

Dos Hermanas, 19 October 2022

SUNDERLAND AND LOEB MAKE THEIR INTENTIONS CLEAR

Rally raid is an endurance sport but attacking right from the start also has its rewards. It was the tactic chosen by Sam Sunderland (GasGas Factory Racing) and Sebastien Loeb (Bahrain Raid Xtreme), winners of the qualifying stage, the curtain raiser of the 2022 Andalucía Rally today. And their reward was being able to choose what they felt was the best starting position for the first big stage of the race. The Brit will leave the line 13th, behind the fastest of the motorcycle category. In the cars, Loeb will put all his trust in his navigator and start first car, with no obstacles in front him. His big rival Al Attiyah, who incurred a speed penalty, will start back in 11th, a long way from his preferred option.

ON TRACK

At yesterday's press conference **Sam Sunderland (GasGas Factory Racing)** admitted he was more at home in the desert, having spent many years living in Dubai, than "slip-sliding around" on Spanish tracks. He forgot to mention that before he moved out there he rode moto-x in the UK as a teenager. Formative years that helped him to win today's qualifying stage just ahead of 2020 Andalucía Rally winner **Kevin Benavides (Red Bull KTM Factory Racing)** with Frenchman **Adrien van Beveren (Monster Energy Honda)** third. Despite having a healthy lead over **Ricky Brabec (Monster Energy Honda)** in the World Championship, the two times Dakar winning Brit was clearly keen to stamp his authority on the race right from the start. In Rally2 victory went to Slovenian outsider **Toni Mulec (TS Racing)** ahead of World Championship regulars **Bradley Cox (BAS KTM World Racing)** and his teammate, the recently crowned Rally2 champion **Mason Klein**. Fastest in Rally3 was French enduro rider **Jeremy Miroir (DB Motors)** with **Kamil Wisniewski (Orlen Team)** quickest quad.

In the cars the first battle was won by the WRC 'maestro' **Sebastien Loeb (Bahrain Raid Xtreme)**, who asserted his expertise on the slippery and narrow tracks of the **Andalucía Rally**. The Frenchman sent his first message to **Al Attiyah (Toyota Gazoo Racing)**: "I will give my best from start to finish", said the nine-time world champion at the finish line. Perhaps the Qatari, knowing that on this terrain he might not be as strong as Loeb, made an unusual mistake: a minute's penalty for speeding that will complicate his strategy for tomorrow. **Yazeed Al Rajhi (Toyota Overdrive)** and **Guerlain Chicherit (GCK Motorsport)** are ready to pounce.

It was expected that the T3s would go well here on the Andalucía Rally and that the Portuguese, who are racing more or less at home, would be quick. And in the light prototypes both predictions proved true, with a triumph for the Portuguese pairing of **Joao Dias and Joao Miranda (Santag Racing)**. Among the W2RC T3s only De Mevius (**Red Bull Off Road Junior Team**) was able to beat **Francisco 'Chaleco' Lopez (Can-Am Factory South Racing)** with the two Red Bull contenders: **Seth Quintero** and **Cristina Gutiérrez** finishing behind the Chilean.

In the ultra-competitive T4 category **Rokas Baciуска (South Racing Can-Am)** made his intentions clear from the start. Not only was he the fastest, he also made it into the top ten in the overall car category. Young Spanish prodigy **Pau Navarro (FN Speed)** and Dakar 2022 runner-up **Gerard Farrés (Can-Am Factory South Racing)** completed the day's podium.

RADIO BIVOUCAC

The title of local hero on this Andalucía Rally goes **Isidre Esteve**, the charismatic **Repsol Rally Team** driver from Lérida, who will defend the honour of Spain flag in the premium car category. After achieving his best result in a World Championship race - seventh at the recent **Rallye du Maroc** - he embarks on his home race... with considerable emotion... 'given' to him by a group of students from the **Salesianas San Vicente** school in **Seville**, 'old friends' of the Toyota driver. In 2021, 52 children - eight years old at the time - wrote letters to the Spanish driver as part of their studies on the theme of: 'Dakar, Isidre Esteve, disability and inclusivity in sport'. "We had to wait almost two years to visit them, but we have finally been able to do it". The Catalan, who drives a **Hilux** adapted to his paraplegia, made a surprise visit: "The kids were incredibly friendly, they didn't stop asking questions about

