



SS2: Four MINI ALL4 Racing vehicles make it to the top 10

- **Al-Rajhi / Gottschalk hold second position**
- **Border crossing from Russia to Kazakhstan**

As yesterday's stage from Kazan to Ufa had to be cancelled due to bad weather conditions, the Silk Way Rally competitors started into their first long special stage today. On the way from Ufa, Russia, to Kostanay, Kazakhstan, they covered 200.43 kilometres against the clock, with four MINI ALL4 Racing vehicles making it to the top 10.

Yazeed Al-Rajhi (KSA) and Timo Gottschalk (GER) finished second, thus being the fastest MINI ALL4 Racing pairings. "At first we had to drive for a long time in the dust of Vasilyev and then in the dust of Loeb," revealed Al-Rajhi. "Otherwise, we certainly would have been able to be a bit faster – but having finished second also is okay. Today you could have short cut many corners but with the high grass, we preferred to stay on the track." Meanwhile, Russian pairing Vladimir Vasilyev / Konstantin Zhiltsov finished fourth in the last stage contested in their home country. Some 200 kilometres after the end of the special stage, the entire rally baggage crossed the border to Kazakhstan.

This means that the next stages will be held on the home soil of Kazakh Aidyn Rakhimbayev. Together with his Russian co-driver Anton Nikolaev he finished sixth in today's special stage, while Harry Hunt (GBR) and Andreas Schulz (GER) came ninth. "This was a truly demanding special stage," said the Briton. "There were many ways in the high grass and deciding which was the right one wasn't easy. Therefore, we lost our way for a short time. But we made it to the finish and that was the most important factor" The fifth MINI ALL4 Racing pairing - Issabayev (KAZ) and

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Demanyenko (RUS) – also came close to making it to the top 10 but had to settle for finishing 11th, in the end.

Tomorrow's stage will take the field to Kazakhstan's capital, Astana. The competitors will have to cover 855.69 kilometres, with the special-stage distance amounting to 345.33km. The special stage will be fast, on a hard track surface. However, the teams will have pay attention to ditches.

Result stage 3:

- 1st C. Despres (FRA) / Castera (GRA) – Peugeot - 1h 56m 45s
- 2nd Y- Al-Rajhi (KSA) / T. Gottschalk (GER) - MINI ALL4 Racing – 1h 59m 25s**
- 3rd S. Loeb (FRA) / D. Elena (MCO) – Peugeot – 2h 00m 59s
- 4th V. Vasilyev (RUS) / K. Zhiltsov (RUS) - MINI ALL4 Racing – 2h 02m 00s**
- 5th E. Frisov (RUS) / V. Filatov (RUS – Toyota – 2h 03m 22s
- 6th A. Rakhimbayev (KAZ) / A. Nikolaev (RUS) - MINI ALL4 Racing – 2h 04m 20s**
- ...
- 9th H. Hunt (GBR) / A. Schulz (GER) - MINI ALL4 Racing - 2h 05min 51s
- ...
- 11th B. Issabayev (KAZ) / V. Demyanenko - MINI ALL4 Racing – 2h 10min 25s

Overall standings after stage 3:

- 1st C. Despres (FRA) / Castera (GRA) – Peugeot - 1h 58m 24s
- 2nd Y- Al-Rajhi (KSA) / T. Gottschalk (GER) - MINI ALL4 Racing – 2h 01m 01s**
- 3rd S. Loeb (FRA) / D. Elena (MCO) – Peugeot – 2h 02m 34s
- 4th V. Vasilyev (RUS) / K. Zhiltsov (RUS) - MINI ALL4 Racing – 2h 03m 35s**
- 5th E. Frisov (RUS) / V. Filatov (RUS – Toyota – 2h 05m 04s
- 6th A. Rakhimbayev (KAZ) / A. Nikolaev (RUS) - MINI ALL4 Racing – 2h 06m 01s**
- ...
- 9th H. Hunt (GBR) / A. Schulz (GER) - MINI ALL4 Racing - 2h 07m 30s
- ...
- 11th B. Issabayev (KAZ) / V. Demyanenko - MINI ALL4 Racing – 2h 12min 11s