

Race report Rallye Breslau 2020, Team 303.

Saturday, 12.09.20

This years Rallye Breslau Poland took place about 10 weeks later than the usual time, due to the pandemic. An unexpected extra amount of time for preparations. Time we really needed, as we start with two cars this year. The proven Suzuki Samurai with the usual suspects will start in the Extreme Cars Open class (Breslau rallye as it should be), my wife Anja with codriver Eddi race in a Discovery I in the Cross Country Limited class. (nearly stock cars without winch for hydrophobes)

The cars were ready to race over a week before the race, apart from some minor details for entertainment in the camp.

We could somehow manage to gather a big team for the service. Gerhard, Max, Ingo and Andre are all experienced and have each been at the rallye two to twenty times.

Departure Saturday afternoon, as planned. We go slow with the trailers and stop near Hohenmölsen, about half the distance, where we call it a good night. Max and Eddi do not give a fuck about sleep and they drive the whole night until Gwda Wielka, ready to set up the first tents in the camp.



Figure 1: A trip to poland

Sunday, a lot of traffic jams around Berlin, we need nearly the whole day. We arrive at the camp at nightfall. The servicetruck gets stuck, so what? Fire up the grill, barbecue, go to bed. Its a pretty good night. Humming generators and the sounds of Becker Touristik create a lovely atmosphere.

Monday, 14.09.2020

We set up the rest of the Camp, the racecars need some final work, scrutineering, a lot of tasks today. The Suzuki gets a new sensor for the Tripmaster installed, also the winch rope and stickers are added to the car. The Land Rover has somehow some more needs. The tires are kissing the fenders, the exhaust pipe keeps falling off and an oilpipe is pretty endangered to rock crushes. We brought enough sheet metal and bars with us, so the monday is packed with fun.



Figure 2: Our Camp set up in Gwda Wielka



Figure 3: Finishing works on the Discovery

We meet again a lot of old friends and the excitement for the race rises. Take a walk through the camp. The extreme class has upgraded their cars a lot.

37 inch tires are considered small, combined coil over and bypass shocks are essential, also a mechanical or at least twin motor winch.

Remarkable is the Trasek-built prototype driven by Hardo Mere from Estonia. Portal axles, extremely light built, someone tells us over 500 HP and only 1,3 tons. Also the 6x6-monster of Gilles Girousse seems to be ready for race. Engine behind the cabin, huge tires, front and rear axle with steering - there are not many

challenging obstacles left with this thing.

Not to forget the experienced racers. Jim Marsden and Franck Daurelle both know the terrain pretty well and have fast and strong cars.

Last years winner David Drancourt from team Meca Cool has nearly the same car as last year. 35 inch tires and they look really small compared to the rest of the extreme class.



Figure 4: The 6x6 of Gilles Girousse



Figure 5: A impressive car, built by Trasek, driven by Hardo Mere

Tuesday, 15.09.2020

Start. No show start this year, all starters from all classes are set up in a parc ferme at the entrance of the camp. Time to have a look at the other competitors.



Figure 6: All racers of this years Breslau in one picture

We set off at ca. 11:00. A quick 4-banger blast for the cameras, then normal road mode, liaison. First stage is about 50km near Dretyn, about 50km road from the camp. As we reach speeds over 40km/h, the tripmaster stops working. The new sensor was only tested at slow speed in the camp. Shit. We also need to refuel in the liaison, a short break which Martin uses to readjust the sensor. On the Road again, the sensor works better, but still loses its signal sometime. As the target time for the liaison is quite short, we can not afford long repairs. After the liaison we can do a small adjustment, but then we have to start into the stage without further testing.

Engage four wheel drive, intercom on, helmets on, adjust seat belts, the row of cars in front of us shortens, we are at the startline, five four three two one START! Off into the forest, wide left corner, a farmtrack below average. Step on the gas. Somehow. Is this the right thing we are doing here? Should I accelerate more or should we go slower? Is this the right place to be? Do I know how to race? Shouldn't we give up right now, after seeing the other competitors? The first three kilometers feel really strange. And then the excitement really kicks in. The tacho doesn't drop below 5000 anymore. This is the shit, flying through the forests without hesitation.



Figure 7: Cornering in the first stage

10km in the stage, turn right.

Martin: "I have realized that we went wrong at the last crossroad. Would you please turn around and go back? We left the path two hundred meters early."

Matthias: "Damn, think this fuckn sensor doesn't work!"

Martin: "At least it is not working properly. I will further on look at our Garmin GPS to decide if the distance is plausible or not."

No time for additional talking, the right junction leads to an extreme class checkpoint. A soft hillclimb, but really soft sand. We know that one, it is a recurring obstacle in the past years, and we also know that we always needed the winch to get to the top.

Martin: "I will get out and climb up by feet, you drive as far as you can get. When the movement stops, we immediately go on winching. No digging up the ground."

Matthias: "right, all lockers engaged, ready to go!"

Another car is in front of us, drives to the top. Over 200 HP, Tires larger than 35 inch - would have been a shame if he needed the winch. We attack with the shrunked japanese. The distance allows to gather just enough speed for second gear, up on the top. No winch required.



Figure 8: The first extreme class checkpoint

Reattach the co-driver, don't forget the CPs stamp and move on. Along the powerline, small bushes and other weeds define the way, almost no visible tracks. We go slow, tree stumps or holes can jump out of nowhere.

Turn left, we are back on the Cross-Country track. Pedal to the metal again. I shift permanently between fourth and fifth gear, always between 5000 and 6500 rpm, try to keep the car on the track and move forward. Sometimes we pass some houses, accompanied by speed limits in the roadbook. Those are good for a little cool down of one or two kilometres, time for a sip of water. Get back into the woods and again high speed. It feels quite fast. No navigational issues, no technical problems. Feels like home again in the car. About 50km stage, then through the finish. All went well.

