

## Hannu Mikkola, Tommi Mäkinen, Marcus Grönholm... - Juha Laaksonen added his name to a tough list!

### Juha Laaksonen, a rally driver from Humpvila, won the legendary Mänttä 200 –rally

Historic Rally Trophy season continued in the neighborhood of Mänttä-Vilppula. Legendary Mänttä 200 –rally was a two day event. On Friday there was a two special stages and on Saturday the drivers drove five stages.

Juha Laaksonen and his co-driver Esa Ekola were in a good mood before the rally. New car worked almost flawlessly in the first event of the season in Savonlinna. They managed to get 2<sup>nd</sup> place overall from the season opener. Now it was time to drive for the win.

On the first stage of Mänttä 200 –rally, Laaksonen had a minor error in the start line. The car moved a little before the start time and it meant 10 second penalty for Laaksonen. Despite the penalty, the driving was real good on Friday. After two stages, Juha and Esa were on the 3<sup>rd</sup> place overall. Volkswagen-driver Janne Lindberg was in the lead and Ford-driver Sami Tuominen was in the second place. Laaksonen hold the third place with a 3,7 second gap to Lindberg.



For Saturday Laaksonen had only one thing in his mind: Victory! First objective was to drive the lost time back in the first stage of the day. And Juha succeeded in the first objective, he was fastest on the third stage by 0,2 second gap to Kimmo Juhannusvuori. Overall leader after Friday, Janne Lindberg loses 6,1 second so Laaksonen moved to 2,4 second overall lead.

- Penalty from the first stage annoyed me, but we decided to drove third stage as fast as we can to catch Lindberg, and we succeeded, Laaksonen told.

On the fourth stage there was a minor engine malfunctioning with the Volkswagen. That slowed Laaksonen a little and he managed to be fourth fastest on the stage. Jari Nurminen was fastest and Juha loses 9 seconds to him. Lindberg was only 0,7 seconds faster than Laaksonen so the overall leader still was Laaksonen with 1,7 seconds difference to Lindberg.

On the fifth stage there was a minor setback because Lindberg has some problems with his car. There was an oil leak and that forced Lindberg to retire after 5<sup>th</sup> stage. Kimmo Juhannusvuori rose to second place in the competition with 15 second difference to Laaksonen.

- Too bad that Lindberg had problems. We have a nice competition with him before the retirement, Laaksonen fretted about Lindbergs situation.

There was still two stages to go and about 20 kilometers. Laaksonen held his speed and managed to win the rally with 15,9 seconds difference to Kimmo Juhannusvuori.

- Rally went well. There were a lot of spectators on the route. We had some problems with the new car. Pistons were broken and that was due to engine malfunctioning, Laaksonen told after the rally.

### **Mänttä 200-rally final results:**

<b>1. Juha Laaksonen – Esa Ekola, VW Golf 16 S (h19)</b>	<b>55:15,2</b>
2. Kimmo Juhannusvuori – Janne Juhannusvuori, Ford Escort RS 2000 (h17)	55:31,1
3. Jari Nurminen – Pentti Savela, Volvo 242 (h20)	56:15,5
4. Jari Heinänen – Raine Takanen, Opel Ascona B (h20)	56:25,8
5. Petri Tiiikkala – Jari Heinikoski, Opel Ascona 400 (h20)	56:40,6
6. Vesa Kahelin – Tomi Mäkinen, Volvo 242 (h20)	57:03,9
7. Anssi Laurell – Olavi Hallikainen, Ford Escort 1600 (h16)	57:20,1
8. Heikki Westerlund – Hanna Valonen, Opel Manta 2.0 E (h23)	57:31,1
9. Vesa Rissanen – Pekka Suhonen, Ford Escort RS 2000 (h14)	57:36,3
10. Tommi Hannuksela – Kai Päivämaa, Ford Escort RS 2000 (h14)	57:37,0



Text and pictures: Timo Nikkilä