



Unfettered Karginov dethrones Gerard in Queens-stage

Today was going to be a tight match; could Gerard keep his lead and could Hans secure his 6th place? Unfortunately for the team Petronas – de Rooy – Iveco we have to answer “no” on both questions.

“My God, our bodies had to suffer a great deal today,” says Tom after the stage. “We were doing alright until a flat tyre halfway the stage. Then we slowed down for a while. We were hoping on spectacular dunes but at the end there were only 5 of them so we couldn’t make the difference. I’m going to pick up the road book for tomorrow and I hope we’ll have a pile of sand and huge dunes so we can make up the difference. We’ll know more by tomorrow night.” The Belgian navigator, who’s always quick to laugh is serious and that means that he’s peed off with it because he had hoped for more.

It was an enthralling battle; until WP10 Karginov was the leader but virtually Gerard was still on the lead in the General Rankings. At that point, after about 300 km’s it went wrong and Gerard stood still for a while with a flat tire. He then follows Loprais and Nikolaev. After a while he overtakes Nikoleav and leaves him behind. The KAMAZ-pilot will try to delay Gerard in the advantage of Karginov. After a number of Way points Gerard has also passed Loprais. Both competitors now hang on to Gerard and follow in Gerard’s track to the finish.

After 605 km’s it is Karginov who did the stage in a splendid time of 6:22:32 hours, an average of 95 km’s per hour and only 24 minutes slower than the fastest MINI, driven by the Argentinian Terranova. Nikolaev is fastest of the trio behind Karginov and finished 14:18 minutes behind him. Gerard lost 15:51 minutes and Loprais 22:36 minutes.

The roles in the General Rankings are switched after today’s stage. Yesterday Gerard was still 7:55 minutes ahead of Karginov, today he’s 7:56 minutes behind. Nikolaev and Loprais follow and for the time being they are no threat for the leaders.

The next stage goes from El Salvador to Le Serena, a total length of 699 km’s. The first part of 201 km’s is again fast and after 60 km’s again sand and dunes. They start in El Salvador which lies quite high so they will have less chance for the camanchaca, a morning dew often seen in the lower desert and sometimes caused delays in the rally as the helicopters couldn’t leave.

At the end of this Special the die is cast normally. The last Special on Saturday has a length of only 157 km’s and is an easy one. However, the race has only ended after all competitors have reached the finish in Valparaiso.

Tomorrow a cloudy day with may be a little rain, very special in this driest part on earth, and a temperature of 26 degrees Celsius.

Time schedule Special – Day 12		(GMT +1)
Start of the cars and trucks	10:18 hours	14:18 hours
Gerard (501)	10:20	14:20
Hans (507)	10:30	14:30
Pep (516)	10:33:30	14:33:30
Jo (520)	11:00:30	15:00:30

To be continued