40km liaison. Refuel, quick technical check. We redesigned the axle straps, now it collides with the frame. Not good. But it is possible to fix that problem by disassembling the strap, turning the lower shackle and reassembling it. We need about fifteen minutes for this operation, carried out at the fuel station. Fifteen minutes we are now late for the second stage and might cause problems in the mud or dust, if we are the ones stuck behind. Whatever.

Start, 76km stage. Full throttle, push the car to speed, its a really good run. Woods, timberland, fast logging roads, turn right and the next one, get out in a clearing, a glance on open fields and back again into the dark woods. For the extrem class they made in total four small extra obstacles. A little through scrub, a small stream crossing, a zig-zag section on a hillside, marked by tape. No big problem, as it is really dry. Wet slopes would be far more interesting and challenging. Here we just have to go easy on one of the hillside corners to prevent a rollover, the rest of the obstacles is a nice break of the full throttle sections.



Figure 9: Thats extreme class, too. Find your way between tree stumps and roots.

In the last third of the stage we find ourselves on an old railway track. It was converted to a flat gravel street. High speed is certain the right speed, but some crossroads or other bumps make mean jumps. Left to the track a side-by-side lies in the field. Its difficult to find the right speed or to know when to brake or not, the shadows through the bystanding trees do not make it easier.

Over the whole stage we challenge with Gilles in his 6x6. It is fast and lies good on the track, and surely has a powerful engine. At the moment, we are a little bit faster. But he will get faster over time for sure.

At the extreme obstacles he overtakes us. We are a bit more cautious there. Narrow, lesser ground clearance, but in the fast and especially the bumpy sections we manage to close the gap again. We overtake some slow cross country cars together, thanks to the new rallye safety system. Press a button if you want to overtake, the surrounding cars get an alarm and should move to the side. Somehow you have to sort out for yourself if you are the one slowing down others, but mirrors help in this case.

A small stream crossing is in the way. No problem, a bit muddy at the exit, also included in the CCs roadbook. A CC Land Cruiser is stuck there, needs a tow. Probably a quick tow would be enough, but we pass with the suzuki. Last time we towed out a Land Cruiser, our clutch started to smell badly and went to hell two days later. Using the winch needs a lot of time. We want to get a good time, so we pass right from him in a bit deeper mud. After us, there are more patient cars and trucks coming, also the discovery class. We go on.

Soon the finish line, the last third passed quite quick.



Figure 10: Near the end of the first day

40km connection to the camp, refuel on the way. No damage at the Suzuki. Clean the air filters, grease prop shafts, check oil, air and water.

A close inspection of the whole car, maybe we forgot to tighten some bolts.

Short time after us our second car of the team arrives. They brought some minor damages, loose cable, some leaking pipes which were not tightened enough. No big deal, a relaxed evening for the whole team.

The Samurai reached 4th place of 23 starters. A surprise, we did not feel SO fast and lost some time here and there.

Wednesday, 16.09.2020

Alarm clock rings at 6:30. Fetch the phone, look at the start list, sent by WhatsApp - we depart at 9:28 at the exit of the camp.

Well, we can afford to sleep a little bit more.

Today two stages are planned, one with 110km, the second one with 130km.

The first one is again mostly cross country, but also fun. We start into the woods as fourth car and try to hold the position.



Figure 11: Second day, the biggest mudhole on the track

This works for about 30km, then a wrong distance gets Martin out of his pace.

Martin: "Please turn right at this junction and go up the hill."

Matthias: "Got it, looks like an extreme track."

Martin: "Go straight for one and a half kilometre, then be so kind and do a left turn."

We move along a rarely used logging path and past several crossroads. Unusual not to have them in the roadbook, but I do not want to confuse my codriver. 1,5km passed, no junction there and the ones before and behind do not match the picture in the roadbook.

Martin: "I am sorry, but I think we should turn around again. These roads do not fit. We should return to the pictures where I was sure. This is not very pleasant, as we had a really good run until now."

We turn around, go back on the track for two kilometres and start over again. The "Danger"-button at the rallye safety system warns other cars of driving in the wrong direction. Right direction again, we are again at the uphill junction, but the distance is not right. Okay, carry on straight. In the meantime, two or three other cars passed us. Slowly we continue, check every junction if it could fit in the roadbook. Jolly overtakes us. Shit, he is usually far behind.

Whatever. Go on, a larger junction with a tarmac road should appear and appears. Jolly is parking here and changes a flat tire, Drancourt and some others stray around, looking for the right path. The roadbook is quite

confusing here.

Martin found back in the roadbook, go left, over a small bridge and right again, along the bottom of a hillside, then to the left, upwards on the sandy slope - works fine even without the lockers.

Three kilometres later, a T-crossing, but its not sure if its already the right one or from "Follow main track"? Stop, check it out. Drancourt comes from behind and turns right. Martin chooses right, too. 50m pass and the next path should turn left. Behind us Gilles appeared. In all three cars we decide at the same moment that this can not be right and turn around simultaneous on this tight track.

Back. We turned right too early. A tight combination of junctions tricked all three navigators.

Carry on at high speeds, everyone wants to know if he can go faster.

We follow the chessboard pattern of the forest roads in a zig-zag manner, straight sprints and tight ninety-degree corners.



Figure 12: Zig-Zag through forests

We move south as we make progress in the stage and enter an old, northwest running railway track. Old sleepers are still in the ground, crushed rocks mixed up with the indigenous sand. The suspension has to do a lot of work. The engine runs at full power, but the energy gets converted in the shocks and not into speed. The shock absorbers get hot, nearly 110°C. Slow down a little bit, we do not want to boil them.

