



Cherain and Thiry ready to take on the forest!

Two times four RTs in the form of real challenges, frost and ice in the morning, incidents galore, and in the end, two Ford Escort Mk2s at the helm of the Legend Boucles @ Bastogne 2025. There was no doubt that Saturday's stage, which attracted a very large crowd, unleashed the passions...

All eyes were on Thierry Neuville (BMW M3) this Saturday morning in Bastogne. Although the world rally champion showed off his top speed right from the start, he also had to deal with alternator problems, a penalty for speeding and, later in the day, another penalty for clocking in early. However, it took more than that to dampen the spirits of the crowd favourite, a world champion in his own right, who is continuing his adventure in order to enjoy himself, delight the public and enchant the Bastogne region with the furious sound of his Bavarian car...

As for André Lotterer (Porsche 911), the reigning endurance world champion and three-time winner of the Le Mans 24 Hours, he ended up making a mistake, damaging the rear-right of the Porsche. Rest assured, he'll be back tomorrow morning to tackle the RT forest...

Traditionally, Ford Escorts are the queens of Bastogne... but over the last two years, a BMW 325i E30 has threatened them right to the end! A scenario which is confirmed again this year. Leading from one end of the day to the other, Cédric Cherain never had the chance to make his mark, constantly pressed by Bruno Thiry who, at the Legend Boucles, fulfilled the dream of finding himself in such a context at the wheel of a top Escort! By putting in the best performance in the final RT of the day, Les Herdiers d'Ardenne, the former World Rally Championship driver kept up the pressure, although he knew that tomorrow would not be easy, especially in the forest. Cherain and Thiry didn't give up, ensuring a constant spectacle!

The forest is the surface of choice for Guino Kenis, already 3rd in the overall standings with a BMW 325i E30 that's breathing hard! The G&A Racing driver is ready to make his move, knowing that the Legend Boucles' D-Day is on Sunday!

A succession of quick retirements deprived spectators of Jean-Pierre Van de Wauwer (Opel Ascona B, oil leak), Christophe Daco (Ford Escort Mk2, clutch), Frédéric François (Ford Escort Mk2, oil pump belt), Fred Bouvy (Ford Escort Mk2, gearbox), Bastien Rouard (Ford Escort Mk1, torn body) and Geoffrey Leyon (Ford Escort Mk1, clutch), the race for places of honour was full of pleasant surprises.

Emile Breittmayer (Ford Escort Mk1) was the man of the evening, pulling away from the final RT in 4th position after getting the better of Frenchman Maxime Vilmot (Ford Escort Mk2), who wasn't necessarily expected to be at such a party.

The provisional top 10 was completed by Stéphane Lefebvre and Mickael Reydellet, who shared the wheel of the Ford Escort Mk2 at the Legend Boucles @ Bastogne, determined to enjoy themselves as much as possible. They were ahead of Ghislain de Mévius, whose Mazda 323 4WD was running a little hot three-quarters of the way through the day, Christophe De Leeuw (Opel Ascona A), who was as efficient as ever, Olivier Cartelle (Ford Escort Mk2), who was only too happy to finally be able to tackle Sunday's forest RTs, and Eric Mauffrey (Ford Escort Mk2), who confirmed the strong French presence at the top of the standings.

Billy Simoné (BMW 325i E30), 11th, is currently the best regional driver on the stage, with Loïc Pirot (BMW M3) in his wake. Nicolas Blerot (Peugeot 205 GTi) is also in the top 15, just ahead of the superb Nissan Sunny GTi-R of Grégoire de Mévius.

Challenger: hot on the trail!

The 'Challenger' category, contested at an average speed of 80 km/h, was the preserve of the regional crews, but the gaps remained very small! Luc Caprasse and Tony Kairis (Audi Quattro) were the leaders on Saturday evening, but there was real pressure behind them from Jencôme Theis and Laurent Perrée (Ford Escort Mk1), Pierre-Henri Kettels and Romain Sulbout (Ford Escort Mk2), Bruno and Florent Nielen (BMW 325i E30), as well as Dimitri Van Hove and Lionel Windeshausen (Alfa Romeo GTV6)! Crews who constantly swapped positions throughout the day. Let's also mention the great 6th place of our Belgian hero of the last Dakar Jérôme Martiny, accompanied by Frédéric Lejeune (BMW 323i). A promising result...

Classic 65: the Belgium/France match takes place

While some crews have not been spared trouble in the 'Classic 65', starting with the winner of the 2024 edition Michael Bartholemy (Ford Escort Mk1), this time seconded by his son Noah, the other favourites are all there! Yves and Benoit Deflandre (Porsche 911) were in the lead on Saturday evening, but only 22.52 points clear of Frenchmen Christophe Baillet and Gauthier Brignon (Ford Escort Mk2), masters in the art of upsetting the Belgians on their own turf. Continued on Sunday morning...

Claude Ninane and Freddy Cara (Opel Kadett GT/E) rounded off the provisional top 3 after narrowly overtaking Eric Gengou and Didier Gathy (Volvo 142), while Dave Cuynen and Guy Desmet (BMW 320/6) confirmed their excellent performances of the day by edging out Jean-Marc Devillers and Guy Hardenne (Ford Escort Mk2).

Classic 50: a breath of fresh air!

Events followed one another at a frenetic pace in the 'Classic 50', a category which quickly lost Felix Quirijnen and Philip Copmans (Citroën Dyane 6), who went off the road! Patrice Simon and Christian Bernard (Porsche 924) led for most of the stage, before handing over to Mario Varrewaere and Pablo Cracco (Nissan Sunny GTi) for 6.55 points! Alain Collée and Didrik Mortier (Alfa Romeo GT Junior) completed the provisional top 3, ahead of Peter Wouters and Charly Laroye (Alfa Romeo Giulia 1600 S) on one side and Jérôme Ambrosini and Montgomery Abel (Audi 80 GT) on the other. A matter for specialists.

Tribute: popularity ratings

There were three of them, and on Saturday they took part in 3 RTs, at an average speed of 30 km/h. They are the Jeep Willys in the 'Tribute Battle of the Bulge' category! Their popularity in Bastogne is high. At the end of the first stage, before setting off on a long trek through the forests, it was Edouard de Braekeleer and Frederic van Rijckevorsel, in the Gendarmerie Jeep, who were in the lead, with a 100-point advantage over Philippe Vermaut and Renaat Declerck

This Sunday, shortly after 9 a.m., the final stage of the Legend Boucles @ Bastogne will get underway, with three forest RTs on the programme, including a 30-kilometre marathon, and an asphalt RT, which the 'Legend/Challenger' competitors will contest twice. By the time the leaders return to Bastogne at 4pm, a lot will have changed.

Place your bets!

Photos libres de droits : J.F. & J. Fiasse

Classements :

Legend/Challenger/Tribute : <https://new.jbtc.be/live/lbb2025>

Classic65/Classic50 : <https://new.jbtc.be/live/lbbc2025>

www.racspa.be

