

2005 Paris Dakar
Race Organizer
Daily Rally Reports

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1. Stage One

1.1. Stage One Route

Stage 1 - 31 December 2004 - BARCELONE > BARCELONE

Liaison 27 km Special 6 km Liaison 17 km Total 50 km



The people of Barcelona will be spectators to a Super Special staged on the beach.

For the first time, the Super Special will not only serve to establish the starting order for the following day's stage, the times will also be taken into account for the official classification.

Over the 6 km of this route run on the beach, the slightest mechanical hitch could already be of consequence!

The motorcycle trunks will not be available here.

1.2. Stage One Preview

Stage 1 - 31 December 2004 - BARCELONE > BARCELONE

Liaison 27 km Special 6 km Liaison 17 km Total 50 km

Just a few hours away from the New Year, the 463 vehicles of the Telefonica Dakar 2005 took off for the 27th edition of the rally. Under the bright sun of Catalunya, the competitors left the Placa de Espanya for a 27km liaison before the super special on the beach of Castelldefels. On the 100% sand 6km circuit, Frétné proved to be the fastest in the bike race while Robbie Gordon started his first rally in the best possible way with the best time on four wheels.

For this record-breaking year with 686 vehicles including the assistance cars and trucks, one could only expect a warm Barcelona cheer for the first stage of the Dakar. And that's exactly what happened with close to 200 000 people massed around the circuit. Not a bad way to start what promises to be a spectacular and... sandy Dakar! Sand indeed and very soft one for the 6 kilometres of the course designed by the organisation with the help of quite a few bulldozers to make the show even more spectacular.

In the bike race, the years go by and David Frétné (YAM – n°12) is proving to be a European stage specialist. After winning the Narbonne and Castellon specials last year for his first ever rally, the Frenchman clinched yet another stage, his fourth success (added to his win in Ayoun El Atrous). "It was a clean and good special. My goal was not to fall. The sand was really soft, but I didn't make any mistakes", admitted the 34 year-old biker. The only official Yamaha member made the best of his lighter 450cc machine, without however using his two-wheel drive system. "Normally I shouldn't be using the system before the long and sandy Mauritanian stages." Second of the special behind Frétné, exactly like in Narbonne and Castellon 11 months ago, Cyril Despres (KTM – n°2) on his bigger official KTM-Gauloises finished 8sec adrift. "It was a good way to get back into gear. I was really happy to hop back on my bike after a month without riding".

The good surprise of the day on two wheels was definitely Erik Verhoef's (KTM – n°29) excellent third spot. The Dutchman who had been forced to quit after last edition's stage 9 going to Nema, finished just 13sec behind the day's winner. Meanwhile, things went totally wrong for two official KTM riders. Eager to take off, Alfie Cox (KTM – n°3) hit the sand after just a few metres of the special after meeting a rock. With an injured shoulder, the South African eventually finished in 49th spot, well over a minute adrift. A few minutes before that, KTM Repsol member, Giovanni Sala (KTM - n°14) suffered clutch worries that forced him to make in to the finish line on his two feet pushing his bike. The Italian lost over 8min on the day. While quite a few privateers struggled in the soft sand of the Catalan beach, US youngster Kellon Walsh (KTM – n°21) flew to a very promising fifth spot. At only 21 years of age, the Red Bull USA KTM team rider who was selected during a six-day selection camp, is proving that the US team has so far made an excellent choice.

A good day for the USA in the bike race... An excellent day on four wheels! Indeed Robbie Gordon (VW – n°317) clocked the best time in the car race for his first ever kilometres on a Dakar. The American who has already clinched successes in NASCAR and CART events as well as the Baja 1000, surprised all the favourites on the tricky circuit to give Volkswagen its second victory in a Dakar special (after Kleinschmidt last year) beating Masuoka (MIT – n°309) by 2sec and De Villiers (NIS – n°314) by 3. “It wasn’t easy because the sand was really soft after the jumps. I was really excited at the start especially with such a crowd. I feel lucky to be here. “

The Dakar rally had already had American stage victories on two wheels with Chuck Stearns and Danny Laporte, but this 31st of December 2004 will be remembered as the first time a US competitor wins in a car. A fine day it was indeed for Gordon and the German brand with two of their diesel vehicles in the top five (Saby finishing fourth) while Scotsman Colin McRae (NIS – n°308) grabbed 8th spot and title holder Stephane Peterhansel (MIT – n°306) had to settle with 9th position. As expected, the hero of the day in the hearts of the Catalan fans was last edition’s bike winner Nani Roma (MIT – n°320). But on four wheels and in his new Pajero Evo 2, things didn’t completely go Nani’s way. The Spaniard who is “here to learn” took it easy, exactly like he was told by his Mitsubishi team and eventually clinched 23rd spot, over 30sec adrift.

In the biggest of categories, Dutchman Hans Bekx (DAF – n°524) earned himself his first ever Dakar success after numerous participation in the World’s most popular rally-raid event. The 48 year old driver took his DAF truck to the finish line in a time of 5’20”09, beating Firdaus Kabirov (KAM – n°520) by 14sec while Jan De Rooy (DAF – n°521) was third. Title holder Vladimir Tchaguine (KAM – n°515) had to settle with 7th spot at 35sec.

1.3. Stage 1 flashes

16:10 Trucks – Beckx early leader

Dutch driver Hans Bekx (DAF – n°524) has managed the best time in the truck special. With all the main favourites already on the finish line, Bekx looks to be headed for his first Dakar stage success. Second so far is Firdaus Kabirov (KAM – n°520) at 14sec while Jan De Rooy (DAF – n°521) is third. Title holder Vladimir Tchaguine (KAM – n°515) is 7th at 35sec.

15:59 Car – Gordon officially wins

After all competitors took off for the first stage of the Dakar in the car category, Robbie Gordon on his Volkswagen race Touareg has officially won the super special beating Masuoka (MIT – n°309) by 2sec and De Villiers (NIS – n°314) by 3sec.

Gordon becomes the first American to win a Dakar stage in a car.

15:19 Car - First US win in the car category

As it stands with 119 having finished their special, American Robbie Gordon still has the fastest time of the day and is set to become the first US competitor in a car to win a Dakar special. The Volkswagen driver is still ahead of Masuoka (MIT – n°309) at 2sec and De Villiers (NIS – n°314) at 3sec.

14:31 Car – Gordon in the lead

With 24 cars already having made it to the finish line, Robbie Gordon (VW – n°317) surprises the field for his very first Dakar with the provisional best time in 4'20". The US driver is just ahead of Masuoka (MIT – n°309) at 2sec and De Villiers (NIS – n°314) at 3sec. Title holder, Stephane Peterhansel (MIT – n°306) has to settle for provisional ninth spot while Colin McRae (NIS – n°308) is eighth.

14:19 Car – First cars on the track

After the last bikers, the first cars have completed the 6 kilometres of the Castelldefels circuit. As it stands, Bruno Saby (VW – n°307) has the fastest time in 4'25"08 with only nine competitors on the finish line. Second is Colin McRae (NIS – n°308) at 8sec, while title holder Stephane Peterhansel (MIT – n°306) has the provisional third spot.

14:15 Bike – Frétigné claims super special

David Frétigné clinches the first special of this Telefonica Dakar 2005 rally, his fourth on a Dakar. The Frenchman on his Yamaha two-wheel drive machine managed the best time of 4'11"06 just ahead of his compatriot Cyril Despres (KTM – n°2), 8sec adrift. Erik Verhoef (KTM – n°29) manages to keep his excellent third spot at 13sec from the day's winner. Surprising newcomer, Kellon Walsh (KTM – n°21) grabbed an excellent 5th place at only 22-years of age. Bad day for Alfie Cox (KTM - n°3) who appeared to suffer a and seems to suffer from a shoulder injury. KTM-Repsol rider Giovanni Sala (KTM – n°14) had to push his bike to the finish line with technical worries and finished in 183rd position, 8min adrift.

14:11 Bike – Frétigné takes command

Winner of three stages last year including the beach special of Castellon on a similar course, David Frétigné (YAM – n°12) on his two-wheel drive official Yamaha has taken the lead. The Frenchman has a 13sec advantage on Erik Verhoef (KTM – n°29) and 21sec on Arjan Brouwer.

13:58 Bike – Verhoef new leader

The Netherlands remain on the top of the standings but this time Erik Verhoef (KTM – n°29) has taken the leadership in a time of 4'24"06.

His compatriot Arjan Brouwer is second at 8sec, ahead of young American newcomer Kellon Walsh (KTM - n°21).

13:53 Bike – Quinonero 11th

Frenchman Pierre Quinonero (KTM – n°131), a former prologue winner back in 2002 in Arras, has clocked the 11th fastest time. Absent for the two previous editions due to injury, Quinonero is 45sec adrift. The best time of the super special is still that of Dutch rider Arjan Brouwer.

Joan-Manuel Gonzalez (BOM – n°244) is the first quad rider in 8th spot. Rik Deprez (YAM – n°241), also on a quad, is among the provisional top ten.

13:27 Bike – Orange power

With 165 riders now having made it to the finish line of the special, Dutchman Arjan Brouwer is still in the lead. The Yamaha rider is followed by his compatriot Rob Van pelt (HUS – n°81) who remains 20sec adrift. Third is Swiss Lavarò while another Dutch rider is fourth: Frans Verhoeven (YAM – n°145).

On the tricky 6km course, quite a few privateers are facing difficulties. In last position so far, Spaniard Alicia Martinez (YAM – n°223) is at over 42min from the current leader.

The main favourites are expected to start any minute now!

12:53 They're off!

After The first 73 competitors made it to the finish line of the Castelldefels super special, Dutchman Arjan Brouwer (YAM – n°153) currently has the best time (so far) in 4'32"06.

After the 27km liaison from Barcelona to the beach of Castelldefels, the first rider to take off for the day's 6km special was Swiss Sandro Lavarò (KTM – n°250).

The bike favourites will take off in the last positions.

12:48 463 vehicles at the start

After the third and final day of technical and administrative scrutineering, that finished late in the evening of Thursday, 463 vehicles have been allowed to start the Telefonica Dakar race, added to 223 assistance cars and trucks. A total of 686 vehicles will be heading for Dakar for the 27th edition of the rally.

Bikes: 230 (including 6 quads and 1 side-car)

Cars: 164

Trucks: 69

Assistance: 223

Other than some late arrivals in Barcelona and some bad moments on the road to Catalunya for others, not the slightest vehicle failed to go through scrutineering. The only non-starter, the car of Canadians Maryline Lambelin and Catherine Corne, didn't show up in the Palau Sant Jordi of Barcelona at all. Other than that, by decision of the race inspection, the truck of Spaniards Fernandez and Agustin has been switched to the assistance category.

12:42 Fast and furious...

Get ready for an action packed day on the beaches of Catalunya. The first stage of the Telefonica Dakar 2005 will take the drivers and riders on the beach of Castelldefels, just outside Barcelona for a super special. Unlike the previous two prologues in Marseille

(1km) and Clermont-Ferrand (1.5km), the day's race will count for the overall standings and will take place on a longer 6km single track.

Competitors will take off one after the other every 30 seconds except the last 10 bikes and the first 10 cars (every minute). They will (unlike the previous years) be allowed to overtake.

The race course will be similar to the Castellon special (9 kms) from the last two editions only this one will only be competed on sand. The track will at its minimum be 15m wide and bulldozers have designed jumps and curves to make the race even more spectacular.

In what promises to be a great show, a rider like David Frétygné on his Yamaha two-wheel drive bike will be one to watch. He indeed finished victorious of the similar Castellon special last year and will be counting on a lighter 450cc bike. Cyril Despres will be wanting to clock the fastest time and grab an early lead in the overall. A winner on the beach of Castellon back in 2003, he as well, is a specialist of this kind of exercise.

Difficult to predict a winner on four wheels. It'll be a perfect test for the top teams who will want to prove what they are capable of. A good opportunity to see how the new Nissan and Volkswagen's behave on the first sand stretches of this Dakar.

Surprises however are to be expected. Some privateers could well clock times that would see them head to the leading positions of the overall, especially in the bike race. On the other hand bad surprises could occur and some could possibly say "adios" to the Dakar after only a few kilometres.

1.4. Stage One Overall Standings

STANDING OVERALL BIKES						
Pos.	Dos.	Name	Mark	Time	Variation	Penalty
1	<u>012</u>	FRETIGNE	YAMAHA	04' 11"	00' 00"	
2	<u>002</u>	DESPRES	KTM	04' 19"	00' 08"	
3	<u>029</u>	VERHOEF	KTM	04' 24"	00' 13"	
4	<u>153</u>	BROUWER	YAMAHA	04' 32"	00' 21"	
5	<u>021</u>	WALCH	KTM	04' 38"	00' 27"	
6	<u>030</u>	VINTERS	KTM	04' 39"	00' 28"	
7	<u>004</u>	MEONI	KTM	04' 41"	00' 30"	
8	<u>033</u>	CROQUELOIS	KTM	04' 48"	00' 37"	
9	<u>005</u>	ULLEVALSETER	KTM	04' 49"	00' 38"	
10	<u>081</u>	VAN PELT	HUSABERG	04' 53"	00' 42"	
11	<u>007</u>	ESTEVE PUJOL	KTM	04' 54"	00' 43"	
12	<u>006</u>	COMA	KTM	04' 54"	00' 43"	
13	<u>207</u>	COTTET	YAMAHA	04' 56"	00' 45"	
14	<u>016</u>	DURAN	KTM	04' 56"	00' 45"	
15	<u>019</u>	CHARBONNEL	KTM	04' 59"	00' 48"	
16	<u>145</u>	VERHOEVEN	YAMAHA	05' 00"	00' 49"	
17	<u>076</u>	LEPAN	KTM	05' 01"	00' 50"	
18	<u>011</u>	DABROWSKI	KTM	05' 02"	00' 51"	
19	<u>213</u>	GOMEZ PALLAS	KTM	05' 04"	00' 53"	
20	<u>015</u>	GRAZIANI	KTM	05' 04"	00' 53"	
21	<u>227</u>	BORSI	KTM	05' 04"	00' 53"	
22	<u>220</u>	VARGA	KTM	05' 11"	01' 00"	
23	<u>244</u>	GONZALEZ	BOMBARDIER	05' 12"	01' 01"	
24	<u>230</u>	PELLETIER	KTM	05' 14"	01' 03"	
25	<u>241</u>	DEPREZ	YAMAHA	05' 16"	01' 05"	
26	<u>199</u>	VAN VELDHUIZEN	KTM	05' 18"	01' 07"	
27	<u>010</u>	CZACHOR	KTM	05' 22"	01' 11"	
28	<u>025</u>	DE AZEVEDO	KTM	05' 23"	01' 12"	
29	<u>069</u>	PEREZ	KTM	05' 26"	01' 15"	
30	<u>045</u>	PAYEN	KTM	05' 26"	01' 15"	
31	<u>026</u>	DUCLOS	KTM	05' 26"	01' 15"	
32	<u>172</u>	TERRANOVA	KTM	05' 29"	01' 18"	
33	<u>229</u>	BERNARBEU	YAMAHA	05' 30"	01' 19"	
34	<u>028</u>	RAMON	YAMAHA	05' 32"	01' 21"	
35	<u>022</u>	BLAIS	KTM	05' 34"	01' 23"	
36	<u>009</u>	BRUCY	KTM	05' 35"	01' 24"	
37	<u>178</u>	MORO	YAMAHA	05' 35"	01' 24"	
38	<u>181</u>	BENETTI	YAMAHA	05' 37"	01' 26"	
39	<u>008</u>	DE GAVARDO	KTM	05' 38"	01' 27"	
40	<u>152</u>	STIJKEL	YAMAHA	05' 38"	01' 27"	

2. Stage Two

1.5. Stage Two Route

Stage 2 - 1 January 2005 - BARCELONE > GRANADA
Liaison 920 km Total 920 km



After the ceremony presenting the competitors on the podium situated "Plaça de Espanya", the Telefonica-Dakar caravan will face its first difficulty.

No competing is on the programme, but a long and testing liaison to Granada.

The route will almost exclusively be covered via motorway, apart from an exit for a lunch break and a check point in Castellon, another regular city on the Dakar route.

The loading or towing of motorcycles and quads is strictly forbidden.

1.6. Stage Two Flashes

Stage 2 - 1 January 2005 - BARCELONE > GRANADA
Liaison 920 km Total 920 km

21:34 The favourites in Granada

After the first cars made it to Granada, the buggies of Jean-Louis Schlesser and Josep-Maria Servia were the first of the top cars to arrive on the finish line. The Schlesser-Ford were shortly followed by Colin McRae in his Nissan, and the Mitsubishi Pajero Evo drivers: Hiroshi Masuoka, Luc Alphand and Stéphane Peterhansel.

20:19 KTM-Gauloises and first car in Granada

After the first few privateers made it to the finish of their long 920km liaison from Barcelona, the first 'big guns' have arrived in Granada. The entire KTM-Gauloises official team with Fabrizio Meoni (KTM – n°4), Cyril Despres (KTM – n°2), Alfie Cox (KTM - n°3) and Jean Brucy (KTM – n°9) climbed on the finish podium of the Southern Spanish city. Meanwhile, Frenchman Jean-Pierre Strugo (MER – n°322) was the first car driver to cross the finish line.

18:50 First 5 in Granada

The first five competitors (all in the bike race) have made it to the finish line of stage 2, a liaison between Barcelona and Granada, via a CP in Castellon. The first to go up the podium at 18h40 were Hansson (KTM – n°198) and Ambrosino (KTM – n°200). Both riders were shortly followed by Terranova (KTM – n°172), Eland (KTM – n°164) and Borsi (KTM – n°227).

17:37 News from Castellon CP

In the closing hours of the afternoon, the race inspectors have signalled that 34 vehicles have not cleared the Castellon CP. 23 cars, 5 trucks and 6 bikes were still to make it to the mandatory check point. The 6 bikers are Sanna Cocco (KTM – n°41), Lepad (KTM – n°76), Verzeletti (KTM – n°150), Terranova (KTM – n°172), Buratti (HON – n°196) and Renders (KTM – n°203). Meanwhile, most of the Dakar competitors were heading south on the motorway to Granada. The first vehicles were expected at around 18h00 on the finish podium of the stage.

15:32 9 bikers still expected at CP

229 bikes have made it to the Castellon check point for a lunch break before heading to Granada. Nine bikes were still expected: Sanna Cocco (KTM – n°41), Lepad (KTM – n°76), Kay (HON – n°119), Vion (HON – n°135), Verzeletti (KTM – n°150), Terranova (KTM – n°172), Buratti (HON – n°196), Renders (KTM – n°203) and Montero Perez (BOM – n°246). Meanwhile on four wheels, 40 vehicles have made it to Castellon where thousands of fans have gathered to cheer on the Dakar competitors.

14:28 First competitors at Castellon CP

After the first 380 kms of the long liaison stage to Granada, the first competitors have made it to the Castellon check point. 169 bikes have cleared the CP as well as three cars: Servia (SCH - n°301), Schlesser (SCH – n°300) and Peterhansel (MIT – n°306). Sixty bikers are still expected in

Castellon for lunch as well as 162 cars and all the trucks that took off last from the Plaça de Espanya in Barcelona.

13:59 Comte forced to quit

Frenchman Denis Comte (KTM n°43) was forced to withdraw from the race and not take the start of today's stage 2 heading to Granada. The 53 year-old had all his official documents (passport, etc) money and credit cards stolen in his assistance van based in Barcelona. Impossible in such conditions to take off for the biker who had financed his Dakar project by himself. There are now only 463 vehicles remaining in the rally race including 229 bikes.

13:43 Adios Barcelona

Sun and fun in Barcelona! In a fantastic atmosphere around the podium of the Plaça de Espanya, the competitors took off at 9h00 for the long road to Granada via a CP in Castellon. Thousands of fans gathered to cheer the Dakar caravan in the first hours of this New Year. Under a bright sunny sky, the first bikers to hit the road were Swiss team Sandro Lanaro and Rudolf Howald (APR – n°250) on their sidecar bike, rapidly followed by all bikes, cars and trucks. As expected the Spanish riders of the KTM Repsol team (Isidre Esteve and Marc Coma) and Mitsubishi's Nani Roma received the warmest farewell from the Catalan crowd. Almost all competitors looked in perfect shape for this 'real' start to the rally, having taken it easy for the New Year's celebration. No time for partying, they all went to bed shortly after midnight for a well deserved rest after their super special and before the 920kms to Southern Spain.

12:35 The long road to Granada

After the super special on the beach of Castelldefels on the outskirts of Barcelona with the wins of David Frégné and Robby Gordon, the competitors face a very long day on the roads of Spain. No racing or navigational difficulties today but hours behind the steering wheel or handle bars of their vehicles.

The day will however start with a podium presentation of every single competitor situated "Plaça de Espanya". A good opportunity to bid farewell to friends and family and receive a warm cheer from the Catalan fans.

Once off the podium, the Dakar caravan will hit the road to Granada for a 920km journey, almost exclusively via motorway, with a stopover in Castellon for a check point and a well-deserved lunch break. For the third consecutive time, the competitors will 'shortly' discover Castellon although this time, unlike the two previous editions, no beach special is planned.

A good two thirds of the liaison will still have to be covered in the afternoon before the first vehicles make it on the Southern point of Spain in Granada.

Although no changes in the overall are obviously possible, the day should prove to be tiring for both man and machine.

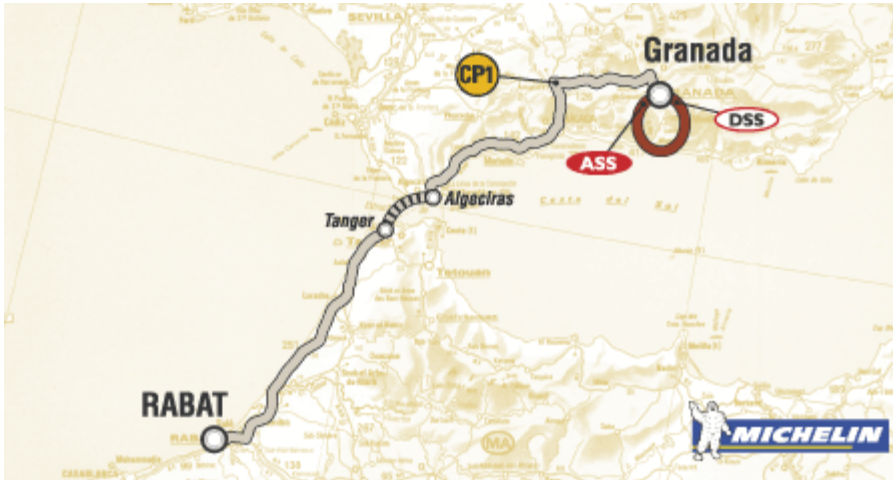
1.7. Stage Two Overall Standings

STANDING OVERALL BIKES						
Pos.	Dos.	Name	Mark	Time	Variation	Penalty
1	012	FRETIGNE	YAMAHA	04' 11"	00' 00"	
2	002	DESPRES	KTM	04' 19"	00' 08"	
3	029	VERHOEF	KTM	04' 24"	00' 13"	
4	153	BROUWER	YAMAHA	04' 32"	00' 21"	
5	021	WALCH	KTM	04' 38"	00' 27"	
6	030	VINTERS	KTM	04' 39"	00' 28"	
7	004	MEONI	KTM	04' 41"	00' 30"	
8	033	CROQUELOIS	KTM	04' 48"	00' 37"	
9	005	ULLEVALSETER	KTM	04' 49"	00' 38"	
10	081	VAN PELT	HUSABERG	04' 53"	00' 42"	
11	007	ESTEVE PUJOL	KTM	04' 54"	00' 43"	
12	006	COMA	KTM	04' 54"	00' 43"	
13	207	COTTET	YAMAHA	04' 56"	00' 45"	
14	016	DURAN	KTM	04' 56"	00' 45"	
15	019	CHARBONNEL	KTM	04' 59"	00' 48"	
16	145	VERHOEVEN	YAMAHA	05' 00"	00' 49"	
17	076	LEPAN	KTM	05' 01"	00' 50"	
18	011	DABROWSKI	KTM	05' 02"	00' 51"	
19	213	GOMEZ PALLAS	KTM	05' 04"	00' 53"	
20	015	GRAZIANI	KTM	05' 04"	00' 53"	
21	227	BORSI	KTM	05' 04"	00' 53"	
22	220	VARGA	KTM	05' 11"	01' 00"	
23	244	GONZALEZ	BOMBARDIER	05' 12"	01' 01"	
24	230	PELLETIER	KTM	05' 14"	01' 03"	
25	241	DEPREZ	YAMAHA	05' 16"	01' 05"	
26	199	VAN VELDHUIZEN	KTM	05' 18"	01' 07"	
27	010	CZACHOR	KTM	05' 22"	01' 11"	
28	025	DE AZEVEDO	KTM	05' 23"	01' 12"	
29	069	PEREZ	KTM	05' 26"	01' 15"	
30	045	PAYEN	KTM	05' 26"	01' 15"	
31	026	DUCLOS	KTM	05' 26"	01' 15"	
32	172	TERRANOVA	KTM	05' 29"	01' 18"	
33	229	BERNARBEU	YAMAHA	05' 30"	01' 19"	
34	028	RAMON	YAMAHA	05' 32"	01' 21"	
35	022	BLAIS	KTM	05' 34"	01' 23"	
36	009	BRUCY	KTM	05' 35"	01' 24"	
37	178	MORO	YAMAHA	05' 35"	01' 24"	
38	181	BENETTI	YAMAHA	05' 37"	01' 26"	
39	008	DE GAVARDO	KTM	05' 38"	01' 27"	
40	152	STIJKEL	YAMAHA	05' 38"	01' 27"	

3. Stage Three

1.8. Stage Three Route

Stage 3 - 2 January 2005 - GRANADA > RABAT
Liaison 6 km Special 10 km Liaison 557 km Total 573 km



Before leaving Spain, competitors will race a final 10 km special, swift and spectacular, run on military ground near Granada.

The liaison to Algeciras, where they will embark, includes a passage control in Antequera. After the boat crossing, the first part of the route on African soil is very smooth running, with a stretch of motorway from Tangiers to Rabat, where the finish may nevertheless be late.

For the 4th time in its history the Dakar will set up its bivouac in the Moroccan capital, after previous visits in 1994, 1999 and 2002.

1.9. Stage Three Flashes

Stage 3 - 2 January 2005 - GRANADA > RABAT
Liaison 6 km Special 10 km Liaison 557 km Total 573 km

13:53 Trucks – Bekx again

After the bikes and cars, the first 47 trucks have completed the 10kms of the Granada special. Like in the Barcelona super special, Hans Bekx (DAF – n°524) has the best time of the day in 9'56". The Dutchman leads ahead of Firdaus Kabirov (KAM – n°520) and Gerard De Rooy (DAF – n°516). Title holder Vladimir Tchaguine (KAM – n°515) has to settle with 7th position.

13:47 Cars – McRae officially wins

With all cars on the finish line of stage 2 special, Colin McRae officially wins the day's race in a final time of 7'48". The Scotsman earns himself his third Dakar win after victories in Ayoun El Atrous and Dakar last year. McRae climbs on top of the overall standings with a second advantage on Robby Gordon.

12:21 Cars – McRae overall leader

If things remain like this, Scotsman Colin McRae (NIS – n°308) with his current best time of the Granada special in 7'48" is the new rally leader. In the overall standings, the former WRC World champion has a 1sec lead on Robby Gordon (VW – n°317) and 2sec on his team mate Giniel De Villiers (NIS – n°314).

11:57 Cars – McRae takes command

Scotsman Colin McRae has the provisional best time of the special in 7'48". On his official Nissan, McRae has a 6sec advantage on Peterhansel (MIT – n°306) and a 10sec lead on Vatanen (NIS – n°311).
15 cars have made it to the finish so far.

