

FIA-FIM RALLY-RAID WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS TEMPERATURE RISING IN HERMOSILLO

Key points:

- 115 vehicles were cleared to start the ninth edition of the Sonora Rally following the routine scrutineering inside the renovated former textile factory in Hermosillo's Parque La Ruina. There will be 27 FIA crews and 34 FIM riders in the race, along with 54 entries in the National class.
- In the FIA category, the main battle will be between the leader of the championship, Sébastien Loeb (Bahrain Raid Xtreme — 101 points), and his closest rival, Nasser Al Attiyah (Toyota Gazoo Racing — 85 pts), only 16 points apart.
- In the FIM category, Toby Price (Red Bull KTM Factory Racing) tops the RallyGP standings with 46 points, but Adrien Van Beveren (Monster Energy Honda) is hot on his heels with 42. Four riders have already got a taste of the Sonora Rally before, including Ricky Brabec, a factory HRC rider with four wins under his belt.
- Tomorrow afternoon, the 10-kilometer prologue will kick off on a dragster track in true American style —it's all about the show—, with temperatures expected to hit 36 °C. The ten fastest competitors will get to pick their starting order for Monday's first stage, a loop in the north of Hermosillo.

FIA: LOEB CROWNED SIX TIMES IN MEXICO

The world championship leader, **Sébastien Loeb**, has bounced back from a missed flight connection and problems with the shipping of spare parts for the BRX team from the port of Los Angeles and is ready to get to grips with his first Sonora Rally. The Frenchman tasted victory in Mexico six times in his WRC career —a good omen for the Prodrive team, which is fielding a total of four Hunters: **Loeb's** (red) Red Bull, **Guerlain Chicherit's** matte black "post-apocalyptic" GCK Motorsport, and two black-and-yellow vehicles recently bought by the X Rally Motorsport team of the Brazilian brothers **Cristian** and **Marcos Baumgart**. These Sertões regulars are not yet in the championship, but they have put their names down for the rest of the calendar and will be there to lend a hand to the two champions on the track. In the Toyota camp, numbers 2, 4 and 5 in the provisional standings are ready to rumble. **Nasser Al Attiyah** is back after his roll-over in Abu Dhabi in a bid to erase his 16-point deficit to Loeb. With **Martin Prokop** and his Ford, third in the standings after two events, out of the picture, Toyota and Prodrive are both eyeing this spot on the provisional podium. The recent winner of the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge, **Yazeed Al Rajhi**, is in pole position with 63 points. His teammate **Jan Cruz Yacopini** is neck and neck with **Guerlain Chicherit**, tied with 49 points apiece. **Sebastián Halpern**, behind the wheel of one of the two Mini JCWs of the X-raid team, is trailing with 43 points. There will be 9 T1+ cars on the start line tomorrow.

In T3, 10 lightweight prototypes registered in the W2RC passed the routine scrutineering, including the three Americans of the Red Bull Off-Road Junior Team USA, who are currently leading the championship. **Seth Quintero**, whose name reveals his Mexican roots, does not hide his hunger for another win after his ADDC triumph. He is perched at the summit of the category with 127 points, with his teammates **Austin Jones** (122 points) and **Mitch Guthrie Junior** (81 points) breathing down his neck. The old guard of "**Chaleco**" **López** (55 points) and **Cristina Gutiérrez** (52 points) have been a cut below the young guns so far, but the Red Bull team dominates the standings. **Mattias Ekström** gave the South Racing outfit a pleasant surprise by announcing a short while ago that he would line up for the Sonora Rally. As in the ADDC, the Swedish champion will be behind the wheel of a Can-Am in T3 to try and secure the victory that slipped from his grasp in the Emirates. In T4, the 3 SSV entrants will be on the start line tomorrow. **Rokas Baciūška** (Red Bull Can-Am Factory) should feel more at ease than his T3 teammates. The Lithuanian has 134 points to the 44 points of his main threat in the standings, the Japanese **Shinsuke Umeda** (Polaris Extrem Plus). All the FIA crews will be making their debut in the race.