But the others seem to have the same problems and are not faster. Still our little convoi manages overtaking two more cross country cars which cant compete with us on these tracks. (limited class has lots of limitations on the suspension modifications)

About 20km of railway track are behind us, go left on tarmac road for 8km, keep a maximum speed of 60. Public road, we roll along, time to drink something. Through a village, slow down to 30, go right afterwards and back into the bushes. On tight and overgrown paths, well hidden junctions, slow speeds. Pay attention not to hit a hidden hole and roll over the car or get stuck there. We arrive at a somehow muddy water crossing. No big deal, but we forgot to switch on the compressor. Wait a short time till we have 4 bar, engage the diff lockers and through with it. Our companions have passed and are far away.

Go on. The track reunites with the CC track, we step on the gas and catch on Gilles, manage to overtake him. 30km left.

Martin: "Would you please slow down? We have to deal with some roadbook changes. I have to compare roadbook and the roads precisely. Ahh, this junction is no more. Please move on for additional two hundred meters and then turn left."

We cross a wide gravel road.

Matthias: "you sure? roadbook path is dashed."

Martin: "I am sure, it was dashed and now we have a roadbook change. Go on straight for a kilometre and turn left."

Left, full throttle, pass two crossroads, but they are not at the right distance. Odd. Wrong again, turn around.

Matthias: "there are "uwaga rajd" signs, arranged as we should go straight."

Martin: "The roadbook states clearly that we should turn left. The change was only on the kilometres. Wait a second."

He digs deep in the glove compartment and grabs the note with the road book changes.

"Here it is stated: Change Distance to... and Change Picture... oh. Go on straight."

Back in the roadbook. 25km of forest speeding later the finish of the first stage for today. Liaison, Refuel, the famous polish hot dogs and a quick check of the car. No abnormalities. Continue to the second stage,

130km in the surroundings of Borne Sulinowo. The road book does not indicate greater obstacles. Start, fly into the forest. A few kilometres only and we branch off the dug out CC-track into overgrown paths. Along a tree plantation we have some steep ascends and descends, a steep hillclimb brings us to a stop, 1m below the top.

Martin: "I get out of the car and attach the winch to this tree over there, what do you think?"

Matthias: "slow down. I didnt use the front locker, cause of bad cornering"

Martin: "Please pay attention. I do not want to roll over, it is quite unstable here."

The front axle has a simple eight-pin locker, which needs some time to engage and should not be engaged under load. A reason not to engage it while still driving under medium hard conditions. Here I should have engaged it. Roll down backwards with caution, not to catch tree stumps or another pain in the ass. Apply air pressure, first gear and now we get up without a problem.

Move on, deeper into the forest. Tracks are barely visible, some bent grass gives you hints where the road book sees a junction. Turn left, a steep descend. I hope we are on the right track, getting up again could be a problem. Down in a narrow valley we have to drive uphill again on the opposing ledge, the slope is divided in three steps, on top of the hill a checkpoint awaits us. Martin runs in front and looks for hidden obstacles. Some kind of slalom is necessary, rocks and stumps are hidden in the thicket. Hard turning of the steering wheel is necessary as both diff lockers are engaged.

The last step is too steep and too plowed, we come to a standstill after climbing the first half. The last five meters have to be covered by the winch.



Figure 13: Extreme class CP. Going uphill in steps.



Figure 14: Stuck a few metres below the top

While we get out the winch rope and get it strapped to a tree, Gilles comes from behind and races uphill. Three axles, well balanced weight and large tires - this car is awesome.

But now its our turn. We are linked to the tree, winch lever is pulled and I depress the clutch for additional wheel drive. Shit. I went into reverse. I need a control lamp for that, we went about 10cm closer to the middle of the earth.

First gear, and up that hill. Pull in the rest of the rope, get the stamp, go on.

Back on the CC-Track. Fast pace, following Gilles and Grosland. A forest track with lots of bumps. Many

dislike these tracks, but if you find the right gear, speed and proper rhythm with the throttle, those bumps get really funny and we are often quicker than others. Sometimes the jump gets higher than thought, sometimes the rear axle kicks the car into the air (still not enough rebound on the shock absorbers), but you hit only sand or grass when landing. Apart from that one head-sized rock, lying on the left side of the track. The left rear wheel gets a full contact.

Matthias: "Damn. Was the rear wheel. You hear it blowin?"

We look out of the side windows, check it. The rim is well bent, air escapes. Damn.

Left of the track a small clearing, we stop there.

Martin assembles the jack, I loose the nuts, car gets up, remove the wheel and mount the spare, two nuts are tightend, Martin lowers the car again.

Tighten the rest, repack tools, wheel and jack, back on the racetrack. This manœuvre took us ten minutes. Two other cars passed in the meantime.



Figure 15: Speed near the end of day 2

We work our way through the stage. Nothing extraordinary. Nice landscape, mainly forests, some speedlimits and houses, an extra loop through scrub and thickets. We manage to overtake four other extreme cars, some more fast forest tracks and its the finish for today.

The damaged wheel and some navigation issues did cost some time, so its only the 6th place of 23 today.

Connection on tarmac road to the camp. Refuel on the way, check the car in the camp. No damages, grease, clean and refill, new spare tire. Gerhard somehow hammers the damaged rim back into shape and keeps it in the camp. You can not predict what challenges the next days will bring with them.

One of the cooler fans has a worn out bearing and gets replaced.

The Discovery arrives, no big problems. The attachment points of the water cooler need reinforcement, an 200mm long nail went into a tire and they had to change the tire in the race, too. Andre mends it with rubber worms. Apart from that, the hardest challenge of this evening is the bristly pork pickle.