11:49 Cars – De Villiers first leader

The first favourites have made it to the finish line of the 10km special. As it stands, Giniel de Villiers (NIS – n°314) has clocked the fastest time in 8'01". Second is USA's Robby Gordon (VW – n°317) at 2sec while third is the other Race Touareg driver Bruno Saby (VW – n°307) at 3sec.

11:27 Bikes – Frétné wins special

After clinching the Barcelona super special two days ago, David Frétné (YAM – n°12) has just claimed stage 3 special in Granada. The Frenchman managed a time of 7'57" on the 10km circuit, beating Alfie Cox (KTM – n°3) by just 2sec and Cyril Despres (KTM – n°2) by 3sec. Spaniard newcomer Jordi Duran (KTM – n°16) manages an excellent 4th place, just 9sec adrift, ahead of his KTM-Repsol team Marc Coma (KTM – n°6). Frétné now has a 11sec lead on Despres in the overall standings. Third is Kellon Walsh (KTM – n°21) who clocked the 10th best time on the day after his excellent 5th spot in Barcelona.

10:57 Bikes – Changes upfront

The leading positions of the stage 3 special in Granda has completely changed. Alfie Cox (KTM – n°3) has, by quite a margin, beaten the previous best time of the day in 7'59", becoming the first biker of the day to go under the 8min mark. The South African has a 17sec lead on Gorrara (KTM – n°130) and 22sec on Casteu (KTM – n°42).

10:56 Bikes – Harden takes the lead

With 173 bikers on the finish line of the Granada special, USA's Scot Harden (KTM – n°17) has just clocked the provisional best time of the day in 8'23". The US KTM-Red Bull rider has a current 12sec lead on Victor Rivera (KTM – n°39) and 13sec on Giovanni Sala (KTM – n°14).

10:25 Bikes – Rivera new leader

Early leader Giovanni Sala has just seen his best time beaten by Victor Rivera (KTM – n°39) in 8'35". The Spaniard has a 1sec advantage on Sala on the finish line of the Granada special. Current third is Alain Hermet (SUZ – n°48). All the main favourites are still expected on the start line.

10:01 Bikes – Sala as expected

After suffering clutch problems during the first special of the rally and finishing in the 183rd spot, Giovanni Sala (KTM – n°14), one of the official KTM-Repsol riders who left among the early starters of the day, has clocked the best time so far in 8'36". The Italian leads with a 3sec advantage on Frenchman Dominique Bastouilh (KTM – n°31) and 24sec on Pierrick Bonnet (KTM – n°52).

09:40 Bikes – Bonnet first leader

After the first 28 bikers have made it to the finish line of the 10km special, Pierrick Bonnet (KTM – n°52) has clocked the provisional fastest time in 9'00. The Frenchman leads ahead of USA's Kevin Heath (KTM – n°118) and Belgian Eric Palante (HON – n°122). All the favourites are still to leave.

09:07 Bikes - Ready for the special

The first bikers have made it to the start of the 10km special on the military terrain of Armilla, after a 6km liaison from Granada. The first man to take off will be Frenchman Nicolas Bayle (HON – n°63). For the bike race, the starting order will be in the reverse order of the overall. David Frétiigné (YAM – n°12) winner of the first special will therefore be the last man to take off. The competitors will be leaving every 30sec.

08:35 Farewell Europe

Privateers, newcomers but also favourites have been waiting for this moment since the beginning of their preparation. While the old-timers often say that the serious business starts on African soil, the first half-day in Morocco should be rather cool. The liaison to Rabat will be exclusively on a 300km highway, all the way from Tangers after the boat crossing from Algeciras.

But before that, the competitors will face a last European test with a fast and spectacular special staged on a military ground outside Granada. The 100% dirt course should crown fast and technical drivers and prove to be well different from the one on the beach of Castelldefels for stage 1.

Winner of the first super special, David Frétygné(YAM – n°12) will do his best to keep hold of his slim 8" leadership while Robby Gordon's (VW – n°317) task to enter Africa in first spot overall on four wheels promises to be tricky with only a 2 sec advance on Masuoka.

1.10. Stage Three Overall Standings

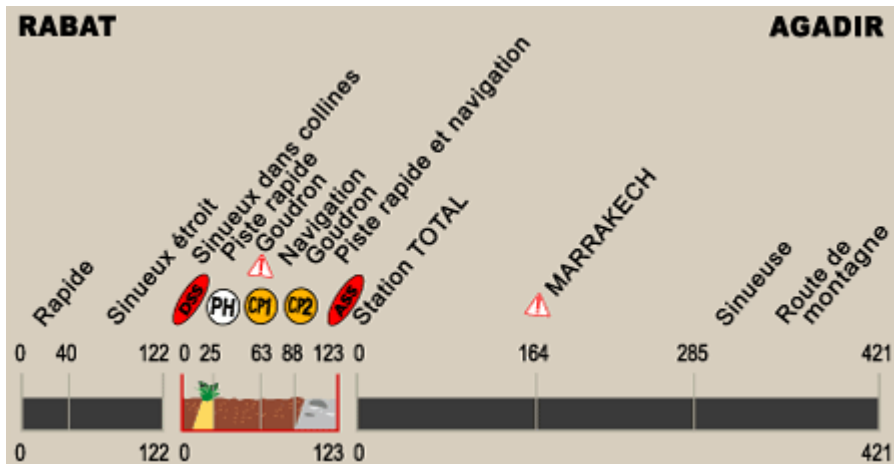
STANDING OVERALL BIKES						
Pos.	Dos.	Name	Mark	Time	Variation	Penalty
1	012	FRETIGNE	YAMAHA	12' 08"	00' 00"	
2	002	DESPRES	KTM	12' 19"	00' 11"	
3	021	WALCH	KTM	12' 55"	00' 47"	
4	004	MEONI	KTM	12' 58"	00' 50"	
5	029	VERHOEF	KTM	12' 59"	00' 51"	
6	008	COMA	KTM	13' 01"	00' 53"	
7	016	DURAN	KTM	13' 02"	00' 54"	
8	030	VINTERS	KTM	13' 04"	00' 56"	
9	005	ULLEVALSETER	KTM	13' 14"	01' 06"	
10	007	ESTEVE PUJOL	KTM	13' 16"	01' 08"	
11	019	CHARBONNEL	KTM	13' 19"	01' 11"	
12	011	DABROWSKI	KTM	13' 28"	01' 20"	
13	033	CROQUELOIS	KTM	13' 30"	01' 22"	
14	153	BROUWER	YAMAHA	13' 32"	01' 24"	
15	145	VERHOEVEN	YAMAHA	13' 35"	01' 27"	
16	207	COTTET	YAMAHA	13' 37"	01' 29"	
17	015	GRAZIANI	KTM	13' 38"	01' 30"	
18	081	VAN PELT	HUSABERG	13' 39"	01' 31"	
19	244	GONZALEZ	BOMBARDIER	13' 45"	01' 37"	
20	023	CALDECOTT	KTM	13' 47"	01' 39"	
21	008	DE GAVARDO	KTM	13' 49"	01' 41"	
22	003	COX	KTM	13' 50"	01' 42"	
23	022	BLAIS	KTM	13' 58"	01' 50"	
24	025	DE AZEVEDO	KTM	14' 00"	01' 52"	
25	009	BRUCY	KTM	14' 01"	01' 53"	
26	026	DUCLOS	KTM	14' 05"	01' 57"	
27	076	LEPAN	KTM	14' 07"	01' 59"	
28	010	CZACHOR	KTM	14' 08"	02' 00"	
29	069	PEREZ	KTM	14' 12"	02' 04"	
30	042	CASTEU	KTM	14' 14"	02' 06"	
31	241	DEPREZ	YAMAHA	14' 17"	02' 09"	
32	181	BENETTI	YAMAHA	14' 22"	02' 14"	
33	220	VARGA	KTM	14' 28"	02' 20"	
34	213	GOMEZ PALLAS	KTM	14' 29"	02' 21"	
35	017	HARDEN	KTM	14' 31"	02' 23"	
36	199	VAN VELDHUIZEN	KTM	14' 33"	02' 25"	
37	172	TERRANOVA	KTM	14' 36"	02' 28"	
38	032	ALGAY	KTM	14' 40"	02' 32"	
39	045	PAYEN	KTM	14' 40"	02' 32"	
40	197	WARRANT	KTM	14' 41"	02' 33"	

4. Stage Four

1.11. Stage Four Route

Stage 4 - 3 January 2005 - RABAT > AGADIR

Liaison 122 km Special 123 km Liaison 421 km Total 666 km



The short liaison will take the competitors to the start of a first African special that is filled with traps from the very beginning; the route is 70 % new. In the first part, marked out through an undulating cork oak forest, Rally specialists may put their driving skills to full use. After this, although the sand and the desert are still far off, the first navigating problems appear.

There are many changes in direction, in a landscape sorely lacking in landmarks: competitors, even experienced drivers, will very likely lose time here. And before reaching Agadir, the gateway to the south, 430 km of liaison must still be covered.

1.12. Stage Four Flashes

Stage 4 - 3 January 2005 - RABAT > AGADIR
Liaison 122 km Special 123 km Liaison 421 km Total 666 km

THE NEWSFLASHES

17:15 Trucks – Tchaguine in command

In the truck race, Vladimir Tchaguine (KAM – n°515) showed that he was already well in shape for a fifth triumph on the Dakar.

The Russian driver clinched the special with a 1'34" advantage on Gerard De Rooy (DAF – n°516) and 1'57" on team mate Firdaus Kabirov (n°520). After a smooth start to the race in Europe, Tchaguine takes command of the overall.

15:33 Trucks – Tchaguine leads at CP2

Vladimir Tchaguine (KAM – n°515) has managed the fastest time at CP2 (km 88). Gerard De Rooy (DAF – n°516) is second, 1'55" adrift. Jan De Rooy (DAF – n°521) is third.

15:31 Trucks – vehicle on its side

The truck of Toon Van Genugten (MAN – n°556) was seen on its side at km 6. It is now back on its wheels and still competing on the special.

15:31 Trucks – Kabirov fastest at CP1

Firdaus Kabirov (KAM – n°520) has the fastest time at CP1 (km 63). He leads ahead of Gerard De Rooy (DAF – n°516) by 12sec and Vladimir Tchaguine (KAM – n°515) at 21sec. 12 trucks have made it to the first CP.

15:29 454 still in the race

454 vehicles are still in the race (226 bikes, 161 cars and 67 trucks). Three failed to start the day's stage 4: Perez (KTM – 18) in the bikes, Naglis (MIT – n°412) in the cars and Benbekhti (MAN – n°569) in the trucks.

15:08 Bikes – Bikers on their way to Agadir

All the bikers, except one were on their way to the Agadir bivouac after the special was cancelled due to the fog in the Rabat area.
One bike has not yet gone through the first check point: Jean-Luc Sevault (KTM – n°72).

14:39 Cars – Gordon wins special

Robby Gordon (VW – n°317) has just clocked the fastest time of the day's 123km special between Rabat and Agadir. The US driver managed a time of 1h14'01" beating Peterhansel (MIT – n°306) by 53" and Saby (VW – n°307) at 1'08". Gordon conquers the new overall lead ahead of Peterhansel, 1min adrift.

14:38 Cars – Gordon fastest at CP2

At CP2 (km 88) Robby Gordon has the fastest time in 24'05". Second is Peterhansel (MIT – n°306) at 1'05". Third is Alphand (MIT – n°311) at 1'57".

14:37 Cars – Gordon best time at CP1

Robby Gordon (VW – n°317) has the new best time at CP1. He leads by 19sec on Peterhansel (MIT- n°306). Third is Luc Alphand (MIT – n°312) at 1'26". Seven competitors have made it at CP1.

14:36 Bikes – 216 at CP1

216 bikes have made it at CP1 which marks the beginning of the road liaison to Agadir. The bike special was cancelled due to heavy fog.

14:36 Car – Peter leads at CP1

Second to start for the special, Stephane Peterhansel (MIT – n0306) has clocked the fastest time at CP 1 (km 63) in 39'33". McRae (NIS – n°308) is second at 1'11". Only two cars have made it so far.

14:35 Bikes - 189 bikes at CP1

189 bikes have made it to CP1 of the stage 4 between Rabat and Agadir. The special was cancelled due to heavy fog and all riders are now on a liaison to Agadir.

14:34 Cars – McRae first to start

The car special has officially started at 10h42. leader of the overall standing, Colin McRae (NIS – n°308) was the first to take off for the 123km special.

14:33 Cars – Special to start at 10h42

Due to heavy fog, the bike special has been cancelled for security reasons (poor visibility). The car special will however start at the normal time of 10h45. The stage' 4 special will be 123km long with three CPs.

11:35 Bike special cancelled

Due to heavy fog, the organisation has decided to cancel the bike special of stage 4 between Rabat and Agadir. The visibility was too bad for the bikers to compete in good security conditions. They, therefore, went to CP1 as a convoy and then used a normal asphalt road to head to Agadir in a liaison. A few years ago, the first stage in Morocco had also been cancelled because of the fog.

On the other hand, the cars should compete the special normally.

07:54 Africa, here we come!

The first African special of the Telefonica Dakar 2005 rally promises a brutal change for the competitors. Short in distance, it will offer a variety of technical difficulties on the rugged Moroccan soil. Navigation shouldn't be too much of a worry but the landscape on the second part of the special will make things trickier. Added to that the organisation's opening team has signalled that the terrain would be rather wet after heavy rains in the past weeks, with puddles and a ford at the beginning of the timed section.

On a course never used at 70 %, the competitors will be using rather narrow and sinuous paths that will make overtaking difficult. The three winners of the previous special David Frégné, Colin McRae and Hans Bex (also leaders in the overall of their categories), will take off first with good chances of keeping their respective leads.

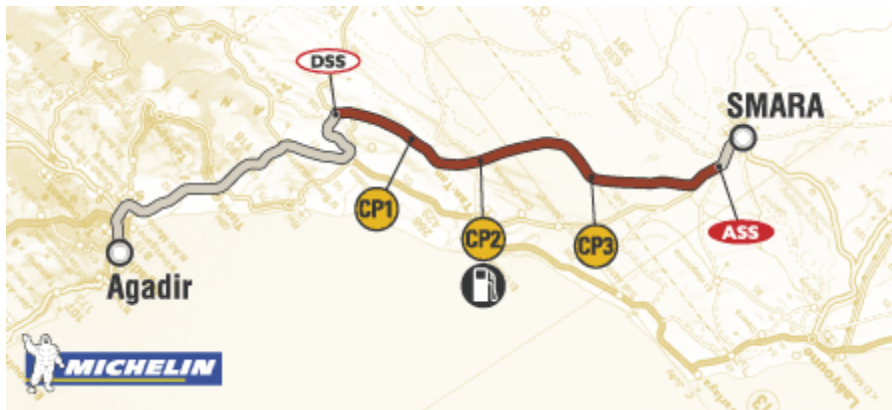
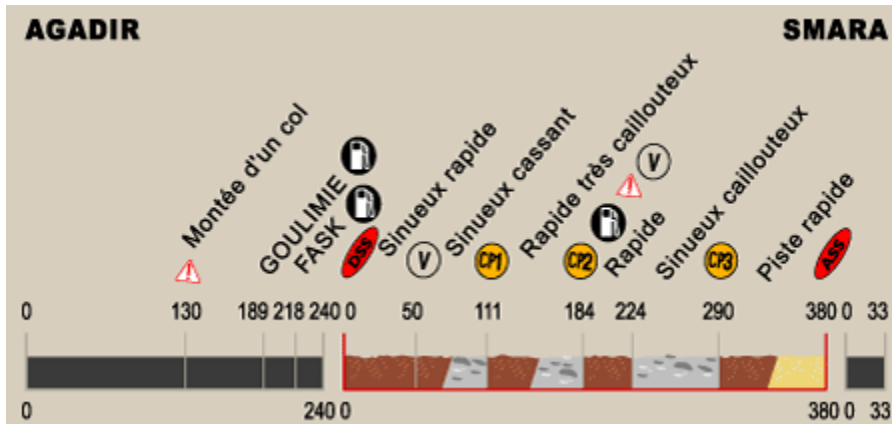
1.13. Stage Four Overall Standings

STANDING OVERALL BIKES						
Pos.	Dos.	Name	Mark	Time	Variation	Penalty
1	019	ESTEVE PUJOL	KTM	1h 13' 29"	00' 00"	
2	003	MEONI	KTM	1h 13' 43"	00' 14"	
3	002	DESPRES	KTM	1h 13' 46"	00' 17"	
4	010	COX	KTM	1h 14' 01"	00' 32"	
5	011	COMA	KTM	1h 15' 14"	01' 45"	
6	183	VINTERS	KTM	1h 15' 35"	02' 06"	
7	007	SALA	KTM	1h 15' 38"	02' 09"	
8	009	BRUCY	KTM	1h 16' 04"	02' 35"	
9	008	DE GAVARDO	KTM	1h 16' 13"	02' 44"	
10	015	ULLEVALSETER	KTM	1h 16' 46"	03' 17"	
11	016	ROESLER	KTM	1h 17' 23"	03' 54"	
12	072	CALDECOTT	KTM	1h 17' 24"	03' 55"	
13	004	ROMA	KTM	1h 17' 32"	04' 03"	
14	021	PELLICER	ALFER	1h 17' 42"	04' 13"	
15	006	LUNDMARK	KTM	1h 17' 44"	04' 15"	
16	022	FLICK	KTM	1h 18' 29"	05' 00"	
17	005	DE AZEVEDO	KTM	1h 18' 32"	05' 03"	
18	045	GRAZIANI	KTM	1h 18' 42"	05' 13"	
19	023	CZACHOR	KTM	1h 19' 08"	05' 39"	
20	001	SAINCT	KTM	1h 19' 11"	05' 42"	
21	025	HARDEN	KTM	1h 19' 44"	06' 15"	
22	029	VERHOEF	KTM	1h 20' 13"	06' 44"	
23	012	FRETIGNE	YAMAHA	1h 20' 26"	06' 57"	
24	030	STANOVNIK	KTM	1h 20' 44"	07' 15"	
25	027	ALGAY	KTM	1h 21' 20"	07' 51"	
26	020	MARCHINI	KTM	1h 21' 29"	08' 00"	
27	024	CHARBONNEL	KTM	1h 21' 49"	08' 20"	
28	171	COAKER	KTM	1h 22' 04"	08' 35"	
29	017	KRAUSE	KTM	1h 22' 34"	09' 05"	
30	031	RAYNAL	KTM	1h 22' 58"	09' 29"	
31	049	CHEVALLIER	KTM	1h 23' 25"	09' 56"	
32	041	CASTEU	CAGIVA	1h 23' 34"	10' 05"	
33	032	PEREZ	KTM	1h 23' 57"	10' 28"	
34	135	RAMOS MARTINEZ	KTM	1h 25' 14"	11' 45"	
35	146	MUGNAIOLI	KTM	1h 25' 20"	11' 51"	
36	199	RIVERA	ALFER	1h 25' 20"	11' 51"	
37	042	AUBIJOUX	YAMAHA	1h 25' 22"	11' 53"	
38	034	KEDZIERSKI	KTM	1h 26' 36"	13' 07"	
39	179	BORSI	KTM	1h 27' 16"	13' 47"	
40	076	LEPAN	KTM	1h 27' 21"	13' 52"	

5. Stage Five

1.14. Stage Five Route

Stage 5 - 4 January 2005 - AGADIR > SMARA
Liaison 240 km Special 381 km Liaison 33 km Total 654 km



Before attacking the first long Special, there will be a warm up session on a tarmac road to Guelmin. The start of the special, between the hills, will allow high speeds but the very rocky tracks that follow will force drivers to reduce their pace.

The level of difficulty will move up a scale here. The rest of the Special will alternate between slow and fast stretches, on a mainly sinuous track. This second part, never taken before by any of the competitors, will end with a very long "chott". From this stage onwards competitors' positions may change and leads may be established.

1.15. Stage Five Flashes

Stage 5 - 4 January 2005 - AGADIR > SMARA
Liaison 240 km Special 381 km Liaison 33 km Total 654 km

19:45 Trucks – Tchaguine wins special

After trailing way behind Gerard de Rooy all the way to CP 3 (km 280), Vladimir Tchaguine (KAM – n°515) eventually clinched the stage after the young Dutch driver suffered a serious crash. Second of the special is André De Azevedo (TAT – n°518), 1'46" behind while team mate Karel Loprais (TAT – n°519) was 4'26" adrift. Tchaguine comforts his overall lead.

19:12 Trucks – De Rooy crashes

In the last kilometres of the special, Gerard De Rooy (DAF – n°516) suffered a serious crash (at km 310) while he was comfortably leading the race. The truck ended on its side. The younger of the De Rooy family was waiting for some help from his father Jan (DAF – n°521) to put the truck back on its wheels and possibly carry on the stage.

18:34 Trucks – De Rooy on his way to victory

At CP3 (km 280), Gerard De Rooy (DAF – n°516) was on his way to a special success with a huge 14'51" advantage on father Jan (DAF – n°521). Third, with 90kms to go, was Vladimir Tchaguine (KAM – n°515), over 17' behind while Kabirov (KAM – n°520) was at 17'25". If things remain this way, De Rooy Junior would become the new overall leader with over 15' on Tchaguine.

17:02 Cars - McRae wins special

With 13 vehicles on the finish line of the special, Colin McRae (NIS – n°308) has clocked the fastest time of the day. The Scot beat team mate Giniel De Villiers (NIS – n°314) by 6'15 to clinch his second special on the rally (for a total of four special wins in two rallies). Third is Jutta Kleinschmidt (VW – n°310) at 7'18", ahead of Nasser Al Attiyah (BMW – n°318) at 7'20". Luc Alphand is fifth, 8'15" adrift. Stephane Peterhansel (MIT – n°306) suffered quite a few punctures during the race and finished over 24' behind. McRae also captures the overall with a 5'283 lead on De Villiers.

16:45 Cars – McRae still in the lead

At the third check point of the special (km 280), Colin McRae (NIS – n°308) still was the fastest of the car special. The Scot has a 3'59" lead on team mate Giniel De Villiers (NIS – n°314) and 4'20" on Jutta Kleinschmidt (VW – n°310). Also on a Race Touareg, Juha Kankkunen (VW – n°313) was fourth ahead of Alphand (MIT – n°312). 90kms are still to be competed on.

16:24 Trucks – De Rooy Jnr fastest at CP1

Gerard De Rooy (DAF – n°516) clocked the fastest time of the truck race at the first CP (km 111). The Dutch driver has a 1'42" lead on Tchaguine (KAM – n°515) and 2'59 on Loprais (TAT – n°519).

15:50 Cars - McRae leads at CP2

At the second check point of the day (km 184), Colin McRae (NIS – 308) has managed the best time of the car race. The Scot leads by a 1'25" margin on team mate Ari Vatanen (NIS – n°311). After the two Nissan vehicles come a Volkswagen trio with Juha Kankunnen (VW – n°313) third at 4'24", Jutta Kleinschmidt (VW – n°310) fourth at 5'33" and Robby Gordon (VW – n°317) fifth at 5'35.

15:22 Cars – Gordon leads at CP1

Leaving first for the timed special after winning yesterday's stage, Robby Gordon (VW – n°317) has the fastest time at CP1 (km 111). Second is his Race Touareg team mate Bruno Saby (VW – n°307) at 3'15 while Peterhansel (MIT – n°306) is over 5' adrift.

15:19 Bikes – Caldecott wins special

Andy Caldecott (KTM – 23) clocked the best time of the day's special in a final time of 4h13'13". The Australian wins his first ever Dakar stage in two appearances (he was forced to withdraw after breaking a leg last year). Caldecott beats Marc Coma (KTM – n°6) by only 3" while Cyril Despres (KTM – n°2) is third at 3'30. Marc Coma takes command of the overall lead with a 42" advantage on Caldecott and 2'45". Former overall leader David Frétygné (YAM – n°12) finished the special over 10min adrift and is now at 9'34 from the new overall leader.

13:08 Bikes – Duran quits

After a fall just before CP1 (at km 100), Jordi Duran (KTM – n°16) was forced to withdraw with a collar bone and femur fracture. The Spaniard had finished fourth in the Granada special and was seventh overall.

13:08 Bikes – Coma new leader at CP2

At check point 2 (km 184), Spaniard Marc Coma (KTM – n°6) is the new special leader after clocking the best time at the CP. Coma has a tiny 2sec lead on Andy Caldecott (KTM – 23) and 3'29" on Despres (KTM – n°2). Frenchman David Frétygné is 9'04" adrift.

13:07 Bikes – Troubles for Despres and Frétygné

Two top bikers suffered navigation and technical worries in the half of the day's special. Overall leader David Frétygné followed a wrong path when seeing bike tracks and dust coming from tourist bikers. Cyril Despres (KTM – n°2) has broken a kilometre control.

13:07 Bikes – Many falls

In the first 111km of the special, quite a few falls were suffered in the bike race. Both Jordi Duran (KTM – n°16) and Arvis Winters (KTM – n°30) had serious crashes.

11:49 Bike. Caldecott leads at CP1

After the first 111km at check point 1, Andy Caldecott (KTM – n°23) has managed the best time so far. The Australian rider leads with a 19" advantage on Marc Coma (KTM – n°6) while Kellon

Walsh (KTM – n°21) is 1'38" adrift. Overall leader after the Agadir stage, David Fréti né (YAM – n°12) is 8'35" behind.

08:06 The real stuff...

With 654 km planned for this stage including 381 of special, the competitors face the first long African stage of the race today where endurance and a clear mind will be precious. Before entering in the heart of Southern Morocco, the competitors won't yet be in sandy landscapes but the most inexperienced will meet tracks known to be extremely rocky and difficult.

The cancellation of the first Moroccan special, that was planned to come as a good preparation is particularly bad news for the newcomers on bikes who will immediately discover the real difficulties of a Dakar. The car drivers will have able to have a warm-up but will still need to be extremely careful, especially with the rocks that could prove to be vicious. Robby Gordon, the overall car leader who proved to be very fast on the short courses of the first specials should, according to race director Patrick Zaniroli, "drive at a normal Dakar pace to eventually make it to the end of the rally".

