



SILK WAY 2018 RALLY 丝绸之路拉力赛



PRESS RELEASE

Bivouac in Astrakhan, 23 July 2018

Temperature: 21°

GMT +3

S.3 – ELISTA-ASTRAKHAN: “Back to the future” (475,38 km)

Special stage 3: 332 km

HUNT AND SOTNIKOV WALK ON WATER

While up until yesterday the rally had enjoyed ‘summer holiday’ weather in a region where rain is rare, violent storms hit today’s stage. With race and safety conditions deteriorating by the minute, the organisers decided to stop the race at CP1 (km 140). It is in these exceptional conditions that Harry Hunt Peugeot 3008 DKR Maxi No 107 won the third stage of the 2018 SILK WAY RALLY. The British driver takes over the lead in the car class following the problems encountered by Nasser Al-Attiyah (Toyota Hilux n°101), forced to leave Elista with just two-wheel drive and who lost almost an hour getting stuck in the mud. In the trucks the special stage being stopped at kilometre 140 (CP1) allowed Dmitry Sotnikov (Kamaz-Master) to strengthen his position as overall leader.

OF NOTE

- # Hunt’s joy, Al-Attiyah’s disappointment
- # Nifontova by the skin of her teeth
- # Sotnikov out of the mud
- # Tomorrow: “On the tracks of Astrakhan”

Cars: Hunt... chases down Al-Attiyah

With the sky falling in on his head Nasser Al-Attiyah nevertheless retains his legendary smile. Without rear-wheel drive on his Toyota Hilux since yesterday, the Qatari driver didn’t have any easy time of it on this 3rd stage back to Astrakhan. Stuck just 3 kilometres from CP1 (km140) and fearful of having problems with his clutch it took him more than 50 minutes and a big helping hand from the Russian driver Krotov (BMW X3 n°11) to finally make it to the control point. A blessing for his rivals who redoubled their efforts to get to the finish line in





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the heavy rain. Sensing his chance and perfectly guided by his co-driver Sébastien Delaunay, Harry Hunt (Peugeot 3008 DKR Maxi n°107) fought it out with the two MINI John Cooper Work of Yazeed Al Rahji and Nani Roma. Between forced showers and barely controlled slides the three of them were the only ones to make it to the end of the special, crossing the line within seconds of each other. In the end it was the British driver who took his first stage victory just 48 seconds ahead of Al Rahji, in the process taking the overall lead by more than 18 minutes on the Saudi driver. With the race stopped at CP1 Al-Attiyah was classified as 16th on the stage and is this evening in 3rd place, 55:24 behind Hunt.

T2 & T3 in brief

Nifontova keeps her overall lead - just

For Anastasia Nifontova (Toyota Land Cruiser n°132) this 3rd stage was almost disastrous. Giving away nearly 46 minutes to the Chinese driver Zi Yun Gang (Toyota Land Cruiser n°134), the Russian saw her comfortable overall lead melt like the snow. Second on the day, the other Toyota of Chinese driver Lu Binglong, completes the provisional podium in the T2 category reserved for production vehicles. A change of leaders however in the T3 class (SSV), where the Russian Mariia Oparina (Maverick X3 n°115) was overhauled by the Bulgarian driver Petar Cenkov (Quaddy Yxz n°130), winner of the stage ahead of the Frenchman Frédéric Chavigny (Polaris RZR n°126).

Trucks: Sotnikov out of the mud hole

The pictures say it all: three Kamaz stuck up to their axles in a giant mud hole. The scene takes place some 20 kilometres from CP1. After Karginov, it was the turn of Nikolaev and his black 'Kapotnik' to get impossibly stuck. Arriving to help out his team mates, it was then Anton Shibalov who lost his footing. Starting last this morning from Elista, after driving all night, following repairs to his Renault Sherpa, in the end it was Martin Van Den Brink who saved the Russian team from their 'ship wreck'. The Dutchman will be able to celebrate his birthday in style after finally finishing second on the day behind the only Kamaz to get through the mud, that of Dmitry Sotnikov. In the process the winner of the 2017 edition increases his overall lead on his team mates Mardeev and Karginov by 26 and 35 minutes respectively. But the





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misadventure of the day goes without contest to the MAZ Sport Auto team, whose leader Siarheii Viazovich, conceded more than 3 hours, stuck off-piste after trying to go round an obstacle.

ROAD BOOK

Tomorrow: Stage 4 – ASTRAKHAN-ASTRAKHAN : “On the tracks of Astrakha” - 390,58 km

For this second loop around Astrakhan (390,58 km, of which 366,03 are special stage), after today’s mud, the sand should make the special stage considerably more ‘driveable’, in spite of the rain on terrain alternating between fast sections and whoops. Care will need to be taken with possible ruts caused by the passing of the rally on SS1 of the previous Saturday. Navigation will once again be tricky...

