

Paris, December 13th 2023

## 2024 DAKAR:

# QUAD RACE: GIROUD EYEING THREE-PEAT

### Key points:

- *The quad rider Alexandre Giroud was head and shoulders above the rest in the last two editions of the Dakar. The Frenchman, again a hot favourite, has a chance to write his name in golden letters in the history of the race.*
- *While the quad field has shrunk to ten vehicles in 2024, the calibre of the riders on the start list promises a no-holds-barred contest featuring challengers such as the Argentinian former winner Manuel Andújar and the 2023 W2RC champion, Laisvydas Kancius.*

"I'm here to make it three in a row" - **Alexandre Giroud** is not beating around the bush. This is no idle threat, considering his track record in his first seven starts, with 11 special wins to his name since his debut in 2017 and, especially, his back-to-back titles in 2022 and 2023. In the last two editions, the man from Grenoble went from strength to strength while keeping a cool head in the face of his solid but gung ho rivals. All in all, he was the epitome of a Dakar champion. However, even for such an experienced rider, a hat-trick is a different kettle of fish. Only five competitors (across all categories) have ever managed to grab three titles in a row: **Stéphane Peterhansel** during his stint with Yamaha (1991 through 1993), **Ari Vatanen** (1989 through 1991) and **Pierre Lartigue** (1994 through 1996) in cars and, more recently, the Russian truckers **Vladimir Chagin** (2002 through 2004) and **Eduard Nikolaev** (2017 through 2019). Among the quad riders, the **Patronelli Bros.** were unable to pull it off even at the height of their dominance, while the Czech **Josef Macháček**, the fastest man before the official launch of the category in 2009, never achieved a three-peat either!

**Giroud** has taken over the mantle of top favourite, but he is still proceeding with caution, not least because an injured shoulder during the W2RC season meant he was not much of a factor on the international scene. He stormed to victory in the Rallye du Maroc, but his rival **Laisvydas Kancius** succeeded him on the honour roll of the world championship thanks to his superior consistency. The Lithuanian earned the bragging rights that come with the smallest Dakar race number (#170), but there will be other serious contenders eager to make their mark in Saudi Arabia. One of them is **Manuel Andújar**, who has twice failed to finish the Dakar since his triumph in the 2021 edition. The Argentinian showed that he is still hungry for more by winning the Desafío Ruta 40 on home soil and three stages of the Rallye du Maroc.

The start list is packed with dark horses and podium contenders, including the Brazilian stage hunter **Marcelo Medeiros** (fourth in 2018) and **Francisco Moreno**, who finished as the runner-up to **Giroud** last January. A question mark hangs over the potential of the three rookies: **Samuel Desbuisson**, who laid down a marker in the Rallye du Maroc (ninth), the Saudi **Hani Al Noumesi**, who will enjoy the home advantage after finishing third in this season's FIM Baja World Cup, and the bold **Antanas Kanopkinas**, who is lining up on a Chinese-designed quad against all the Yamaha Raptors in the field.

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