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## WORLD RALLY-RAID CHAMPIONSHIP 2023 SEASON 2: A DREAM LINE UP

**Of note:**

- After the successful launch of the W2RC in 2022, all the major bike and car rally-raid stars have confirmed their presence for season 2. It is a dream line up that will compete for the 2023 titles.
- In the cars: Peterhansel, Sainz, Ekström and Chicherit join Al Attiyah, Loeb and Al Rajhi. All the big names are now entered in a championship that has just gone up a notch.
- The cards have also been extensively reshuffled in T3 and T4 with new technical alliances, the arrival of the young revelations from season 1 racing the entire calendar and the return of two major manufacturers: Polaris and Yamaha.
- In the FIM category, almost all the riders and manufacturers involved in RallyGP in 2022 are back. In Rally2, the route to the top level is being structured with teams banking on the future generation.



Barely crowned with the first W2RC laurels at the traditional **FIA** and **FIM** awards ceremonies this month, the 2022 world champions and winners of the different categories will be putting their titles on the line as of the next **Dakar**. The first of the five rounds of the 2023 W2RC calendar is about to reveal the new stakes, starting with the cars...

**Peterhansel, Sainz, Ekström and Chicherit arrive**

In the **FIA** cars, the battle, dominated by **Al Attiyah-Baumel** (reigning world champions) and **Loeb-Lurquin** is going to get a lot fiercer in 2023! The main offensive comes from **Sven Quandt** who has decided to try and steal their limelight by adopting a variable strategy of which he has the secret! The German head of the **Audi** and **Mini** programmes, who is celebrating the 20th anniversary of the team he created in 2002, has decided to strike a blow by entering **Peterhansel, Sainz and Ekström** and their team-mates in the driver and co-driver rankings! On the **Dakar** and on the final of the **Rallye du Maroc**, the trio will be equipped with the factory **Audis** with which they will score points individually. On the other three rounds the **X-raid** team boss will give them the opportunity to drive his third and new generation **Mini T1+**. A 4x4 with body-builder dimensions that

will make its debut in January in the hands of **Sebastian Halpern**, who will race the whole season at the wheel of this T1+. The other challenge comes from **Guerlain Chicherit**, who made his comeback on the **Rallye du Maroc 2022** and who has decided to grab his share of the 2023 cake. The **GCK Racing** driver showed his potential by winning from the start.

This is enough to revive the race for the drivers' and co-drivers' World Championship titles, but also the manufacturers' title since **X-raid Mini JCW**, third in 2022 behind **Toyota Gazoo Racing** and **Bahrain Raid Xtreme**, will be able to count on its jokers: **'Peter'**, **Sainz** and **Ekström**. **Toyota** can rest assured with their 2022 winning duo of **Al Attiyah-Al Rajhi** who will be supported by **Erik Van Loon** and **Juan Cruz Yacopini**. **Bahrain Raid Xtreme**, which finished the season with only **Loeb's Hunter**, will field a stronger team, as in addition to Frenchmen **Loeb** and **Chicherit**, **'Orly' Terranova** will be the third **BRX** man. In addition to these tenors, **Mathieu Serradori**, now directly supported by **Century Racing Factory**, has also decided to join the party in the new **CR6-T**, a new generation buggy using a turbo-charged engine. Among the lone wolves, **Martin Prokop** and his **Ford Orlen Benzina** and the rookie **Magdalena Zajac** with **Marek Czachor** in a **Toyota Proxcars TME Rally** will also need to be watched. And China is also coming to the 2023 W2RC! **Hanwei Motorsport** with two national crews in **SMGs** and **BAIC ORV**, entered as manufacturers with drivers **Zhang Guoyu** and **Zi Yunliang** accompanied by the experienced co-driver **Jean-Pierre Garcin**. At the time of counting, there is a **total of 19 cars** and **4 manufacturers**.

### The Red Bull 'dream team', Yamaha plus South Racing in T3

At the T3 table, the cards have been profoundly redistributed and the circle has widened here too! First of all with the **Red Bull Off-Road Junior Team** which has decided to join forces with **Can-Am** to create its 'dream team' by going from 4 to 5 aces! Take the 2022 championship podium of **'Chaleco' Lopez**, **Seth Quintero** and **Cristina Gutierrez**, add **Mitch Guthrie** powered by a prototype that prefigures the T3-U category, move the T4 Dakar winner **Austin Jones** to T3 and you get the new composition of the **Red Bull Off-Road Junior USA Team presented by BF Goodrich** (the American trio) and the **Red Bull Can-Am Factory Team** (Lopez and Gutierrez). An alliance that will take on **X-raid** and **Yamaha** who are coming with a new factory programme for the Japanese brand. Equipped with a lightweight prototype developed during the 2022 championship by **Sven Quandt's** team, the German driver **Annett Fischer** and the Portuguese Joao Ferreira will be equipped with a state-of-the-art vehicle. **South Racing Can-Am** adds to its regulars **Alvarez**, **Zille** and **Akeel**, the ex-biker and manager **Helder Rodrigues** who would very much like to follow in the footsteps of **'Chaleco'**! With **Jean-Luc Ceccaldi-Pisson** in a **Zephyr (JLC Racing)**, **Claude Fournier (Team BBR Pole Position 77)** and **Aliyyah Koloc (Buggyra ZM Academy)**, there will be a **total of 14 entries**.

