

Race report Rallye Breslau 2021, Team 317

Saturday, 26.06.2021 - Sunday, 27.06.2021

Finally its Breslau time again. Martin and me are competing with our Suzuki Samurai, as usual in the extreme open class.

We are accompanied by Anja and Edi, starting with the golden Land Rover Discovery in the Cross Country limited class.

The team is completed by our service crew, Andre, Gerhard, Ingo and Max, and new to the team our apprentice Mäx. Nine people in total.



Figure 1: First camp is set up, the cars await the race

The first camp is set up near Recz, on a bumpy meadow in the unused part of the military training ground. Max & Mäx started half a day earlier, did some scouting and picked a fine spot for us.

We begin building our camp, at first the shovels are needed to flatten the ground. Tents, tables, tools out. Some final points on the to do lists of both cars, technical scrutineering, cooking food, and the weekend passed by soon. Our well-equipped service truck is needed to help some befriended teams, too. Welding a broken suspension link, solder a worn down radiator, turning spacers for a trucks shock absorbers, we are happy to help out while we have the time.

Andre hits an open car boot with his head and is forced to wear a funny hat for the next days.



Figure 2: Bored service crew, as the cars are still intact. Note: Andre did not suffer from the impact yet.

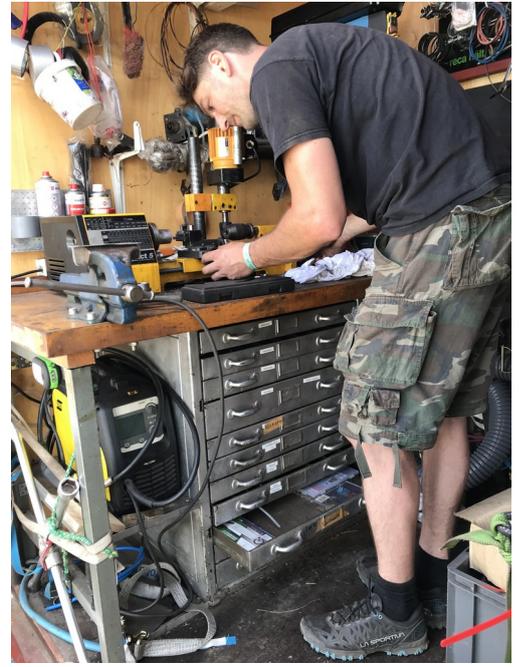


Figure 3: Left: final preparations on the car. Right: a turning machine in the service car can be quite useful

Monday, 28.06.2021

The complete field of about 400 vehicles is gathered on a field next to the camp. A impressive view, and we are part of it.



Figure 4: The full starter field, aerial view.

No clouds in the sky, its a hot and dry day. Two hours wait for us, as the SSVs and Cross Country cars start before.

No hurry. A liaison of 20km out of the camp to the heart of the polygon. Speed limit 40km/h on forest tracks. Good for additional run-in of the new differential gears, but nonetheless a bit boring. On the other hand, if we took the normal route, competitors traffic would collide with the service crews on their route to the shopping malls of Recz.

We arrive at the start line of the first special stage. No damages on the car yet. Good. Every 30s another car crosses the start line. Quite close, the navigation not too easy, we soon run into another car in front, overtake, others closing in behind us, everyone feels the heat of the race. We chase along a tank track, soon turn to a smaller path between the woods.

In the past few weeks some rain fell and so the track is moist in some places - less dust. Less than 10 minutes after the start we enter a washed-out track with huge bumps, over a meter in height, the pits filled with clay, mud with low grip.

Last year this section was also part of the track, we got stuck on the last huge bump and needed the winch. I would not like to repeat that. So more speed. On the far left, there is a deep trench. I choose my path a little to the right. Both lockers engaged, fire. But too much. The right front wheel climbs the slope. We tip over into the trench on the left, more than 90°.



Figure 5: Flipped over. Picture taken a few minutes after the incident. Both crew members have already left the vehicle.

The mud has a depth of about half a meter, i have to raise my head to the left in order to keep breathing. Co driver, driver out. Mud on the glasses, no sight. Roadbook, helmets out of the danger zone on a bush. Get an overview of the situation.

Matthias: "Damn. Damn. Just a few kilometers in the race and its over again. Damn."

Martin: "Cool down. Nothing is lost yet. What should we do now?"

Matthias: "Somehow we need to get back on our wheels again."

We get out the car jack. Applied on the upper right cage tube, inclined and against the left slope.

While we do our job, a lot of cars pass. The first one comes really close, hits our wheels, full throttle and no brains, really dangerous for us to be here. The next cars pass with more distance. It is possible to pass on the right, up on the bank. Team Maszka has to use their winch and breaks an already dead birch tree, a lot of offroad action going on. If we weren't lying in the mud, i'd feel fine.

Martin jacks the car up until the jack is fully extended. At least we are at 90 degrees again. I put the spare tire under the front window pillar, Martin loosens the jack and reattaches it on the now accessible left roll cage tube. Carry on, further upwards. The jack sinks into the ground, but we are at around 70°. Better, but still too much to get it up by hand. Somehow we have to support the car again with the spare tire. Near the centre pillary, maybe?



