

# Rally d'Italia Sardegna

Press Office



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Rally d'Italia Sardegna – Second leg

## SEBASTIEN LOEB, CITROEN XSARA WRC IS IN THE LEAD

The French driver took advantage of Marcus Gronholm, Ford Focus Wrc, retirement and took the lead of the rally. Gigi Galli, Peugeot 307 Wrc, retired because of mechanical problems in the last stage of the day while fighting for the podium

An unfinished series of Coup de theatre at Rally d'Italia sardegna, race organized by the Automobile Club Italy, seventh round of the 2006 FIA World Rally Championship. The duel started yesterday between Marcus Gronholm, Ford, and Sebastien Loeb, Citroen, finished today on the second special stage of the second leg with the retirement of the Ford's Finnish driver. While braking the Focus of the Fins hit a rock with the front of the car and broke the sump and lost all the oil. A bad luck that gave Loeb the possibility to take the lead, with quite a big advantage over the other drivers. During tomorrow's difficult final leg he can calmly manage his advantage. At the end of Leg 2 Loeb is in the lead with over two minutes over Mikko Hirvonen, Ford Focus Wrc, the latter one drove quite fast today too. Thee 26 years old Finnish driver has to watch his back from the Spanish driver Daniel Sordo on a Citroen Xsara Wrc, that passed in the last special stage of the day Gigi Galli at the wheel of a Peugeot 307 Wrc, even though only by 1"3.

The two drivers were fighting all day and got very close to Hirvonen. The coup de theatre for the Italian driver Gigi Galli, arrived few meters after the finish of the last stage of the day. His 307 had a problem with the radiator that impede him to reach the last TC, that's to say the finish line of today's leg. If during the night the car would be fixed the Italian driver will be able to restart tomorrow thanks to the Super Rally rule, but he will give up the fight for the upper places of the classification, because he will start with a 5 minutes penalty.

The fight for the second and third place will be the main issue of tomorrow's leg, while for the lead everything seems almost done. The third and final leg will start tomorrow at 7.00 am from the Service Park in Olbia and the first stage is going to be a classic of this rally, San Giacomo. The leg will then go on in the Gallura region on the gravel roads of La Prugnola and Campovaglio. The day will finish with the Arrival Ceremony in Porto Cervo at 2.15 pm. The leg is composed of three stages for a total of 78 km.

Behind the leaders a big gap. Xavier Pons third driver of the Citroen Kronos team is 4'30" behind them. The Spanish is in front of Atkinson on Subaru and Jussi Valimaki with Mitsubishi Lancer. Another Subaru of the Finnish driver Solberg is 8<sup>th</sup> overall, the last place giving points for the World Rally Championship. Among the drivers racing for the fifth round of the JWRC the leader is Guy Wilks on a Suzuki Swift Super 1600, followed by Patrick Sandell on Renault Clio Super 1600, like yesterday. Third is now Conrad Rautenbach with another Renault Clio. Goes on the good race of Alessandro Bettiga among the cars of the Ford Fiesta Trophy, while among the cars of the Subaru Cup Alan Scorcioni is leading after a long fight with Anton Alen. The Finnish has been obliged to retire because he went off the road and hit a tree in the last stage.

**Classification after Leg 2** – 1. Loeb – Elena (Citroen Xsara Wrc) 3h02'26"0; 2. Hirvonen – Lehtinen (Ford Focus Wrc) diff 2'17"; 3. Sordo – Marti (Citroen Xsara Wrc) diff 2'56"0; 4. Pons – Del Barrio ( Citroen Xsara Wrc) diff 4'27"1; 5. Atkinson – MacNeall (Subaru Impreza Wrc) diff 5'56"7; 6. Valimaki- Kalliolepo (Mitsubishi Lancer Wrc) diff 6'01"6; 7. Solberg - Tuominen ( Subaru Impreza Wrc) diff 6'29"1; 8. Solberg –Mills (Subaru Wrc)

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