absolutely everything... no filters!" A first contact with his Spanish fans, that Isidre Esteve hopes will improve his results and allow him to finish even better than the 7th place he achieved just two weeks ago: *"This race is nothing like the Rallye du Maroc or the Dakar. Here we are on very narrow, dusty tracks... where the smaller T3s and T4s will be very effective. It will be difficult to overtake, but... it's a world championship race in Spain and I see it as a unique opportunity for me and also for the fans"*. Esteve will race with 'extra power' in the form of support from his fans!

STAT OF THE DAY: 8

The cars and the bikes did exactly the same qualifying special this afternoon at the **Gran Hipodromo de Andalucía** that was precisely 9.67 km long. But if you look at the times you will see that the bikes and quads took much longer than the cars, in fact they were approximately 8 times slower. The fastest car completed the stage in 07'52" while the fastest bike has a time of over an hour! So what's going on? Was the terrain much better suited to cars? Did the bike riders all have a big lunch? Well no, they were roughly 8 times slower because the FIM rules state that a coefficient of 8 is applied to all qualifying stages less than 10 kilometres long. If the stage had been more than 10 kms long the coefficient would have been 4. This time is added to the overall result. The motorcycle federation didn't decide this on a whim but rather to discourage their competitors from going very slowly around the qualifying stage so as to not 'open' the next day's stage. Because on a motorcycle, where inevitably you navigate on your own, you lose time 'opening' the track. As an extra incentive to get a move on, the first 15 on the qualifying special get to choose their start position, with the fastest getting their first choice. The fastest 10 cars also get to choose their start position but because car drivers have navigators and opening the piste is less of a handicap for them, there's no coefficient.

W2RC

The only one of the W2RC leaders who started the Andalucía Rally in dominant form was **Sam Sunderland (GasGas Factory Racing)**, who did not give **Ricky Brabec (Monster Energy Honda)** a chance in the qualifying stage. **Nasser Al-Attiyah (Toyota Gazoo Racing)** made life difficult for himself, as the penalty he received will surely give him a less advantageous starting position than his T1 rival. **Francisco 'Chaleco' López (Can-Am Factory South Racing)** finished ahead of **Seth Quintero** and **Cristina Gutiérrez**, his two rivals in T3, while in T4 the man on form was **Rokas Baciuska** who, besides winning, saw that his two rivals for the title **Marek Goczał (Cobant-Energylandia Rally Team)** and **Austin Jones (Can-Am Factory South Racing)** couldn't do better than fourth and fifth place, respectively.

QUOTES

Sam Sunderland (GasGas Factory Racing): *"The prologue is always a bit exciting. Reminds me a bit of my moto-x days. When you walk the track or go on the bicycle its not the same speed. On the motorcycle everything comes up much quicker. But I enjoyed it, it was fun. Got a bit of a sweat on. It was only 9 kilometres but everybody likes to show who's the man on these occasions, so nice to have the best time. Now four long days ahead of us."*

Sebastien Loeb (Bahrain Raid Extreme): *"A good push for sure but it was the stage where we could do the recce, so for me it was a bit like WRC style. I could really push with the car from the start to the end so no mistake at all. At the moment it is perfect but it is only the start and now the long stages are coming."*

TOMORROW'S PROGRAMME

STAGE 1B

Liason: 145km / SS: 319 km (69%) / total: 464 km



Andalucía = RALLY =



Seville, along the lines of the two previous editions

David Castera: *"The first stage around Seville is very similar to the terrain encountered on the two previous editions of the Andalucía Rally. There will be these fast tracks between the wheat fields and olive trees, hilly and sometimes twist – the route is mainly over dirt tracks. It is a stage that will allow the competitors to find their feet."*

MEDIA CONTENT

Stage 1A: photos and quotes of the day : [DROPBOX](#)

Videos : [HERE](#)

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En [sitio web](#) del Andalucía Rally

Andalucia.org

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