DID YOU KNOW?

Russia’s Merzouga...

Astrakhan, nestling between the Volga and the Silk Road, possesses a thousand and one marvels. But apart from its Kremlin and its innumerable Buddhist temples, its furs and its caviar, the place that the Tatars named over 500 years ago the ‘star of the desert’ is the gateway to the largest desert in Europe. It is here that the Russian all-terrain rally championship is held every year in dunes that are every bit as impressive as those to be found in North Africa and South America. The Russian, Belarus and Kazakh competitors know the region like the back of their hands. “It is a little bit like our Merzouga”, confirms Anton Shibalov, one of the drivers in the Kamaz-Master team, who in addition to racing here in their national series, carries out almost all their tests in preparation for the biggest races of the year.

STAGE 2 – INTERVIEWS

CARS

Harry Hunt (G-B/Peugeot 3008 DKR Maxi n°107 – 1ST)

‘Still a long way to go’

‘Good – it was really wet with a lot of standing water. Very muddy and very slippery and with 2-wheel drive it was pretty tricky. We got stuck once just before CP2 and Yazeed overtook us. Anyway now we’re in the lead which is good but there’s still a long way to go and everybody





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can lose time. With Nasser almost 1 hour behind that should just about be OK (laughs). But you know you get a puncture, have some problems... I'll just carry on driving fast and having fun. Keep doing what I'm doing and try and enjoy it'

Yazeed Al Rajhi (SAR/MINI John Cooper Works n°103 – 2ND)

'Very slippery'

'Everything OK. We enjoyed ourselves and everything went well. The track was very difficult, very muddy and very slippery. We didn't know they had cancelled the stage (editor's note: they had already passed CP2 when the decision was taken).'

Nani Roma (Spa/MINI John Cooper Works n°104 – 3RD)

'Happy with my speed...'

'Really raining a lot and a lot of mud – really difficult conditions. These cars aren't made for this and nor are the tyres. The problem was that the tracks were so slippery that we went to the sides to drive on the grass but in the grass there's some big holes. When I saw the conditions I thought the race would be stopped at CP1. But when I got there they didn't say anything so I carried on. Same thing at CP2. But now, after my issues on the first day, we're really happy to be here. I didn't expect to be so fast today. These guys like Yazeed and Harry have done a lot of races during the year and for me it's my first race of the season and so to have this speed after the third day this is quite nice.'

Mathieu Serradori (Fra/Buggy SRT n°108 – 4TH)

'Never seen anything like that before...'

'Complicated day, but complicated for everyone. We started 5th on the road this morning ahead of all the trucks. The idea was to hold onto the guys at the front and I think we succeeded in that as we were 4th at CP1. After that weather conditions became apocalyptic. I've never seen anything like that before. People had warned me about it, I'd seen it on the TV and now I've experienced it for myself. The amount of water, both on the track and off the track was unbelievable and you didn't know whether to stay on the piste or not. With the 2-wheel drive we had some big frights and plenty of times I thought it was all over for us. Now we're happy to be back at the bivouac, there's still everything to play for, anything can happen.'

Nasser Al-Attiyah (Qat/Toyota Hilux n°101- 16TH)

'Not going to be easy – but I'll do my best to win this race...'

'Yesterday we had the problem with the rear differential. We tried to fix it but couldn't so we decided to remove it. Today we knew it was going to be a difficult day for everybody. Then





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we arrived at CP1 and the organisers told us to stop. But we'd already lost a lot of time from the beginning. Still we have four days and we try and fix the car. It is not going to be easy but I will do my best to win this race.'

TRUCKS

Dmitry Sotnikov (Rus/Kamaz-Master n°300 - 1ST)

'It was really bad today. It was literally impossible to drive in these kind of conditions. I think that before the start no one expected that it would be so hard to stay on the track today, especially because after the organizers briefing where they said that the stage would be like the previous one, but the weather changed everything. It wasn't too slippery at the beginning, everything was under our control. But when the rain became stronger, the truck became impossible to control. The visibility was not good and I didn't think about trying to drive fast. The only idea we had was just to drive.'

Martin Van Den Brink (NDL/Renault n°304 – 2nd)

'Yesterday we spent the whole day repairing the truck and then we arrived at the bivouac to take the start at 6 o'clock in the morning. We slept for one hour and then started last. We overtook all the buggies, some cars and some trucks. Then just before CP1 there were lots of Kamaz stuck in the mud. We pulled out one Kamaz, I think No 306 and then we continued to CP1. It wasn't too clear there if the race was cancelled so we carried on to CP2. We were second today and so I'm happy because it is my birthday. Difficult to win when you have to come right from the back.'