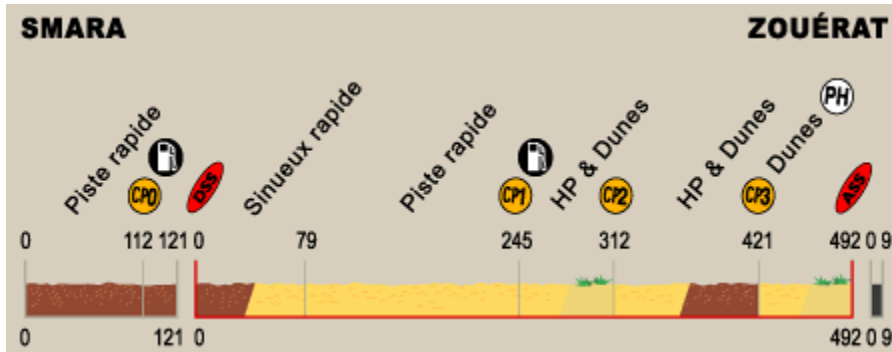
1.16. Stage Five Overall Standings

STANDING OVERALL BIKES						
Pos.	Dos.	Name	Mark	Time	Variation	Penalty
1	<u>006</u>	COMA	KTM	4h 13' 13"	00' 00"	
2	<u>002</u>	DESPRES	KTM	4h 14' 58"	01' 45"	
3	<u>003</u>	COX	KTM	4h 19' 58"	06' 45"	
4	<u>007</u>	ESTEVE PUJOL	KTM	4h 20' 05"	06' 52"	
5	<u>004</u>	MEONI	KTM	4h 20' 51"	07' 38"	
6	<u>012</u>	FRETIGNE	YAMAHA	4h 22' 47"	09' 34"	
7	<u>022</u>	BLAIS	KTM	4h 27' 42"	14' 29"	
8	<u>008</u>	DE GAVARDO	KTM	4h 28' 28"	15' 15"	
9	<u>005</u>	ULLEVALSETER	KTM	4h 30' 34"	17' 21"	
10	<u>042</u>	CASTEU	KTM	4h 30' 39"	17' 26"	
11	<u>025</u>	DE AZEVEDO	KTM	4h 30' 43"	17' 30"	
12	<u>023</u>	CALDECOTT	KTM	4h 30' 56"	17' 43"	17' 00"
13	<u>009</u>	BRUCY	KTM	4h 31' 46"	18' 33"	
14	<u>010</u>	CZACHOR	KTM	4h 33' 53"	20' 40"	
15	<u>017</u>	HARDEN	KTM	4h 40' 48"	27' 35"	
16	<u>011</u>	DABROWSKI	KTM	4h 43' 42"	30' 29"	15' 00"
17	<u>014</u>	SALA	KTM	4h 44' 00"	30' 47"	05' 00"
18	<u>026</u>	DUCLOS	KTM	4h 44' 18"	31' 05"	
19	<u>130</u>	GORRARA	KTM	4h 48' 29"	35' 16"	09' 00"
20	<u>032</u>	ALGAY	KTM	4h 51' 22"	38' 09"	
21	<u>015</u>	GRAZIANI	KTM	4h 51' 57"	38' 44"	
22	<u>033</u>	CROQUELOIS	KTM	4h 53' 43"	40' 30"	
23	<u>056</u>	VIGNERON	KTM	4h 54' 09"	40' 56"	
24	<u>019</u>	CHARBONNEL	KTM	4h 55' 37"	42' 24"	
25	<u>145</u>	VERHOEVEN	YAMAHA	5h 00' 27"	47' 14"	
26	<u>020</u>	MARCHINI	KTM	5h 00' 34"	47' 21"	
27	<u>096</u>	KARSMAKERS	KTM	5h 02' 24"	49' 11"	
28	<u>037</u>	POLLI	KTM	5h 02' 52"	49' 39"	
29	<u>053</u>	EXTANCE	HONDA	5h 03' 22"	50' 09"	
30	<u>181</u>	BENETTI	YAMAHA	5h 03' 38"	50' 25"	
31	<u>172</u>	TERRANOVA	KTM	5h 05' 57"	52' 44"	05' 00"
32	<u>034</u>	PIROUD	KTM	5h 05' 58"	52' 45"	
33	<u>057</u>	SCHWARZ	KTM	5h 06' 51"	53' 38"	
34	<u>029</u>	VERHOEF	KTM	5h 07' 08"	53' 55"	
35	<u>091</u>	DE URIARTE	KTM	5h 07' 52"	54' 39"	
36	<u>131</u>	QUINONERO	KTM	5h 08' 57"	55' 44"	11' 00"
37	<u>230</u>	PELLETIER	KTM	5h 14' 30"	1h 01' 17"	
38	<u>127</u>	MURATORI	KTM	5h 14' 33"	1h 01' 20"	
39	<u>144</u>	BECKERS	KTM	5h 15' 00"	1h 01' 47"	
40	<u>039</u>	RIVERA	KTM	5h 15' 02"	1h 01' 49"	

6. Stage Six

1.17. Stage Six Route

Stage 6 - 5 January 2005 - SMARA > ZOUERAT
Liaison 121 km Special 492 km Liaison 9 km Total 622 km



Drivers skilled at dune crossing and navigating will here be in their element. But for the 40 % of new entrants in the motorcycle category, it is in arriving in Mauritania that the real Dakar experience will begin.

After 100 km of track liaison to the Mauritanian border, competitors will start the Special with a very fast section on sandy ground.

This will be followed by mainly speedy stretches punctuated by spaced out dune fields, as far as 1 km apart.

Assistance vehicle will take the spécial route on 100 km.

1.18. Stage Six Flashes

Stage 6 - 5 January 2005 - SMARA > ZOUERAT
Liaison 121 km Special 492 km Liaison 9 km Total 622 km

20:58 Fire under control

A fire started in the kitchens of the Dakar bivouac due to the explosion of a neon light. It was rapidly put under control by the organisation and local authorities. No harm or injuries were sustained.

19:51 Cars – Gordon at CP2

After his crash at km 300, Robby Gordon (VW – n°317) was seen going through CP2 (km 312) pulled by an assistance vehicle. The American driver has serious problems with the rear of his Race Touareg.

19:44 Trucks – Another stage for Tchaguine

Vladimir Tchaguine (KAM – n°515) captured a third consecutive stage success on the Dakar. The Russian driver beat Dutchman Hans Bekx (DAF – n°524) by over 18' while team mate Kabirov (KAM – n°520) finished third at 19'17". Tchaguine comforts his lead overall with a 25'34" advantage on Kabirov.

18:32 Trucks – Tchaguine fastest at CP3

At check point 3 (km 421), Vladimir Tchaguine (KAM – n°515) had a comfortable 9'34 lead on Hans Bekx (DAF – n°524). Third was Kabirov (KAM – n°520) at 13'30.

17:36 Cars – Masuoka second on the day

A very late starter (121st), Hiroshi Masuoka (MIT – n°309) finished second of the special at 5'58" of his team mate Stephane Peterhansel who won the special.

17:03 Cars – Gordon still stopped

After his crash just before CP2 (km 300), Robby Gordon (VW – n°317) was still working on his car. He tried, twice to carry on the race, but had to stop again. It appears he has major worries on the rear part of his Race Touareg.

16:27 Cars – Peterhansel wins special

In a final time of 4h00'29", Stephane Peterhansel (MIT – n°306) clinched his first special of this year's Dakar. The Frenchman beat compatriot Bruno Saby (VW – n°307) by 7'26" while Luc Alphand (MIT – n°312) finished at 9'17" and Jean-Louis Schlesser at 11'07". Bruno Saby becomes the overall leader of the race with a 40" advantage on Alphand.

16:04 Cars – Peter fastest at CP3

At km 421 (CP3), Stephane Peterhansel (MIT – n°306) had clocked the fastest time with a 5'03 advantage on Bruno Saby (VW – n°307). Third was Jean-Louis Schlesser (SCH – n°300) at 6'04", followed by Alhand (MIT – n°312) at 6'31 and Al Attiyah (BMW – n°318).

15:25 Cars – McRae quits the race

After suffering a crash at km 410, Colin McRae (NIS- n°308) was taken back to the Zouerat bivouac by helicopter due to the shock of the crash. The Scot appeared on his two feet with no serious worries.

15:01 Bikes – Griffiths quits

At km 311, UK's John Griffiths (HON – n°193) suffered a crash and was forced to retire from the race with a broken wrist.

14:59 Cars – Gordon working on the car

After crashing his Volkswagen Race Touareg, Robby Gordon (n°317) was seen repairing his vehicle. It appears he has front break and gear box worries and is awaiting an assistance car. Meanwhile Giniel De Villiers (NIS – n°314) suffered a puncture at km 360.

14:45 Bikes – Meoni wins special

Favrizio Meoni (KTM – n°4) has clinched the best time of the day's special. The Italian beat Pal-Anders Ullevalseter (KTM – n°5) by 1'38". Third is Alfie Cox (KTM – n°3) at 2'58" and Despres (KTM – n°2) at 4'37".

Despres takes command of the overall with a 35" lead on Coma (KTM – n°6).

14:44 Cars – McRae leads at CP2

At the second CP (km 312), Colin McRae (NIS – n°308) had the best time so far. The Scot has a 36" lead on Saby (VW – n°307). Third is Peterhansel (MIT – n°306) at 2'26" followed by Al Attiyah (BMW – n°318) at 2'30 and Schlesser (SCH – n°300) at 3'.

14:34 Cars – Gordon crashes

Robby Gordon (VW – n°317) suffered a serious crash after CP1 (10kms before CP2). The US driver and his co-driver appear to be OK and are trying to put the car back on its wheels.

14:03 Cars – Kleinschmidt full speed ahead

At km 205, Jutta Kleinschmidt (VW – n°310) was seen overtaking Giniel De Villiers (NIS – n°314). Colin McRae who took off in first position of the special was still in front. The leading cars were 40kms from the first CP.

14:02 Cars – Leaders at km 119

The leading five cars have made it at km 119 of the special... No overtaking yet with McRae (NIS – n°308) ahead of De Villiers (NIS – n°314), Kleinschmidt (VW – n°310) and Al Attiyah (BMW – n°318): the exact starting order.

13:59 Bikes – Meoni in the lead at CP3

At the third check point of the bike special (km 421), Fabrizio Meoni had clocked the fastest time with a 3'34" lead on Ullevalseter (KTM – n°5). Third was Cox (KTM – n°3) at 5'47", followed by Despres (KTM – n°2) at 7'41". Early leader of the special, Marc Coma (KTM – n°6), appeared to have lost precious time between CP2 and CP3, in the dunes. Coma went through CP3, 12'20" adrift.

13:57 Cars – None starters this morning

12 cars failed to start the day's special : Lohr (n°336), Belmondo (n°338), Pinard (n°356), Teinturier (n°371), Doskocil (n°372), Dubrisay (n°383), Ribas (n°400), Sanchis (n°406), D'Herbigny (n°433), Andrieux (n°437), Grigoletto (n°439), Dupriez (n°453).

13:53 Bikes – Grezes retires from race

At km 44, Frenchman Yannick Grezes (BMW – n°85) was forced to retire from the rally with a broken back suspension on his bike.

13:27 Cars – Wheel worries for Peter

Just before the start of the day's special, Stephane Peterhansel (MIT – n°306) hit a rock and damaged his right rear wheel. He stopped to repair taking one of Nani Roma's spare wheels. The Frenchman was able to start the special in due time.

13:26 Bikes – Caldecott in trouble

At km 340, Andy Caldecott (KTM – n°23) was still expected far far behind the bike leaders. Race leader Coma was still leading ahead of Despres and Meoni. The best bikers were seen at speeds close to 180km/h.

13:26 Bikes – Coma leads at CP2

Marc Coma (KTM – n°6) was still the fastest at CP2 (km 312). The Spaniard had a 18" lead on Meoni (KTM – n°4) and 3' on Despres (KTM – n°2). Andy Caldecott (KTM – n°23) lost a lot of time between the first two CPs and appears to have had trouble in a sand portion of the special. He made it to CP2 with a 7'02 deficit on Coma.

13:22 Bikes – Coma leads at CP1

Overall leader Marc Coma (KTM – n°6) has clocked the best time at CP1 (km 245). He is riding with Caldecott (KTM – n°23) who took off 2 minutes ahead of him at the start of the special. Coma therefore has a 1'56" on the Australian rider. Third is Meoni (KTM – n°4) at 3'58. 206 riders started the special and 18 have made it to CP1.

11:18 NIGHT WATCH

Mechanical worries, late arrivals, injuries, bad luck and withdrawals... All you need to know about what happened on the bivouac during the night.

22h36 – De Rooy: “sh... happens!

Shortly before 23h00, the youngest of the De Rooy family eventually made it to the Smara bivouac in a well-battered DAF truck. The night was to be long... After suffering a serious crash, not only did Gerard have to cope with the deception of letting the Kamaz take control of the race while he was comfortably leading, he also has to spend the night working on his truck. In order to eventually start Stage 5. Crashed on its side at km 310, the DAF n°516 was put back on its wheels with the help of the Kamaz team, his father Jan and the fast assistance DAF. But once on the Smara bivouac, Gerard still had a smile on his face when explaining his accident: “It was very bumpy with big jumps. On one of them, the truck lost balance, the rear wheel was stuck in a hole and we pivoted before crashing on the side. There are days like that. Sh... happens”. Time then to start working on the monster machine.

23h30 – 3 hours lost and 4 to repair for Masuoka

The whole Mitsubishi assistance team did all they could for Hiroshi Masuoka to have a brand new car for the start of the Smara-Zouerat stage. The Japanese driver indeed lost around three hours due to a mechanical problem and finally made it to the bivouac at 19h30 in a damaged vehicle. It was time for the mechanics to change the front transmission. It took 4 hours to repair, thanks to the help of the mechanics who usually work on the other official cars.

0h00 – Complete check-up on Vatanen's car

In the late hours of the night (or early of the morning) the Nissan team was still working on the cars and especially on Ari Vatanen's pickup after the Finn had complained about transmission problems during the day's stage. The car was totally checked in order to be in perfect condition for the very demanding stage 5 and its first dunes of the rally.

1h30 – Everyone at work at Euromaster

After working on all the bikes and cars that they normally take care of, the Euromaster team started this time taking care of their own trucks. A complete check that also concerned the assistance vehicles before the dunes to come and the second part of the rally.

2h10 – A Kamaz crashes

After a series of changes on the Kamaz truck of Ilzigar Mardeev, a truck member and a mechanic took the vehicle on a test run outside the bivouac. The two team members hit a pavement before losing control of the truck and crashing on its side. Both were seriously injured and taken to a close by hospital. The truck was totally wrecked and Mardeev forced to retire from the race.

2h43 – De Rooy still at work

In the DAF team, the De Rooy family was still at work. Father Jan supervising the work of son Gerard on the damaged truck. Despite the helping hand of the entire team members, nothing was yet decided whether to carry on the race or not.

3h00 – The absent

213 bikes made it to the bivouac. Miguel Agullo Gonzalez, Franck Weissner and Robert Knecht were still expected. 149 cars had also made it, 10 were still expected. 65 trucks were also in the bivouac.

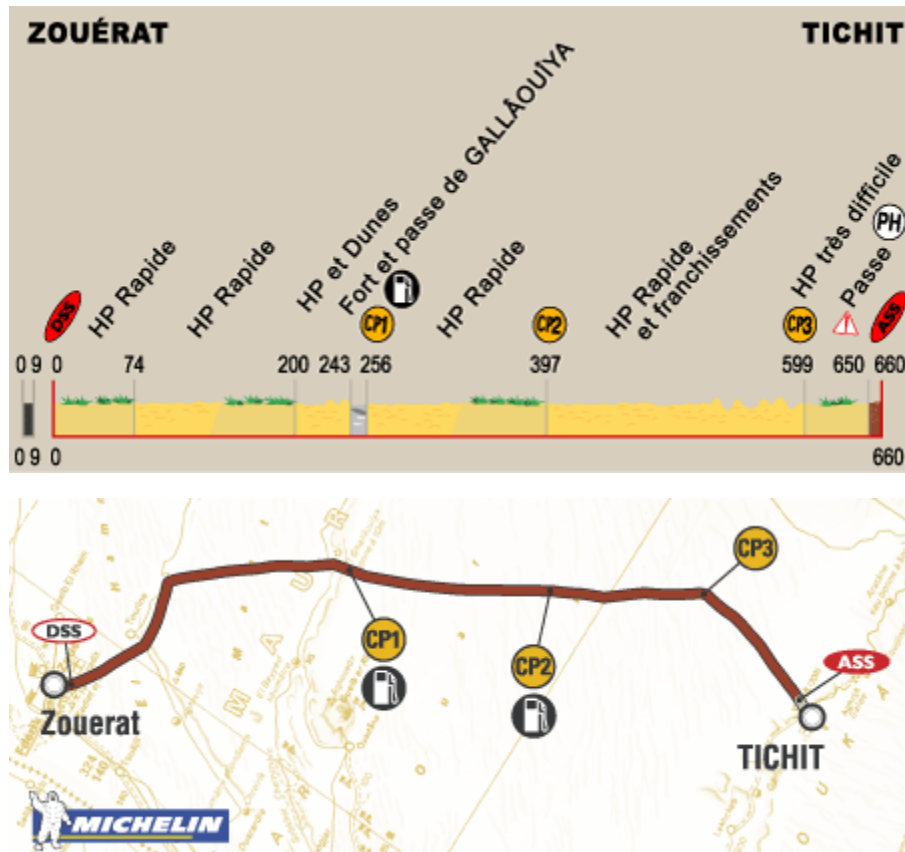
1.19. Stage Six Overall Standings

STANDING OVERALL BIKES						
Pos.	Dos.	Name	Mark	Time	Variation	Penalty
1	002	DESPRES	KTM	8h 56' 49"	00' 00"	
2	006	COMA	KTM	8h 57' 24"	00' 35"	
3	004	MEONI	KTM	8h 58' 05"	01' 16"	
4	003	COX	KTM	9h 00' 10"	03' 21"	
5	007	ESTEVE PUJOL	KTM	9h 06' 20"	09' 31"	
6	005	ULLEVALSETER	KTM	9h 09' 26"	12' 37"	
7	012	FRETIGNE	YAMAHA	9h 10' 04"	13' 15"	
8	023	CALDECOTT	KTM	9h 17' 00"	20' 11"	17' 00"
9	022	BLAIS	KTM	9h 22' 16"	25' 27"	
10	025	DE AZEVEDO	KTM	9h 27' 37"	30' 48"	
11	042	CASTEU	KTM	9h 28' 10"	31' 21"	
12	008	DE GAVARDO	KTM	9h 32' 48"	35' 59"	
13	011	DABROWSKI	KTM	9h 34' 00"	37' 11"	15' 00"
14	009	BRUCY	KTM	9h 37' 18"	40' 29"	10' 00"
15	014	SALA	KTM	9h 39' 02"	42' 13"	05' 00"
16	010	CZACHOR	KTM	9h 40' 00"	43' 11"	
17	017	HARDEN	KTM	9h 51' 01"	54' 12"	
18	026	DUCLOS	KTM	10h 20' 21"	1h 23' 32"	
19	033	CROQUELOIS	KTM	10h 27' 45"	1h 30' 56"	
20	032	ALGAY	KTM	10h 29' 44"	1h 32' 55"	
21	020	MARCHINI	KTM	10h 32' 46"	1h 35' 57"	
22	015	GRAZIANI	KTM	10h 33' 53"	1h 37' 04"	
23	021	WALCH	KTM	10h 34' 15"	1h 37' 26"	
24	130	GORRARA	KTM	10h 37' 30"	1h 40' 41"	09' 00"
25	056	VIGNERON	KTM	10h 38' 04"	1h 41' 15"	
26	037	POLLI	KTM	10h 42' 43"	1h 45' 54"	
27	029	VERHOEF	KTM	10h 49' 11"	1h 52' 22"	
28	019	CHARBONNEL	KTM	10h 54' 33"	1h 57' 44"	
29	145	VERHOEVEN	YAMAHA	10h 58' 13"	2h 01' 24"	
30	091	DE URIARTE	KTM	10h 58' 33"	2h 01' 44"	
31	034	PIROUD	KTM	11h 01' 05"	2h 04' 16"	
32	172	TERRANOVA	KTM	11h 01' 09"	2h 04' 20"	05' 00"
33	057	SCHWARZ	KTM	11h 04' 45"	2h 07' 56"	
34	039	RIVERA	KTM	11h 05' 21"	2h 08' 32"	
35	220	VARGA	KTM	11h 06' 04"	2h 09' 15"	
36	144	BECKERS	KTM	11h 06' 54"	2h 10' 05"	
37	131	QUINONERO	KTM	11h 08' 07"	2h 11' 18"	11' 00"
38	127	MURATORI	KTM	11h 14' 16"	2h 17' 27"	05' 00"
39	053	EXTANCE	HONDA	11h 19' 46"	2h 22' 57"	
40	198	HANSSON	KTM	11h 20' 16"	2h 23' 27"	

7. Stage Seven

1.20. Stage Seven Route

Stage 7 - 6 January 2005 - ZOUERAT > TICHIT
Liaison 9 km Special 660 km Total 669 km



Regular Dakar participants won't be able to use their intimate knowledge of the region as most of the route is new this year. In the motorcycle category, there will be a line-up start, in lines of 20. Up to the difficult El Ghallâouïya pass, situated between two cliffs, drivers will cross plains and some dune fields. The programme will then consist of the crossing of El Mrayer, the "mirror", a series of small ergs, followed by one hundred or so kilometres of camel grass, and terminating with the need to find a pass, the only way to arrive at the Tichit oasis! At the finish, only refreshments are authorised; vehicles are placed in the Parc Fermé. "Real" marathon stages are back on the Dakar programme.

1.21. Stage Seven Flashes

Stage 7 - 6 January 2005 - ZOUERAT > TICHIT
Liaison 9 km Special 660 km Total 669 km

21:38 CHANGES FOR STAGE 8, TICHIT-TIDJIKJA

Due to the very difficult weather conditions during stage 7 between Zouerat and Tichit in Mauritania that forced seven of the nine race helicopters to remain grounded at CP2 (km 397), the following decisions have been taken by the organisation:

Tonight's briefing at 21h00 is cancelled

The briefing will take place at 8h30 tomorrow morning

Stage 8 special between Tichit and Tidjikja will be shortened. It will now be 130kms long (the first 130kms of the normal stage). The remaining part will be covered as a liaison.

The first vehicles will take off later than planned for tomorrow's stage.

The first bike will start at 10h and the first car at 12h30

THE RACE ORGANISATION

20:08 Cars – Peter new overall leader

On the finish line of the car special, Stephane Peterhansel (MIT) beat Nasser Al Attiyah (BMW) by a huge 25'40 advantage. Third on the day is Jutta Kleinschmidt (VW) at 26'07 while Alphand (MIT) is fourth at 28'11. Only four cars have so far made it to the finish line. Peterhansel takes command of the overall standings with a 21'32 lead on team mate Luc Alphand.

19:57 Cars – Peterhansel wins special

In a final time of 8h21'57, Stephane Peterhansel (MIT) finished the stage on his own and in winning position. The other competitors were still expected at the finish over 30' after the Frenchman.

18:35 Bikes – Frétiigné wins special

With 9 bikers on the finish line of stage 7 between Zouerat and Tichit, David Frétiigné (YAM) has clocked the fastest time of the day in 9h16'26". The Frenchman beats Marc Coma (KTM) by 3'31. Third is Despres at 5'22 while Gauloises team mate Alfie Cox is at 7'25" and Andy Caldecott at 7'35. Marc Coma takes the overall leadership with a 16" advance on Despres.

17:54 Trucks – Kabirov leads at CP2

At the second check point of the truck special (km 397), Firdaus Kabirov (KAM) had the best time so far. Second is Gerard De Rooy (DAF) at 16'13", ahead of De Azevedo (TAT) at 24'42".

16:55 Trucks – De Rooy back in the special

After suffering mechanical problems on the front of the DAF truck, due to a dune jump, Jan De Rooy was finally able to carry on the special after repairing.

16:54 Cars – Saby way behind at CP2

Volkswagen driver Bruno Saby eventually made it to check point 2 of the special (km 397) with 39'29" time deficit on the special leader Peterhansel. In The new virtual overall, Peter takes command with a 32' advantage on Saby.

16:40 Trucks – Tchaguine in trouble

At km 300 of the truck special, overall leader Vladimir Tchaguine (KAM – n°515) was stopped with serious mechanical worries.

16:07 Cars – Peter flying to special victory

At the second check point of the car special (km 397), Stephane Peterhansel (MIT –n°306) has the fastest time so far and is heading to a probable stage win. Second is Jutta Kleinschmidt (VW) is 8'17" adrift while Nasser Al Attiyah (BMW) is at 11'36". Fourth is Alphand (MIT) over 20' behind and Masuoka at over 27'.

15:47 Cars- Schlessler still stopped

Suffering mechanical problems on the rear left wheel of his buggy, Jean-Louis Schlessler has decided to await his assistance car for possible repairs rather than heading to a tricky dune portion.

15:28 Bikes – leading 5 at km 500

The first five bikers to have started the special are still riding together (Despres, Cox, Meoni, Coma, Ullevalseter) with Despres and Meoni leading the group most of the time. Behind is a group including virtual special leader Walch.

14:40 Cars – Schlessler on the phone

At km 243, Frenchman Jean-Louis Schlessler (SCH) was seen stopped, et the Gallaouyia Fort. The two-time Dakar winner was outside of his buggy.... On the phone!

14:23 Cars – Peter fastest at CP1

At the first check point of the car special, Stephane Peterhansel (MIT – n°306) has the best time. Second is Jutta Kleinschmidt (VW – n°310) at only 37". The others are far behind with Al Attiyah (BMW), third, at 4'19" followed by Saby (VW)at 10'24", Alphand (MIT) at 14'52" and Masuoka (MIT) at 19'24".

14:14 Bikes – Walch still ahead

USA's Kellon Walch (KTM – n°21) is still the fastest biker of the special so far. At CP2 (km 397), the KTM rider had 3'12" lead on Sala (KTM – n°14) and 5'30" on Coma (KTM – n°6). Fourth was Frétygné (YAM – n°12) at 6'52", followed by Despres (KTM – n°2) at 7'19".

13:58 Cars – Schlesser stopped

Frenchman Jean-Louis Schlesser (SCH – n°300) stopped his two-wheel drive buggy at km 185. Both the driver and co-driver went to check the rear left wheel without however repairing anything. They lost around 4 minutes.

13:57 Cars – race incidents

Before the first CP of the day (km 256) quite a few incidents occurred in the car special :

- Alphand (MIT – n°312) was stuck in the sand for a few minutes.
- Masuoka (MIT – n°309) damaged the front of his Pajero Evo, under his front left light.
- Saby (VW – n°307) also damaged the front of his Race Touareg.

13:36 Cars – Shinozuka crashes

At km 120 of the day's special, Japan's Kenjiro Shinozuka (NIS – n°319) crashed his Nissan Dessoude car. The vehicle flipped. Both the driver and co-driver are OK.

13:36 Bikes – Walch fastest at CP1

At check point 1 (km256), USA's Kellon Walch (KTM – n°21) had the best time of the bike race. The US rider has a 51" lead on Coma (KTM – n°6) and 2'46" on Despres (KTM – n°2).

12:51 NIGHT WATCH

Mechanical worries, late arrivals, injuries, bad luck and withdrawals... All you need to know about what happened on the bivouac during the night.

22h50 – Vatanen at last

The press had almost forgot about good old Ari when the Finn finally made it to the bivouac late in the evening. After breaking his transmission box at kilometre 150 of the special, Vatanen spent a good part of his day waiting first of all for his assistance vehicle and then for the reparations on his Nissan Pickup. When finally arriving in Zouerat, the multiple Dakar winner remained calm and composed. "We lost seven hours but everything is OK. The moral is still all right, there are far worst things in life. Maybe we didn't do enough testing on the car. Anyhow now I'll do my best to make arrive in Dakar and that's the most important..."

23h00 – Happy birthday Tchaguine

Thankfully, Vladimir Tchaguine doesn't celebrate in the same fashion every time he wins a stage on the Dakar. But the day was special. Not only had the Russian claimed his 32nd ever Dakar special but it was also his ... birthday. A perfect opportunity to drink champagne and eat caviar in the Kamaz family. A party without the two members of the team that suffered a serious crash last night and were taken to the Layoune hospital for further examination and care. Anyhow, the celebration remained quiet with the difficult upcoming stage to prepare and the long days to come. One can expect a big fiesta if Tchaguine claims a fifth win in Dakar.

23h30 – Gordon's long day

Robby Gordon knew what he was coming for on the Dakar. Was he really expecting such a bad day? After his crash (and flip) just before CP2 (km 300), the American eventually made it to the finish of the stage pushed by an assistance truck. Not really the most triumphant of ways to enter the bivouac. The Volkswagen crew remained stranded in the desert awaiting for assistance and eventually saw help come at 17h00 to try and repair the seriously damaged rear part (breaks...) before being pulled through CP2 and most of the special. Once on the bivouac the whole VW team started deconstructing the Race Touareg and change the necessary parts so that Gordon

could carry on his Dakar adventure. "It's a real shame because I think I could have done something good here on this rally. But I'm here to learn.

