



Icy start into the World Cup season

- Two MINI ALL4 Racing vehicles to contest the Baja Russia
- Challenge on ice and snow

“Get out your warm gear” definitely is the motto for the coming weekend when the FIA Cross Country Rally World Cup is going to kick off its 2015 season. After the heat and the sand they had to cope with in the Dakar Rally, all the competitors and the two MINI ALL4 Racing pairings now will have to face coldness, snow and ice – in the Northern Forest Baja Russia (20th to 22nd February, 2015). Dutch pairing Erik van Loon / Wouter Rosegaar who finished fourth in the Dakar will make their first appearance in the Russian Baja. Meanwhile, the second MINI ALL4 Racing will be raced by the Russians Vladimir Vasilyev and Konstantin Zhiltsov who finished runner-up in last year’s edition of the event and won FIA World Cup title, at the end of the season. In the 2015 Dakar, they finished fifth.

After the Dakar, the two vehicles were flown to Frankfurt, to have the time to prepare them for the icy adventure in the team’s headquarters in Trebur. After all, they will have to cope with completely different conditions, there. In the Dakar, you try as hard as you can to cool the engine, the differential and the gearbox as well as possible. For the event in Russia, however, the engineers and mechanics have to find solutions for making sure that these areas are kept warm enough for working flawlessly. The gearbox, for instance, needs a working temperature of 80 to 90 degree. And the drivers also need a heating instead of an air condition system. In addition, the cars are shod with spikes, providing grip on the icy and snowy track surfaces. And the mechanics will be provided with heated tents, enabling them to work on the cars at bearable temperatures.

Venue of the Baja is the Russian republic Karelia. The service park of the event will be erected in the city of Sortavala, right at the Finnish border. The first stage will be contested on Friday afternoon – with the special stage featuring a length of 9.5

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kilometres. The second and the third stages, contested on Saturday and Sunday respectively, feature a 159.kilometre special stage each.

“Last year we made our first appearance in the Baja Russia and this debut meant a lot of stress for us,” reveal X-raid GmbH CEO Sven Quandt. “After all, we didn’t exactly know what kind of impact the freezing cold would make on the MINI ALL4 Racing. This year, we travel to Russia in a more relaxed mood. For Erik, however, driving on ice and snow will represent a completely new challenge. While Vladimir already gathered experience with his MINI ALL4 racing in the 2014 edition of the event..”