

Sea Camp, December 29th 2022

DAKAR 2023 : CARS: ELECTRICITY IN THE AIR

Key points:

- The battle for the title between the 73 cars set to take starter's orders at Sea Camp raises many questions, the first of which is the ability of the three Audi RS Q e-tron E2 vehicles driven by Stéphane Peterhansel, Carlos Sainz and Mattias Ekström to maintain a high level of performance for the entire length of the Dakar. If they manage to do so, they could stand a chance of laying their hands on the trophy.
- To withstand the rise in power of the German 4x4s, Toyota will be calling upon a pack of 14 Hilux T1+ led by title holder Nasser Al Attiyah and local hero Yazeed Al Rajhi. They will also have to contain the attacks from the BRX Hunters, driven by Sébastien Loeb, Guerlain Chicherit and Orlando Terranova.
- The new rules will also allow the two-wheel drive buggies to make up for their power deficit: the Century CR6 will be aiming for respectable finishes with, for example, Mathieu Serradori and Laia Sanz, whilst the Optimus de MD Rallye's machines will be guided by Christian Lavieille.

Now we find ourselves at the beginning of Act II. In January 2022, Audi arrived on the Dakar boasting innovative technology involving an electric drive in each of the three RS Q e-tron cars taking part, with plenty of interrogations and few certainties. After four stage victories without really having been in contention for the general rankings, the German constructor went back to the drawing board to produce an improved version of its vehicle, which made its grand appearance on the Rallye du Maroc. Each with a RS Q e-tron E2 compliant with the technical regulations for 2023, **Stéphane Peterhansel, Carlos Sainz and Mattias Ekström** raced a parallel rally in the Open category but did not come across any pitfalls on the tracks whilst displaying performances worthy of their main rivals. With a maximum of watts and confidence, will the four-ring brand's trio of stars be able to clearly beat the current masters of the discipline? Such a threat has got Toyota thinking, as well as BRX, who are both pitting the men who lit up the 2022 edition against their Audi rivals.

Nasser Al Attiyah, with four triumphs on the Dakar and a season he completed as world rally-raid champion, has drawn on the superiority of his T1+ version of the Toyota Hilux (with its larger wheels, greater displacement, etc.). His Overdrive team-mates, such as Saudi **Yazeed Al Rajhi** (3rd on the Dakar and in the W2RC) or South Africans **Giniel de Villiers and Henk Lategan**, will all benefit from having the same car, whose performances have been curbed in order to balance the potential between the different classes of vehicle who will be battling it out for the title (see the insert below). The Hunters developed by the ProDrive team will also be subjected to these same restrictions but have displayed a level of performance which has boosted their hopes for the two weeks of racing to come. Although **Sébastien Loeb** was not able to make **Nasser Al Attiyah** falter on the way to Jeddah last January (finishing 2nd), their struggle continued throughout the W2RC season, which finished in particular with a victory for the man from Alsace in Andalusia. His Hunter-driving colleagues also put in equally convincing displays, with **Guerlain Chicherit** back to the highest level with a win on the Rallye du Maroc, just ahead of Argentinean "Orly" Terranova, who finally finished at the foot of the W2RC podium just like on the Dakar (4th). This collection of T1+ is enhanced this year by two cars presented by the X-raid Mini JCW Team, conferred to the ultra-regular **Jakob Przygoński** (4th in 2019 and 2021) and to **Sebastian Halpern** (8th in 2022). Another driver familiar with respectable finishes, **Martin Prokop** (6th in 2019) will also be driving a T1+ 4x4 Ford with which he will begin the prologue on Saturday.

The beneficiaries of the technology equivalence strategy may be the two-wheel drive buggy drivers, who struggled last year but should raise their game this time. Century have found 10 competitors for their CR6 buggies registered by different teams, including **Mathieu Serradori** (7th in 2022) and **Brian Baraganath** in the colours of the South African constructor, those of **Laia Sanz** and **Carlos Checa** for the Astara team, or also the Coronel twins who have succumbed to the machine's charms. In a similar manner, the MD Rallye's Optimus buggies could also make their way into the Top 10, with drivers who

have already hit such heights, like **Christian Lavieille** or **Pascal Thomasse**. It is almost time to seize the opportunities.

What is equivalence of technology?

In order to bring the performance of amateur cars closer to that of the official teams, a new equivalence of technology (EOT) rule is making its appearance on the Dakar for the 2023 W2RC season.

The FIA has chosen to reduce the performances of the T1+ and the T1U equivalently by decreasing their power by 42 Ch or 30 kW and increasing those of the T1.2 (two-wheel drives) by approximately 20-25 Ch (+ 1 mm at the air intake flange).

For example, the 400 Hp Hilux driven by **Nasser Al Attiyah**, who won the Dakar in 2022, has lost 10% of its power.

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