0h30 – Work for DAF

After a very very long night indeed, spent working on Gerard De Rooy's truck (damaged after a crash during stage 5), it was this time father Jan De Rooy's vehicle that needed a special 'treatment'. Indeed the elder of the De Rooy family suffered turbo problems on the special.

0h50 – Sad atmosphere at Nissan...

With the retirement of Colin McRae and the difficult day of Ari Vatanen, the Nissan clan was feeling rather devastated after the day's stage 6. Giniel De Villiers only needed a change of wind screen while the mechanics were still working on Vatanen's car.

1h10 - ...busy at Mitsubishi

No serious worry hit the Mitsubishi team. The title holders went through an excellent day with the performances of Stephane Peterhansel and Hiroshi Masuoka. But to keep up their Dakar rhythm, the mechanics checked and re-checked all the vehicles, especially for the upcoming marathon stage. "Tomorrow, we won't be allowed to give a helping hand so we need the cars to be very reliable and work perfectly well for two days", explained one of the Mitsu mechanics...

3h00 – Time for a count

190 bikes made it to the bivouac of Zouerat, as well as 143 cars and 60 trucks.

07:43 The longest day...

For the longest special of the rally, the competitor's menu offers many novelties. With a mix between navigation difficulties, camel grass and numerous dunes, the bikers and drivers will have to be patient to avoid all kind of mistakes. Added to that, all vehicles will be entered in a 'parc fermé' where no assistance is authorised. The real 'marathon' stages are back on the Dakar...

A specialist of this type of exercise, yesterday's winners, Fabrizio Meoni in the bike race and Stéphane Peterhansel on four wheels, should be serious contenders for victory on a course where experience will pay.

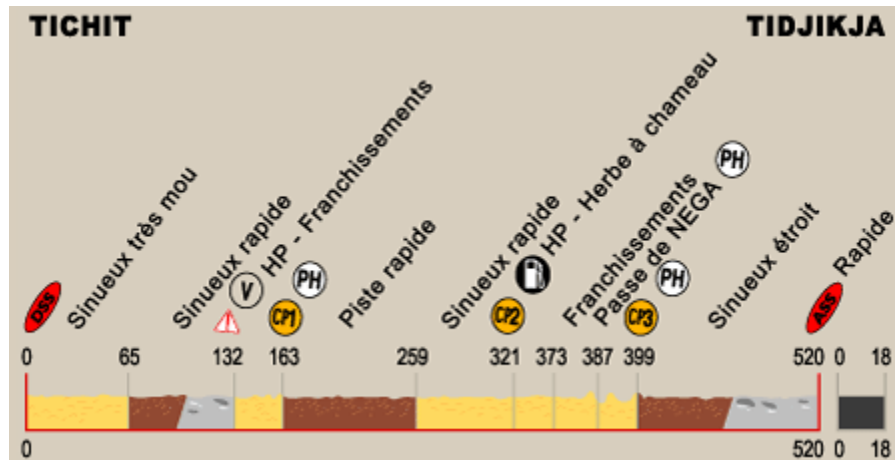
1.22. Stage Seven Overall Standings

STANDING OVERALL BIKES						
Pos.	Dos.	Name	Mark	Time	Variation	Penalty
1	006	COMA	KTM	18h 18' 21"	00' 00"	
2	002	DESPRES	KTM	18h 18' 37"	00' 16"	
3	003	COX	KTM	18h 24' 01"	05' 40"	
4	012	FRETIGNE	YAMAHA	18h 31' 30"	13' 09"	05' 00"
5	004	MEONI	KTM	18h 35' 53"	17' 32"	10' 00"
6	005	ULLEVALSETER	KTM	18h 40' 37"	22' 16"	05' 00"
7	023	CALDECOTT	KTM	18h 41' 01"	22' 40"	17' 00"
8	007	ESTEVE PUJOL	KTM	18h 41' 31"	23' 10"	05' 00"
9	014	SALA	KTM	19h 03' 38"	45' 17"	05' 00"
10	025	DE AZEVEDO	KTM	19h 20' 21"	1h 02' 00"	
11	022	BLAIS	KTM	19h 21' 08"	1h 02' 47"	05' 00"
12	010	CZACHOR	KTM	19h 59' 17"	1h 40' 56"	
13	042	CASTEU	KTM	20h 04' 55"	1h 46' 34"	
14	011	DABROWSKI	KTM	20h 14' 21"	1h 56' 00"	15' 00"
15	009	BRUCY	KTM	20h 15' 04"	1h 56' 43"	10' 00"
16	021	WALCH	KTM	20h 15' 35"	1h 57' 14"	05' 00"
17	033	CROQUELOIS	KTM	20h 53' 53"	2h 35' 32"	05' 00"
18	017	HARDEN	KTM	20h 56' 02"	2h 37' 41"	
19	015	GRAZIANI	KTM	21h 04' 16"	2h 45' 55"	05' 00"
20	020	MARCHINI	KTM	21h 24' 49"	3h 06' 28"	10' 00"
21	019	CHARBONNEL	KTM	21h 31' 36"	3h 13' 15"	05' 00"
22	026	DUCLOS	KTM	21h 41' 17"	3h 22' 56"	10' 00"
23	076	LEPAN	KTM	21h 43' 16"	3h 24' 55"	05' 00"
24	172	TERRANOVA	KTM	21h 46' 11"	3h 27' 50"	05' 00"
25	145	VERHOEVEN	YAMAHA	22h 06' 40"	3h 48' 19"	05' 00"
26	144	BECKERS	KTM	22h 12' 20"	3h 53' 59"	
27	220	VARGA	KTM	22h 23' 34"	4h 05' 13"	
28	127	MURATORI	KTM	23h 01' 06"	4h 42' 45"	10' 00"
29	131	QUINONERO	KTM	23h 05' 50"	4h 47' 29"	11' 00"
30	029	VERHOEF	KTM	23h 07' 02"	4h 48' 41"	05' 00"
31	056	VIGNERON	KTM	23h 16' 58"	4h 58' 37"	
32	031	BASTOUILH	KTM	23h 38' 32"	5h 20' 11"	05' 00"
33	091	DE URIARTE	KTM	23h 38' 58"	5h 20' 37"	
34	207	COTTET	YAMAHA	23h 43' 23"	5h 25' 02"	10' 00"
35	227	BORSI	KTM	23h 44' 18"	5h 25' 57"	
36	039	RIVERA	KTM	23h 52' 51"	5h 34' 30"	
37	057	SCHWARZ	KTM	23h 53' 35"	5h 35' 14"	
38	098	KASTAN	KTM	24h 20' 44"	6h 02' 23"	06' 00"
39	153	BROUWER	YAMAHA	24h 28' 53"	6h 10' 32"	24' 30"
40	034	PIROUD	KTM	24h 45' 54"	6h 27' 33"	

8. Stage Eight

1.23. Stage Eight Route

Stage 8 - 7 January 2005 - TICHIT > TIDJIKJA
Special 520 km Liaison 18 km Total 538 km



This stage is a real best of. It will include several stretches of the greatest Specials raced in the region over the last 20 years.

Competitors will have sand and sand and sand...

But along with the many dunes to be crossed, there will also be several difficult passes to find, for which competitors who need could request the GPS de-blocking codes.

After climbing the Nega pass, which becomes more and more difficult every year, drivers must follow a rocky and sinuous track to Tidjikja.

1.24. Stage Eight Flashes

Stage 8 - 7 January 2005 - TICHIT > TIDJIKJA
Special 520 km Liaison 18 km Total 538 km

21:20 Update on the arrivals

At 20h00 (GMT), the competitors were still making it to Tichit, where they will then have to take off to go to Tidjikja in a night liaison. They need to make it there within the half hour after the last competitor takes off for the special (12h38 GMT). For the moment, 139 bikes, 86 cars and 40 trucks have finished stage 7. 39 vehicles have officially retired from the race. 77 vehicles, all, are still on the road to Tichit.

17:41 Cars – Servia at last, Schlessler quits

At around 16h30, Josep Maria Servia finally made it to the end of stage 7 between Zouerat and Tichit. The Spaniard in his Schlessler Ford buggy ran out of fuel at km 510. We was eventually given fuel by the organisation. Servia is now headed to Tidjikja on the day's liaison. Meanwhile according to Schlessler-Ford team manager Regis Sellier, Jean-Louis Schlessler who suffered mechanical problems on his rear left wheel officially quit the race leaving his buggy between CP1 and Atar.

16:53 The situation at 13h30

At 13h30 (GMT), the arrival CH line was officially closed. 107 bikes had made it to Tichit. 15 of them made it after 24 hours of racing and should be given a 1 hour time penalty. Those who make it to Tichit now have the possibility to start the liaison stage to Tidjikja. They will be given a 9 hour penalty but need to make it within half an hour after the starting time of the last biker for stage 9. As it stands, the 107 bikers that crossed the finish line of stage 7 are currently in the liaison to Tidjikja.

In the car race, 75 vehicles arrived before 13h30 and 8 were given a time penalty. 35 trucks had also made it to the end of the stage including one that should get a penalty.

16:52 Cars – Servia out of fuel

Stopped at km 510 of yesterday's stage between Zouerat and Tichit, Josep Maria Servia (SCH) is out of fuel and awaiting assistance from the organisation vehicles.

16:50 Cars – Vatanen heading to Tichit

Still in yesterday's stage between Zouerat and Tichit, Ari Vatanen (NIS) was seen pulled by a race truck and heading to the finish line of the special. The Finn was stopped earlier 158kms from Tichit out of fuel.

11:50 Tichit – Tidjikja special cancelled

Due to the weather condition on the Mauritanian desert since Thursday on the course of the rally, the organisation has decided to modify the race. The bad visibility has forced most of the helicopters to remain grounded.

At 10.00 am today, only 96 bikes, 59 cars and 27 trucks had completed stage 7, and 31 competitors had officially retired from the race.

The race organisation has therefore decided on the following measures :

- Cancel stage 8 between Tichit and Tidjikja.
- The authorized time for stage 7 will be longer.
- The competitors will all head to Tidjikja in liaison.

11:25 Night watch

Mechanical worries, late arrivals, injuries, bad luck and withdrawals... All you need to know about what happened on the bivouac during the night.

22h35 – Kabirov first

The first truck to make to the finish line in Tichit was Firdaus Kabirov. Like many competitors, the Russian suffered fuel worries but managed to adapt his driving to clinch the special victory. "I knew I didn't have a lot of fuel left, so I decided to reduce my speed and it worked out. On the last part of the course, I never went over 80km/h and 2000 rpm".

23h00 – Fuel distribution

Quite a few competitors were stranded close to Tichit with no more fuel left, the organisation therefore decided to send a vehicle with two barrels to help out. David Castera, a former biker, now working for the organisation took off with a local guide to find the way through the Tichit pass, extremely difficult to find and he helped out numerous vehicles including the truck of Gerard De Rooy, stopped 11kms from the bivouac.

0h30 – Magnaldi's buggy in pieces

Thierry Magnaldi eventually made it to Tichit but his problems were not over yet. All the front part of his buggy was severely damaged in the last part of the stage. With no possibility to repair (this is a marathon stage)!

1h00 – Mayer pulled

The German Mitsubishi driver was also stopped 8 kilometres from the finish line, out of fuel. Andrea Mayer finally carried on pulled by a truck. Indeed, she was thankfully caught by the truck of Giacomo Vismara, who used to take care of her assistance when she was on two wheels.

1h10 – Gordon home

"I only have 1 litre of fuel left... », explained Robby Gordon when hopping out of his Volkswagen Race Touareg. The American was forced to drive very slowly for the whole last part of the stage. Winner of the two specials on the rally, Gordon also gave rather bad news on his team mate Juha Kankkunen: "He is stopped and his front right wheel is completely destroyed after a shock in the camel grass.

6h15 – Just a few

76 bikes have made it to Tichit, as well as 43 cars and 16 trucks! Among the absentees are Schlessler, Vatanen and Tchaguine.

6h20 – Etienne Lavigne troubled

The rally boss spent the whole night centralising the different problems and thinking about the way to sort them out. "The night has been very very long but I also witnessed scenes of bikers so happy to finish that they burst into tears. I have to admit that some also insulted me because of the difficulties they went through. What troubles me now are the competitors injured in the desert like Patrick Martin, for example who has a shoulder fracture and has a medical car looking for him. Three other distress signals have been launched and we are awaiting the first hours of the day to take off and look for them. We hope the weather will be better and that the other helicopters will be able to fly...

1.25. Stage Eight Overall Standings

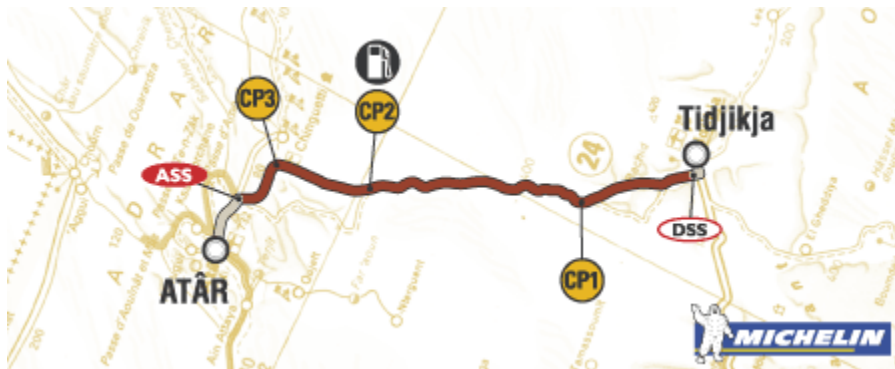
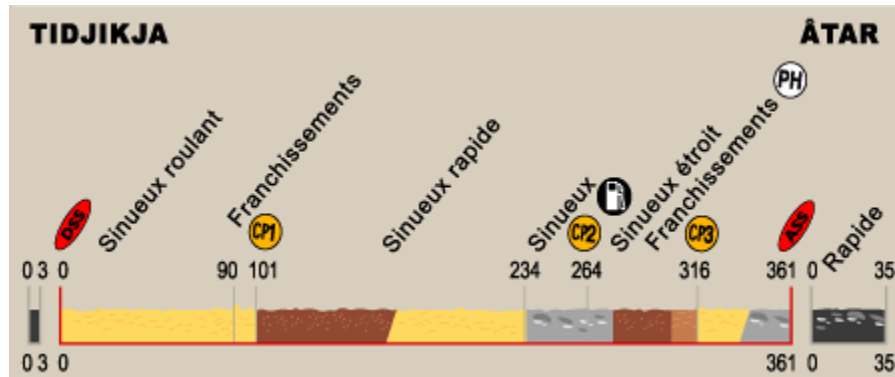
STANDING OVERALL BIKES						
Pos.	Dos.	Name	Mark	Time	Variation	Penalty
1	<u>004</u>	ROMA	KTM	21h 04' 40"	00' 00"	
2	<u>001</u>	SAINCT	KTM	21h 12' 56"	08' 16"	
3	<u>009</u>	BRUCY	KTM	21h 19' 05"	14' 25"	
4	<u>010</u>	COX	KTM	21h 55' 59"	51' 19"	
5	<u>015</u>	ULLEVALSETER	KTM	22h 05' 46"	1h 01' 06"	
6	<u>006</u>	LUNDMARK	KTM	22h 08' 00"	1h 03' 20"	
7	<u>002</u>	DESPRES	KTM	22h 15' 56"	1h 11' 16"	
8	<u>023</u>	CZACHOR	KTM	22h 50' 54"	1h 46' 14"	
9	<u>025</u>	HARDEN	KTM	22h 56' 07"	1h 51' 27"	
10	<u>022</u>	FLICK	KTM	22h 56' 23"	1h 51' 43"	
11	<u>005</u>	DE AZEVEDO	KTM	23h 07' 25"	2h 02' 45"	
12	<u>008</u>	DE GAVARDO	KTM	23h 13' 04"	2h 08' 24"	
13	<u>003</u>	MEONI	KTM	23h 13' 45"	2h 09' 05"	
14	<u>011</u>	COMA	KTM	23h 17' 54"	2h 13' 14"	
15	<u>012</u>	FRETIGNE	YAMAHA	23h 23' 03"	2h 18' 23"	
16	<u>171</u>	COAKER	KTM	23h 28' 25"	2h 23' 45"	
17	<u>030</u>	STANOVNIK	KTM	23h 50' 46"	2h 46' 06"	
18	<u>020</u>	MARCHINI	KTM	23h 59' 35"	2h 54' 55"	
19	<u>045</u>	GRAZIANI	KTM	24h 14' 06"	3h 09' 26"	
20	<u>017</u>	KRAUSE	KTM	24h 18' 27"	3h 13' 47"	
21	<u>049</u>	CHEVALLIER	KTM	24h 22' 52"	3h 18' 12"	
22	<u>029</u>	VERHOEF	KTM	24h 23' 59"	3h 19' 19"	
23	<u>032</u>	PEREZ	KTM	24h 39' 14"	3h 34' 34"	
24	<u>016</u>	ROESELER	KTM	24h 45' 01"	3h 40' 21"	
25	<u>024</u>	CHARBONNEL	KTM	24h 58' 34"	3h 53' 54"	
26	<u>028</u>	CROQUELOIS	KTM	25h 09' 33"	4h 04' 53"	
27	<u>155</u>	VERCOELEN	KTM	25h 38' 41"	4h 34' 01"	
28	<u>179</u>	BORSI	KTM	25h 58' 19"	4h 53' 39"	
29	<u>027</u>	ALGAY	KTM	25h 59' 11"	4h 54' 31"	
30	<u>042</u>	AUBIJOUX	YAMAHA	26h 19' 26"	5h 14' 46"	
31	<u>026</u>	PIROUD	KTM	26h 20' 47"	5h 16' 07"	
32	<u>183</u>	VINTERS	KTM	26h 32' 14"	5h 27' 34"	
33	<u>031</u>	RAYNAL	KTM	26h 48' 30"	5h 43' 50"	
34	<u>041</u>	CASTEU	CAGIVA	27h 18' 02"	6h 13' 22"	
35	<u>035</u>	AUBREE	KTM	27h 21' 51"	6h 17' 11"	
36	<u>111</u>	SACCHETTINI	KTM	27h 27' 23"	6h 22' 43"	
37	<u>146</u>	MUGNAIOLI	KTM	27h 34' 27"	6h 29' 47"	
38	<u>113</u>	BASTOUILH	HONDA	27h 37' 03"	6h 32' 23"	
39	<u>117</u>	CARILLON	KTM	28h 00' 11"	6h 55' 31"	
40	<u>123</u>	VAN PELT	KTM	28h 10' 10"	7h 05' 30"	

9. Stage Nine

1.26. Stage Nine Route

Stage 9 - 8 January 2005 - TIDJIKJA > ATAR

Liaison 3 km Special 361 km Liaison 35 km Total 399 km



In this final stage before the rest day driving enthusiasts will here be in their element. The 300 kilometres of track will be very fast running even if the end of the stage is punctuated with difficulties. 20 kilometres from the end, competitors will find themselves at the foot of the immense and mythical Chinguetti erg. Crossing the dunes will have to be done gently, without overdoing it, in order to arrive quickly at the bivouac. As after more than a week into the race, every hour of rest will be appreciated. This stage has been traced so that amateurs can reach the bivouac as early as possible in order to enjoy the rest day.

1.27. Stage Nine Flashes

Stage 9 - 8 January 2005 - TIDJIKJA > ATAR
Liaison 3 km Special 361 km Liaison 35 km Total 399 km

19:20 Trucks – Tchaguine wins special

In the truck special, late starter (36th) Vladimir Tchaguine (KAM) captured his third special on the rally. The Russian driver beat Hans Stacey 'DAF' by 17'45" and Loprais (TAT) by 18'55". The overall leadership remains in the hands of Firdaus Kabirov (KAM).

16:12 Cars – Alphand wins special

Frenchman Luc Alphand (MIT) grabbed his first stage success of the 2005 edition on the special between Tidjikja and Atar. Alphand finished with a 1'31" lead on team mate Stephane Peterhansel. Third was Robby Gordon at 17'29. Jutta Kleinschmidt (VW) finished 19'13" adrift while Masuoka (MIT) was at 23'50". Title holder Peterhansel however appeared to have engine problems after the finish line on the liaison to the bivouac. In the overall Peterhansel keeps the leadership with a 20'01" advantage on Alphand. Jutta Kleinschmidt loses ground on the two Mitsubishi drivers and is now 40'26" behind.

16:11 Race situation

137 bikes, 110 cars and 49 trucks started the day's stage 9 between Tidjikja and Atar. Here is a list of those who have retired from the race before the start of the special:

Bikes

Algeri (155), Kronsseder (106), Favre (132), Le Cocq (183), Mikajiri (139), Delaby (105), Houache (67), Arredondo (163), Pelletier (230), Sanna Cocco (41), Fonjallaz (143), Dubuy (51), Stefani (179), Ferrer Garcia (225), Quick (100), Town (99), De Beaufort (93), Arragones (104), Defelice (38), Sevault (72), Linares (24), Hamonic (65), Manning (204), Houlemare (50), Champion (123), E.Vuillet (74), Pichegrain (157), Blanpain (221), Kawai (138), Renders (203)

Cars

Jean-Joseph (223), Schlessler (300), Strugo (322), Van Cauwenberge (404), Ten Harkel (408), Patissier (324), Hutten (407), Beckers (405), Martin (382), Arnoux (399), Kroon (430), Round (409), Jerie (386), Men (373), Bailey (380), Van Vliet (428), Onoue (387), Galan Perez (410), Meier (397), Touly (432), Laplace (390), Nielsen (452), Turki (457), Girard (431), Guy (411)

Trucks

Banyard (554), Versino (523), S.Lambert (549), C.Lambert (540), Walcher (513), Hoebeke (511), Gaverini (505), Ducroux (545), Myers (550)

15:53 Cars – Saby back in the special

After suffering front left wheel problems at km 126, Bruno Saby was given a new wheel by team mate Juha Kankkunen and is now back in his car and driving.

15:18 Trucks – Stacey new leader at CP1

Late starter Hans Stacey (REN) eventually grabbed the best time of the day at CP 1 (km 101). The Dutchman had a 58" lead on Vladimir Tchaguine (KAM) also a late starter, while De Azevedo was at 5'15 and Kabirov at 5'23.

15:13 Cars – Alphand leader at CP2

At the second check point of the day (km 264), Luc Alphand (MIT) had the fastest time with a 52" lead on team mate Stephane Peterhansel. Third was another Pajero Evo driver Hiroshi Masuoka at 4'26 while Robby Gordon was fourth at 6'21. Alphand who took off after Peterhansel this morning is moving closer to his team mate and can see the dust behind the Mitsubishi.

14:21 Bikes – Esteve wins special

On the finish line of the day's special between Tidjikja and Atar (361kms), Isidre Esteve clinched his first victory on this year's rally. The Spaniard beat Fabrizio Meoni by 1'29. Third is Ullevalseter at 4'09, followed by Caldecott at 8'10, Cox at 9'45, Despres at 11'40, Coma 13'52 and Frégné at 14'22. The leading eight arrived bunched on the finish line. Fabrizio Meoni captures the new overall leadership with a 2'55 advantage on Despres and 4'49 on Caldecott.

13:53 Cars – Saby in trouble

At km 130, Bruno Saby (VW) was seen stopped with serious problems on his front left wheel. The Frenchman is waiting for his assistance truck...

13:39 Cars – Situation for the BMWs

After suffering crashes around the 57km mark, here is the latest update concerning the two BMW vehicles:

- No serious injuries sustained,
- Nasser AL Attiyah has announced that he is retiring from the race,
- José Luis Monterde was able to repair and is back in the special.

13:25 Trucks – Kabirov in the lead at CP1

At the first check point of the day (km 101), Firdaus Kabirov (KAM), overall rally leader had the fastest time with a 32" advantage on Gerard De Rooy (DAF) and 3'42 on Hans Bekx (DAF). Fourth was Jan De Rooy (DAF) at 4'07. The leading trucks were in trouble in the sand portion after the check point.

12:33 Bikes – Esteve leader at CP2

At the second check point of the day (km 264), Isidre Esteve (KTM) had clocked the fastest time with a 1'26 advantage on Meoni and 3'21 on Ullevalseter. Fourth is Caldecott at 7'40 while Cox is 9'41 adrift. Frégné (YAM) who had chosen a different navigation option after CP1 eventually had the 6th time at CP2 at 10'51. Despres is 12'08 adrift.

12:30 Cars – Peter fastest at CP1

At the first check point of the day (km 101), Stephane Peterhansel (MIT), who took off in first position this morning has the fastest time with a tiny 6" lead on Robby Gordon (VW). Third is Alphand (MIT) at 15", followed by Masuoka (MIT) at 57" and Kleinschmidt (VW) at 1'47".

Meanwhile, Nasser Al Attiyah (BMW) was forced to quit the race after a crash at km 57.

12:15 Cars – Monterde crashes

On the way to CP1, Spaniard José-Luis Monterde (BMW) suffered a crash at km 62. The car flipping over. The vehicle is back on its wheels. The co-driver has asked for medical assistance.

11:47 Cars – At Attiyah crashes

At km 57, Qatar driver Nasser Al Attiyah crashed his BMW. The vehicle rolled over. The driver appears to be in good condition, his co-driver Alain Guehenec has asked for medical assistance.

11:43 Bikes - Meoni fastest at CP1

At CP 1 (km 101), Fabrizio Meoni (KTM) had the fastest time in the bike race. Caldecott was second at 30" ahead of Esteve at 1'34", Ullevalseter at 1'38 and Cox at 2'12.

10:57 Night watch

Mechanical worries, late arrivals, injuries, bad luck and withdrawals... All you need to know about what happened on the bivouac during the night.

22h20 – Party time in Norway

Well over 24 hours after starting stage 7 from Zouerat to Tichit, Norwegian pair Tollefsen – Nielsen finally made it to the finish, almost sure their time had come to say goodbye to the rally. But once at the organisation tent for competitors they were told that they could carry on and that they had to head to Tidjikja for the start of the next special. A great big "Yeeeeaaaaaaah, that's fantastic..." came out of the mouth of Ivar Tollefsen, a member of this first ever-Norwegian team to compete in the car race. The Northern crew went through hell with no more four wheel drive system and had to count on the help of another team that had gear box problems to get the necessary fuel to carry on... After explaining his problems, Ivar immediately phoned his 18-year-old son Nick back home to give him the good news. "He's going crazy..." A glass of wine later and they were off to Tidjikja...

22h35 – Tchaguine at last

Truck race favourite and four-time winner Vladimir Tchaguine certainly wasn't expected so late on the Tichit bivouac. Fuel problems made things go completely wrong for the Russian that remained stopped in the desert ever since 23h00 on Thursday night. Hopping out of his Kamaz, Tchaguine however didn't look too devastated. When asked how he felt now victory seems to have faded away, he answered: "C'est la vie! (that's life)..." but insisted that another Kamaz truck (Kabirov) was still in the lead and that that was the most important.

0h30 – Round and Round again

Britain's Paul and Mark Round, father and son almost had as many problems leaving Tichit than they had to get there. On the liaison road to Tidjikja for the start of the next stage, Round and Round had to come back because a broken turbo. After calling their assistance, already in Tidjikja, it looked as though the truck wouldn't have been able to come and repair on time. They eventually decided to take off with their broken turbo and hope to make it to Tidjikja. Just in case, the British pair have precious allies in a Croatian team that promised to help out in case of a problem.

1h00 – Work for Hoebeke

Roland Hoebeke and François Beguin went through quite a few worries during stage 7. Like many, they had to find out a way to cope with the lack of fuel: a mixture between kerosene,

gasoline, engine fuel and oil did the business. But the Belgians had another problem: the chassis of their vehicle was broken. François therefore went to work while Roland enjoyed a well deserved but short rest.

