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COPA DACIA



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After winter, spring always follows

Romanian driver, Cristiana Oprea (26) had a most unexpected debut in her season in the Romanian National Rally Championship. After her first ever proper test session on tarmac with the ProRally Team and with experienced Diana Hațegan as her new co-driver, the weather changed dramatically, leaving Romania under heavy snow.

The first event of the season was the Tess Rally Brașov at the end of March, and, although it should not have been a "winter rally", the conditions were very difficult for the 2WD Dacia Sandero. After a steady pace on slippery and frozen early special stages, the ladies finished the first day in fifth place overall (out of eleven crews) in the Dacia Cup. The result was good, given the fact that, since last year, they have halved their time difference, compared to the best in their group. Plus, no studded tyres are allowed in the Dacia Cup, so the crews had to choose between race tyres and winter 'street' tyres, with Cristiana choosing the former.

However, the second day had some surprises in store for Cristiana. The day started with the "Queen" of all Romanian stages - the 27,5 km Babarunca, which has to be driven once each way. Unlike any other year, the tarmac was extremely slippery, owing to the mixture of de-icing materials, sun, melting snow and low temperatures, which allowed Babarunca to take her share of victims from among the Dacia competitors. With a little bit of luck, Cristiana found herself in third position, with a big gap to those ahead and with only three more special stages left, which were all short (around ten kilometres) and dry. One of the top competitors lost six minutes stuck in the snow, but he managed to

continue and tried to make up lost time.

The battle was fierce, challenging Cristiana and Diana to give their best performance on the stages. On the uphill Pârâul Rece, they managed to have achieved the second best time of the stage, thus gaining the respect of their colleagues'. But, after a long and challenging day, the power stage proved to be decisive and the ladies lost third place by only four seconds, after a remarkable come-back by the above-mentioned competitor.

The next event is also on tarmac, the Transilvania Rally on 3-5 May, and Cristiana and Diana want to put in an even better performance, now that they are 100% confident in each other and Sean D'Or. Their aim is to break a twelve year-old record in the Dacia Cup, as, out of over one hundred rallies, no other all-female crew has ever finished on the overall podium of even one event.

