



Dakar 2017 / SS3: Mikko Hirvonen finishes fourth in stage three

- All the three MINI John Cooper Works Rally vehicles make it to the top 10
- From tomorrow, the Dakar will be continued in the heights

In the third stage, taking the field to San Salvador de Jujuy, Finland's Mikko Hirvonen and his French navigator Michel Périn secured the fine fourth place, with their MINI John Cooper Works Rally while their team-mates Orlando Terranova (ARG) / Andreas Schulz (GER) finished sixth. Right behind them, the third MINI John Cooper Works Rally pairing, Yazeed Al-Rajhi (KSA) / Timo Gottschalk (GER), came seventh. In addition, Poland's Kuba Przygonski and his Belgian co-driver Tom Colsoul also made it to the top-10 by finishing ninth, today!

Throughout the special stage, Hirvonen was giving the Peugeot pairings an extremely hard time but was defeated in the closing stages. "Things went well for us, today, Michael did a great job," said the Fin who also worked his way up to fourth in the overall standings. "The track was more winding than in the previous special stages and I know that we are able to gain time in these sections. Therefore, I pushed as hard as I could. There was a thunderstorm at 5000 metres above sea level, accompanied by some snow, resulting in an incredible view as you even could see the sun on the right."

"This was a real Dakar special stage with a lot of off-road sections in the beginning – and a lot of thirst, too. Nonetheless, we found a good pace," revealed Terranova who holds eighth position in the overall standings, following today's stage. "Later we unfortunately were stopped by a puncture and lost some five minutes as changing the tire proved to be rather difficult. And I have to admit that I felt the altitude. Even snow was lying there – this must have been extremely difficult for the motorbike riders." Meanwhile, Al-Rajhi had bigger problems with the altitude. "I felt really sick and even had to vomit," admitted the Saudi. "I was really happy when the special stage finally was over." Al-Rajhi defended his sixth position in the overall standings.

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“The navigation was difficult in the opening stages”, said Przygonski who also made it to the top 10 with an overall 9th place. “There were a lot of rocks and holes in the first part and so, we couldn’t drive really fast. Later, the track resembled the one of a WRC special stage and we had a lot of fun. From tomorrow we will race in Bolivia and consequently in high altitudes. That’s not only tough for the cars but for us, too.”

The three pairings Boris Garafulic (CHI) / Filipe Palmeiro (POR), Sylvio de Barros / Rafael Capoani (both BRA) and Mohamed Abu Issa (QAT) / Xavier Panseri (FRA) crossed the line as a three-pack and secured 14th to 16th positions. While Germany’s Stephan Schott and his Portuguese navigator Paulo Fiúza also made it to the top 20 by finishing 16th. Abu Issa now holds 13th position in the overall standings, Garafulic and De Barros are 14th and 15th respectively and Schott worked his way up to 17th.

“With three days contested, things are looking not too bad for us,” said X-raid Team Manager Sven Quandt. “We hadn’t expected that our competitors would get into problems so soon. I hope that our cars will remain as reliable as they have been so far. We are in a good initial position.”

Tomorrow, in stage four to Tupiza, the Dakar train will cross the border to Bolivia. The competitors will have to contest a long 416-kilometre special stage, with the liaison-section distance amounting to just 105 kilometres. After having entered Bolivia the field will have to cope with the first dunes, located about 3500 metres above sea level.

Dakar 2017 Result SS3:

1. S. Peterhansel (FRA) / J.-P. Cottret (FRA) - Peugeot - 4h 18m 17s
2. C. Sainz (FRA) / L. Cruz (ESP) - Peugeot - 4h 20m 11s
3. S. Loeb (FRA) / D. Elena (MCO) - Peugeot - 4h 21m 25s
4. M. Hirvonen (FIN) / M. Périn (FRA) - MINI John Cooper Works Rally – 4h 22m 14s
5. C. Depres (FRA) / D. Castera (FRA) - Peugeot - 4h 26m 05s
6. O. Terranova (ARG) / A. Schulz (GER) - MINI John Cooper Works Rally – 4h 29m 43s
7. Y. Al-Rajhi (KSA) / T. Gottschalk (GER) - MINI John Cooper Works Rally – 4h 31m 30s
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9. J. Przygonski (POL) / T. Colsoul (BEL) - MINI ALL4 Racing – 4h 38m 15s

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12. B. Garafulic (CHI) / F. Palmeiro (POR) - MINI ALL4 Racing – 4h 52m 49s

13. M. Abu Issa (QAT) / X. Panseri (FRA) - MINI ALL4 Racing – 4h 54m 15s

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15. S. De Barros (BRA) / R. Capoani (BRA) - MINI ALL4 Racing - 4h 55m 22s

16. S. Schott (GER) / P. Fiúza (POR) - MINI ALL4 Racing – 5h 09m 42s

Dakar 2017 Overall standing after SS3:

1. S. Loeb (FRA) / D. Elena (MCO) - Peugeot - 6h 54m 56s

2. C. Sainz (FRA) / L. Cruz (ESP) - Peugeot - 6h 55m 38s

3. S. Peterhansel (FRA) / J.-P. Cottret (FRA) - Peugeot - 6h 59m 14s

4. M. Hirvonen (FIN) / M. Périn (FRA) - MINI John Cooper Works Rally – 7h 04m 34s

5. N. Roma (ESP) / A. Haro (ESP) - Toyota - 7h 08m 00s

6. Y. Al-Rajhi (KZA) / T. Gottschalk (GER) - MINI John Cooper Works Rally – 7h 10m 13s

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8. O. Terranova (ARG) / A. Schulz (GER) - MINI John Cooper Works Rally – 7h 16m 25s

9. J. Przygonski (POL) / T. Colsoul (BEL) - MINI ALL4 Racing – 7h 22m 33s

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13. M. Abu Issa (QAT) / X. Panseri (FRA) - MINI ALL4 Racing – 7h 55m 11s

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14. B. Garafulic (CHI) / F. Palmeiro (POR) - MINI ALL4 Racing – 7h 58m 53s

15. S. De Barros (BRA) / R. Capoani (BRA) - MINI ALL4 Racing - 8h 04m 34s

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17. S. Schott (GER) / P. Fiúza (POR) - MINI ALL4 Racing – 8h 26m 26s