Thursday, 17.09.20

Today three stages and the movement of the camp are on the schedule.

Two stages near the first camp at Gwda Wielka, then a transfer to the second camp at Drawsko. The third stage is scheduled in the darkness - night stage on the military training area of Drawsko.



Figure 16: Speed stage near Okonek, hard braking before a corner



Figure 17: Speed stage near Okonek, full speed on open space

First stage, 50km near Okonek. Liaison on public road, queue at the start line and go!
Some wide open areas which allow high speed, tight corners in the forest, some other cars with problems on the roadside. Full throttle most of the time and always at the edge between speed and stability. We do not overtake anyone, we do not get overtaken by anyone and finish 55 minutes later. That was fun. Short, but fun.

A little break for us, one and a half hour liaison time for 20km.



Figure 18: Meet up of the team midway of the rallye week

Going slow, refuel, line up at Czarne. At least half of the other extreme cars can be found there waiting. Takes a while until all bikes and trucks have finished and left the track. Time for chatting around. Some competitors have been taking part in the rallye for really a long time, but the real fast teams are not the real veterans here.

We start in roundabout 50km stage, Poligon Czarne. A good track to ride. In the beginning we achieve maximum speed (115 km/h), but then we reach the range with its sandtracks. The trucks have been here in the morning and this had a huge impact on the ground. Deep dug out corners, the narrow Suzuki meets the grooves only with one side, dragging the axle through the sand slows us down and we fear to roll over in every corner. In between long straights with heavy sand, which call for lots of engine power. Not really a home match with our car, but we get through.



Figure 18: Czarne poligon. Deep sand.



Figure 19: Czarne poligon. More deep sand.

On the way, we challenge some CC cars, overtake our teammate, a Wrangler shows us that he can drive way faster, eat dust and more dust, permanently need to press the acknowledge button on the rallye safety system (no wonder, going zig-zag means you get close to a broken down car more than one time), get back on the range, a short loop with some parts repeated, turn right at the railway crossing, Finish.
Done for the day.

Again 6th place of 23. Everything went fine, I do not know where we lost minutes, but other teams had flawless races too. The Breslau is decided at the swamps and mudholes, and until now it is way to dry for us.

A short time after us the Discovery finishes. We inform the rest of the team that all went well and we move into the second camp by ourselves. Ingo stayed in the first camp to have a backup if one car breaks down.

We do a cruising drive to Drawsko at relaxing 80km/h through the beautiful Pomerania. Somewhere at road 20 we find a fuel station which provides also coffee, pizza and hotdogs, an idyllic place for a break in the afternoon's sun.

Finally we reach the camp. Gerhard, Ingo, Andre and Max were busy and set up the whole tent camp again, we roll into the garages for a short checkup.



Figure 20: Preparing for the night: The cars

The rear bearing of the clutch housing has quite a lot of radial play. Change it? The whole assembly is still hot. The oil is clear and free of abrasion. Everyone feels the play and comes to his own diagnosis. After some cooldown the play has nearly vanished.

Dinner, fiddle around with tonight's roadbook, add the changes that came in via WhatsApp, get into the right mindset for the night stage.



Figure 21: Preparing for the night: Codriver

An early start time due to early sunset, 22:50 for us.

At the prestart we adjust the headlamps, as they lighten everywhere but not in the front. The left one lost a screw and a zip tie has to help out.

Start and on we go, straight into the polygon. Navigation is hard in the night but it works, the first big clearing with a multi-junction crossed right on the first try, roadbook fits good. We don't catch up with anyone, no one catches up with us, dew fell and there is not much dust in the air. Apart from some other lights at the horizon we are completely alone on the track.

25km are done without any issues. Roadbook change kicks in.

Martin tells me to turn left at the fence. Strange. Only a few traces.

The next junction fits, the one after that not. Damn.

Searching in the dark, that lane between the trees, could that be a path?

Back and forth, one, two kilometres, nothing fits.

Matthias: "Which crossroads was sure?"

Martin: "Please return to the junction next to the fence. Until we arrived there, the roadbook was on point."

Even the way back is not easy, coming from the other direction changes the view.

Back at the fence.

Martin: "This junction was a perfect fit. I saw no difference between roadbook and tripmeter for the whole stage until we reached this point."

He points to a T-crossing in the roadbook, where it pictures a left turn at a fence.

Matthias: "Can't be right. The road goes on straight, in the roadbook there is no straight road."

Martin: "Maybe. Try going on straight, maybe the distance was not right. Roadbook changes, you know."

We move on, but the next junction is not right. Back again, to an earlier roadbook picture. It fitted perfectly as well. We turn around again, hit the junction near the fence again. Many other cars pass in the meantime.

Martin: "Oh dear! The picture is clocked by ninety degrees! Please continue straight."

We continue straight and the roadbook fits again.

But now we joined the convoi. A phenomenon we can observe at nearly every night stage. Some codrivers are overstrained by the difficult navigation on the tank tracks, they roam around. After a while a later and slower car comes by. Slow driving, but on the point with its navigation. The stressed codriver of the lost car tells his driver to follow until he finds back into navigation.

A few cars of the same kind and there is a convoi of four to ten cars, slowly crawling to the finish. Now we are stuck behind.

Not really our speed, and we also have found back into the roadbook. So we try getting forward again. We overtake one car, and another, narrow forest track with no room for overtaking. The Convoi enters a large multijunction with at least twelve possible ways to go. The track is wide, Martin decided quite fast where to go. A good chance to set off forward. I overtake at the left ledge, bumps slow them down. One bump is filled with lots of water and mud.