1h25 – Strugo to T2

Jean-Pierre Strugo who had captured the lead in the T1 marathon class made it to Tichit knowing that his leadership had gone for good. 200kms from the finish, after having gone through CP2 in 11th position, the Frenchman broke the transfer box of his Mercedes. 25 hours later, his assistance repaired the problem but their initial goal had disappeared in the sand wind... “Not only are we too late in the overall, but added to that, the fact that we changed pieces on the vehicle makes us change class from T1 to T2.”

2h05 – The 2 longest kilometres

Spaniard Amparo Ausina will remember her stage to Tichit. Luck certainly wasn't on her side. It first started with fuel consumption problems, her Yamaha then had ignition worries just 2 kms from the finish line. She therefore had to wait 'forever' for an assistance truck to give help her out. Amparo took advantage of the situation to sleep a little. Enough to take off in top shape to Tidjikja.

2h45 – Still expected

2 bikes were still on their way to the finish, as well as around 15 cars and 12 trucks, all spotted in the desert. The Tichit stage is almost over!

07:01 Back to business

After a 'forced' one day break, that wasn't however a rest for the competitors who still had to continue their rally with a liaison to Tidjikja after the hell of stage 7 to Tichit, the day's special will be another tough one. No camel grass for the first 361 km. The driving experts that still have some energy will take advantage of the fast first 300kms before the main difficulties of the special.

Theoretically, most competitors should make it to Atar before sunset and take full advantage of the rest day

Among the favourites of the rally, the leaders could increase their advantage. Peterhansel, who will take off in first position (like in Zouerat) proved that his Mitsubishi could well head for a hat trick (after wins in Zouerat and Tichit). The KTM bikes should have a slight advantage on this type of special but David Frégné would be happy to come up with yet another surprise.

1.28. Stage Nine Overall Standings

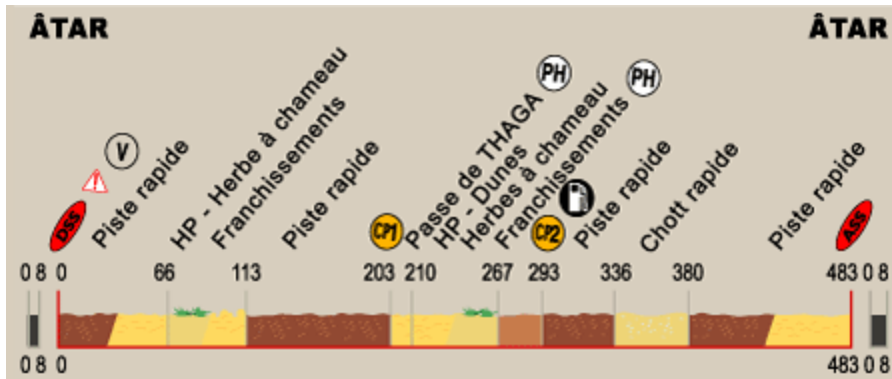
STANDING OVERALL BIKES						
Pos.	Dos.	Name	Mark	Time	Variation	Penalty
1	004	MEONI	KTM	23h 43' 32"	00' 00"	02' 00"
2	002	DESPRES	KTM	23h 44' 27"	00' 55"	
3	006	COMA	KTM	23h 46' 23"	02' 51"	
4	003	COX	KTM	23h 47' 56"	04' 24"	
5	007	ESTEVE PUJOL	KTM	23h 51' 41"	08' 09"	01' 00"
6	005	ULLEVALSETER	KTM	23h 54' 56"	11' 24"	01' 00"
7	012	FRETIGNE	YAMAHA	23h 58' 02"	14' 30"	01' 00"
8	023	CALDECOTT	KTM	24h 03' 21"	19' 49"	17' 00"
9	014	SALA	KTM	24h 29' 20"	45' 48"	05' 00"
10	022	BLAIS	KTM	24h 44' 30"	1h 00' 58"	01' 00"
11	025	DE AZEVEDO	KTM	24h 48' 01"	1h 04' 29"	
12	011	DABROWSKI	KTM	25h 26' 40"	1h 43' 08"	
13	021	WALCH	KTM	25h 40' 47"	1h 57' 15"	01' 00"
14	010	CZACHOR	KTM	25h 41' 38"	1h 58' 06"	
15	009	BRUCY	KTM	25h 43' 17"	1h 59' 45"	10' 00"
16	042	CASTEU	KTM	25h 46' 06"	2h 02' 34"	
17	020	MARCHINI	KTM	26h 44' 35"	3h 01' 03"	02' 00"
18	015	GRAZIANI	KTM	26h 46' 30"	3h 02' 58"	01' 00"
19	017	HARDEN	KTM	27h 06' 56"	3h 23' 24"	
20	026	DUCLOS	KTM	27h 13' 00"	3h 29' 28"	02' 00"
21	076	LEPAN	KTM	27h 27' 25"	3h 43' 53"	01' 00"
22	172	TERRANOVA	KTM	27h 29' 40"	3h 46' 08"	05' 00"
23	019	CHARBONNEL	KTM	27h 41' 44"	3h 58' 12"	01' 00"
24	145	VERHOEVEN	YAMAHA	27h 54' 47"	4h 11' 15"	01' 00"
25	144	BECKERS	KTM	28h 30' 49"	4h 47' 17"	
26	220	VARGA	KTM	28h 55' 53"	5h 12' 21"	
27	131	QUINONERO	KTM	29h 01' 58"	5h 18' 26"	11' 00"
28	127	MURATORI	KTM	29h 18' 09"	5h 34' 37"	02' 00"
29	029	VERHOEF	KTM	29h 27' 38"	5h 44' 06"	01' 00"
30	056	VIGNERON	KTM	29h 39' 23"	5h 55' 51"	04' 00"
31	031	BASTOUILH	KTM	29h 40' 00"	5h 56' 28"	01' 00"
32	091	DE URIARTE	KTM	29h 52' 35"	6h 09' 03"	
33	207	COTTET	YAMAHA	29h 58' 54"	6h 15' 22"	06' 00"
34	057	SCHWARZ	KTM	30h 36' 37"	6h 53' 05"	
35	227	BORSI	KTM	30h 42' 08"	6h 58' 36"	
36	153	BROUWER	YAMAHA	30h 54' 16"	7h 10' 44"	20' 30"
37	034	PIROUD	KTM	31h 11' 42"	7h 28' 10"	
38	039	RIVERA	KTM	31h 26' 07"	7h 42' 35"	
39	098	KASTAN	KTM	32h 14' 19"	8h 30' 47"	06' 00"
40	058	MARCUSSON	HONDA	32h 19' 33"	8h 36' 01"	

10. Stage Ten

1.29. Stage Ten Route

Stage 10 - 10 January 2005 - ATAR > ATAR

Liaison 8 km Special 483 km Liaison 8 km Total 499 km



Competitors usually have a smooth start to the stage following the rest day. That will not be the case this year! This loop Special is the hardest in the rally in terms of dune crossing.

At the very beginning of the stage, a 40 km erg will filter the competitors, and then they will have to climb the difficult Thaga pass.

A sea of sand and numerous dune fields will enliven the route to the El Beyyed Erg: another 40 km of non-stop dunes, amongst the most difficult ever crossed by the competitors. The "return" route will be easier, marked out through the plains for 200 km over the Sebket Chemchâm "chott".

1.30. Stage Ten Flashes

Stage 10 - 10 January 2005 - ATAR > ATAR
Liaison 8 km Special 483 km Liaison 8 km Total 499 km

18:54 CHANGES FOR STAGE 11 BETWEEN ATAR AND KIFFA

The weather conditions that have shaken the rally since the beginning of the event have made the last stages a lot harder than expected for the 2005 edition. Added to that, the information given by the organisation opening teams indicate that the first half of the special will be a lot tougher, especially if the weather remains this way. La rally officials have therefore decided to shorten stage 11 from Atar to Kiffa that was already expected to be one the hardest of the event. The special will stop at the originally planned CP2 shortening the distance from 656 km to 400,48km. From CP2, the competitors will head to the Kiffa bivouac on a liaison via a asphalt road.

16:39 Cars – De Mevius crashes

Forty kilometres after the second check point, Gregoire De Mevius suffered a serious crash in his Nissan Pickup and launched his distress signal. Both the driver and co-driver were shocked but are slowly recovering.

16:21 Cars – and another special for 'Peter'

With only two cars on the finish line of the special, Stephane Peterhansel can already start celebrating his third victory on the rally. The Frenchman beat his Mitsubishi team mate Luc Alphand by 1'24.

15:05 Cars – Alphand fastest at CP2

After Stephane Peterhansel stopped to add air to his tires before CP2, Luc Alphand clocked the fastest time at that check point with a 25" lead on 'Peter'. Third, Jutta Kleinschmidt (VW) is far behind at 22'35", while De Mevius (NIS) is fourth at 24'30 and Gordon fifth at 33'25". Both Nissan Pickups of De Villiers and Vatanen were seen stuck in the sand before the CP.

14:41 Bikes – Despres wins special

After taking off in 7th position of the bike special, Cyril Despres conquered his first win on this 2005 Dakar.

The Frenchman caught up all the bikers ahead of him to clock a final time of 5h28'26" on the day's 483km special. Despres beat Meoni by 10'08". Third was Isidre Esteve at 12'24", followed by David Frégné at 12'51" and Alfie Cox at 16'26".

Despres takes command of the overall with a 9'13 lead on Meoni.

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14:04 Trucks – De Rooy fastest at CP1

With the first trucks at CP1 (km 203), Gerard De Rooy (DAF) has the provisional best time. The Dutchman has a 14'34" lead on Hans Bekx (DAF). Third is overall leader Firdaus Kabirov (KAM) at 16'50 followed by Loprais (TAT) at 23'29 and Tchaguine (KAM), who suffered a puncture, at 30'45.

Meanwhile, André De Azevedo (TAT) seemed to have mechanical problems and was heading back to the Atar bivouac.

13:55 Cars and trucks – the situation

152 cars and trucks still remain in the rally and have started the day's stage from Atar to Atar. Four vehicles have withdrawn from the rally: Josep Nicolas Gonzalez (374), Manuel Duran (438) and Franco Grigoletto (439) in the car category and Jordi Ginesta (547) in the truck race.

13:42 Trucks – Tchaguine stopped

Winner of the previous stage, Vladimir Tchaguine (KAM) was stopped at km 180 with a punctured tire.

13:35 DEATH ON THE RALLY: OFFICIAL RELEASE

It is with great sadness that we have been informed of the death of José Manuel PEREZ (biker n°69) after an accident during stage 7 between ZOUERAT and TICHIT on the 6th of January.

Immediately treated by the medical teams of the rally, he was transferred to the Zouerat bivouac and operated in emergency for a serious abdominal trauma by the surgeons on site. He was then sent to the 'clinique du Cap' in Dakar on the 6th of January and then transferred to Alicante.

José-Manuel died of his serious injuries on this 10th of January 2005 in an Alicante hospital.

He was 41 years of age and was competing in his fourth Dakar.

To his family, his relatives and friends, the entire Dakar organisation wishes to express its sincere and sad condolences.

13:29 Bikes – Fuel problems for Coma

Spaniard Marc Coma, third at CP1 found himself out of gasoline 5kms before CP2 (km 293). He received assistance, and fuel from his Repsol team mate Giovanni Sala. Coma eventually made it to CP2 with an 11'22" deficit on fastest rider Despres.

13:29 Cars – Mechanical update

Hiroshi Masuoka was seen heading back to the bivouac of Atar in the opposite direction of the special due to his serious engine problems. With the dunes he will soon have to cross, the Japanese will probably have to wait for his assistance truck. Meanwhile, good news from Bruno Saby. The Frenchman was stopped at km 35 with gear box worries. He was eventually helped out by Volkswagen team mate Juha Kankkunen and is now back on the special and driving.

13:08 Cars – Peterhansel fastest

At CP1 of the car special (km 203), Stephane Peterhansel has the provisional best time. The Frenchman has a 1'24" lead on Mitsubishi team mate Luc Alphand. Third is Ari Vatanen (NIS) at 3'48, followed by De Villiers (NIS) at 5'02, Sousa (NIS) at 5'52, Kleinschmidt (VW) at 7'38 and Gordon (VW) at 11'31.

12:50 Bikes – Despres still the fastest

At the second check point of the bike special, Cyril Despres still has the fastest time so far. The Frenchman has a 6'06 lead on Cox, 6'13 on Frétygné (YAM), 8'55 on Meoni and 10'17" on Ullevalseter.

12:36 Cars – Alphand fastest

At CP1 of the car special (km 203), Luc Alphand had the provisional best time with only two cars so far at the check point. The Frenchman has a 1'24" lead on Mitsubishi team mate Stephane Peterhansel.

12:34 Cars – Saby stopped

Before CP1 of the car special, Bruno Saby was stopped with mechanical problems on his Volkswagen Race Touareg. His team mate Juha Kankkunen has also stopped to help repair.

12:28 Cars – Engine broken for Masuoka

After stopping at km 100, Hiroshi Masuoka appears to have broken his engine. The Mitsubishi two-time Dakar winner could be headed for an early withdrawal from the race.

12:20 Cars – Masuoka in trouble

At km 100, Hiroshi Masuoka was stopped with mechanical worries. Both the Japanese and his co-driver were working on the Mitsubishi.

12:18 Cars – Henrard in trouble

Belgian Stephane Henrard was seen stopped before the km 10 mark repairing. It appears that his buggy has transmission problems.

12:17 Cars – Peter and Alphand in the lead

Before km 100 of the car special, Stephane Peterhansel and Luc Alphand are in the leading positions. Peter caught up his Mitsubishi team mate and both are overtaking each other one after the other. Meanwhile Robby Gordon who left 2 minutes before Volkswagen team mate Kleinschmidt let her go through and is driving just behind as a fast assistance.

12:17 Bikes – Despres best time at CP1

At the first check point of the bike race (km 203), Cyril Despres has clocked the fastest time so far. The Frenchman has a 1'40 lead on Coma, 4'35 on Cox, 4'40 on Meoni and 7' on Esteve. Despres went through CP1 in a group with Ullevalseter and Cox while Meoni and Esteve were riding in front but had started the special in the leading two positions.

12:16 Bikes – Meoni at CP1

The first two riders have arrived at the first check point of the bike race (km 203). Fabrizio Meoni made it first with a slight lead on Esteve who had started the day's special two minutes before the Italian.

11:43 Bikes – Meoni at CP1

The first two riders have arrived at the first check point of the bike race (km 203). Fabrizio Meoni made it first with a slight lead on Esteve who had started the day's special two minutes before the Italian.

10:44 Bikes – Meoni in the lead

At km 177, close to 20kms from the first CP, Meoni leads the special with Esteve just behind (at 35"). Both bikers are riding under a typically British rain. At the same spot but over five minutes behind three riders were riding bunched (Despres, Ullevalseter and Cox), followed at 7min by Andy Caldecott.

10:24 Cars – Off goes Alphand

The first competitor in the car race, Luc Alphand (winner of the last special) took off this morning at 9h18 (GMT) as planned. Alphand (MIT) was followed by Peterhansel (MIT), 2' later and Gordon (VW) 4' later.

10:12 Bikes – 128 still in the rally

128 bikes have taken the start of the day's special and therefore still remain in the rally. Only one biker failed to start the special: Duval (167).

09:42 Bikes – Coma impressive

Marc Coma who took off 12th this morning is managing the best performance so far. The Spaniard has caught up 4 riders after km 70: Marchini, De Azevedo, Blais and Dabrowski.

09:39 Bikes – Frétygné with Brucy

At km 67, just at the entry of a dune portion, David Frétygné (YAM) has caught up with Jean Brucy (KTM) who took off 4 minutes before him. In other words, we have confirmation that the Frenchman is in excellent shape and hungry for a good performance. The two riders are slowly closing the gap on Walch.

09:37 Bikes – Meoni with Esteve

At km 70 of the Atar-Atar special, Fabrizio Meoni has now closed the gap on Esteve that had taken off 2 minutes ahead of the Italian.

09:37 Bikes – Frétigné full speed ahead

Seventh overall, the Frenchman took off this morning in 15th and announced before the start that he would attack all day. The enduro World champion has the benefit of his two wheel drive system that was set up during rest day.

09:19 Get ready for more drama

The first bikers took off this morning at 7h30 (GMT) with Esteve starting first followed by Meoni 2' after and Ullevalseter 4' after. The remaining Dakar competitors that enjoyed a rest day on the Atar bivouac will now meet one of the toughest stages of this 27th edition: a special heading up north and back down to Atar with a first fast 120km portion including little dunes. But the really serious business will start in the second part of the race with camel grass and especially very difficult Ergs, huge dunes to cross on the last 5kms.

The day promises to be very long for the privateers. On this stage where navigation will have its importance, the biker who will choose to take risks could well be decisive. In the car special, all eyes are on the Mitsubishi armada, so comfortable on these kind of specials. One final detail: the sky is still as cloudy and the wind remains very strong. Added to the poor visibility that, according to Patrik Zaniroli, could make "things 30% harder."

09:16 Rest day: all you have to know...

The 276 remaining competitors in Atar (129 bikes, 99 cars, 48 trucks) enjoyed a well deserved rest day on the Mauritanian bivouac ... Here's all you need to know about what happened on the day!

9 h 00: Good morning Atar

While the mechanics have started working on the vehicles since dawn, the first journalists started settling in the media centre. The bivouac of the Telefonica Dakar 2005 starts slowly waking up. Meanwhile, the competitors are still enjoying a 'long' night's sleep after the 399km Tidjikja-Atar special.

10 h 00: Mitsu at work

Team Mitsubishi is at work. Stéphane Peterhansel's car is hidden under a tent. The explanation is quite simple: on the previous day, the vehicle of the six-time rally winner suffered piston problems, 40km from the finish of the special.

10 h 30: Privateers finally in Atar

Eric Palante and Ennio Cucurachi, finally reached the finish line of the stage. "I destroyed my chain while at full speed in fifth gear before CP1. My clutch no longer works. So I took time to get here", explained the Belgian biker.

11 h 30: KTM teams at work

The mechanics of the KTM team are awake and working. While the Gauloises team's only serious task concerns the change of engine on Meoni's bike. "I'd rather not take any risks. I feel better and so do the mechanics", admitted the Italian. On the other hand, it was a different story in the Repsol team with changes of engines on all machines. "For us, it isn't a rest day. Every year that's what we do, especially because tomorrow we have no driving to do. We'll have more time for a rest", explained Christian, one of the head mechanics.

12 h 00: The Schlessers expo

Jean-Louis Schlessers, who withdrew from the race between Zouerat and Tichit, takes advantage of the rest day and the visit of sponsors and journalists to show off his buggy. "I'm a bit disappointed but have a lot of faith in the car. I want to carry on with it for the rally-raid season to test it and probably come back even better for the next Dakar".

13 h 30: Golden oldie

The very popular Citroen 2 CV, that stopped its route between Smara and Zouerat is also present in Atar.

George Marqués, the co-driver hopes to take his little wonder to Dakar. And added to that he hopes to try and start again next year. With all the advertising we've had, we hope to come back with a bettered 2 CV: lighter and more adapted to the sand.

13h40: Press conference time

Like at each rest day on the Dakar rally, time had come for the traditional organisation press conference with Etienne Lavigne and Patrick Zaniroli facing the media. A good opportunity to talk about the first 9 stages and especially the last three days. Race director Patrick Zaniroli insisted that in thirteen years in the Dakar organisation never had he seen such bad weather conditions "making the race 30% harder". The race officials also announced that the time penalties concerning the bikers caught outside the XTE GPS corridor were reduced from 5' to 1'. In other words, that meant that Fabrizio Meoni was back on top of the bike standings.

"I gave the officials my point of view this morning to feel better, explained the Italian. I am now told that the penalty is cut down. That's good news. It wasn't a major affair but I still think that the penalty shouldn't be applied".

15 h 00: Good news from X-Raid

Sven Qandt, team manager of X-Raid, is reassuring on the state of health of his driver Nasser Al Attiyah and especially co-driver Alain Guehennec, after their crash during stage 8. "Nasser is in top shape. Alain was a little shocked by the accident. To be honest they were ready to carry. But it wouldn't have been serious.

They're now in Nouakchott and will maybe go to Dakar."

16 h 00: Nissan at work

No time for a rest in the Nissan team. Giniel De Villiers' car is fully checked from back to front and top to bottom. Ari Vatanen's Pickup on the other hand is more of a problem. Christophe Chapelain, technical director, remains optimistic: "We've changed the parts that we had planned for Giniel's car. The transmission worries on Ari's vehicle are about to be sorted out. We've done the necessary changes. We should be finished in about 3 hours".

17 h 00: Pessimistic Jutta

Does she really mean it? Jutta Kleinschmidt sounded rather pessimistic on her victory chances: "Even with only a 40 minute deficit, the Mitsubishi are unreachable, except of course if they have a major problem. I'm just going to hang on to my third position."

18 h 30:

Carlos Sousa, 4th overall has a better face. After suffering problems on old 2003 suspensions, the Portuguese driver saw the 'Messiah' arrive in the person of a British engineer present in Atar with brand new suspensions.

Carlos can now carry on dreaming of a place on the podium in Dakar with his Nissan de Pick-up.

20 h 15: The traditional briefing ends. Etienne Lavigne, event director and Patrick Zaniroli, race director, told the competitors how difficult the next stage would be. The Atar – Atar special promises a best of the difficulties one can meet on a Mauritanian stage of the Dakar. Stage 10 should be one the toughest of the 27th edition.

Thank goodness, every one had a rest!

22h30: Here comes Patsy

Stranded in the desert ever since Thursday after-noon, Britain's Patsy Quick eventually arrived on the Atar bivouac alongside compatriot Clive Town and Frenchman Gerard Dubuy. All three bikers went straight to the race PC plane to give explain their story after a few tears and hugs. All three had been located and sent food and water supplies by parachute while in the desert before the organisation picked them up to bring them to Atar after their three day nightmare.

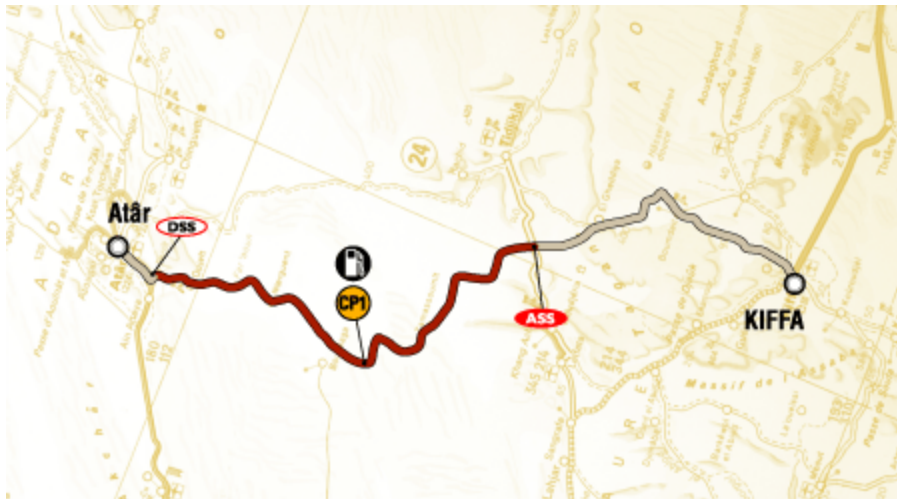
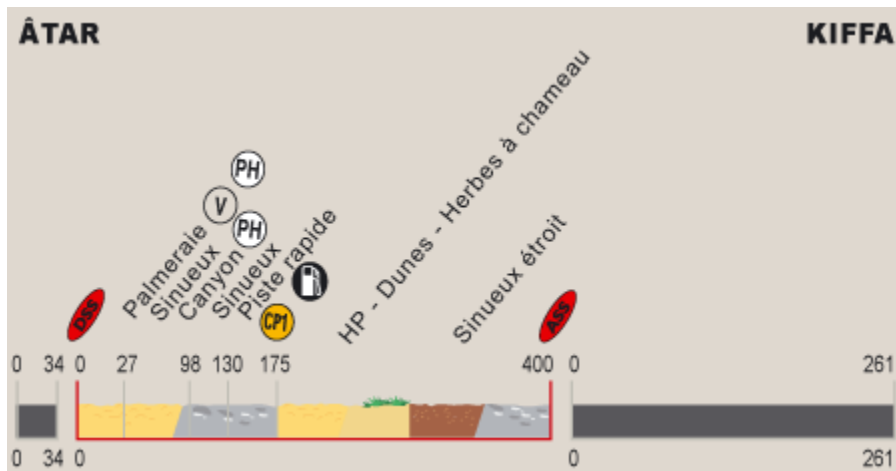
1.31. Stage Ten Overall Standings

STANDING OVERALL BIKES						
Pos.	Dos.	Name	Mark	Time	Variation	Penalty
1	002	DESPRES	KTM	29h 12' 53"	00' 00"	
2	004	MEONI	KTM	29h 22' 06"	09' 13"	02' 00"
3	006	COMA	KTM	29h 28' 55"	16' 02"	
4	007	ESTEVE PUJOL	KTM	29h 32' 31"	19' 38"	01' 00"
5	003	COX	KTM	29h 33' 48"	20' 55"	01' 00"
6	012	FRETIGNE	YAMAHA	29h 39' 19"	26' 26"	01' 00"
7	023	CALDECOTT	KTM	29h 50' 38"	37' 45"	17' 00"
8	014	SALA	KTM	30h 25' 24"	1h 12' 31"	05' 00"
9	025	DE AZEVEDO	KTM	30h 52' 35"	1h 39' 42"	
10	022	BLAIS	KTM	31h 05' 52"	1h 52' 59"	01' 00"
11	021	WALCH	KTM	31h 53' 57"	2h 41' 04"	01' 00"
12	011	DABROWSKI	KTM	31h 58' 13"	2h 45' 20"	
13	009	BRUCY	KTM	32h 07' 12"	2h 54' 19"	10' 00"
14	010	CZACHOR	KTM	32h 16' 12"	3h 03' 19"	
15	042	CASTEU	KTM	32h 29' 09"	3h 16' 16"	
16	026	DUCLOS	KTM	33h 34' 39"	4h 21' 46"	02' 00"
17	015	GRAZIANI	KTM	33h 40' 16"	4h 27' 23"	01' 00"
18	017	HARDEN	KTM	33h 59' 19"	4h 46' 26"	
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21	019	CHARBONNEL	KTM	34h 53' 19"	5h 40' 26"	01' 00"
22	131	QUINONERO	KTM	35h 45' 37"	6h 32' 44"	11' 00"
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33	057	SCHWARZ	KTM	38h 41' 09"	9h 28' 16"	
34	034	PIROUD	KTM	38h 52' 28"	9h 39' 35"	
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36	110	CARILLON	KTM	39h 52' 02"	10h 39' 09"	
37	195	CORINTI	KTM	39h 59' 07"	10h 46' 14"	
38	058	MARCUSSON	HONDA	40h 02' 44"	10h 49' 51"	
39	098	KASTAN	KTM	40h 27' 33"	11h 14' 40"	21' 00"
40	064	ROBIN	KTM	42h 12' 15"	12h 59' 22"	

11. Stage 11

1.32. Stage 11 Route

Stage 11 - 11 January 2005 - ATAR > KIFFA
Liaison 34 km Special 400 km Liaison 261 km Total 695 km



To celebrate in a worthy fashion the leaving of Atâr and the last day in Mauritania, drivers will race a long Special of 600 km. The first half, towards Tidjikja via the Pic de Bou Naga, will include much dune crossing on very soft sand: be careful with the fuel consumption. The track is then a new one, in the valleys of the Tagant massif, crossing the superb Ksar el Barka oasis before once again taking the very rocky stretch leading to the Nega pass, this time in a downwards direction.

The final 150 km stretch is a fast one, but motorcycle participants will have to watch out for ruts made by trucks on this sandy track.

1.33. Stage 11 Flashes

Sad day on the Dakar...

