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Dakar Rally
4th - 17th January 2015



Vladimir Vasilyev surprises with stage win

- **Five MINI ALL4 Racing vehicles hold top-five positions in the overall standings**
- **Qatar Rally Team extends its lead**

On the fifth stage of the 2014 Dakar Rally, from Copiapo to Antofagasta, Vladimir Vasilyev celebrated his very first Dakar stage win. In addition, he and his Russian navigator Konstantin Zhiltsov also made for the fifth consecutive stage win of a MINI ALL4 Racing. Altogether, six MINI ALL4 Racing cars made it to the top 10. The Qatar Rally Team, represented by Nasser Al-Attiyah (QAT) and Mathieu Baumel (FRA), finished fourth. And as they finished ahead of Toyota's Giniel de Villiers, they even could extend their lead in the overall standings to more than 10 minutes.

Nobody had bargained for the two Russians. At the second waypoint they still were 10th but at the third, they already had leaped up to the lead. Navigator Zhiltsov found a shortcut and using shortcuts is allowed as long as the crew passes all the waypoints. "We passed all the waypoints and today things went really well for us," Zhiltsov said. "Apart from that, it was a difficult day but very interesting. And definitely really gruelling for the car. A lot of big rocks and Fech Fech." Vasilyev also was delighted: "Other than in the previous nights I slept really well tonight. Maybe that's the reason why I won today." With his success, the Russian worked his way up from 11th to seventh position in the overall standings.

Having won yesterday's stage, Al-Attiyah was the first to start into today's stage. "We held the lead throughout the day and nobody closed in on us. We had a puncture on the final 10 kilometres that cost us two minutes but at the end of the day, this was just a minor nuisance," said the driver from Qatar who extended his lead in the overall standings, nevertheless."

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The two Monster Energy Rally Raid crews Krzysztof Holowczyc (POL)/Xavier Panseri (FRA) and Nani Roma (ESP)/Michel Périn (FRA) finished seventh and eighth respectively, followed by Erik van Loon MINI ALL4 Racing (Van Loon Racing) in ninth position. “Never ago have I raced a car as good as today’s,” beamed the Dutchman who nearly can’t believe that he is that successful. “We made some suspension changes and these changes proved to be just perfect. We now are fifth in the overall standings and that actually is too good. Originally we planned to try to secure a top-10 position but now, we can achieve something clearly better.” The third Monster Energy Rally Raid Team pairing, the Argentineans Orlando Terranova / Bernardo ‘Ronnie’ Graue, finished 10th.

Aidyn Rakhimbayev (KAZ) and Anton Nikolaev (RUS) (Astana Dakar Team) finished 15th, today and hold 10th position in the overall standings, just two minutes behind Stéphane Peterhansel. China’s Zhou Yong and his German co-driver Andreas Schulz came 20th and hold 17th place in the overall standings, five positions ahead of the German pairing Stephan Schott / Holm Schmidt who finished 27th, today. Meanwhile, Boris Garafulic (CHI) and Filipe Palmeiro (POR) crossed the finish line in 22nd and are 13th in the overall standings.

Tomorrow’s stage will take the competitors from Antofagasta to Iquique, the starting point of the marathon stage, on the day after tomorrow. But prior to that, there are another 647 kilometres to be covered. The day will begin with a 322-kilometre liaison section, with the following special stage being split in two parts. The first part comprises 69 kilometres, followed by a 22-kilometre neutralisation and the second special-stage part over a distance of 186 kilometres. The day will be completed by another 48-kilometre liaison section to the bivouac. The fans of the famous big dune at Iquique, however, will have to be patient. The finish of tomorrow’s special stage will be located in Iquique’s city centre and the special stage will end with a podium crossing. This is supposed to be a symbol of support for the city that was struck by an earthquake.