Everything went black suddenly. Full stop.

Martin: "Please switch on the wipers, I can not see anymore out of the window."

Matthias: "already running, but the headlamps are covered with mud"

Martin: "WIPER!"

Matthias: "won't help without light!"

Switch on the Lamps on the roof, they are only mildly covered. But still not very much.

Martin: "I still can not see really much. Please use the wipers!"

Does not help. Stop, exit and clean the headlamps with the edge of the jacket. The headlamp washers had broken nozzles, so we did not install it.

Lights are on again, Codriver chilled down, go on again. The Convoi is again in front. Damn.

Larger puddles are now circled, we catch up to the Convoi and manage again to overtake them (I feel really stupid in such moments), somewhere on the track a rather easy water crossing is no real obstacle.



Figure 22: We want more than that. How about a real deep waterhole?

After forty kilometres we get to the temporary bridge in the forest. Not very interested in getting wet, we drive over the bridge carefully.

The next junctions are somehow confusing, but we get them right in the first try, just a few kilometres left.

Two or three cars come back on the track. Apparently they are searching something. We approach the next junction. But in front of us is a tape across the path.

Martin: "This does not seem right. The distance fits perfect. Go around the tape. The finish is not very far away."

Matthias: "This one's plain white, not by euro4x4. I think its leftover from the military training."

To the left there are some tracks. Go around the tape and get to the finish line.

We ranked 9th place in the night stage. Had faster years before.

Back to the camp. Fault analysis. The navigational mistake can be traced to the roadbook changes. One picture is the same as in the unchanged roadbook, but turned by 90°. Slipped through, copying changes from a phone display does not make this easier. We commit to an additional cross-checking of the roadbook by the driver. This happened not for the first time and we lost over ten minutes today. Quick check of the car, no damages here. At least.

The Discovery comes back a bit later. Navigation through the night was quite unnerving. But the car is fine. So we can go to sleep, refuel and service will happen tomorrow.

Friday, 18.09.2020

Two stages on the training grounds of Drawsko are on today's menu. It's a well known terrain which brings a lot of fun and many possibilities to get wet and to need the winch. THE way it should be.

First stage is 95km long. At the pre-start we notice that we have no fresh drinking water on board. Damn. The half-empty bottles from the day before were taken out, but not replaced. We try to coax some water from some present audience, the prestart crew gives us two bottles. Driving without drinking is not very funny. A little late for the start, already a bit more from behind, as the night stage did not go very well, we have to fight to get better times again.



Figure 23: Drawsko. Well known tank tracks

Long deep sand tracks, engine power is required and the small 1,6 litre Renault engine delivers all it can give. But temperature is rising, to 120°C and above. This is not normal. Stop and check for problems. The big fan is not running. Strange, we tested it while servicing the car this morning.

Matthias: "Could be da temperature switch. Died already once."

Pull of the 6,3mm plugs from the switch, bridge them with the Leatherman - Fan runs.

Martin: "That is not very pleasant. We should bridge the switch and move on."

Matthias: "I have a Wago clamp in the toolbox. You strip them meanwhile."

Martin strips the cables with his Leatherman and burns his fingers on the exhaust muffler. Meanwhile I dig in our spare parts box for a wago clamp. Other cars pass. Attached, fan runs, temperature drops, we move on.

Go on on the tank track, branch of to a smaller side track. Tank-made bumps with some deeper holes, muddy, water-filled, the exit dug out by large tires on portal axles. Tire pattern, tire size, diff locks and a well-chosen lane are essential.

We get through, till the last hole. Hanging over to the left at the exit. We could try again, but Martin went out and has the winch rope faster in his hands than i can realize. Strapped to a tree, pull and we are out. Definitely easier for axles and gears, but also a little bit slower. We get overtaken again.

The track gets harmless again and meets up with the CC-track. Tight navigation on the shooting range. Lots of tracks, lots of dust and other cars driving around creating even more dust and tracks. A challenge and we do not get the right way in the first try, but we do not lose very much time.

A little bit later we arrive at a well known water crossing - in the middle of a wide area, no tree here, a truck of the recovery team is parked as winch attachment point.

We don't try driving there. Stop at the edge, Martin jumps into the puddle, decides for a lane, gets the rope and checks the water depth for the remaining crossing. He is faster at the truck than Sjoerd, codriver of the dutch 333, already in the swamp as we arrive. Quick, pull on the rope and overtake him in the mud. Water depth is quite harmless. At the other side, take the rope off, codriver jumps in, do not forget the CP's stamp and were off again.



Figure 24: Martin enjoying the first real mud for this year.



Figure 25: Martin won the race to the tow point, ensures a tight rope



Figure 26: Overtaking in the mud is one of this Suzuki's special abilities



Figure 27: The Obstacle lies behind us.

Full throttle for some kilometres, tank track here, forest road there. A lot of construction is going on on the training area. Lots of bumpy tracks were visited by a grader and filled up with rough gravel. The track is a lot faster than the years before, many corners can be taken with a drift. The bumpy roads which were there before had their own challenges and needed a well dosed and timed gas-foot to be fast and still stay on the track.

Again long straps of CC-Track. Tank roads, forest tracks, sand tracks again.



Fig 28: Tank Tracks again.

A small water crossing for all competitors, included for the CC-class. Nothing hard, easy for every offroad car with MT tires. Still a car is stuck there. Dug himself in really deep. Tow strap already attached, co-driver looks sad. But we are still to light for a quick tow, especially uphill on this wet sand. We pass on the right and shrug our shoulders. Would lose a massive amount of time when using the winch or burn down the clutch, when not more.

