



Successful Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge for the MINI ALL4 Racing

- Six MINI ALL4 Racing pairings in the top 10
- Impressive testing mileage with the buggy

Today, the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge, second round of the FIA World Cup for Cross Country Rallies, ended with six MINI ALL4 Racing vehicles securing top-10 results. Yazeed Al-Rajhi (KSA) and Timo Gottschalk (GER) finished second behind the Toyota of winner Nasser Al-Attiyah. Mikko Hirvonen (FIN) and Michel Périn (FRA) finished third, in the desert rally. US-American Bryce Menzies who contested his first desert rally behind the wheel of a MINI ALL4 Racing delivered in particularly fine style and clinched fourth place right away. Behind him, Jakub Przygonski (POL) and his new Belgian navigator, Tom Colsoul, finished fifth.

The local heroes, Sheik Khalid Al Qassimi / Khalid Al Kendi (both UAE) made it to seventh place while the German pairing Stephan Schott and Holm Schmidt received a multi-hour time penalty for the accident they had two days ago and consequently finished 19th. Jutta Kleinschmidt (GER) and Tina Thörner (SWE) had to cope with a similar fate. In the end, they took their buggy to 25th position. In the meantime, things went even worse for the Russians Vladimir Vasilyev and Konstantin Zhiltsov: they held second position for quite a while but an accident in the penultimate stage of the rally forced them into early retirement.

In the 2015 Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge, the drivers and their navigators had to cope with extremely high temperatures but this year, the weather conditions were rather unusual for the region and the season. On the first two days, rain was falling to an extent that the drivers were forced to turn on the windscreen wipers. And in addition, the temperatures did not even reach the 20° C mark. From stage three on, however,

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the temperatures began to rise and in the penultimate stage, they were back in the more usual area of 40° C and more.

For Al-Rajhi it was the first appearance in the MINI ALL4 Racing after several years and although he got on well with the vehicle right away and used the rally for better familiarising with it. “The rally wasn’t easy and due to the choppy dunes it also was rather risky,” said the Saudi. “We got through well. As the MINI is new to me I didn’t want to push too hard. But I still have to learn that the car’s suspension is working better if you push and go faster.”

For Mikko Hirvonen, the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge represented the perfect opportunity to extend his sand and dunes experience. To date, the Finnish MINI ALL4 racing driver never had been racing for such a long time in this terrain. “Five days in the dunes were really hard,” the Finn who won the penultimate stage admitted. “And racing here differs a lot from contesting WRC-like special stages. 280 kilometres solely sand and dunes – that’s more exhausting than the mixed special stages. But I got faster and faster day by day and learned where I could push.”

The surprise of the rally certainly was Bryce Menzies who succeeded – together with his extremely experienced German navigator Andreas Schulz – in securing one of the top positions right away. Nonetheless he said: “The difference is bigger than I had expected. For me, it was all about familiarising myself with the vehicle and the terrain. And doing so was a major challenge. Unfortunately, I was slightly ill on the final days and consequently couldn’t keep on pushing. But I already look forward to the coming rallies.”

For Jakub Przygonski, racing in the desert for such a long time also represented virgin soil. “I had a lot of fun,” he said. “We learned how to deal with the MINI in the sand and dunes. That also is important for the Dakar. There, you always have to face two or three days in the dunes. After this experience, I feel as at home in the sand as a fish in the water.”

Jutta Kleinschmidt and Tina Thörner had another really good day, today. In the buggy, they finished eighth in the final stage. “To finish the rally was very important,” said Jutta. “Today we were able to demonstrate where the vehicle is standing. On the other hand, there still is a lot of work to do.”

“We are happy with our achievements. Nasser is just invincible in this kind of terrain,” said X-raid Team Manager Sven Quandt. “For Mikko, learning to drive in the dunes was crucial and you could watch him going faster and faster. Yazeed unfortunately

was sick in the early stages of the rally and therefore probably wasn't able to achieve the absolute maximum. Meanwhile, Bryce was a true surprise. Nearly nobody would have expected him to deliver in this amazing style and finish fourth right away."

ADDC - Result SS5:

- 1st N. Al-Attiyah (QAT) / M. Baumel (FRA) – Toyota 2h 38m 17s
- 2nd M. Hirvonen (FIN) / M. Périn (FRA) - MINI ALL4 Racing 2h 40m 50s
- 3rd B. Menzies (USA) / A. Schulz (GER) - MINI ALL4 Racing 2h 41m 59s
- 4th Y. Al-Rajhi (KSA) / T. Gottschalk (GER) – MINI ALL4 Racing 2h 42m 22s
- 5th J. Przygonski (POL) / T. Colsoul (BEL) – MINI ALL4 Racing 2h 47m 38s
- ...
- 8th J. Kleinschmidt (GER) / T. Thörner (SWE) – Buggy 2h 57m 20s
- ...
- 11th S. Schott (GER) / H. Schmidt (GER) – MINI ALL4 Racing 3h 12m 08s
- 12th K. SH Al-Qassimi (UAE) / K. Al Kendi (UAE) – MINI ALL4 Racing 3h 12m 29s

ADDC – overall standings after SS5:

- 1st N. Al-Attiyah (QAT) / M. Baumel (FRA) – Toyota 18h 14m 49s
- 2nd Y. Al-Rajhi (KSA) / T. Gottschalk (GER) – MINI ALL4 Racing 17h 47m 02s
- 3rd M. Hirvonen (FIN) / M. Périn (FRA) - MINI ALL4 Racing 17h 53m 02s
- 4th B. Menzies (USA) / A. Schulz (GER) - MINI ALL4 Racing 17h 59m 04s
- 5th J. Przygonski (POL) / T. Colsoul (BEL) – MINI ALL4 Racing 18h 06m 33s
- ...
- 7th K. SH Al-Qassimi (UAE) / K. Al Kendi (UAE) – MINI ALL4 Racing 18h 56m 01s
- ...
- 19th S. Schott (GER) / H. Schmidt (GER) – MINI ALL4 Racing 28h 45m 33s
- ...
- 25th J. Kleinschmidt (GER) / T. Thörner (SWE) – Buggy 39h 27m 17s