



SILK WAY 2018 RALLY 丝绸之路拉力赛



S.1 – ASTRAKHAN - ASTRAKHAN “The whoops and pipeline track” 347,97 km

SS1 : 311 km

Al-Attiyah and Sotnikov, first across the line

Nasser Al-Attiyah (Toyota Hilux) in the cars and Dmitry Sotnikov (Kamaz-Master) in the trucks have won the first stage of the 2018 SILK WAY RALLY, run as a loop around Astrakhan. This first special stage could in no way be considered a gentle warm up and provoked a number of upsets. The first competitors to run out of luck were Nani Roma (MINI John Cooper Works No 104), Mathieu Serradori (Buggy SRT), Martin Van Den Brink (Renault Mammoet) and Akira Muira (Toyota Land Cruiser Autobody)...

Of note

- # Cars: Al-Attiyah tries to find the right pace
- # T2: Miura breaks down, Nifontova takes the lead
- # Trucks: Sotnikov saves the day
- # Tomorrow: “Marathon stage in the Kalmoukie Desert”

Cars: Al-Attiyah tries to find the right pace....

Opening this first stage, Nasser Al-Attiyah and Matthei Baumel (Toyota Hilux No 101) spent the whole day without seeing another competitor. On a track that was sometimes hard on the suspension, the duo struggled to find the right pace against the competition that wasn't spared their fair share of problems and bad luck. First to run into difficulties was Nani Roma (MINI John Cooper Works No 104) victim of stomach problems that forced him to turn back at CP1 (km 118) after a chaotic start. Returning to the bivouac, the Spanish driver made straight for the medical tent and will most likely restart tomorrow morning, despite having said goodbye to any chance of featuring well in the overall results right from the start. If it was a route that suited the buggies, a right rear puncture dashed the hopes of Harry Hunt (Peugeot 3008 DKR Maxi No107) mid-special. The British driver finally finished second on the day, 2:30 behind the winners. Same problem for Yazeed Al Rahji (MINI John Cooper Works No 103). Setting off on a false rhythm and also victim of a puncture, the Saudi gave away more than





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20 minutes. Fighting for the 3rd place on the day, until just 15 kilometres from the finish, Mathieu Serradori (Buggy SRT No 108) ended up losing nearly one hour after repeatedly running out of petrol due to as yet unexplained heavy fuel consumption.

T2 and T3 categories in brief

Miura breaks down, Nifontova takes the lead

The T2 category for production vehicles also had its share of upsets. After only 20 kilometres of special stage, the Japanese driver Akira Miura (Toyota Land Cruiser Autobody No 120), the favourite on the race, was forced to turn back with gearbox problems. A gift for the Russian driver Anastasia Nifontova (Toyota Land Cruiser No 132) who takes the early lead on her first race in the desert on four wheels. The ex-motorcycle champion leads the Turkmen competitor Shamyrat Gurbanov (Nissan Patrol No 141) and the Chinese driver Zi Yun Gang (Toyota Land Cruiser No 134) by over an hour. In the T3 class it is the Frenchman Nicolas Duclos (Polaris RZR No 117), 7th overall, who posts the fastest time ahead of the Russian female pairing of Mariia Oparina and Taisiia Shtaneva (Maverick X3 No 115). The Bulgarian Petar Cenkov (Quaddy YXZ No 130) completes the day's T3 podium.

Trucks: Sotnikov saves the day

In the truck class everyone was expecting an orderly procession of Kamaz at the finish. In the end it failed to materialise. First on the road, Dmitry Sotnikov (KAMAZ-MASTER No 300) was passed by his team mate Eduard Nikolaev (KAMAZ-MASTER No 301) closely followed by the Dutchman Van Den Brink in his Renault Mammoet. But the charge at the front wouldn't last long. Running into hydraulic problems, Nikolaev would lose more than an hour, while a fuel leak followed by an errant front wheel would put an end to the Flying Dutchman's ambitions. While Airat Mardeev (Kamaz-Master No 303) struggled with his diff lock and then his power steering, Sotnikov continued on his way to win the stage and save Kamaz's honour. Second on the day, the Belarus Viazovich (MAZ No 302) finished just 6 minutes behind the leader with Andrey Karginov (Kamaz-Master No 309) completing the podium.

ROAD BOOK

Tomorrow: Stage 2- ASTRAKHAN-ELISTA : "Marathon in the Kalmoukie Desert" - 472,6 KM





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First point to point stage of the rally, the second stage, run in the heart of the Kalmoukie Desert (472,6 kms, of which 365,5 km are special stage) will make up the first part of the marathon stage laid on by the organisers. No assistance and the finish in Elista. Competitors will therefore need to be extra vigilant, especially as there will be many changes of direction, often on difficult to see tracks. Although the special stage is in the main 'rolling', competitors will need to stay on the course at the end of the special to avoid the numerous holes and invisible washouts...

