

Peking to Paris 2019.

Day 32. Bydgoszcz - Szczecin 382km

As well as the great roads, an excellent lunch and a fantastic Test, today went down in the rally legend as one in which we'd never used so many Z's in a route book.

Heading out of Bydgoszcz today, our destination was Szczecin right on the German border and, with only five days to go the end of the rally is fast approaching. There's still plenty of action to look forward to though and today we got to enjoy another superb test venue, on the site of a disused Cold War airfield in Broczyno.

Over the course of the day we also passed though Zdbice, Szczutki, Mrocza, Zlotow, Palac Siemczyno and Choszczno.

There was a slightly more civilised way to start the day though with another track test hard on the heels of the croissants and coffee.

Last night the crews got to try out the Kartodrom and this morning they were able to put those sighting laps to some good use when they were unleashed once again on the little circuit. Sure, one or two of the bigger cars struggled with some of the tighter turns but that only made it more fun for the crowds of locals who stopped by to see what all of the noise was about and one of them was overheard to say that it would have been even more fun in the wet!

Next up in the route book was the day's big attraction, the so called "Battle of Broczyno", as referenced in the Baltic Classic of 2017 and, as before, the course itself comprised a mixture of tarmac, broken concrete and tracks filled with loose sand and gravel. This 10.10km loop was run as a Time Control section and the navigation required wasn't as precise as the first time we were here but nevertheless, through the waist high grass, and dense woodland, the air was thick with choking dust, squealing brakes and revving engines and a sudden rainstorm only added to the drama.

Despite the easy navigation though there were some crews who were perhaps so inspired by their woodland jaunt, that they sought to do parts of it more than once and as such, Michael Merkle and Firdous Naqvi might have had run short of space on their timecard by the end of the section.

Armed with their clocks though, John Spiller and Rikki Proffitt swapped seamlessly from timekeepers to traffic wardens whenever a wrong approach was detected and some subtle direction was required.

After all of this, the hungry crews enjoyed a good lunch at the Palac Siemczyno before another excellent run through the Pomeranian countryside to the days finish at the Szczecin Marina. We're bedding down in the Radisson Blu Hotel tonight where the end of term feeling is building already.

Szyd Stzelvio