The 2005 Dakar was the scene of another very sad day with the death of Fabrizio Meoni, a day after Spanish biker Jose-Manuel Perez passed away in an Alicante hospital after crashing during stage 7.

The Italian biker had taken the start of the day's stage 11 in second spot overall, over 9' behind Cyril Despres. The leading bikers had been riding together on the fast course early in the special. Indeed five riders made it bunched at CP1 (Despres, Meoni, Esteve, Coma and Frétiigné) with Coma setting the provisional best time.

A few minutes after refuelling at km 184, Meoni suffered a serious crash. David Frétiigné who witnessed the accident, immediately launched the Italians distress signal. A medical helicopter sent on site made it on the scene of the crash at 10h36 finding Meoni in a situation of heart failure. After 45minutes of treatment, the efforts appeared to be vain. The hour of death was pronounced at 11h11 GMT.

The other riders, not aware of Meoni's condition carried on the special with Marc Coma clocking the fastest time of the day.

The leading bikers were then informed, on the finish line, of the sad news by race director Patrick Zaniroli. Shocked by the terrible news, they then headed to the bivouac in Kiffa on a liaison. The organisation decided not to inform the other competitors in order not to trouble them psychologically on the long road to Kiffa.

The Dakar rally has today lost one of its greatest figures. At 47 years of age, Fabrizio Meoni was seen by all as a reference in the world of rally raid and the bearer of the Dakar Spirit. The Italian had started as a privateer for the first of his 13 Dakars winning 14 stages and 2 titles in 2001 and 2002.

Meanwhile, the car special was won by Jutta Kleinschmidt in her Volkswagen Race Touareg. The German took off third this morning behind the Mitsubishi's of Alphand and Peterhansel and remained within shooting distance all day earning herself a first special victory this year with a 1'04 advantage on Alphand and 2'42 on Peterhansel. 'Peter' keeps the overall leadership with a 19'50 advance on his team mate and 1h08 on Kleinschmidt.

DAKAR OFFICIAL RELEASE: DEATH OF FABRIZIO MEONI

It is with huge sadness that the rally was informed this morning of the death of Fabrizio MEONI (n°4), one of the greatest rally-raid champions ever, after a crash just after CP1, at km 184, at 10h15 (GMT) during stage 12 between Atar and Kiffa.

A medical helicopter of the organisation was immediately sent on the scene of the accident at 10h36 (GMT) and the doctors treated the champion for 45 minutes.

However, the two-time Dakar winner, aged of 47 years, died of his injuries at 11h11 (GMT).

Fabrizio MEONI, a huge figure of the rally, was 2nd overall in the bike standings, behind Cyril Despres and was competing on the race for the 13th time.

His body was taken to Atar.

The entire Dakar caravan wishes to express its sincere condolences to his family, his friends and his many admirers.

16:05 Cars – Kleinschmidt wins special

On the finish line of the day's 400km special, Jutta Kleinschmidt (VW) has just clocked a winning time of 5h29'37". The German in her Race Touareg beat Luc Alphand (MIT) by 1'04" while Peterhansel (MIT) finished at 2'42".

15:00 Cars – Reds in front

At km 315 of the car special, the two Mitsubishi Pajeros of Luc Alphand and Stephane Peterhansel were comfortably leading the race. About a kilometre behind was Jutta Kleinschmidt (VW). Further behind were the Nissan Pickups of Vatanen and De Villiers, followed at shooting distance by Bruno Saby (VW).

According to the starting times of the day's stage, that would mean that Kleinschmidt do far has the best time.

14:59 Bikes – Coma wins special

On the finish line of the day's special between Atar and Kiffa, Marc Coma clinched the win with a 1'12 lead on Cyril Despres and 3'57 on Esteve. Fourth was Cox at 4'45. Despres remains the leader of the rally.

13:59 Trucks – Bekx fastest at CP1

At the first check point of the truck race (km 175), Hans Bekx (DAF) has the best time so far. Second is Jan De Rooy (DAF) at 4'34, followed by Tchaguine (KAM) at 13'15 and Kabirov (KAM) at 19'15.

13:43 Cars – 3 in the lead

After Jutta Kleinschmidt had made it to CP1 (km 175) alone in the lead. At km 245, the German had been caught and overtaken by the two Mitsubishi cars of Peterhansel and Alphand.

13:31 Cars – Jutta fastest at CP1

At the first check point of the car special (km 175), Jutta Kleinschmidt (VW) has the fastest time so far. The German driver has a 5'12 lead on Luc Alphand (MIT) and 9'05 on her Volkswagen team mate Bruno Saby.

Fourth is overall leader Stephane Peterhansel (MIT) at 9'35, followed by Ari Vatanen (NIS) at 11'20.

13:22 DAKAR OFFICIAL RELEASE

DEATH OF FABRIZIO MEONI

It is with huge sadness that the rally was informed this morning of the death of Fabrizio MEONI (n°4), one of the greatest rally-raid champions ever, after a crash just after CP1, at km 184, at 10h15 (GMT) during stage 11 between Atar and Kiffa.

A medical helicopter of the organisation was immediately sent on the scene of the accident at 10h36 (GMT) and the doctors treated the champion for 45 minutes.

However, the two-time Dakar winner, aged of 47 years, died of his injuries at 11h11 (GMT).

Fabrizio MEONI, a huge figure of the rally, was 2nd overall in the bike standings, behind Cyril Despres and was competing on the race for the 13th time.

His body was taken to Atar.

The entire Dakar caravan wishes to express its sincere condolences to his family, his friends and his many admirers.

11:55 Cars – Vatanen to help De Villiers

Taking off 2 minutes before his Nissan team mate, Ari Vatanen has let De Villiers pass him before CP1, probably to help out in case of a problem. Indeed, De Villiers is the best placed member of the Nissan team, 4th overall.

11:47 Cars – Roma stopped

At km 23, Spaniard Nani Roma had a major fright after a dune. The Mitsubishi driver was then stuck in the sand for around 5 minutes.

11:43 Cars – Mitsus together

At km 100 of the car race, both Mitsubishi vehicles of Peterhansel and Alphand are driving together which means that Alphand has gained two minutes on 'Peter'. Jutta Kleinschmidt is some 300m behind.

11:34 Bikes – Coma fastest at CP

At the first and only CP of the day (km 175), a group of 5 riders arrived bunched (Meoni, Despres, Esteve, Frétygné, Coma) meaning that Marc Coma, the latest starter, has the fastest time. Alfie Cox made it to the CP on his own, slightly later.

11:21 Night watch

Mechanical worries, late arrivals, injuries, bad luck and withdrawals... All you need to know about what happened on the bivouac during the night.

21h15 – Sousa relieved

Carlos Sousa, fourth overall before the start of the Atar-Atar stage has lost all chances of making it on the podium in Dakar. « We had a problem on the front right wheel. We therefore lost six to seven hours. We were finally able to get the wheel of De Mevius who had to retire after his crash. Luckily, Thierry (Delli-Zotti, his co-driver) who is an excellent mechanic managed to repair and got us out of this problem. I'm really happy to have made it and to be able to carry on", insisted the Portuguese.

21h35 – G.De Rooy once again

Just arrived at the end of the special, Gerard De Rooy once again had troubles during the stage that prevented him from competing until the end with the Kamaz trucks. "I managed a very good start to the race but then broke down and lots twice as much time, first of all because we had to try and repair and then because the truck wasn't working as well. Anyhow, the most important thing now is that we carry on having fun each day and that it lasts until Dakar.

23h00 – Some work at Mitsu...

In the workshop of the Japanese brand, all are sad about Masuoka's withdrawal (the first since 1993) but the most important thing is to take care of the two leading cars. The mechanics have done the same checks on both Alphand and Peterhansel's car after his problems at the end of stage 8. Meanwhile, still no news from Andrea Mayer, stopped on the special with electrical problems.

23h30 – VW with Jutta

Volkswagen has lost Juha Kankunnen, who crashed his car on its side on a dune. The back of the Race Touareg being extremely damaged, the Finn has decided to quit the race in Atar despite possibilities to repair. Now all the teams' expectations lie on the shoulders of Jutta Kleinschmidt and everything will be done to help her remain on the podium of the car race until Dakar.

2h30... Mitsu still at work

The work continues on Luc Alphand's car that needs more than expected. The mechanics decide to take 'Peter's Evo out for a test. Andrea Mayer still hasn't made it to the bivouac or to CP2.

3h30 – Late arrivals

116 bikes have made it to the finish out of the 126 that had started the stage. None of the bikers are still on the road. In the car race, 80 crews have arrived on the bivouac and 17 are still expected. 32 trucks out of the 48 have made it to Atar.

07:25 CHANGES FOR STAGE 11 BETWEEN ATAR AND KIFFA

The weather conditions that have shaken the rally since the beginning of the event have made the last stages a lot harder than expected for the 2005 edition. Added to that, the information given by the organisation opening teams indicate that the first half of the special will be a lot tougher, especially if the weather remains this way. Rally officials have therefore decided to shorten stage 11 from Atar to Kiffa that was already expected to be one of the hardest of the event. The special will stop at the originally planned CP2 shortening the distance from 656 km to 400,48km. From CP2, the competitors will head to the Kiffa bivouac on a liaison via an asphalt road.

1.34. Stage 11 Overall Standings

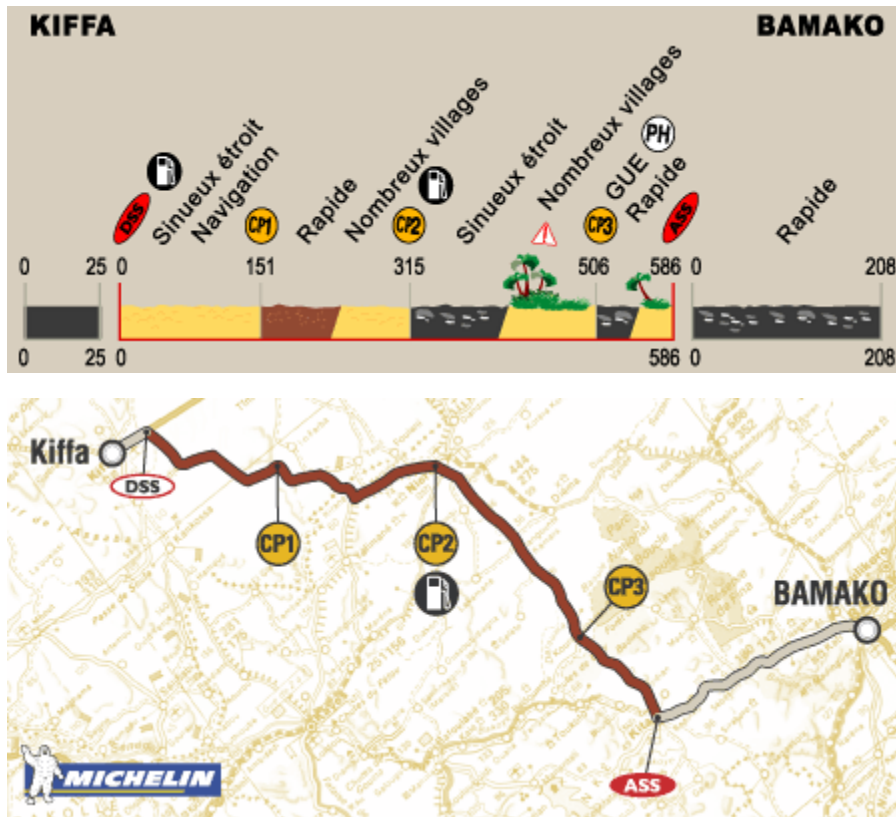
STANDING OVERALL BIKES						
Pos.	Dos.	Name	Mark	Time	Variation	Penalty
1	002	DESPRES	KTM	35h 13' 04"	00' 00"	
2	006	COMA	KTM	35h 27' 54"	14' 50"	
3	007	ESTEVE PUJOL	KTM	35h 35' 27"	22' 23"	01' 00"
4	003	COX	KTM	35h 37' 32"	24' 28"	01' 00"
5	012	FRETIGNE	YAMAHA	35h 53' 21"	40' 17"	01' 00"
6	023	CALDECOTT	KTM	36h 02' 27"	49' 23"	17' 00"
7	014	SALA	KTM	36h 40' 04"	1h 27' 00"	05' 00"
8	025	DE AZEVEDO	KTM	36h 55' 39"	1h 42' 35"	
9	022	BLAIS	KTM	37h 18' 09"	2h 05' 05"	01' 00"
10	009	BRUCY	KTM	38h 17' 48"	3h 04' 44"	10' 00"
11	011	DABROWSKI	KTM	38h 22' 20"	3h 09' 16"	
12	010	CZACHOR	KTM	38h 46' 04"	3h 33' 00"	
13	042	CASTEU	KTM	38h 52' 27"	3h 39' 23"	
14	026	DUCLOS	KTM	39h 47' 03"	4h 33' 59"	02' 00"
15	015	GRAZIANI	KTM	40h 22' 18"	5h 09' 14"	01' 00"
16	145	VERHOEVEN	YAMAHA	40h 37' 07"	5h 24' 03"	01' 00"
17	017	HARDEN	KTM	41h 05' 11"	5h 52' 07"	
18	019	CHARBONNEL	KTM	41h 54' 02"	6h 40' 58"	01' 00"
19	076	LEPAN	KTM	42h 04' 36"	6h 51' 32"	01' 00"
20	131	QUINONERO	KTM	42h 36' 58"	7h 23' 54"	11' 00"
21	029	VERHOEF	KTM	43h 26' 06"	8h 13' 02"	01' 00"
22	144	BECKERS	KTM	43h 28' 50"	8h 15' 46"	
23	031	BASTOUILH	KTM	43h 43' 14"	8h 30' 10"	01' 00"
24	091	DE URIARTE	KTM	43h 59' 11"	8h 46' 07"	
25	220	VARGA	KTM	44h 22' 56"	9h 09' 52"	
26	207	COTTET	YAMAHA	44h 28' 32"	9h 15' 28"	06' 00"
27	056	VIGNERON	KTM	45h 15' 39"	10h 02' 35"	04' 00"
28	153	BROUWER	YAMAHA	45h 26' 32"	10h 13' 28"	20' 30"
29	227	BORSI	KTM	45h 42' 13"	10h 29' 09"	
30	034	PIROUD	KTM	46h 20' 23"	11h 07' 19"	
31	110	CARILLON	KTM	47h 21' 54"	12h 08' 50"	
32	195	CORINTI	KTM	47h 26' 06"	12h 13' 02"	
33	039	RIVERA	KTM	47h 32' 50"	12h 19' 46"	
34	058	MARCUSSON	HONDA	47h 51' 42"	12h 38' 38"	
35	098	KASTAN	KTM	48h 24' 49"	13h 11' 45"	21' 00"
36	130	GORRARA	KTM	48h 57' 42"	13h 44' 38"	09' 00"
37	064	ROBIN	KTM	49h 53' 41"	14h 40' 37"	
38	197	WARRANT	KTM	51h 30' 39"	16h 17' 35"	
39	189	MESSIAEN	KTM	51h 52' 27"	16h 39' 23"	
40	037	POLLI	KTM	52h 23' 58"	17h 10' 54"	

12. Stage 12

1.35. Stage 12 Route

Stage 12 - 12 January 2005 - KIFFA > BAMAKO

Liaison 25 km Special 586 km Liaison 208 km Total 819 km



The arrival in Sahelian Africa is marked by speedy tracks surrounded by vegetation. Difficulties in finding landmarks make navigating a delicate operation in the first third of this stage, up until the malian border.

Then follows the crossing of numerous villages. Drivers are here obliged to slow down for the security of everyone. After Niore competitors will encounter narrow laterite tracks, which make overtaking very difficult. They will also splash through their first rivers, and perhaps encounter a few animals. In Bamako, vehicles will once more be placed in the Parc Fermé, and no mechanical interventions will be allowed.

1.36. Stage 12 Flashes

The race goes on...

In terribly sad conditions after the news from the previous days, the Telefonica Dakar 2005 rally carried on its road to the Lac Rose, entering its fourth country, Mali. No bike race today but an air lift to Bamako for the shocked bikers while the cars and trucks took off with a black scarf on their rear view mirrors in homage to Meoni. The special was won by Giniel De Villiers.

Traditionally, when the Dakar enters Mali, it often appears like the last step to Promised Land, a new phase and a first taste of the upcoming finish line in Dakar. The first kilometres in black Africa today were however very painful. On the race course for the cars and trucks or in the planes taking the bikers, devastated after the terrible news from the previous days. Indeed the riders had requested not to compete on the day's long 819km stage. A painful day for everyone on the Dakar! But despite the terrible absence of Fabrizio Meoni on this 12th stage, the race went on, exactly like the Italian would have wanted it to. The bikers gathered on the tarmac of the Bamako airport were indeed well aware of that.

The car race took off under the cloudy skies of Mauritania and the conditions remained the same all the way to the Mali capital. Comfortably in the leading two places of the overall, the Mitsubishi vehicles of Peterhansel and Alphand started nice and easily, going full speed when necessary and eventually catching and passing their closest rival Jutta Kleinschmidt (VW) who had taken off in first spot of the special. But the fastest on the sandy portion to CP1 (km 151) was Giniel De Villiers (fifth to start in his Nissan Pickup) with a tiny 4" advantage on 'Peter'. The South African carried on his fast rhythm, adding precious time to his advance (1'55 on Saby and 3'42 on Peterhansel).

At CP3, he had done even better, flying to his first win on this 27th edition (Nissans third after the two won by McRae). De Villiers crossed the finish line with a 3'01 lead on Stephane Peterhansel and 6'27 on Luc Alphand. Already a winner of the Castellon stage last year, the Nissan driver remains well over 4h adrift, while Jutta Kleinschmidt who had to deal with a problem on rear wheels finished the stage over 13' adrift is still third overall but now has a 1h18 deficit on the race leader Stephane Peterhansel.

Meanwhile, it was a tough day for Robby Gordon (VW) who damaged his shock absorbers after only 100kms and lost over 2h30 on the day. Josep Maria Servia also had a fright when he hit a tree at km 511 (not the slightest injury) and had to ask for the assistance of another competitor to help him get back on the special.

In the truck race, after suffering mechanical problems and race incidents since the start of the rally, Gerard De Rooy (DAF) clinched his first special victory in Bamako on this 27th edition. The Dutchman beat overall leader Firdaus Kabirov by 5'17".

21:59 Cars – De Villiers wins special

For the first time on this 27th edition, Giniel De Villiers (NIS) clinched the day's special between Kiffa and Bamako. The South African beat Peterhansel (MIT) on the finish line by 3'01 while Alphand (MIT) was third at 6'27. Bruno Saby (VW) finished fourth at 8'06, followed by Sousa (NIS) at 10'46. Jutta Kleinschmidt (VW) who suffered rear wheel problems crossed the line 13'45 adrift. Stephane Peterhansel keeps the overall leadership with a 23'16 advantage on Alphand and 1h18 on Kleinschmidt.

17:40 Cars – Servia hits tree

After clocking the ninth time at the third CP(km 506), Josep-Maria Servia lost precious time after hitting a tree at km 511. No injuries were sustained. The Schlessler-Ford buggy of the Spaniard appeared to be stuck in the tree and Servia had to ask for help from another competitor to eventually carry on the special.

17:15 Cars – Gordon only at CP2

While the leading cars were heading to the finish line (with less than 80kms left), Robby Gordon (VW) had just made it at CP2 (km315). The American who was stopped with absorber worries (at km 100) had a 2h30 deficit on the best time set by De Villiers.

17:01 Cars – De Villiers leads at CP3

At the third and final CP of the day (km 508), Giniel De Villiers (NIS) still had the fastest time of the special. Stephane Peterhansel (MIT) was second at 3'02 while his team mate Luc Alphand was at 6'31. Bruno Saby (VW) is now fourth at 6'53. Jutta Kleinschmidt on the other Race Touareg remains 12'23 adrift.

16:48 Trucks – Tchaguine finally at CP2

Third at the first CP of the day (km 151), Vladimir Tchaguine (KAM) eventually made it to the second check point (km 315) with a 42' deficit on the best time set by Gerard De Roy (DAF).

16:08 Trucks – De Rooy Jnr fastest at CP2

At the second check point of the truck race (km 315), the best time was for Gerard De Rooy (DAF) with a 6'35 lead on overall leader Firdaus Kabirov (KAM). Third was Jan De Rooy (DAF), 9'07 adrift while Bekx (DAF) was fifth at 16'53.

14:49 Cars – De Villiers still in the lead

At km 365 of the car race, Giniel De Villiers was leading a bunch of 5 cars including Kleinschmidt (VW), Saby (VW), Alphand (MIT) and Peterhansel (MIT). In other words, the South African is on his way to a possible first special success this year.

14:37 Cars – Gordon back in the special

After suffering shock absorber problems on his Volkswagen Race Touareg at km 100, Robby Gordon has managed to repair and is back on the special and driving.

14:21 Cars – De Villiers still fastest at CP2

At CP2 (km 315) of the car special, the fastest time was for Giniel De Villiers (NIS). The South African has a 1'55 lead on Bruno Saby (VW) and 3'42 on Stephane Peterhansel (MIT). Fourth, Luc Alphand (MIT) was at 5'49 while Kleinschmidt (VW) who had taken off first this morning is 7'36 adrift.

13:51 Trucks – Kabirov fastest at CP1

At CP1 (km 175) of the truck special, overall leader Firdaus Kabirov (KAM) has clocked the fastest time with a tiny 23" lead on Jan De Rooy (DAF). Third is Vladimir Tchaguine (KAM) at 1'18, followed by Gerard De Rooy (DAF) at 1'40 and Hans Bekx (DAF) at 6'47. Kabirov therefore comforts his leadership on Bekx.

13:19 Cars – Gordon stopped

After only 100km of the day's 586km special between Kiffa and Bamako, Robby Gordon (VW) was stopped with serious mechanical problems. The American appears to have wrecked his shock absorbers.

13:14 Cars – Kleinschmidt in front

After taking off first of the special, Jutta Kleinschmidt was in front of Peterhansel and Saby just after the Mali border crossing. But because of her early starting position, the German has lost quite some time on her main rivals. At CP1, she was 5'54" adrift on the best time set by De Villiers (NIS).

13:09 Cars – De Villiers fastest at CP1

At the first check point of the day (km 151), Giniel De Villiers (NIS) had the best time. The South African had a tiny 4" lead on Peterhansel (MIT), while Bruno Saby (VW) was third at 1'44, followed by Alphand (MIT) at 2'08 and Sousa (NIS) at 3'51".

13:04 Cars and trucks – the situation

A total of 122 cars and trucks have started the day's stage 12 between Kiffa and Bamako. 15 were forced to retire from the rally: Berkut (314), Van Deijne (393), Labrousse (451), Tartarin (379), Salinero (359), Smulevici (348), Brezzi (461), Sireyjol (421), Maimi (462), Olive (463) in the car race, Monseu (537), Taranienko (563), Jacquot (529), Bauerle (536), Biasion (517) in the truck race.

12:15 Night watch

Mechanical worries, late arrivals, injuries, bad luck and withdrawals... All you need to know about what happened on the bivouac during the night.

21h30 – Minute of silence

Shortly before the traditional evening briefing on the bivouac, event director Etienne Lavigne asked all the competitors and people present, with the bikers at the first rows, to respect a minute of silence in honour of Fabrizio Meoni. Caps off and a knee on the ground! Fabrizio will forever remain in our minds... Farewell to the Lion of the desert.

The briefing was then aimed at telling the bikers how their airlift to Bamako would be organised. Planes, take-off times especially difficult due to the fact that the Kiffa airport has no lights.

23h00 – Nissan without its T4

While the atmosphere on the bivouac remained extremely sad, the mechanics of the different car teams had other concerns. Nissan, for example has to cope with a new problem. With no T5 truck present because this is a marathon stage and without its T4 race assistance truck, Giniel De Villiers team will not be able to repair in Bamako. Time to check every detail on the vehicles during the whole night.

23h40 – Lavieille on a bike

Christian Lavieille, driving a car alongside Christian Choupin, a journalist for France Télévisions, took time to climb on a bike on this Dakar 2005. The former winner of the 'Bol d'Or' endurance bike race, accepted to help out Jean-Paul Higy, totally exhausted after the special and incapable of driving his Yamaha for the 230kms of liaison. For the occasion, Christian Choupin, normally a co-driver changed roles and drove the Nissan to Kiffa.

0h00 – "Mitsu" working on navigation

Having finished the major part of the mechanical work on the vehicles, the main goal in the Mitsubishi team was to gather the co-drivers for a road-book briefing in order to prepare the Kiffa-Bamako stage.

0h30 – Long day for Syndiely

Syndiely Wade, daughter of Senegal's president has never been so close from making it to Dakar for her third attempt. However, she suffered a very long day because of a broken gearbox on the Nissan she drives alongside Pierre-Henri Desmazures (both having their share of driving). The fifth gear and the reverse gear were no longer working. In other words the night promises to be long.

1h30 – Bikes ready for the plane

Etienne Lavigne having asked all bikers to bring their machines as close as possible to the planes in a 'parc fermé' zone to help in the organisation of the air-lift, there are now only 3 bikes at the 'trunks' plane where most of the privateers are normally based. 43 bikes are already in the parc fermé, including all the official bikes. Jean Brucy a drawn on his KTM a 'Fabrizio' surrounded with stars while Cyril Despres has added to his race number Meoni's identification sticker.

2h15 – Mystery on Walch's bike

Young and promising American Kellon Walch made it in 100th position of the day's special. Stranded at CP1, Walch had to repair, by himself, his KTM in order to finish the stage. Without any explanations, he then handed his bike to the mechanics of the Red Bull-KTM team. "I don't know what exactly happened or how he managed to repair. I am now going to check the bike".

3h00 – The absent

7 bikes were still expected at the bivouac, all having finished the special and probably on their way to Kiffa. 23 cars and 19 trucks were also awaited.

07:30 Bikers to be transported to Bamako

The entire competitors of the Dakar rally have been deeply affected by the sad death of Fabrizio Meoni.

The bikers have expressed the wish not to compete on stage 12 between Kiffa and Bamako. The rally organisation has therefore decided, in accordance with the riders, to cancel the special and to take by airplane the competitors and their bikes to Bamako.

The special will be normally competed for the cars and trucks.

1.37. Stage 12 Overall Standings

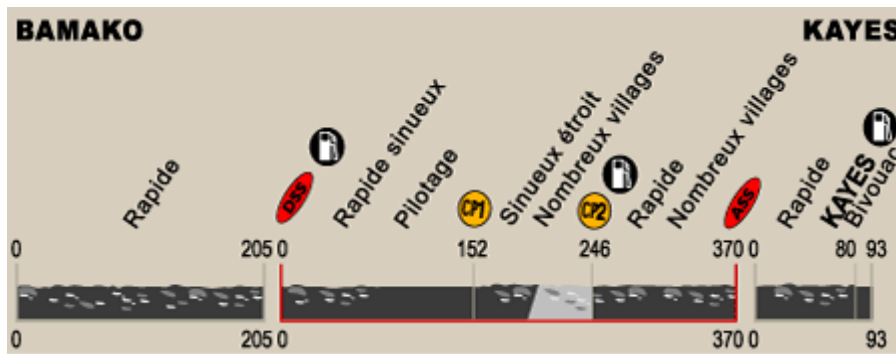
Bikes did not compete today, no changes.

13. Stage 13

1.38. Stage 13 Route

Stage 13 - 13 January 2005 - BAMAKO > KAYES

Liaison 205 km Special 370 km Liaison 93 km Total 668 km



From the start of the Special to the Manantali barrage, the still laterite track is on the wide side and allows for fast Rally style driving.

For the next 150 km, it's back to bush landscape, where the track more often than not takes the form of a bush path through the middle of nowhere.

