

Kopecký Wins as Kubica Stars



JAN KOPECKÝ & PAVEL DRESLER

Jan Kopecký made it a hat-trick of wins on Rally Islas Canarias El Corte Inglés to move into the lead of the FIA European Rally Championship. His success, at the wheel of his Michelin-shod ŠKODA Fabia Super 2000, followed Robert Kubica's dramatic retirement from top spot when he damaged his Citroën DS3 RRC striking a barrier on Saturday's second stage.

That said, it was Kubica that was the star of the show, leading up to and during the event with his pace and approach from the shakedown.

The Canadian 200 GP winner was making his ERC debut in the DS3 and had been leading by more than one minute after going fastest on all eight stages on Friday. But he hit trouble on a right-hand bend approximately five kilometres from the finish of stage 10 and slid wide hitting a barrier. His heroic performance, however, earned him the prestigious Colin McRae ERC Flat Out Trophy.

Of his accident, Kubica explained, "We were in a high-speed downhill section. It was quite big braking into a third-gear corner. Unfortunately when I hit the brakes I lost the rear of the car and I had to reduce the pressure [on the brakes] otherwise I would spin and the road was very narrow.

I tried to do the corner, but I didn't reduce enough speed and I hit the barrier with the rear-left corner. Then with the front we dived into the barrier. It's a shame, but unfortunately this can happen."

Kopecký, meanwhile, who moved back on top of the ERC drivers' standings by 18 points following his success on the

opening round in Austria said, "I have to say it is good for us and Škoda. We didn't expect rain and that's why we were losing so much on the first day. But the set-up of this car for the dry conditions is really perfect, and we had no problems. Robert was great, but he made a mistake, which can happen in rallying."

Behind Kopecký and co-driver Pavel Dresler, Craig Breen continued his strong start to his career as a member of the Peugeot Rally Academy in an impressive second place alongside navigator Paul Nagle. His cause was not helped on the Saturday morning when he incurred a ten second time penalty for leaving service in Las Palmas behind schedule. The delay was caused because of tyre choice decisions being left until the last possible moment. Breen also left his glasses behind. Saturday though was a day of testing and working on the car for the crew with a view to the events coming up for them in the near future as part of the Peugeot Team.

There was disappointment for team-mate Jérémi Ancian, who was forced to stop when he ran out of spare tyres after suffering punctures on successive stages.



2ND: CRAIG BREEN & PAUL NAGLE