Figure 6: Car jack fully extended, spare wheel is used as support to rearrange the jack

While we fiddle still around with a stable support, Daniel and Boris arrive, right of us. They ask if we need help.

Yes, we do. They have a rear winch. Just a short pull and we are on all four wheels again.



Figure 7: Help arrives with a 300tdi engine.



Figure 8: Boris brings the car back on its wheels with one hand.

Team Lollipop with their Samurai arrives. Oliver helps us, too, uses his winch to get us out of the mudhole. Nearly dry ground, again. Good news. Our rescuers rejoin the race.



Figure 9: An important aspect of the Breslau is helping each other.

A quick check up. No big leakages, no visible damages. We were lying on the left side, so no oil gets into the air filter.

So, lets try a start.

The engine turns about ninety degrees, then it locks up. Damn. Did somehow water get in there?

Our cyclone pre cleaner (in the middle of the car, behind the seats) is filled with mud, but the air filter is dry.

Good, at least no water. I try to turn the engine with the ratchet, but its locked up.

Okay. Ignition coils and spark plugs need to get out. First spark plug is dry, second one dry, too, number three and four are full of oil. Not many clean and flat surfaces in the engine bay to lay out the demounted parts. One bolt falls down, forever lost in the mud.

All plugs out, revving the engine with the starter. Four nice oil fountains out of the cylinder head. Lying on the side with more than 90° lets the oil flow into the manifold...

Plugs and coils mounted again, spare bolt is found in our toolbox, and we start the engine. A bit smoky, but no abnormal noises and good oil pressure. Fine.



Figure 10: Repairs on the race track

We pack our things again, get rid of some of the mud in the cockpit and the windscreen, and carry on. We lost about an hour with this flip over.

After a few kilometres in the roadbook, we arrive at the water crossing without any winch-usable trees. On the other side, a recovery truck is parked as usual for winch lines to be attached. Most cars have passed a while ago, but one or two on the other side are doing repairs there.

Martin finds a good lane, we get the winch line out and attach it on the truck. We just want to finish now, no more stunts needed. A easy crossing, a stamp from the cp and back on the tank track.

Not much later another water crossing on the track. A moderate one. Both lockers engaged, i try to guess the best lane, crossed with smooth pace. Back on the soft sand track again. The engine has to work hard.

Matthias: "Bad news. That motor is way too hot. Somethings wrong."

Martin: "Stop, let's have a look at the radiator."

The radiator is full of mud. After its been half submerged into the clay, the fins are clogged. Damn. We get rid of the largest bits with compressed air. The fans are working.

We spend ten minutes cleaning and poking dirt out. Enough. We move on.



Figure 11: We are running late. The first motorbikes appear on the track.

Follow the track to the right, uphill. In the meantime the first motorbikes appear, they already finished their first stage and are now on the same terrain as we are for their second stage.

But somehow we are lost, the road book does not fit anymore. We search here and there, meet Daniel and Boris again, which are lost, too and also some others are searching for the right direction. Strange. 15 minutes of clueless searching have passed, then we finally decide to go back, till a picture where Martin was sure to be right.

We find the initial mistake - Martin started from one picture too far after the last repair stop. Not good. But now everything is fine again.

Apart from the engine coolant temperature.

Hotter than usual and further rising on the heavy sand tracks. A few kilometres later, we are at 120°C again.

Stop, off the track, do we need more cleaning?

The left fan, unfortunately the bigger one, worked for a while, although it has been submerged in the mud. But now the dirt has crept into the housing and does its evil work. It still runs, but at a very slow speed, and the small fan on the right is not enough.

Perhaps some oil helps? Nearly half a spray can of oil goes into the fan, but without any effect.

At least we try to clean the radiator a bit more with compressed air.

Martin: "Well, we do not have a lot of options here. Let us continue with slow pace."

That's the way we go on. 30km/h is the max speed on the sand tracks, we can do a bit more on the harder parts, every puddle is used to get some spray cooling on the oil pan. Sometimes we pour water on the radiator when there is no cool place in sight. At a river we can refill our small canister... slowly we crouch till the end of that stage. Apart from two or three small water crossings without need for the winch, there are no big obstacles for the extreme class.



Figure 12: A river allows us to refill our water supplies



Figure 13: A thick layer of mud, but still enjoyable.

First finish, we went far over the max time for that stage, but we finished. Two hours liaison time for 35km, it is allowed to service the car in the camp and we need it pretty bad. Our Team stands ready and do the urgent repairs immediately as we enter the camp.

Change the fan, clean the radiator with a bigger air compressor, clean the jammed belt buckles, and even a shower is possible. (2mm of mud in the face are dried up, every wink is a crumble). No time to go to the fuel station, but 20l petrol are found in the camp. Should be enough.