Motocross specialists will be the most confident in the crossing of the Tambaoura cliffs. The finish of the Special will be judged in Sadiola, a small Malian town known for its opencast gold mine.

1.39. Stage 13 Flashes

Back on the bikes...

After a day of mourning in memory of Fabrizio Meoni, time had come to get back on the bikes and carry on the race. With a black scarf on their arms, the 108 took off for the 370kms of the special between Bamako and Kayes. The fastest on the day was Andy Caldecott, the Aussie clinching his second stage success on the rally. In the car race, Peter captured the win and added precious minutes to his overall lead.

After the cars and trucks yesterday, it was the bikers' turn to pay tribute to one of the greatest heroes of the Dakar, Fabrizio Meoni. With a black scarf around their arm, the riders took off in the middle of the Bamako night, on a 205km liaison to head to the start of the day's special. The sun had just set when the first bikers started their race with Marc Coma in the leading position (after winning the last special). It appeared however that the official KTM favourites had decided to start gently with Andy Caldecott clocking the best time at the first check point (km 152), ahead of Chris Blais on a very technical track. David Frégné reacted at the second CP (km 246) with the best time while overall leader Cyril Despres had to stop and repair exhaust pipe problems after hitting stones on a small fall. The Frenchman indeed lost time but made up for it in the last very fast portion of the special. Meanwhile, Andy Caldecott was flying to his second win on the rally and crossed the finish line with a 2'06 on Frégné and 3'32 on Chris Blais who manages his best performance so far.

The overall leadership remains in the hands of Cyril Despres who comforts his lead on Marc Coma. The Frenchman now has a 16'06 on Coma who finished ninth on the day (at 9'34) while Despres was 8th at 8'36.

On four wheels, the main difficulty, like yesterday concerned the narrow paths and many trees. It didn't however seem to be too much of a problem for Stephane Peterhansel. The title holder rapidly caught Ginie De Villiers' Nissan Pickup (who had taken off first after his win yesterday) and passed the South African before CP1. He then took advantage of a navigation error from his team mate Luc Alphand to take full command of the stage with the best time at CP2 (km 246). On the finish line, the Red armada managed the double with 'Peter' beating his team mate Alphand by 4'17 while De Villiers had to settle for third spot at 7'59. Peterhansel wins his 15th special on four wheels and his 48th overall. The good news of the day came both from Thierry Magnaldi who grabbed an excellent 4th spot in his Honda buggy while Nani Roma (MIT) finished 5th, his best ever performance on four wheels. It was a whole different story for Jutta Kleinschmidt (VW) and her 'bodyguard' Bruno Saby, who lost an extra 12' on 'Peter' and 8' on Alphand. The German driver is now 1h30 adrift in the overall. The fright of the day came from Josep-Maria Servia who went for a tumble in his Schlessler-Ford buggy, 10km after CP2 (where he had clocked the third best time). No worries for driver and co-driver, but the vehicle appeared to be badly damaged and was slowly heading to the finish.

The truck race saw a DAF 1-2-3... Indeed, in outstanding fashion, Gerard De Rooy took off in first spot after his first win yesterday and flew to his second triumph. The DAF trucker crossed the finish line with a huge 18'50 lead on his father Jan while Belgian Hugo Duisters on another DAF managed an excellent third spot at 31'23. Fourth was four-time Dakar Vladimir Tchaguine (KAM), 33'17 adrift, while his team mate and overall leader Firdaus Kabirov finished with a 51'55 deficit on De Rooy. Not too much of a concern for the Russian who still has a comfortable 2h40 lead on Hans Bekx (DAF).

17:02 Trucks – Easy win for Gerard De rooy

Gerard De Rooy (DAF) conquered his second special win of the Dakar in outstanding fashion. The Dutchman beat his father Jan by an 18'50 lead. Third on the day was Belgian trucker,

Duisters (DAF) at 31'23. Vladimir Tchaguine finished fourth at 33'17 while his Kamaz team mate and overall leader Firdaus Kabirov crossed the finish line 51'55adrift.

15:46 Cars – Serbia goes for a tumble

Ten kilometres after CP2 (km 246) where he had clocked the third best time, Josep Maria Servia crashed his Schlessler-Ford buggy. Both driver and co-driver are fine but the vehicle went for a roll. Servia is now back on the special but driving at a very slow pace.

15:38 Trucks – Gerard De Rooy leads at CP2

At CP 2 (km 246), Gerard De Rooy (DAF) had the best time of the day with a huge 19'55 lead on Duisters (DAF). Overall leader Firdaus Kabirov (KAM) was close to 40' adrif.

14:59 Cars – Fourth win for Peter

On the stage between Bamako and Kayes in Mali, Stephane Peterhansel (MIT) captured his fourth special of the rally. On the 370kms of the course, the Frenchman beat his team mate Luc Alphand by 4'17. After being caught and passed by Peter, Giniel De Villiers (NIS) eventually managed the third best time, 7'59 adrif. Thierry Magnaldi (HON) grabbed an excellent fourth spot at 9'19 while Nani Roma (MIT) managed his best performance on four wheels with a fifth place at 11'43. In the overall, Peterhansel has a 27'33 lead on Alphand.

14:44 Cars – Fourth win for Peter

On the stage between Bamako and Kayes in Mali, Stephane Peterhansel (MIT) captured his fourth special of the rally. On the 370kms of the course, the Frenchman beat his team mate Luc Alphand by 4'17.

13:51 Cars – 'Peter' fastest at CP2

At the second check point of the car race, Stephane Peterhansel (MIT) has the fastest time. The Frenchman has a 1'40 lead on team mate Luc Alphand. Third is Josep-Maria Servia (SCH) at 2'56, followed by Roma (MIT) at 4'29 and De Villiers (NIS) at 5'07. Third overall, Jutta Kleinschmidt (VW) is 7'46 adrif.

13:28 Bikes – Caldecott wins special

For the second time on this 27th edition, Andy Caldecott has clinched the special win. The Australian KTM biker beat David Frégné (YAM) by 2'06 while Chris Blais was third at 3'32. Overall leader Cyril Despres, who suffered exhaust pipe problems finished at 8'16 and comforts his leadership with a 16' advantage on Coma (9th of the special).

13:18 Trucks – Gerard De Rooy fastest at CP1

In the truck race, Gerard De Rooy (DAF) who took off first after winning yesterday's special, had managed the best time at the first check point (km 152). Second was Vladimir Tchaguine (KAM) at 6'45. Overall leader, Firdaus Kabirov (KAM) was 20' adrif.

13:15 The remaining competitors

114 competitors in the car and truck races still remain in the rally and have started the day's special. Have failed to start in the car race: Dro (446), Roca (422), Bartin (377). Have failed to start in the truck race: Lacourt (534), Van Ginkel (564), Molina (546). Meanwhile 108 riders are currently competing in the bike race.

12:24 Cars – Alphand loses time

After clocking the fastest time at the first CP of the car race (ahead of Peterhansel and Kleinschmidt), Luc Alphand (MIT) appeared to have navigation mistakes and lost some time on his main rivals. At km 175, 'Peter' was leading ahead of De Villiers (NIS - who took off first this morning). Jutta Kleinschmidt (VW) was just behind, followed by team mate Bruno Saby, helping out in case of a problem.

12:05 Bikes – Frétigné fastest at CP2

At CP2 of the bike race (km246) the best time has been set by David Frétigné (YAM). Second is Andy Caldecott at 1'13, followed by Chris Blais at 2'07. Alfie Cox is fourth at 2'38. Marc Coma, seventh at the CP appeared to have broken his Trip Master. Overall leader had to cut his right exhaust pipe after damaging it on a stone.

11:38 Bikes – Caldecott fastest at CP1

At the first CP of the bike race (km 152), the best time had been clocked by Andy Caldecott (KTM). The Aussie had a 4" lead on Blais. Third was Frétigné (YAM) at 1'34, followed by Brucy at 2'09 and Cox at 2'39. Overall leader Cyril Despres made it to the CP, 5'58 adrift.

10:29 NIGHT WATCH

Mechanical worries, late arrivals, injuries, bad luck and withdrawals... All you need to know about what happened on the bivouac during the night.

22h45 – De Rooy, first truck

Only truck in Bamako with Kabirov, Gerard De Rooy is delighted with his first win on the 2005 rally especially on such a difficult stage. "It was very dusty and the road was really narrow for the trucks. I even damaged the side and broke the windscreen. I spent a total of 12h30 in the truck, including the evening. And I was the fastest! It's going to be very difficult for the others because you can't see with so much dust".

23h00 – Servia helped by Magnaldi

Josep-Maria Servia has worries to sort out and his race assistance truck still hasn't arrived. After hitting a tree, the Catalan has damaged his buggy. No mechanical problems however! "The road was very slippery and 60kms from the finish of the special I stuck the car in a little tree. Nothing serious but the car was trapped and I asked Thierry Magnaldi for help to pull out the buggy. Once freed, the wheel was bent and I punctured a few kilometres later. So I lost a lot of time.

23h20 – Debanne too nervous

We all know that on the Dakar, patience is a key asset. And that's what Alexandre Debanne seems not to have had on the day's special when he suffered a crash that could be annoying for the last stages of the rally. "There were a lot of cars who were driving slowly without letting anyone overtake. I went crazy with all that dust. I went to overtake and hit a tree. Therefore, as of

km 150, the gearbox was damaged and I had to drive in third gear. I also damaged the front suspensions.

23h30 – Chicherit not sure

The winners of the Volant Dakar competition (giving them the opportunity to compete the rally on a Bowler vehicle), Guerlain Chicherit and Mathieu Baumel, only just finished the stage but weren't sure if they could carry on to the finish line at the Lac Rose. In the middle of the special, they crashed into Latvia crew Saukans – Zarins who were driving in the opposite direction. "We were in a village where quite a few cars were looking for their way. We were almost stopped but they were going in the opposite direction. The crash occurred and the damage was pretty bad. The breaking liquid container broke and the car chassis was bent. I had to drive the 400kms with my hand-break. I'm pretty pessimistic.

0h00 – Another buggy in pieces

After that of Josep-Maria Servia, Philippe Gache's buggy eventually made it to the bivouac in sad state. "I was really unlucky because on this sinuous special, the steering broke just before km 100. On this 14-hour day, I therefore hit a lot of trees and rocks. The front of the car is broken and I hope they will let me carry on because I've lost a light. I will work on the car to put the left light instead of the right so it'll be less dangerous and I hope that in Kayes, the car will be totally repaired. We've also lost the co-driver door.

3h05 – The absent

5 trucks and 5 cars are still on the special. 58 cars and 17 trucks have made it to the bivouac on the 122 that took off on that very morning.

07:45 Back on the bikes

The sand and shovelling is over... Not a dune in sight or a once of sand for the competitors still in the race. The strongest have managed to make it past Mauritania and the difference will now be made on speed and driving. The best will indeed have the possibility to climb up a few places in the overall. New landscapes with trees and growing nature have replaced the tough desert portions.

For the return of the bikers after a day of mourning in memory of Fabrizio Meoni, enjoying the ride and being careful will be the most important thing. The competitors will have to take it easy in the many village crossings. The 'trial-type' portions will please many and the technical ability will be key. In the car race, the fastest will have a serious advantage. Drivers like Giniel De Villiers (a winner yesterday), Robby Gordon or Bruno Saby, will be closely followed. This is their kind of terrain.

1.40. Stage 13 Overall Standings

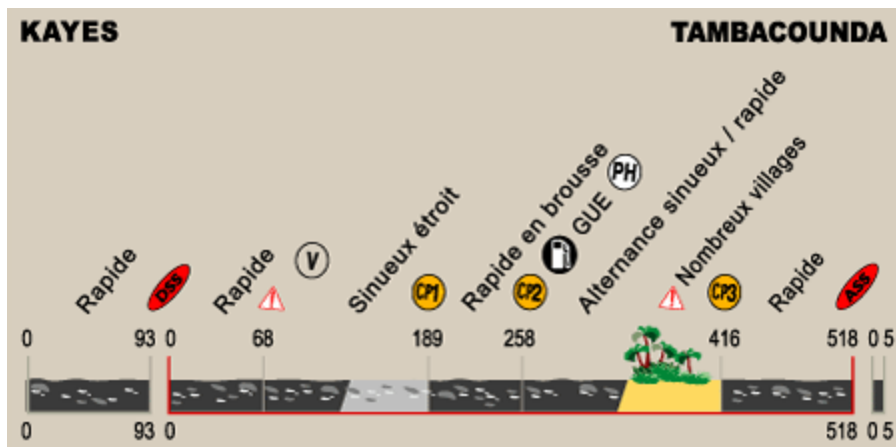
STANDING OVERALL BIKES						
Pos.	Dos.	Name	Mark	Time	Variation	Penalty
1	002	DESPRES	KTM	39h 13' 03"	00' 00"	
2	006	COMA	KTM	39h 29' 09"	16' 06"	
3	003	COX	KTM	39h 33' 42"	20' 39"	01' 00"
4	007	ESTEVE PUJOL	KTM	39h 34' 09"	21' 06"	01' 00"
5	012	FRETIGNE	YAMAHA	39h 47' 08"	34' 05"	01' 00"
6	023	CALDECOTT	KTM	39h 54' 08"	41' 05"	17' 00"
7	014	SALA	KTM	40h 46' 32"	1h 33' 29"	05' 00"
8	025	DE AZEVEDO	KTM	40h 52' 52"	1h 39' 49"	
9	022	BLAIS	KTM	41h 13' 22"	2h 00' 19"	01' 00"
10	009	BRUCY	KTM	42h 18' 26"	3h 05' 23"	10' 00"
11	011	DABROWSKI	KTM	42h 38' 20"	3h 25' 17"	
12	010	CZACHOR	KTM	43h 01' 16"	3h 48' 13"	
13	042	CASTEU	KTM	43h 08' 34"	3h 55' 31"	
14	026	DUCLOS	KTM	43h 57' 25"	4h 44' 22"	02' 00"
15	015	GRAZIANI	KTM	44h 36' 56"	5h 23' 53"	01' 00"
16	145	VERHOEVEN	YAMAHA	45h 00' 34"	5h 47' 31"	01' 00"
17	017	HARDEN	KTM	45h 37' 38"	6h 24' 35"	
18	019	CHARBONNEL	KTM	46h 14' 22"	7h 01' 19"	01' 00"
19	076	LEPAN	KTM	46h 55' 31"	7h 42' 28"	01' 00"
20	131	QUINONERO	KTM	47h 05' 45"	7h 52' 42"	11' 00"
21	021	WALCH	KTM	47h 57' 10"	8h 44' 07"	01' 00"
22	029	VERHOEF	KTM	48h 02' 19"	8h 49' 16"	01' 00"
23	031	BASTOUILH	KTM	48h 03' 19"	8h 50' 16"	01' 00"
24	091	DE URIARTE	KTM	48h 27' 26"	9h 14' 23"	
25	220	VARGA	KTM	49h 09' 59"	9h 56' 56"	
26	144	BECKERS	KTM	49h 17' 45"	10h 04' 42"	
27	056	VIGNERON	KTM	49h 44' 43"	10h 31' 40"	04' 00"
28	153	BROUWER	YAMAHA	50h 13' 51"	11h 00' 48"	20' 30"
29	227	BORSI	KTM	50h 28' 38"	11h 15' 35"	
30	034	PIROUD	KTM	51h 02' 20"	11h 49' 17"	
31	207	COTTET	YAMAHA	51h 15' 15"	12h 02' 12"	06' 00"
32	039	RIVERA	KTM	52h 02' 58"	12h 49' 55"	
33	195	CORINTI	KTM	52h 04' 39"	12h 51' 36"	
34	110	CARILLON	KTM	52h 06' 27"	12h 53' 24"	
35	058	MARCUSSON	HONDA	52h 34' 37"	13h 21' 34"	
36	098	KASTAN	KTM	53h 23' 26"	14h 10' 23"	21' 00"
37	057	SCHWARZ	KTM	53h 26' 52"	14h 13' 49"	
38	130	GORRARA	KTM	53h 36' 44"	14h 23' 41"	09' 00"
39	064	ROBIN	KTM	54h 40' 29"	15h 27' 26"	
40	197	WARRANT	KTM	56h 13' 43"	17h 00' 40"	

14. Stage 14

1.41. Stage 14 Route

Stage 14 - 14 January 2005 - KAYES > TAMBACOUNDA

Liaison 93 km Special 529 km Liaison 8 km Total 630 km



It is from Sadiola, in Mali, that this stage will start, moving directly south along the Senegalese border.

The laterite track gradually narrows leading to a savannah landscape near Satadouguou. Here the rally will cross the Falémé River, which in the memories of old hands remains a historical spot as it heralds the arrival of the rally in Senegal and the finish.

The track that leads to Tambacounda alternates between bush landscape, the crossing of villages and quick splashes in little rivers in Soninké country.

1.42. Stage 14 Flashes

Brazilian day on the rally

For the first kilometres on Senegal soil, the sun had reappeared on the Telefonica Dakar 2005 rally. On the day's 518km special, Jean De Azevedo conquered his very first stage success beating David Frétagne in the last kilometres of the bike race. In the car race Ari Vatanen added a 51st win to his Dakar record.

A bright sun was shining on the bivouac of Tambacounda when the first competitors of the rally made it to the finish line of the stage. A warm Senegal welcome for the 217 remaining competitors who are now only two stages away from the Lac Rose. After unexplained and terrible conditions for the main part of the event, the perfect but windy weather crowned a Brazilian in the bike race. Indeed, for the first time on two wheels, Jean De Azevedo (KTM) claimed a stage win for his country. Brazil had however won several specials thanks to André De Azevedo (brother of Jean) in the truck race. The little Brazilian on his big KTM took advantage of the last kilometres after CP3 to clinch victory beating David Frétagne by only 10". Indeed the Frenchman had been leading the race from the very start with the best times at all three check points but on his lighter Yamaha 450cc, failed to be quite as fast on the last portion where speed was key. Third on the day, like yesterday, was Chris Blais who managed another fine performance for his first appearance in the race. The American finished just 23" adrift on what proved to be the closest special so far in Africa. On the dusty and narrow paths of Senegal, Andy Caldecott looked to be heading for another fine special but a rear tire problem ("A bad bib-mousse according to him) at km 320 forced the Aussie to stop, repair and eventually lose over 20' on the finish line

Meanwhile, Cyril Despres, not too concerned by a stage win, took it easily and crossed the finish line with a 7' deficit on De Azevedo, losing 3'50 on his closest overall rival Marc Coma. Time lost on the special added to 9' minutes of penalty for the frenchman (30" per km/h over the limit) after the officials published a list of those who had been caught speeding in the villages. Despres saw his lead on Coma drop down to 3'16. Not a lot with two stages to go...

On four wheels, there was only one man to watch... His name? Ari Vatanen. After suffering various worries all along the Dakar, the Finn clinched his 51 stage success in outstanding fashion. Taking off in 9th position this morning, the four-time winner of the event flew to victory on a course suited to his driving skills and his Nissan Pickup. Vatanen overtook seven vehicles 'en route' to the win. He crossed the finish line with a 9'16 lead on his closest rival on the day, Bruno Saby wile is team mate Giniel De Villiers had to settle for third spot at 11'45. The European MP could have been annoyed by another late starter Robby Gordon, second at the first two CPs (1'58 behind at CP2, km 258) but poor old Robby was forced to stop his fine effort to help out Volkswagen team mate Jutta Kleinschmidt. The German was indeed stopped at km 268 with no more steering and for team reasons, Gordon gave a helping hand and especially his steering system to keep Jutta's hope for a third place on the podium alive... The American was then left stranded on the road waiting for the spare parts in his assistance trucks.

Meanwhile, the day went rather calmly for the Mitsubishi cars of leader Stephane Peterhansel and his team mate Luc Alphand, second overall. No risks were to be taken so close to Dakar for the Frenchmen! They therefore took off with water protections for the river crossing at CP1, stopped to get rid of them and carried on without really being concerned about the leading positions. Both finished over 20' adrift. The good news was that their comfortable overall lead was made even greater with Kleinschmidt's mechanical worries.

Peterhansel now has a 26'41 lead on Alphand and well over 3 hours on the Volkswagen Race Touareg of the German driver.

Like on the two previous days, the truck race was another Gerard De Rooy master piece. A winner in Kiffa (stage 12) and Bamako (stage 13), the DAF trucker made the best of his machine

on the laterite paths of Senegal to conquer a third consecutive special on the Dakar. But this one was even more impressive with a 24'38 lead on runner-up on Japan's Sugawara (HIN). Third on the day was overall leader Firdaus Kabirov (KAM), over 30' adrift. However one shouldn't forget that the Russian's main goal is to make it safe and sound to Dakar for an expected triumph. Indeed Kabirov keeps a very comfortable 2h55 lead on Dutchman Hans Bekx.

21:37 Time penalties

The following time penalties have been given to the Dakar competitors after they were caught speeding in the villages. These penalties apply to the overall standings and not the special.

BIKES:

- Despres (2), 9'
- Frétygné (12), 12'30
- Algay (32), 11'
- Puy (35), 11'30
- Rivera (39), 12'
- Vignerón (56), 4'
- Ramos Martínez (68), 21'
- Gorla (84), 14'30
- Ciscar Chisbert (109), 14'
- Quinonero (131), 6'
- Verhoeven (145), 19'
- Ausina (156), 5'
- Hansson (198), 3'
- Varga (220), 15'30
- Franssen (222), 8'30

CARS:

- Vatanen (311), 12'
- Kolberg (339), 25'

18:01 Cars – Kleinschmidt finally finishes special

After severe steering problems during the special, Jutta Kleinschmidt (VW) eventually made it to the finish line of the stage with a 2h06 deficit on the fastest time set by Ari Vatanen. The German keeps her overall third spot, but is now 3h16 adrift. Giniel de Villiers is fourth overall at 4h06.

15:57 Cars – Vatanen wins special

Finland's Ari Vatanen won his first special of this 27th edition on the day's 518km. The Nissan driver flew to victory beating Bruno Saby (VW) by 9'16 and team mate Giniel De Villiers by 11'45. Fourth was Roma (MIT) at 14'47, followed by Magnaldi (HON) at 15'52. Overall leader Stephane Peterhansel (MIT) finished 20'55 adrift but keeps a comfortable 26'41 advantage on Alphand (MIT - who finished at 20'03 of the day's winner).

15:12 Cars – Kleinschmidt back on the road

After stopping with very serious steering problems, Jutta Kleinschmidt is back on the special and driving. The German managed to repair her Race Touareg thanks to team mate Robby Gordon's steering system who had stopped to help. The American is now waiting for his assistance truck at km 268 for spare parts.

14:53 Cars – Vatanen heading to victory

At the third and final CP of the day (km 416), Ari Vatanen (NIS) had a comfortable time lead on all his rivals. Bruno Saby (VW) remained 7'08 adrift while Giniel De Villiers (NIS) was at 11'38. Fourth was Nani Roma (MIT) at 12'56, followed by Magnaldi (HON) at 13'46. Overall leader Stephane Peterhansel (MIT) was at over 19'.

14:24 Bikes – De Azevedo wins special

On the finish line of the day's special, Brazil's Jean De Azevedo wins the stage with a 10" on David Frétygné and 23" on Chris Blais. Fourth is Alfie Cox at only 34", followed by Coma at 3'10. Overall leader, Cyril Despres finished 7' adrift but keeps the leadership with 12'16 advantage on Coma.

14:15 Cars – Kleinschmidt stopped

At km 268 of the car special, Jutta Kleinschmidt (VW) was stopped with mechanical problems. Team mate Robby Gordon has also stopped to help out and try to repair.

14:12 Bikes – Caldecott finally at CP3

After suffering rear wheel problems and stopping at km 320, Andy Caldecott (KTM) eventually made it to the third check point with a 22'50 deficit on the best time set by Frétygné.

14:11 Cars – Vatanen fastest at CP2

At the second CP of the day (km 258), Ari Vatanen continues his fantastic special. The Finn has a 1'58 lead on Robby Gordon (VW), 6'25 on Bruno Saby, 8'11 on Sousa and 8'41 on De Villiers. Overall leader Stephane Peterhansel is taking it easy. The Frenchman was at 15'43.

13:22 Bikes – Frétygné still fastest at CP3

At the third and final CP of the day (km 416), the best time was still in the hands of David Frétygné (YAM). Second was Chris Blais (KTM) at 1'39, followed by Alfie Cox at 3'10. Overall leader was 7'20 adrift. Andy Caldecott who suffered severe problems on his rear wheel was still not at the check point.

12:57 217 still in the race

217 vehicles are still in the race and have started the day's 14th stage.
- 105 bikes. No longer in the race: Volpari (141),
- 75 cars. No longer in the race: Rentero Cano (459),
- 37 trucks.

12:37 Cars – Vatanen fastest at CP1

At the first check point of the car special (km 189), the best time was for late starter Ari Vatanen (NIS). Second fastest was Jutta Kleinschmidt (VW) at 5'51 followed by Carlos Sousa (NIS) at 6'04. Giniel De Villiers (NIS) was fourth at 7'04 after overtaking both the Mitsubishi cars of Alphand and Peterhansel who stopped to get rid of their water protections for the river crossing.

11:55 Bikes – Frétiigné fastest at CP2

At the second checkpoint of the day (km 258), David Frétiigné still had the best time of the bike race. The Frenchman has a 57" lead on Caldecott (who started first and remains alone ahead on the special). Third is Chris Blais at 1'34, followed by Coma at 3'30 and Cox at 3'38. Overall leader, Cyril Despres is at 7'01...

11:11 Bikes – Frétiigné fastest at CP1

At CP1 (km 189), David Frétiigné had managed the best time of the bike race. The Frenchman on his Yamaha had a 1'04 lead on Caldecott, followed by Blais at 1'55, Coma at 4'17 and Cox at 4'41. Overall leader Cyril Despres was 6'50 adrift.

11:11 Bikes – Leaders at CP1

The first bikes have made it to the first check point of the day, situated just on small river crossing. The first biker was Andy Caldecott (winner of yesterday's special) who crossed the river on the saddle of his KTM. Shortly after came David Frétiigné who jumped off his bike to cross the 50cm of water. The two first bikers were followed by Chris Blais and Alfie Cox.

10:33 NIGHT WATCH

Mechanical worries, late arrivals, injuries, bad luck and withdrawals... All you need to know about what happened on the bivouac during the night.

21h45 – Servia, the end

After having hit a tree during stage 12, Josep-Maria Servia lived another misfortune between Bamako and Kayes when he crashed his car and went for a roll. The damage was so bad that the Spaniard was forced to quit a rally that will have been a nightmare for the Schlessler-Ford team following the withdrawal of boss Jean-Louis Schlessler on his V8 buggy. Servia looked rather devastated on the Kayes bivouac. "The accident was that bad but I am now forced to go home. I entered a bend too quickly, the car went sideways and it ended up going for a flip. The engine and mechanical parts are fine but the chassis and main cabin are wrecked, and of course we have no more spare parts. It's tough to have to quit with just three days left, especially because it was very important for Jean-Louis to have at least one car in Dakar.

22h20 – Dessoude satisfied

André Dessoude, team boss of about ten Nissan vehicles on the rally is still directing his 40 mechanics who are working on the cars of his 'clients'. Three days from the finish, the check-up remains impressive. "It would be terrible to have to break down now for whoever. So we do the maximum so that the end goes as easily as possible, although we're all tired". So far, Dessoude has quite a few satisfactions on this 2005 Dakar but has regrets for those who haven't made it. "I especially happy for Benoit Rousselot who should finish his first Dakar, as well as for Japan's Jun Mitsuhashi and the Chinese Lang Xu and Yong Zhou. But, I'm also disappointed for Paul Belmondo, Kenjiro Shinozuka and Grégoire De Mevius".

