
Date: 19.11.2023 **Time:** 09:00 hrs
Subject: STEWARDS DECISION No. 4 **Document No:** 2.5

From: The Stewards
To: The Clerk of the Course
Cc: All competitors / crew members
FIA WRC Safety Delegate
FIA WRC Commission

The Stewards, having received a report and having heard from the Clerk of Course, have considered the following matter and determine the following:

Facts Prior to the start of SS9 (Nukata Forest 1), zero car A stopped twice on the stage in an unsafe position and disrupted the running of 4 competing cars.

Offence Failure by the Clerk of the Course to take reasonable measures, thus resulting in an unsafe situation (Breach of Art. 12.2.1.h of the 2023 FIA International Sporting Code).

Decision A serious and unsafe situation occurred because the Clerk of the Course started the stage without ensuring that it was safe to do so. This was due primarily because of the failure of the crew of zero car A to follow the directions given at three pre-event Safety Briefings to not stop on the stage after leaving the start. Then the Clerk of the Course failed to properly check where zero car A was before starting the stage. The Stewards have determined this is a breach of Article 12.2.1.h of the 2023 FIA International Sporting Code and therefore:

- 1- Impose a reprimand on the Clerk of the Course, as the person responsible for conducting the Event.
- 2- Refer this incident to the FIA WRC Commission for further action, if deemed appropriate.

Reason The Stewards initially met with the Clerk of the Course on Saturday 18 November 2023 at 10:30 hrs and requested him to prepare and submit a comprehensive report of what had occurred and to identify the cause of the unsafe situation (namely the start of the stage before zero car A had exited the stage).

At 16:00 hrs the Clerk of the Course returned to the Stewards' office and presented his detailed report, which included a map of the stage with all relevant markings and time stamps. The Stewards asked the Clerk of the Course, with the assistance of his translator, to clarify the context and factual situation referred to in his report.

The Clerk of the Course informed the Stewards that the tracking system showed that zero car A had stopped twice on the stage. The Clerk of the Course's assumption was that zero car A was having mechanical problems. He said he later discovered that the reason for the stopping was to oversee the removal of unauthorised persons that the crew of zero car A had located on the stage as they were moving through it and were experiencing a restricted capacity to report this fact to Rally HQ via the radio network. According to the Clerk of the Course's statement, he was told by the Stage Commander that zero car A was clear of the stage before starting it, but his subsequent investigation revealed that there was a misunderstanding by the Stage Commander as to where zero car A had reported its whereabouts. He had assumed from a report from the Stage

Commander that zero car A had moved off the stage into a safe position and everything was in order for him to start the stage.

The Stewards adjourned the hearing at 16:30 hrs and requested the Clerk of the Course to return with the crew of zero car A to further explain what had occurred.

At 16:50 hrs, the Clerk of the Course returned to the Stewards' room with the Driver of zero car A, Mr. Hiroshi Hoshino, and the Co-Driver, Ms. Hiroko Takahashi, as well as with Mr. Tadayoshi Sato, the Course Car Co-ordinator for the Event.

The Driver and Co-Driver of zero car A confirmed the statement of the Clerk of the Course. They said that they had acted under pressure because there was no radio signal where they were then positioned, so they were unable to relay to Rally Control the presence of the unauthorised persons on the stage. They stated they were concerned about the safety of the unauthorised persons on the stage. They added they had located a marshal on the stage and had asked him to report this to the Stage Commander. They said the marshal had replied that the Stage Commander requested them to assist with the clearing of the people from the stage. They therefore had assumed that the stage would not be started until they had removed themselves from the stage into a safe position.

The Driver and Co-Driver of zero car A acknowledged that they had been instructed in three pre-event Safety Briefings that the role of the zero car was not to stop on the stage once it has left the start and that, by doing so, they had failed to follow instructions, which caused the unsafe situation to occur.

The Clerk of the Course offered to accept full responsibility of the actions of the crew of zero car A, who had themselves accepted that they had acted in the heat of the moment and in an inappropriate manner. The Clerk of the Course provided his full cooperation with the Stewards' investigation in a transparent way, as did the Officials concerned.

The Stewards took into consideration some circumstances that conspired against the Clerk of the Course, which are that radio communications between zero car A and the Rally HQ and/or the Stage Commander was not possible due to limitations of the local radio network and the terrain involved. Further, there was the failure of the crew of zero car A to follow directions and there was a misunderstanding by the Stage Commander as the location of zero car A.

However, the Stewards consider that this isolated incident is of a serious enough nature and refer it to the FIA WRC Commission for further action if deemed appropriate.

This decision was taken in accordance with Articles 11.11.3, 12.2.1.h, and 12.4.1.b of the 2023 FIA International Sporting Code as well as Article 1.1.3 of the 2023 FIA World Rally Championship Sporting Regulations.

All parties concerned are reminded that certain decisions of the Stewards may be appealed, in accordance with Article 15 of the 2023 FIA International Sporting Code and Chapter 4 of the FIA Judicial and Disciplinary Rules.



François Dumont
The Stewards



Chris McMahon



Kunihiro Tabata

RE: STEWARDS DECISION No. 4 – FORUM8 RALLY JAPAN 2023

This decision was notified to the Clerk of the Course as below:

<i>Name (in block letters):</i>	HARUO TAKAKUWA	<i>Date:</i>	19.11.2023
<i>Position:</i>	Clerk of the Course	<i>Time:</i>	09.28

Acknowledged by the Clerk of the Course on 19.11.2023:

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10.135

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