Figure 14: Quick repair of the coolant system between first and second stage

The changed fan works, let's go. We enter the polygon again, pre-start is near closing time. They tell us, that maybe Gilles Girousse will come after us, otherwise we are the last starters.

Yes, we know. We know the feeling to be the last ones... Go. Straight to the "Ladoga"-mudhole. Three cars are fighting or awaiting a free lane. The common lane is blocked at the exit by a fallen tree, brought down by someone else's winch earlier this day. A new exit has been whacked through the bushes to the left, with a steep and muddy step and therefore a hard obstacle. One car is trying, two behind are waiting for this lane.

Martin has a plan: "We have a fine wood saw in our recovery equipment. I will saw off the thick branches, toss them aside and we can use the straight lane, faster than those guys."

Matthias: "Sounds good. We should attach the winch rope first, so no one will interfere with our path!"

Martin brings the rope across the swamp, I winch the car into the mud and await the clearing of the path. Now the sawing starts. Four cuts are needed, branches with diameters between 8 and 15 cm. Green wood. That takes a while.

In the meantime, the first car on the left lane is out of the mud. Martin is done with the saw, now the wood needs to be pushed aside. Tough stuff, but luckily Team Boomerang joins our plan to reuse the right lane and their co-driver helps Martin with that task.



Figure 15: Martin and Damien Mauro working together, clearing the way.

The rest is easy - engage the hydraulic winch again and leave the mud. Saw, winch rope and Codriver find their spots in the Suzuki again and we move on. We overtook three cars here. Even the first one did not leave the scene before us.

Now we are on the sandy tracks of the military training ground. Time to step on the gas again - for a few kilometres.

The motor is getting to hot... again.

We stop. The fan, which was exchanged during the service stop and worked fine with a good air flow, changed its behaviour and does not provide more than a light breeze. Well, it is a used spare part with unknown background, but still annoying. Damn. To open the fan while we are in the race would take a lot of time. Better drive on with reduced speed.

At least the radiator is cleaner than before. We can drive a higher speed than in the afternoon - but full speed is only possible for short times.

Matthias: "Maybe we can get a new fan somewhere in the camp. Andre or Gerhard could use their persuasion skills to find one for us."

Martin: "Next year, we should invest in watertight rugged fans, and not some worn down used parts!"

Again every puddle is used for additional cooling. About the half of this stage is completed when we arrive at the next swamp crossing, someone called it "swan lake".

Two lanes are possible. On the right Team Bema struggles with the exit slope - we know that those guys take their time when winching. Left is number 312, a extreme-prototype-tube-buggy-V8-"thing", attaching their winch rope on the tree. This lane should be the faster one.

We enter the swamp with the winch, come closer. Suddenly three people on the other side rush to the 312, still in the water, and get the driver out of the car. Unconscious? Four or five people are helping that guy, and we are still on the other side of the swamp.

Well. Our lane is blocked. Back up again only with wheel drive does not work. We could pull the winch rope out backwards for a rear pull, but afterwards we would have to fiddle the rope back in under the car again... no, thanks.

In the meantime, the Bema team is out of the mud. That way is free now. Damn. In our lane still number 312. More than enough people take care of the driver, but the car will stay there for a while.

Maybe we can pass the car on its left side? On the right hand a tough step with big tree roots is in the way. We winch closer. The water level rises, the steering wheel is under water. We pass a tree in the water to our left. Its roots give us a big inclination to the right. No. This will not work. A flip over into the water per day is enough.

Carefully back up. Half a metre is possible until we lose grip and are stuck again. Fine. Change of plans. Winch rope sharp right, two, three meters winching, then the rope back to the first tree, a bit more pull and we are at the bumper of the 312. Straight onwards is a big tree in perfect direction for winching our car out. Before, we have to overcome a small grass hill. Again leaning to the right. If we flip over, we would land on car number 312, fatal damage implied.

Martin secures with tow straps on a nearby tree against our cage. Slowly we crawl over the hill, back into the water again and exit the swamp onto hard ground again. Done. We exit the small forest as the first aid team arrives for the unconscious driver. What happened there?

The CP stamps our timing card and we move on.

Back on the sand tracks. The motor was submerged in the cold water of this swamp for more than 10 minutes. This cooled down the motor a lot and we can drive with full throttle again. Not really. We pulled the ignition coils earlier this day, so the sealing with silicone is broken and some water entered the ignition. Sometimes we have only three working cylinders. But it is not too bad, we decide to move on.

More sand tracks, some small water crossings, no mentionable events on the rest of the stage. 30-40 km in "don't-get-to-hot"-mode and we cross the finish line with the last daylight.

Back to the camp. Service time.

Fan broken? Mäx and Gerhard opened the old one. The brushes were stuck by mud. Cleaned, new grease and it works again. Change it again, it works. I think it should do more, on the other hand - it worked also last year. Dry and reseal the ignition coils, air filter, suspension, oil, interior, windscreen, lights, start numbers and license plates need some attention. Ready to Race again.

We exceeded the maximum time in the first stage today, but as we have all check points, we still get the 14th place out of 28.