Move on. The tank tracks slow us down. Deep grooves are contrary to our small tires and the low engine power does not help either. One of this tracks ends at a birch marshland. A bit of a swampy water crossing, along the stream, through the stream again, up a washed out hill and back on the track.

Again we pass the dam of Borowo. A small loop here. We overtake a Defender 130 with an awning, taking part in the Discovery class. I hope for them that they won't hit a tree with this awning. Short while after again the CC water crossing and that car is still stuck there. Damn. But a dutch Land Cruiser from the extreme limited class is already helping, and that Defender comes this way, too. Okay, we move on, we don't want to lose minutes here.

The end of the stage comes near. We drive along a longer road construction area. It has a speed limit and the roads are getting flattened. Two small watercrossings are freed of their dams and get filled with gravel, lose lots of their difficulties. Only 30cm of waters are to be crossed.

Martin: "What a pity. I think, these crossings will lose their challenge by these measures."

Matthias: "think there were stuck to much humvees, so they have to flatten them."

Whatever the reason for these measures might be, the finish is not far anymore.

Done, for the first half. Two hours service time till the second stage.

15km back to the camp. Martin, well soaked, exits at the camp, I move on to the next fuel station, back to the camp.



Fig 29: Service between the stages.

A small service for man and machine. Eat something, check the car, fresh air filter, check the roadbook, fresh water bottles and back into the polygon.

The second stage has 125km. Start, behind us is Gilles in his 6x6. He hunts us on the tank tracks. Compass course. Time to take advantage of our high tech tripmaster. We move on fast, Gilles takes a little longer, but catches up again. He is definitely faster in the deep sand, we let him pass.

But we try to keep up with him. Suddenly they take the wrong way and we are in front of him again. But I can see him closing in again in the rear mirror. We leave the tank track, into a low pine forest. Tight corners, short distances. The Suzuki was constructed as a foresters car, and this is its time to shine. Gilles is out of sight behind us. Always above 5000 rpm, the rev limiters sound is present from time to time and we have always full engine power.

We come to a halt at a swamp crossing. Limited possibilities for a crossing, left and right is tape, so there are only two lanes.

On the left Grosland (Nr. 302) is stuck, quite inclined, he fell into a hole hidden in the water. On the right lane nr. 323 begins his crossing. His codriver wades through the swamp, winch rope in his hands. Gilles arrives behind us.

Where to go? We do not want to leave it to Gilles again. Maybe on the far left, left of Grosland? Then diagonally through the swamp? Martin tries by foot. A huge step downwards. Surely a roll over there. The Grosland crew works on their rear winch. This will need some time. 323 went into the swamp in the

meantime, slowly winching through. Quick, over there, before another one decides to use that lane next. Martin crosses the swamp with the rope on all four. Matthias via Intercom: "go right, through the scrubs, I think the Defender needs some time for the steep exit"



Figure 30: Overview of the situation shortly after we have arrived. Notice the stuck 302 (on the right in the background)

323 is through the swamp itself and struggles with the steep exit. Martin fiddles with the rope on a tree 2m right of them. With full winch speed we get across the swamp, but we cant exit here - a marking tape forces us to the left. Use another tree for the winch, but the 323 works with the pulley now and blocks the way. We can go up the ramp two meters and have to switch to another tree for the last part. But now we are out.



Figure 31: Switching anchor points, as the direct exit is blocked by the tape



Figure 32: Final ascend. Notive the detached rope of 323, they let us pass.



Figure 33: Behind the Suzuki is the codriver of Gilles, ready to anchor his rope to the same tree as we do.

After us comes Gilles. He has now a straight line for the crossing and does not fear roll overs. Once strapped to a tree, full throttle, engine revs, 6 wheels dig and he flew across the swamp.

Matthias: "I want THAT!"

We are still back on track before Gilles. A few hundred meters later, hidden in the bushes, a small water crossing, not a problem. Go on. Fly on the track.

A strange noise appears. Like grinding pepper, but on a V8 driven pepper grinder. Repeats. Especially when compressing the springs or braking. I press the clutch, rev up, it gets louder.

Martin: "Would you fancy a stop? I suppose we do not include this noise in the large list of ignored noises."

Stop next to the track. Looking for damage or else. Wheels, wheel arches are fine. In the front, a cucumber-sized branch was pushed in over the front axle, ends in the transmission tunnel, the prop shaft mills its way through the branch. That's the noise. I pull out the branch with ease.

Matthias: "We were lucky. I feared a gearbox damage!"

Gilles did not catch up yet.

We move on. Soon we depart into dark forest, low visible track. Markers on the trees. Entrance to the "Ladoga"-Swamp.

You have to cross a very small stream at the border between forest and marshland. Once crossed, soft ground, only reed and other swamp plants grow there. If you dig through the sod, both axles will have full ground contact. In addition there are not really good trees for winching. So we get in position first, both lockers in and then with a bit of momentum straight onto the marshland. A few hundred meters on ground with questionable capacity, and then we are at the real challenge here. A long swampy mudhole, dug up at the time of our arrival

and the exit is not driveable anymore as well.

But still we are lucky. No one blocks the way. We can attach the rope to a tree in straight line. It is quite far away, 40 to 50 meters, but really in straight line.

But prior to that Mart has to fight his way through the swamp with the rope. A hard task. The swamp has not much water, but the remaining mud is quite sticky. He complains via Intercom:

"I can not move anymore"

"The mud nearly kept my shoes"

"The beer is too far away"



Figure 34: "Ladoga"-Mudhole. Low water level, but very sticky this year.



Figure 35: The exit ramp of the ladoga mudhole. Slippery after the first cars drove up here.

