

master switch. Ouch. Teammate Roman Kresta slid off course, and took some time getting the car back on the road. This likely cost him a position to Mitsubishi's Gig Galli, who had passed him by for fifth place by SS17. Duval, urged by his team to ease off on Loeb, finishes second, followed by Gronholm and Martin in third and fourth, respectively. "I am very happy," said Duval after the rally, "there was quite a lot of pressure on me because I had to finish."

On the south coast of the Welsh peninsula, the Wales Rally GB, due to a move in the circuit calendar, promised to be drier than usual, and perhaps the fastest event of the season. Duval arrives with a renewed confidence, and Former champion Colin McRae sits in for team Skoda, reportedly more relaxed, and ready to do battle. But Marcus Gronholm has nothing to lose, and although starting out on maximum attack, loses almost a minute and a half with brake failure on Stage 2, and ends up in 17th place. Loeb leads, with P. Solberg pushing him hard from behind, as Gronholm fights his way back towards third, while Colin McRae struggles with his Skoda.

Then something seemed horribly wrong as WRC released the following unusually short press release during



photo by Warwick Patterson



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SS15:

"Peugeot's Markko Martin has gone off the road on the first run through Margam, forcing organisers to cancel the stage. The Estonian has reportedly struck a tree on the co-drivers' side of his car and marshals are attending to the scene... More news to follow..."

It was to not only be the end of the stage, but of the event, as waiting fans were finally given the tragic news. "Michael Park, co-driver to works Peugeot driver Markko Martin, has died as a result of injuries sustained in an accident on the final leg of this weekend's Wales Rally GB."

Markko Martin escaped the crash uninjured. Gronholm refuses his third place finish in respect for his teammate, and Loeb, not wanting to win the event, (nor the title) in such a manner, deliberately takes a 2 minute penalty. His 10 points would have given him the drivers title, and he understandably wasn't keen on winning in such a way. "I could not imagine for one second that it was right to win the championship under these circumstances," Loeb said on his website after the event. Solberg ends up in first, with Duval moving ahead of Loeb to take second, leaving Loeb with third.

There were no celebrations at the podium in Cardiff, and all present observed a minute of silence.

By Ken Jeffery



photo by Warwick Patterson

WRC		
WORLD RALLY		
CHAMPIONSHIP		
DRIVER'S STANDINGS		
1. S.LOEB (F)		127Pts
2. M.GRONHOLM (FIN)		71Pts
3. P.SOLBERG (N)		71Pts
4. T.GARDMEISTER (FIN)		58Pts
5. M.MARTIN (EE)		53Pts
6. F.DUVAL (B)		37Pts
MANUFACTURER'S STANDINGS		
1. CITROEN		178Pts
2. PEUGEOT		135Pts
3. FORD		100Pts
4. SUBARU		91Pts
5. MITSUBISHI		63Pts
6. SKODA		18Pts