### Red Bull, youngsters and Polaris in T4

In T4, it will also be necessary to make some space to welcome a returning brand, some youngsters and to get used to the new livery of the W2RC 2022 title holder **Rokas Baciuska**. The young Lithuanian will now race for the **Red Bull Can-Am Factory Team**. Three 'sons of' will also be featuring in the results sheets. At **South Racing Can-Am** with **Bruno Conti de Oliveira**, one of the revelations of the **Rallye du Maroc** who is none other than the son of **Rodrigo Luppi di Oliveira**, who will be present with regulars **Guayasamin**, **Taylor** and **Seidan**. Another nugget discovered in Morocco is **Pau Navarro**, the son of **FN Speed's** team boss. And in the **Cobant-Energylandia** clan, **Marek's** son **Eryk** will be the third member of the **Goczal** family with **Michal** competing for the title in T4. With the return of Polaris, it is not just a family story but the history of SSV that returns to W2RC. The American manufacturer that was the first to win the Dakar in SSV in 2012 is back with the latest generation 2000cc **RZR Pro R**. The pioneering **Xtreme Plus Polaris Factory** team will be represented by 2016 Dakar winner **Michele Cinotto** and Japan's **Shinsuke**. Together with **Rebecca Busi (HRT Technology)** and **Nicolas Cavigliasso (Drag'on Rally)**, they will also be a **total of 14 entries** in T4.

### Revenge in T5

In the truck category, the three official teams: **Project 2030**, **MM Technology** and **Fesh Fesh Group** are once again entered, the latter now with two trucks. Although **Kees Koolen** got the upper hand in last year's battle, **MM Technology** boss **Martin Macik** dominated the early part of the season and will be keen to take his revenge. For season 2, **Tomas Vratny** will team up with **Albert Llovera**, doubling the **Fesh Fesh** team's chances.

## 16 RallyGP riders in the FIM bikes category

After the transfer of **Adrien van Beveren** to **HRC** during the 2022 season, the W2RC manufacturers' line-up remains fixed for 2023. The same teams will be back for season 2, with one expected returnee: **Daniel Sanders**, the team-mate of world champion **Sam Sunderland**, who has not ridden since his crash on the last Dakar. Alongside this **Red Bull GasGas Factory Racing** duo, there's **Red Bull KTM Factory Racing (Walkner, Price, K. Benavides)**, **Husqvarna Factory Racing (L. Benavides, Howes)**, **Hero Motosports Rally (Bühler, Branch, Rodrigues, Caimi)** and the **Monster Energy Honda** manufacturers' world champion (**Brabec, Quintanilla, Cornejo, 'VBA'**). To these 15 factory riders, we must add the American **Mason Klein**, winner of the Rally 2 World Cup, who is continuing his career by joining the pros while remaining at KTM satellite team **BAS World KTM Racing**.

## More support in Rally 2

The other satellite team, **HT Rally Raid Husqvarna Racing** will be assisting **Klein's** runner-up, Frenchman **Romain Dumontier**, as well as **Michael Docherty**, the rookie from South Africa who made a strong impression in the first stages of the **Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge**. The trio that finished the championship behind **Klein** and **Dumontier** will also be challenging for the 2023 title. **Bradley Cox** continues with **BAS World KTM Racing**, as does Poland's **Konrad Dabrowski** with **Duust Diverse Racing** while **Camille Chapelière** joins **Team Casteu**. The Italian **Paolo Lucci**, who posted some good performances in 2022, joins the **BAS World KTM Racing** team. **Jan Brabec** is staying with his own team **Strojrent Racing**. The French **Nomade Racing** team, a regular presence on the big international rallies, is taking the plunge and committing itself to the full 2023 season with **Mathieu Dovèze** and **Jean-Loup Lèpan**. Two American newcomers join W2RC and make the USA the strongest motorcycle nation. **David Pearson** will ride for **American Rally Originals** while **Jacob Arbubright** joins **Duust Diverse Racing**. In the women's category, **Miriam Pol** is back to defend her title. In Rally3, we will have to wait for the first event open to this category to know the contenders, but Frenchman **Jérémy Miroir** who made his appearance in the 2022 final by winning the **Andalucía Rally** could be a favourite.

In the quads, reigning world number two **Jurav Varga (Varga Motorsport)** will face **Laisvydas Kancius (Story Racing SRO)**, the very experienced **Pablo Copeti (Del Amo Motorsports by Motul)** all of whom will have to watch out for the return of **Axel Dutry**. The **Drag'on Rally** team boss has decided to commit to the full season and has prepared for this with a second place on the 2022 **Rallye du Maroc**. In the FIM category there will be a total of **32 competitors and 5 manufacturers**.

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