DID YOU KNOW?

What's a marathon stage?

This Sunday the 2nd stage will be run under regulations specific to marathon stages. Although not comparable to the Olympic running race, the notion of endurance is nevertheless primordial. In rally-raid in general and on this 2018 SILK WAY RALLY in particular, a marathon stage means that competitors will be deprived of all assistance at the bivouac in Elista, with all the vehicles being placed in a parc ferme as soon as they arrive. The challenge then is for the competitors to manage as best they can their vehicles and their tyres so as to successfully complete the 950 kilometres that make up the two days. Those who run into difficulty will have to pray they make it to CP2 (km 215,53 of the third stage) where assistance will once again be authorised, though of course any time taken there will be added on to their overall stage time...

INTERVIEWS

CARS

Nasser Al-Attiyah (Qat/Toyota Hilux n°101- 1st)

'We were worried..'

'Yes it was a hard stage. It's a long time since we did a stage like this – bumpy and fast. Because we opened the road we didn't know the speed to go. We were worried we weren't fast enough but now its more than 2 minutes and nobody else has arrived, so it looks like we had the good speed. The Toyota Hilux is really working well and also the BF Goodrich tyres were really good on this kind of sandy and muddy terrain. We are quite happy. We finished the day without any problems and now we try and fix something on the suspension side and tomorrow will be another day.'

Harry Hunt (G-B/Peugeot 3008 DKR Maxi n°107 – 2nd)

'Good fun!'





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'I think the stage quite suited the buggy – quite bumpy. Hotter than I thought it would be and we got one puncture but never mind it was good. We passed Nani (Roma) and Yazeed (Al Rahji) If it is all like that it's going to be a long race. Very bumpy but good fun.'

Yazeed Al Rajhi (SAR/MINI John Cooper Works n°103 – 3rd)

'A difficult one'

'I had a puncture on the right side and I had no jack. The stage was very rough and bumpy – a difficult one. I stopped in the river bed. I don't know what happened to Nani...'

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

'I try tomorrow...'

'I don't know what happened exactly. We started on some really nice tracks but after kilometre 25 something like that I started to feel bad. I stopped 4 times. Then I stopped at CP1 to try and recover a little bit, drank some water and saw a doctor there and she said to me that I had to stop racing today. I feel pain in my eyes and in my head. I try tomorrow if it is possible. A real pity for me. After my accident on the Dakar I was looking forward to getting back in the car again. I don't know exactly what happened. Maybe I eat something bad yesterday but its really strange. I don't think it is as a result of my accident in Dakar, more a problem with my stomach, something like that. I make a lot of check ups and have driven other cars since.'

Mathieu Serradori (Fra/Buggy SRT n°108)

'Inexplicable...'

'When we started this morning we had 45 litres more petrol than we needed. But for some inexplicable reason we used more fuel than normal and ran out of petrol 11 kilometres from the finish. It is particularly annoying because up until then this stage had gone exactly to plan. We could have finished 3rd today. Fortunately Andrey Rudskof, who we helped out last winter on the Africa Eco Race stopped and towed us to the finish. We will send the info from our engine to our engineer in France so that he can look at this anomaly.'

TRUCKS

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





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'We've more experience...'

'We come to Astrakhan practically every year but the organisers managed to surprise us with a first special that was almost unknown to us! It was however a nice surprise! It was an incredible day. We have more experience with the new engine. We have been using it for a year now. We are happy to finish this long and difficult stage without the slightest problem. That proves the capabilities of our team and underlines our ambitions on this 2018 SILK WAY RALLY.'

Eduard Nikolaev (Rus/Kamaz-Master n°301)

'A problem with the compressor'

'Before CP1 (km 118) everything was going well for us and we were leading the race. But unfortunately in the second part a problem with the air compressor system costs us a lot of time. But even if we have come here for a result, this 2018 SILK WAY RALLY is essentially a real-life test for us. Each team is testing something new that we will use on the next Dakar.'

Airat Mardeev (Rus/Kamaz-Master n°303)

'A very complicated day'

Our troubles started with the front differential which costs us quite a lot of time. Then we stopped next to Nikolaev, though in the end we were unable to help him. At 80 kilometres from the end we started to lose our power steering and I can tell you we suffered in the sand. Then not far from the finish line we had a fuse blow and we free-wheeled to the line... It was a very complicated day...'

