2008. Sebastien Ogier is sixth for Volkswagen Motorsport followed by team-mate Andreas Mikkelsen.

Peter van Merksteijn Jr had been in ninth place starting the day's final stage - despite completing the first Arena Panzerplatte run stuck in fifth gear after the lever broke - when he rolled into retirement. With his Citroen blocking the road, the stage was neutralised for a number of minutes, delaying several drivers including Evgeny Novikov, Nasser Al-Attiyah and leading German runner Sepp Wiegand.

Citroen Junior driver Thierry Neuville went off the road on the first Arena Panzerplatte stage while running in a strong fourth overall. Daniel Oliveira, in a Brazil World Rally Team Fiesta, restarted following his off on day one and survived a high-speed spin and a broken driveshaft to complete day two.



Sunday's itinerary features three stages, the first of which, Dhrontal 1, goes live at 09:13hrs local time.