FIM: 4, THE MAGIC NUMBER BEFORE THE START

Among the FIM riders in the championship, 27 will be at the start of the prologue tomorrow. 4 of the 15 RallyGP entrants already have a history with the Sonora Rally. **Ricky Brabec** (Monster Energy Honda) is the event record holder with 4 wins to his name (2017 and 2019 through 2021). His three-time runner-up, **Skyler Howes** (Husqvarna Factory Racing), has won twice here (2018 and 2022) and does not beat around the bush about his prospects. He says he feels "like Sunderland in Abu Dhabi: home". **Nacho Cornejo** (Monster Energy Honda) finished third in 2021, but that edition was all about dunes, unlike the route awaiting the field of the ninth edition. **Mason Klein** (BAS World KTM Racing) has participated twice, with his top performance being fifth in 2021. **Brabec**, **Howes** and **Klein** should be able to capitalize on their familiarity with the terrain. 4 is also the number of points separating the leader, **Toby Price** (46 points), and his closest rival, Adrien Van Beveren (42 points), as well as the difference between **VBA** and **Kevin Benavides** (Red Bull KTM Factory Racing — 38 points). The Argentinian, who broke his femur on February 22, just before the ADDC, is back in action exactly 2 months later! His supersonic comeback has left his peers in awe. The Dakar champion already spent three days of testing on his bike in the US with his team last week. While he is not likely to be at 100% this week, his presence allows the Austrian teams KTM, Husqvarna and GasGas to field a full complement for the first time since the start of the last Dakar. The reigning world champion, **Sam Sunderland** (Red Bull GasGas Factory Racing), is back after sitting out the ADDC due to an ankle injury. "**SunderSam**" announced that he is firing on all cylinders, unlike his teammate "**Chucky**" **Sanders**, who should be back to his usual self by August, say his doctors. The same goes for **Matthias Walkner** (Red Bull KTM Factory Racing) who rates his form at 80% following his wrist injury in the Dakar. Counting **Mason Klein**, the Austrian posse has 8 riders on the RallyGP start list. Honda, with 4 factory riders, will seek to negate their numerical superiority. A fifth bike was provided to **Joan Barreda** in the Dakar. In the Sonora Rally, the extra HRC is going to the 27-year-old **Tosha Schareina**, who finished his second Dakar in fifteenth place last January. The Spaniard did not sign up for the championship before the start of the season, so he will not be scoring any points, but he will be able to assist the CRFs on the track and, who knows, perhaps even pick up the torch from the reds. As in the ADDC, Hero MotoSports have selected **Ross Branch** and **Sebastian Bühler** to participate in the third round. In Rally2, the 7 entrants will be on the start line. **Romain Dumontier** (HT Rally Raid Husqvarna Racing — 38 points), the winner of the category in the Dakar, third in the standings after skipping the ADDC, is back in the game. He will again cross swords with the new leader, **Paolo Lucci**, (BAS World KTM Racing — 50 points), the victor of the second round. **Bradley Cox** (BAS World KTM Racing) is also making his comeback after his crash in the Dakar. Neither the Saffa nor Duust Diverse Racing's **Konrad Dąbrowski** have opened their accounts yet. The Pole's teammate, **Jacob Argubright** (15 points), has a shot at inching closer to the podium in the absence of four higher-ranked entrants. In Rally3, the 3 first-timers are set to discover the W2RC. Among the 2 quads expected tomorrow, the championship leader, **Laisvydas Kancius** (AG Dakar School — 44 points), holds a comfortable lead over **Rodolfo Guilliolli**. The Guatemalan, seventh with 13 points to his name, also has a clear run to the provisional podium in the absence of the five riders ahead of him in the standings.

PROLOGUE: THE SHOW MUST GO ON

The scrutineering came to a close this evening in Parque La Ruina, a former industrial site that used to house a textile factory and now stands as a memento of Sonora's historical economy. Renovated with a local brewery at its core, the scrutineering venue becomes the gathering point for the competitors and the organization as soon as temperatures start to dip. The paddock boasts food trucks, a skate park, and even a minigolf course under the shade of a retired plane! The W2RC competitors have started to get a feel for the Sonora Rally and its chill vibes, which until now were mainly aimed at amateurs. Now, the race is poised to become "Pro-Am", the usual term in American motor sports for events in which the amateurs mingle with the pros. Tomorrow, the 10-kilometer prologue will start on the Cerro Colorado race track, where dragsters usually blast off in front of the stands and the spectators. Pre-race strategies, usually top secret, are crystal-clear here because one of the challenges of the first stage is already known to the regulars: visibility. In the motorbike race, the dust expected in the first stage among the cacti and the fast tracks on the ranches in the north of Hermosillo leaves no room for doubt: starting ahead in stage 1 is a must to avoid as much as possible having to overtake competitors on Monday. All riders should therefore start tomorrow's prologue in motocross mode for the bikes and pedal to the metal for the cars. More than enough to spice up the show, to the delight of the sonorenses, who will hear for the first time the sound of the official FIM 450s and FIA T1+ of the W2RC.

TOMORROW'S PROGRAMME*

- Prologue (10 km — Cerro Colorado race track)
 - first FIM start: 12:45 pm (Quads/Rally3/Rally2/ in the reverse order of race numbers / RallyGP in the reverse order of the W2RC provisional standings / National class)
 - first FIA start: 1:35 pm (T1/T3/T4 in the order of race numbers)

Follow the prologue live: [HERE](#)

- Publication of the provisional prologue results: 6 pm*
- Selection of the starting order for the next day by the top 10 FIM/FIA competitors: 7 pm*
- Publication of the FIM/FIA start list for stage 1: 8:30 pm*

* local time: GMT-7

List of FIM pilots authorized and FIA crews authorized to start [HERE](#)

Find all the practical information of the race on Sportity:

- All categories Sonora Rally 2023: sonorally2023
- National: NATIONALSONORARALLY2023
- FIA: FIASONORARALLY2023
- FIM: FIMSONORARALLY2023

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