Nearly on all four again he is finally on the other side. Winch rope is in place, I apply pressure on the winch. Using the faster of the two hydraulic gears, we need about 250 bars on the winch. But the car is moving, no reason to use the first gear. Just keep on pulling.



Figure 36 & 37: Winching through "Ladoga"-Mudhole



We get the CPs stamp, nr. 334 is parking there, the crew works on the car. Oh. Bad. We go on. Back on the tank track for a while, maximum possible speed. To make life even more difficult and entertaining for the codrivers, a little loop closed by a compass course was written into the roadbook.

Again the water crossing at the temporary bridge. Some spectators have found the place and don't want to see boring bridge crossings. So they blocked the bridge with some wood. Last night it was not there. So this time its the water way. No problem, less than a meter deep, stable ground.

We move on, back at the junction with the leftover tape, go around and back to the CC track. Some small water crossings are left on the route, but none is a real challenge for us. Now just go on until we see the finish.

This was really good, we had lots of fun. That's the way we love the Breslau, it could be like that everyday. We rank fifth in the extreme class.

In a really good mood we return to the camp, do the usual service, shower, dinner.

No damages, just normal wear. We check even every oil for its color or possible metal debris. Grease everything, replace air filter, clean the alternator, check the bolts of the suspension and the brakes.

A relaxing evening.

The Discovery is missing. Anja calls. The engine blows out between manifold and y-pipe, does not run properly and has reduced power. But they finished.

Maybe limp home mode cause the oxygen sensor makes silly things.

They limp back to the camp, Andre does a field repair with some curses, as the bolts are somewhat shorter than supposed. Engine runs round again.

The suspension is way too soft, especially for the Drawsko area, and above all too soft on the rear axle. We have harder and longer shitpart springs on the service truck, but no one wants to change them only for the last day.

Saturday, 19.09.20

Last day. 130km Drawsko. Time to look at the classification, to calculate our chances and maybe use some tactics.

Overall classification until now:

1: 312 Marsden/Ayre	14:18	
2: 328 Mere/Kujawski	14:21	
3: 301 Drancourt/Walocha	15:27	
4: 303 Hertwig/Hertwig	16:12	<-- Thats us!
5: 334 Plomp/Wijnia	18:10	
6: 325 Daurelle/Hollender	18:19	

The first two cars drive their own race. Three minutes apart, but over an hour to the third car. Only a bigger mistake or problem could change that.

Nr 301 is about our speed, a little bit faster, and often with lesser problems on the way. To catch up 45 minutes on normal track is not possible in a stage of this length. But if we are lucky at the mudholes?

Nr. 334 is next to us in the camp and won't start today, as they have bigger damages.

Nr. 325 is a really fast car, we are only faster at winching sections. When it comes to soft sand tracks we stand no chance, even bumpy tracks are won by their longer wheelbase. They had a lot of fuel problems on the second day, so they are behind. We have over two hours buffer time, that should be enough even if we face some problems.

Concluded: Podium could be possible. Be fast, be at the mudholes before Drancourt gets there and maybe we will be lucky.

We move into the poligon, start time is late at 12:30, as all classes drive the same track today.

Being the fourth extreme car, we are off at a good pace. Tank tracks, after 15km an easy water crossing in a birch wood. After 20km Daurelle/Hollender (325) have closed the gap to us and we let them pass. But we take on the challenge to keep up with them, hard, but possible. 5km later they come to a halt. Navigation? Technical problems?

We take the chance and pass, and manage to keep them behind us for a while. At 35km in the stage, car number 301 of Drancourt and Walocha is at the side of the track. Bonnet is open, they are doing some repairs.



Figure 38: On the left Drancourt/Walocha. Doing repairs as we pass them.

Matthias: "They are third place. Ha, we've closed in."

Martin: "The stage is by far not over, a lot of things can happen on the way."

No, we do not wish for anyone to drop out. But somehow it is for our benefit. And finally, an open bonnet does not mean the end of the race.

A short time later I can spot Daurelle/Hollender from time to time in the rear mirror. Quite far behind, some times there, some times not. At 45 km in the stage they are close behind us and stay there. Overtake alarm goes off. They had patience with us. Keeping right and of the throttle, let them overtake and then we try to keep their pace. The water crossing with the temporary bridge again, this time we come from north. Is the wooden barrier still on the bridge? We can't see it from here. Better use the waterway and full throttle again.



Figure 39: Still wet from the last water crossing.

Maybe it was a little bit too much torque in the wet sand. We get a loud clunky noise while driving. Proportional to speed. Stop. Visual inspection. Nothing to see. Carefully set off again, a loud clunk, a jerk. Came from behind.

Martin: "My personal opinion points to a damage at the final drive unit of the rear axle. Ring or pinion may have lost some teeth. We run them since five years of racing, only with regular inspection. Maybe its over for them."

Matthias: "Thats shit. We go on slowly, could be lucky and this works for a while"

We limp on, not fast, crawling along the track. Listening to the rear axle. Trying not to apply too much torque. Calculating the risk of a suddenly blocked rear axle, followed by a roll over. The noise gets louder and louder over the next five kilometres.

Matthias: "Should dismount propshaft. Blocked diff in mudhole will be shit"

55km are done. Stop. Get two 13mm spanners, Martin crawls underneath the car and gets out the rear propshaft. In the meantime I deflate the tires. 1 bar at the front wheels and 1,4 at the rear is good for traction, but a greatly increased danger of popping of a tire off its rim.

Propshaft is on the roof and fixed with zip ties, tools back in the toolbox, move on. Five other extreme cars passed us while we stood there. But 301 was not among them. Maybe they have a bigger problem?

Martin: "Our tripmaster is not counting anymore. The bolts of the propshaft are out and those trigger the speed sensor."