22h45 – 'Mitsu' at work

In the Mitsubishi team, the perspective of victory to come hasn't eased the pressure on the mechanics. What happened to Hiroshi Masuoka is still well in the minds of all so everything is done so that Peterhansel doesn't break his engine. Team boss Dominique Serieys has therefore asked for the pistons on Peter's engine to be changed again for the remaining three days. «One has to be careful because the last days have their traps like the crossing of the Faleme River for example...

23h15 – Puy first lady

Despite the fact that for this 21-year-old girl the main goal is to get to Dakar for her first participation, Ludivine Puy still has a fierce sense of competition. The only women left in the race with Spaniard Amparo Ausina, she discovered that the penalty time that should have been added to the time of her rival hadn't been done. France's Enduro champion therefore alerted the officials on this mistake and the standings were immediately modified after many excuses. Ludivine Puy is now in good position to win the woman's event.

2h05 – Schlessler mechanics give a helping hand

Philippe Gache had already seriously damaged his buggy on the previous day but a driving mistake almost cost him deeply. After falling asleep 20kms from the start of the special, his buggy was trapped in a hole and went for a tumble. "The chassis is wrecked but the engine is still working", admitted the head mechanic while Gache was enjoying some rest. "We managed to get the door of and front and rear cap of Errandonea's car that is no longer in the race. The mechanics of Jean-Louis Schlessler have been really nice. They came to help us so that 5 guys could work on the car. Thanks to all the help, Philippe should be able to carry on.

2h30 – Two vehicles still expected

All the vehicles expected had made it to the Kayes bivouac except the truck of Roland Hoebeke and the car of Carlos Rentero, stopped between CP 1 and CP 2 because a damaged front wheel.

07:28 Welcome to Senegal

Statistically, there are often competitors that are forced to quit in the last stages of the rally. The rule will probably again be applied this year. However, those who will make it to Senegal today will have almost managed their challenge. With few difficulties, the stage will crown the strongest and fittest that will manage to remain focused and enjoy the splendid landscapes of black Africa.

For the leaders, the bike race can still have some upsets although on a special with no significant navigation, the big KTMs have a serious advantage. In the car race, the Mitsubishi driver's have a big enough lead to control things until Dakar. But Stephane Peterhansel is well placed to know that 'it ain't over til it's over!

1.43. Stage 14 Overall Standings

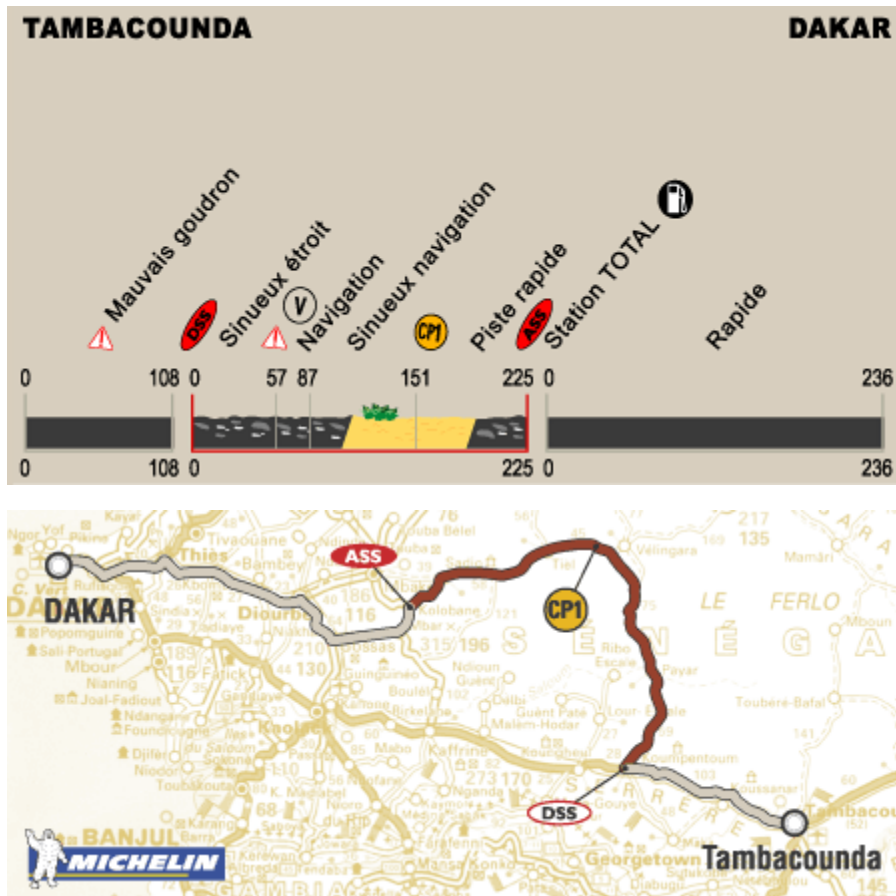
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3	003	COX	KTM	44h 45' 12"	05' 13"	01' 00"
4	007	ESTEVE PUJOL	KTM	44h 51' 16"	11' 17"	01' 00"
5	012	FRETIGNE	YAMAHA	45h 10' 44"	30' 45"	13' 30"
6	023	CALDECOTT	KTM	45h 25' 26"	45' 27"	17' 00"
7	025	DE AZEVEDO	KTM	46h 03' 48"	1h 23' 49"	
8	014	SALA	KTM	46h 09' 32"	1h 29' 33"	05' 00"
9	022	BLAIS	KTM	46h 24' 41"	1h 44' 42"	01' 00"
10	009	BRUCY	KTM	47h 41' 56"	3h 01' 57"	10' 00"
11	011	DABROWSKI	KTM	48h 21' 54"	3h 41' 55"	
12	010	CZACHOR	KTM	48h 44' 30"	4h 04' 31"	
13	042	CASTEU	KTM	48h 56' 06"	4h 16' 07"	
14	026	DUCLOS	KTM	49h 32' 07"	4h 52' 08"	02' 00"
15	015	GRAZIANI	KTM	50h 16' 50"	5h 36' 51"	01' 00"
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32	039	RIVERA	KTM	58h 06' 08"	13h 26' 09"	12' 00"
33	195	CORINTI	KTM	58h 22' 30"	13h 42' 31"	
34	110	CARILLON	KTM	58h 27' 29"	13h 47' 30"	
35	058	MARCUSSON	HONDA	58h 55' 04"	14h 15' 05"	
36	130	GORRARA	KTM	59h 39' 20"	14h 59' 21"	09' 00"
37	057	SCHWARZ	KTM	59h 39' 36"	14h 59' 37"	
38	098	KASTAN	KTM	59h 58' 10"	15h 18' 11"	21' 00"
39	064	ROBIN	KTM	61h 09' 37"	16h 29' 38"	
40	197	WARRANT	KTM	62h 28' 03"	17h 48' 04"	

15. Stage 15

1.44. Stage 15 Route

Stage 15 - 15 January 2005 - TAMBACOUNDA > DAKAR

Liaison 108 km Special 225 km Liaison 236 km Total 569 km



Competitors will be back on a tarmac road for a liaison of approximately 100 km to the start of the Special.

This is a route for specialists of expert driving for all those who have the energy left.

We leave the tropical forest for the savannah, the landscape lightens along with the kilometres but landmarks are so difficult to find.

After the Special, there is a final 200 km stretch of route through Senegal, to be savoured slowly, for your personal safety and enjoyment! No bivouac at night. The Assistance Parc is situated within the perimeter of the hotel Méridien.

1.45. Stage 15 Flashes

Despres and 'Peter' close in on triumph!

With one final stage to go, Cyril Despres moved closer to his first ever Dakar victory in the bike category. The Frenchman added a second special success to his 2005 record on the stage between Tambacounda and Dakar (225km of special). Despres now has a comfortable 9'45 lead overall. A few hours later, Giniel De Villiers clinched his second stage win while Peterhansel added a few minutes to his overall lead on Alphand.

For the remaining competitors of this 27th edition, the 569kms of the day's stage looked a lot like a long soothing road to final destination, Dakar... But the race was still well on the minds of many. Including Cyril Despres! Indeed, the Frenchman had yesterday evening seen his overall lead drop down to 3'16 after collecting a 9' time penalty for speeding (in villages) during the Kayes-Tambacounda stage, and was no longer a comfortable leader on two wheels. The menace coming from Spaniard Marc Coma!

Time to attack – a last time- for Despres who took off 7th of the stage, two positions after his rival Coma (5th). On the narrow and dusty paths of Black Africa, the KTM-Gauloises rider rapidly closed the gap on Coma even passing him before CP1 to have a massive 4'51 lead after only 151kms. The Despres show continued all the way to the finish line where he added a few extra minutes to his advantage on Coma, finishing with a 6'29 lead on the Catalan KTM-Repsol rider. Meanwhile, the most surprising performance of the day came from privateer Alain Duclos The French biker grabbed second spot, capturing his best ever place on a Dakar special, 1'24 adrift. Third on the day was Andy Caldecott, now used to fine performances on the Dakar, at 1'54.

In the new overall standings, Cyril Despres has a 9'45 lead on Marc Coma and only 31km of special to go before the podium at the Lac Rose. South African Alfie Cox, 8th on the day keeps his third place of the bike race at 12'09 but sees Isidre Esteve close in dangerously on the podium spot, only 1'28 behind (and 13'37 on Despres).

While the bike race was tighter than ever, in the cars, it was a slightly different story with Stephane Peterhansel (MIT) controlling the last few special and gradually increasing his comfortable lead. He is now more than ever on the verge of winning his second consecutive title. 'Peter' took off 8th this morning from the Eastern city of Tambacounda and overtook Brazilian Klever Kolberg (MIT) and team mate Nani Roma to grab the best time at the first CP but then took it easily to avoid any incident so close to the Lac Rose. The Frenchman let the others fight it out for stage success and again, Nissan's Giniel De Villiers proved to be the fastest. In his Pickup, and after winning stage 12 to Bamako, the South African grabbed his second success on the rally beating Bruno Saby (VW) by only 57" on the finish line. Third on the day at 1' was Portugal's Carlos Sousa (NIS) managing his best performance so far on the rally, while Frenchman Thierry Magnaldi (HON), grabbed fourth spot and entered the top five for the third consecutive time. Just behind came Stephane Peterhansel at 1'52 adding extra seconds to his overall lead on Luc Alphand. Indeed the other Mitsubishi Pajero Evo driver finished 32" behind 'Peter'.

In the overall, Peterhansel has a 27'13 lead on Alphand while Jutta Kleinschmidt (VW) is way adrift at 3h23, after finishing close to 9' from the day's winner. De Villiers gains time on 'Jutta' in fourth spot but is still over 41' behind...

Definitely out of the title fight after the stage to Tichit, Vladimir Tchaguine added a fourth special win to his 2005 record on the stage between Tambacounda and Dakar. The Russian Kamaz driver beat Belgian Hugo Duisters (DAF) by 6'37 and Gerard De Rooy (DAF) by 13'19. Overall leader Firdaus Kabirov (KAM) finished over 20' adrift but is just 31kms away from a first triumph at the Lac Rose. He still has a 3h03 lead on Hans Bekx (DAF).

16:23 Trucks – Tchaguine wins special

Definitely out of the title fight after the stage to Tichit, Vladimir Tchaguine added a fourth special win to his 2005 record on the stage between Tambacounda and Dakar. The Russian Kamaz driver beat Belgian Hugo Duisters (DAF) by 6'37 and Gerard De Rooy (DAF) by 13'19. Overall leader Firdaus Kabirov (KAM) finished over 20' adrift but is just 31kms away from a first triumph at the Lac Rose. He still has a 3h03 lead on Hans Bekx (DAF).

13:54 Cars – De Villiers wins special

On the 225 km of the day's special between Tambacounda and Dakar, Giniel De Villiers (NIS) clinched his second success on the rally (after Stage 12 to Bamako). The South African beat Bruno Saby (VW) by only 57" while Carlos Sousa grabbed third spot at 1'. Thierry Magnaldi (HON) carried on his excellent run of fine performances with a fourth position at 1'27, followed by Peterhansel (MIT) at 1'52. 'Peter' increases his overall lead on Alphand (MIT) and now has a 27'13 advantage.

12:44 Bikes – Despres wins special

On the penultimate stage of this 2005 Telefonica Dakar, Cyril Despres conquered his second special of the race. The Frenchman beat surprising compatriot Alain Duclos by 1'24. Third on the day was Andy Caldecott at 1'54, followed by Esteve at 2'20 and De Azevedo at 3'37. Thanks to his win on this Dakar-Tambacounda stage, Despres comforts his lead on Marc Coma and now has a 9'45 advantage with one stage to go. Coma indeed finished 7th today, 5'29 adrift.

12:42 Bikes – Despres fastest at CP1

At the first and only CP (km 151) of the bike race between Tambacounda and Dakar (225km), overall leader Cyril Despres has clocked the fastest time of the day. Taking off in 7th position this morning, the Frenchman caught and overtook his closest rival Marc Coma. Second is Alain Duclos at 1'59, followed by Isidre Esteve is at 2'18, Andy Caldecott at 2'47 and David Frégné at 3'53. Marc Coma is 6th at 4'51 which means that Despres now virtually has a 8'20 overall lead on the Spaniard.

16. Stage 15 Overall Standings

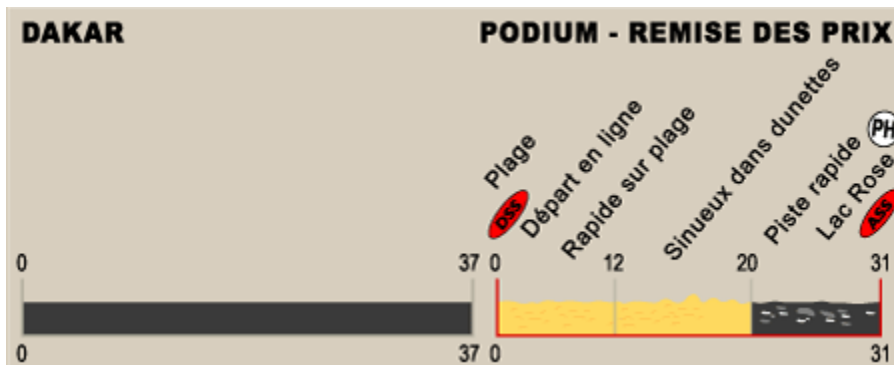
STANDING OVERALL BIKES						
Pos.	Dos.	Name	Mark	Time	Variation	Penalty
1	002	DESPRES	KTM	47h 07' 36"	00' 00"	09' 00"
2	006	COMA	KTM	47h 17' 21"	09' 45"	
3	003	COX	KTM	47h 19' 45"	12' 09"	01' 00"
4	007	ESTEVE PUJOL	KTM	47h 21' 13"	13' 37"	01' 00"
5	012	FRETIGNE	YAMAHA	47h 42' 45"	35' 09"	13' 30"
6	023	CALDECOTT	KTM	47h 54' 57"	47' 21"	17' 00"
7	025	DE AZEVEDO	KTM	48h 35' 02"	1h 27' 26"	
8	014	SALA	KTM	48h 42' 45"	1h 35' 09"	05' 00"
9	022	BLAIS	KTM	49h 01' 41"	1h 54' 05"	01' 00"
10	009	BRUCY	KTM	50h 19' 12"	3h 11' 36"	10' 00"
11	011	DABROWSKI	KTM	50h 59' 56"	3h 52' 20"	
12	010	CZACHOR	KTM	51h 23' 32"	4h 15' 56"	
13	042	CASTEU	KTM	51h 39' 15"	4h 31' 39"	
14	026	DUCLOS	KTM	52h 01' 08"	4h 53' 32"	02' 00"
15	015	GRAZIANI	KTM	53h 00' 23"	5h 52' 47"	01' 00"
16	145	VERHOEVEN	YAMAHA	54h 13' 14"	7h 05' 38"	20' 00"
17	017	HARDEN	KTM	54h 27' 25"	7h 19' 49"	
18	019	CHARBONNEL	KTM	54h 50' 09"	7h 42' 33"	01' 00"
19	131	QUINONERO	KTM	56h 07' 56"	9h 00' 20"	17' 00"
20	076	LEPAN	KTM	56h 33' 40"	9h 26' 04"	01' 00"
21	031	BASTOUILH	KTM	56h 39' 37"	9h 32' 01"	01' 00"
22	021	WALCH	KTM	56h 55' 09"	9h 47' 33"	01' 00"
23	029	VERHOEF	KTM	57h 20' 12"	10h 12' 36"	01' 00"
24	091	DE URIARTE	KTM	57h 42' 28"	10h 34' 52"	
25	144	BECKERS	KTM	58h 29' 56"	11h 22' 20"	
26	056	VIGNERON	KTM	58h 40' 20"	11h 32' 44"	08' 00"
27	220	VARGA	KTM	59h 06' 19"	11h 58' 43"	15' 30"
28	153	BROUWER	YAMAHA	59h 46' 15"	12h 38' 39"	20' 30"
29	227	BORSI	KTM	59h 52' 40"	12h 45' 04"	
30	034	PIROUD	KTM	60h 16' 57"	13h 09' 21"	
31	207	COTTET	YAMAHA	60h 39' 35"	13h 31' 59"	06' 00"
32	039	RIVERA	KTM	60h 54' 15"	13h 46' 39"	12' 00"
33	195	CORINTI	KTM	61h 10' 49"	14h 03' 13"	
34	110	CARILLON	KTM	61h 20' 59"	14h 13' 23"	
35	058	MARCUSSON	HONDA	62h 03' 15"	14h 55' 39"	
36	130	GORRARA	KTM	62h 19' 03"	15h 11' 27"	09' 00"
37	057	SCHWARZ	KTM	62h 37' 18"	15h 29' 42"	
38	098	KASTAN	KTM	63h 06' 39"	15h 59' 03"	21' 00"
39	064	ROBIN	KTM	64h 13' 29"	17h 05' 53"	
40	197	WARRANT	KTM	65h 24' 14"	18h 16' 38"	

Stage 16

1.46. Stage 16 Route

Stage 16 - 16 January 2005 - DAKAR > DAKAR

Liaison 37 km Special 31 km Total 68 km



Apart from a handful of competitors capable of moving one or two places further up in the "overall" ranking and so interested in gaining a few seconds, the outcome is already decided for everyone else. This year, the finish will renew with tradition. There will be a line-up start for the Special on the beach: in lines of twenty for bikers, in twos for cars and trucks. So be careful on the final route which runs through the dunes, followed by the traditional tour of the Lac Rose in front of the thousands of people who have congregated here to applaud their heroes! After the ceremony on the podium and the prize giving, everyone returns in procession to the hotel Méridien. A party for all participant will be organized at the Club Med.

1.47. Stage 16 Flashes

First triumph for Despres, Peter doubles

On an edition deeply touched by the tragic deaths of Fabrizio Meoni and José Manuel Perez, the Telefonica Dakar 2005 crowned Frenchman Cyril Despres (KTM) in the bike race. On four wheels, Stephane Peterhansel (MIT) conquered his second consecutive victory while the truck race win remained in the hands of the Kamaz team but it was Firdaus Kabirov's turn to clinch the overall win.

It was a question of honour. At the start of the race in Barcelona, the KTM-Gauloises team promised they would place one of their 'blue bikes' on the highest step of the podium of the 27th Dakar, in memory of Richard Saint three-time winner of the event who had tragically died three months earlier during the 'Pharaoh rally' in Egypt. On the Dakar, Cyril Despres and his mates were once again hit by the terrible death of Fabrizio Meoni during stage 11. Devastated, the KTM official riders had a new reason to carry on, despite the pain, "because that's what he would have wanted!"

In memory of Fabrizio and Richard, Despres won his first Dakar after having climbed on both the second (in 2003) and third steps (in 2004) of the podium. The Frenchman had started building his victory well before the tragedy that rocked the whole rally. On the eve of the crash, during the Atar-Atar special, Despres took command of the rally thanks to a 10' lead on Meoni who was to finish his last stage. Before that, the 31-year old rider based his race on regularity, making it nice and easy in the Top 5 of every single stage before entering Mauritania, his favourite playground. Once in the overall lead, Despres after his Atar masterpiece never let go of his advantage and controlled his closest rivals from then on. The only danger came from Marc Coma who had closed the gap on the leader to 3'16 because of a time penalty given to Despres for speeding. Not a problem for the talented Frenchman who left his main rival way behind on the penultimate stage to Dakar, clinching at the same time his second special success.

This 27th edition was a good opportunity to discover the talents that will certainly dominate the upcoming years alongside Cyril Despres. David Frégné, 5th overall and the only biker to have won three specials this year (added to two second spots), will certainly be among those that will be the main actors of the Dakar in the upcoming years. Slightly older but just as talented, Australian Andy Caldecott (2 stage wins), as well as Spaniards Coma and Esteve, who are part of the 'Nani Roma generation' will certainly also be of those fighting for glory in the deserts of Africa. The 'First time' standings crowned two very impressive youngsters. Indeed, Americans Chris Blais (9th overall, and twice 3rd on specials) and Kellon Walch (22nd and winner of the last stage around the Lac Rose), from the KTM – Redbull team easily captured the first two spots, while David Casteu (13th overall) clinched the 'Marathon' class win. For her first experience on the Dakar, 21-year-old Ludivine Puy, was the better placed of the two remaining bikers in the women's standings.

Maybe his prestigious past as a biker made Stephane Peterhansel use the exact same strategy than Cyril Despres'. The only difference was that the titleholder started his real road to victory just before Mauritania. Chapter one happened on the stage between Smara-Zouerat, where he captured the overall command after grabbing the stage. Chapter two was for the following day on the now legendary Zouerat to Tichit stage where with his team mate Luc Alphand, 'Peter' hit even harder leaving his closest contender, Jutta Kleinschmidt, 40' adrift before the rest day.

If Mitsubishi made the difference there, the battle among the Japanese brand carried on until they left Mauritania with Luc Alphand challenging his compatriot and proving that he should be one to watch for a possible future victory. To ensure a 'Mitsu' win, they then took it steadily until the finish line, especially after the mechanical problems that shook Masuoka (who quit with a broken engine) and Mayer (who quit with electric problems).

Black Africa was therefore a good occasion for the others to fight it out for special wins, exactly like they had done during the European and Moroccan stages. American Robby Gordon, for his first Dakar, and Scotsman Colin McRae had shared the wins on the fast specials before Mauritania. The Volkswagen-Nissan duel had therefore stopped on a 2-2 draw! It then went Nissan's way thanks to Giniel De Villiers (twice) and Ari Vatanen's impressive stage from Kayes to Tambacounda. With Jutta Kleinschmidt's win in Kiffa and Bruno Saby's final success on the shores of the Lac Rose, the score ended 5-4... to Nissan, with Jutta Kleinschmidt however managing to keep her very important third spot on the podium.

In the T1 class that saw favourites Isabelle Patissier and Jean-Pierre Strugo quit the race early, Japan's Asaga (18th overall) topped the standings with a diesel vehicle, beating Pascal Thomasse in his normal fuel car (39th overall). The 'first time' standing was won by China's Yang Zhou, 10th overall.

Finally, the truck race rapidly lost its four-time Dakar winner Vladimir Tchaguine who was leading the race when he ran out of fuel during the Zouerat-Tichit stage forcing him to forget about his title ambitions. One of his closest rivals witnessed the same problem but still proved that he was a promising prospect, winning three consecutive stages. The rally however remained in the hands of the Kamaz team and it was Firdaus Kabirov's turn to conquer top spot. The Russian team continues its victorious run, equalling Tatra's record of 6 wins.

08:16 The classic of classics

To drive on the banks of the Lac Rose is the dream for any competitor starting a Dakar. The drivers and bikers of the 104 bikes, 75 cars and 37 trucks still in the rally this morning will be living their dream whether they make it for the first time or on a new occasion. This year the final special of the 2005 Telefonica Dakar will be started with 20 bikers on a starting line every minute while the cars will take off 2 by 2. The final course will be using dune portions before going around the Lac Rose in front of thousands of fans.

On a 'clockwatch' point of view, the results shouldn't change the overall standings dramatically, especially for the leaders Cyril Despres, Stephane Peterhansel and Firdaus Kabirov. However a fine performance in the bike race could help Isidre Esteve capture Alfie Cox's provisional third spot. To do so, the Spaniard will have to cross the finish line 1'28 before the South African.

1.48. Stage 16 Overall Standings

STANDING OVERALL BIKES						
Pos.	Dos.	Name	Mark	Time	Variation	Penalty
1	002	DESPRES	KTM	47h 27' 31"	00' 00"	09' 00"
2	006	COMA	KTM	47h 36' 48"	09' 17"	
3	003	COX	KTM	47h 39' 00"	11' 29"	01' 00"
4	007	ESTEVE PUJOL	KTM	47h 39' 22"	11' 51"	01' 00"
5	012	FRETIGNE	YAMAHA	48h 01' 07"	33' 36"	13' 30"
6	023	CALDECOTT	KTM	48h 15' 42"	48' 11"	17' 00"
7	025	DE AZEVEDO	KTM	48h 55' 12"	1h 27' 41"	
8	014	SALA	KTM	49h 01' 24"	1h 33' 53"	05' 00"
9	022	BLAIS	KTM	49h 20' 41"	1h 53' 10"	01' 00"
10	009	BRUCY	KTM	50h 39' 10"	3h 11' 39"	10' 00"
11	011	DABROWSKI	KTM	51h 19' 03"	3h 51' 32"	
12	010	CZACHOR	KTM	51h 44' 10"	4h 16' 39"	
13	042	CASTEU	KTM	52h 00' 32"	4h 33' 01"	
14	026	DUCLOS	KTM	52h 21' 25"	4h 53' 54"	02' 00"
15	015	GRAZIANI	KTM	53h 23' 00"	5h 55' 29"	01' 00"
16	145	VERHOEVEN	YAMAHA	54h 33' 32"	7h 06' 01"	20' 00"
17	017	HARDEN	KTM	54h 48' 31"	7h 21' 00"	
18	019	CHARBONNEL	KTM	55h 13' 08"	7h 45' 37"	01' 00"
19	131	QUINONERO	KTM	56h 30' 51"	9h 03' 20"	17' 00"
20	076	LEPAN	KTM	56h 56' 41"	9h 29' 10"	01' 00"
21	031	BASTOUILH	KTM	57h 00' 44"	9h 33' 13"	01' 00"
22	021	WALCH	KTM	57h 12' 26"	9h 44' 55"	01' 00"
23	029	VERHOEF	KTM	57h 38' 24"	10h 10' 53"	01' 00"
24	091	DE URIARTE	KTM	58h 05' 33"	10h 38' 02"	
25	144	BECKERS	KTM	58h 49' 46"	11h 22' 15"	
26	056	VIGNERON	KTM	59h 00' 33"	11h 33' 02"	08' 00"
27	220	VARGA	KTM	59h 27' 34"	12h 00' 03"	15' 30"
28	153	BROUWER	YAMAHA	60h 04' 29"	12h 36' 58"	20' 30"
29	227	BORSI	KTM	60h 17' 40"	12h 50' 09"	
30	034	PIROUD	KTM	60h 39' 15"	13h 11' 44"	
31	207	COTTET	YAMAHA	60h 59' 44"	13h 32' 13"	06' 00"
32	039	RIVERA	KTM	61h 16' 10"	13h 48' 39"	12' 00"
33	195	CORINTI	KTM	61h 32' 52"	14h 05' 21"	
34	110	CARILLON	KTM	61h 43' 43"	14h 16' 12"	
35	058	MARCUSSON	HONDA	62h 26' 44"	14h 59' 13"	
36	130	GORRARA	KTM	62h 42' 02"	15h 14' 31"	09' 00"
37	057	SCHWARZ	KTM	63h 02' 06"	15h 34' 35"	
38	098	KASTAN	KTM	63h 31' 25"	16h 03' 54"	21' 00"
39	064	ROBIN	KTM	64h 38' 27"	17h 10' 56"	
40	197	WARRANT	KTM	65h 45' 41"	18h 18' 10"	