Pull over again. Put nuts and bolts in place again at the transmission case flange. Again two cars pass us, but still Drancourt in the 301 was nowhere to see.

Matthias: "If they drop out, we just have to finish today without haste. Two hours till the next one, should be enough!"

Martin: "If they drop out. Maybe they just have bigger repairs. The race is over when its over."

We move on. The clunky noise is no more to hear. At least it really was a problem with the rear axle. We have completed more than one stage with only front drive in the last years. Just move on, at moderate speeds, not too slow. Be the last at the mudhole, a narrow lane and bad luck and one hour is easy lost. If you are too fast in a huge bump, you lose one or maybe two front tires, with only one spare.

Some heavy sand passages are really tough now and slow us down, but we manage to cross them with front wheel drive. Don't want to kill the propshaft or the front diff. But we still have to keep the speed, otherwise we will be stuck.

At 75km again the Ladoga swamp. Increased difficulty now. We even get stuck at the first small muddy place before the real swamp. Martin loops the tree strap around several bushes, somehow we need an anchor point to get onto the swamp. Using it with the front wheel drive it works somehow.

Traffic jam at the mudhole. All present cars decided to cross the swamp at the left edge. Near the other side one car is winching towards the exit, two other cars queuing behind.

Martin jumps out, gets the rope and wades through in the middle, rope anchored on the tree behind the swamp and we pull the car through the swamp.

Alas, the competitor in the front made it to the exit lane, blocks the way a short time before we can arrive. Our rope nearly gets caught in his right mirror.

First come, first serve. We loosen our rope again and Martin pulls it aside, so it won't get caught in the Defender's wheels. The Suzuki is quite inclined to the left, the mud soaks into the footwell, the pedals disappear.

The Defender attached his rope to the final tree, but now his winch is not enough. He uses the pulley. Or rather not, he redirects right through a shackle.

Martin via Intercom: "Can't be long until his rope will break, but will take long time then..."

But like a miracle their rope withstands. The Defender exits, as soon as the path is clear we get out too.

At the CP we see a flat tire front left. Damn.

We winch the car aside, jack it up, spare wheel attached.



Figures 40, 41, 42: Changing front wheel right after passing the Ladoga mudhole

Martin: "This stage is not really our stage. Maybe the tire pressure was a little bit too low?"

Hias: "Might be. We try 1,2."

Lowering air pressure at the front left tire to 1,2 bar. Go on, back to the track.

The slightly increased air pressure or maybe the higher weight of the car due to thick mud layers take their toll. We dig even more in the sand. I try to avoid trampling of the axle. Starts easy with too much throttle and is bad for the drive components.



Figure 43: Drawsko, fast track.

At 90km in the stage a T-crossing, tight left and uphill, heavy sand. Not enough momentum, we don't reach the top. Roll down backwards again and up the counter hill, then forward again and get all speed we can get. Enough. Some trampling of the front axle, but we reach flat land again and gain speed. Three corners later, a similar hill, no real possibility to gain speed, and in addition a lot of acceleration bumps from trucks. Full throttle, get close, the car slows down, the wheels dig and trample. Nowhere a tree for a winch rope, we get on the top with the last bits of speed.

Matthias: "We did harder on the front drive in 2018, when we lost the rear propshaft. That was a hard beating then. This is kinda harmless."

Martin: "But I have to remind you that the ring of the front differential was slightly damaged afterwards. We still finished the race, but we had luck with that."

Go on. CHUNK.

Matthias: "Now the last parts of the rear drive are leaving us..."

CHUNK.

Martin: "This sounds and feels familiar. I think this comes from the rear as well."

CHUNK. Does not feel good. Jerk in the drivetrain, something is breaking there. Or is it the rear diff, blocking from time to time?

Foot off the throttle, listening. CHUNK-CHUNK. FUCK.

We roll on for a few metres, it gets worse, finally no more drive. Rolling to a halt.

The front differential seems broken as well.

SHIT.

We winch aside from the track, analysis of the problem.

Propshaft is still in position. No big radial play on the pinion (compared to the bad rear axle). A little bit of drive works, but only for a quarter of a wheel turn. Front locker can not be engaged anymore, the pin does not move in the whole way. Half shafts would do other noises. A damage at ring or pinion seems the most plausible reason. Damn. Both axles aren't working anymore. Maybe we can move for some meters. But we have covered only 95 of total 130km. And a mud hole is listed in the roadbook. A few kilometres hard work with the winch and the remains of the drive might work. But for 35km?

Somehow, we gave up. Way to fast. Race is over, we call the recovery truck.

Breslau 2020 is over for us. Out of race.



Figure 44: End of the race. Inglorious finish in the forest.

Later, two unhasty trucks pass. They even offer to tow us to the finish. Hm. We called recovery, and are out of the race.

Later, on the recovery truck, we pass the prize giving at the finish. No finisher medal for us.

In the camp, we load the Suzuki onto the trailer, no party. I meet Maxence Walocha, codriver at 301. They got badly stuck on the temporary bridge shortly after we passed them and could not get their car rescued without the recovery trucks. No reason for a good mood there, too.

In the same evening we drive off and reach Berlin.

In the final classification we reached 11th position. If we had checked in the stamp card, we had one CP more, two hours faster, but what difference would that have made? Maybe we gave up too fast? Bolt in the rear prop shaft again, hope on enough left teeth and our winch to fight, hope for a truck crew which gives us a tow to the finish? Who knows. Podium seemed out of reach. Theories are made up easy, and do not help anymore.

What remains is a car with some more known weak points, but we also know that we will return. We still have unfinished business with this race

Anja and Eddi finished the rallye in their Discovery successfully and want to return, too.