



2018 Dakar // Rest day: Difficult first week for the X-raid Team

- Extremely tough start into the 2018 Dakar
- Jakub Przygonski holds promising sixth position

With six stages of the 2018 Dakar contested, today's schedule features the rest day in Bolivia's capital La Paz. For the drivers this day offers the chance of putting their feet up and relax or be available for a Q&A every now and then. The same applies to the co-drivers but in the afternoon they will be busy preparing the road book for tomorrow. And for the mechanics and engineers relaxing is impossible. All the MINI vehicles are disassembled completely, checked and prepared for the second Dakar week.

At the same time, the rest day also offers the possibility to look back on what happened in the first week. It was the most difficult start into a Dakar since many years. From the beginning, the stages featured nearly exclusively sand, extremely demanding dunes and off-track sections. This mix left the drivers nearly no time for a breather and nobody contested the week without making mistakes.

A week that proved to be extremely eventful for X-raid. The fact that the US pairing Bryce Menzies / Pete Mortensen was forced into retirement was just the beginning. Thanks to the strong roll cage they both survived the incident without serious consequences but Mortensen suffered an ankle fracture. "That's not the way I wanted to finish my first Dakar," said Menzies. "Day one went really well for us and I already looked forward to the coming days. Now we already focus on the 2019 Dakar. We want to keep on testing the buggy that ran really well and return to the Dakar in an even more competitive shape.

On the following day, the X-raid Team had to cope with the drop out of Joan 'Nani' Roma and Alex Haro (both ESP). Roma had to stay for two days in a hospital to then

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return to Barcelona. There, he currently is subjected to extensive checkups. "I'm really frustrated because my Dakar was over so quickly," said the MINI JCW Rally driver. "Races that are as tough as this year's Dakar actually suit me well. Alex and I would have had the chance of securing a really good result. But now we have to focus on the future."

At Dakar half-time, Jakub 'Kuba' Przygonski (POL), Tom Colsoul (BEL) and their MINI John Cooper Works Rally hold sixth position in the overall standings and are determined to push in the second week. They again and again struggled with minor problems but remained untroubled by any major incidents.

MINI JCW Buggy pairing Mikko Hirvonen (FIN) and Andreas Schulz (GER) will start into week two from 13th position overall. For Hirvonen, the first stages in the dunes represented first of all learning days. "I hadn't driven in this kind of dunes to date," revealed the Finn. "You can cross them in fourth, fifth or sixth gear but I tend to brake as I always am afraid to miss a dangerous spot." On day three, however, they lost a lot of time when they skidded sideways down a dune and got stuck at the side of a mountain. Later, Yazeed Al-Rajhi (KSA) and Timo Gottschalk (GER) helped them to get going again but the big loss of time cost them a lot positions in the overall standings.

Al-Rajhi and Gottschalk also weren't exactly lucky, with their MINI John Cooper Works Buggy. On day two they collided in the desert with their team-mates Boris Garafulic (CHI) and Filipe Palmeiro (POL) in the desert. Both pairing lost a lot of time until the cars were repaired and ready to go again. Two days later, Al-Rahji / Gottschalk landed – due to an unfortunate incident – in the Pacific. They followed a track along the beach when they were captured by a big wave that dragged them into the ocean. Fortunately they were rescued by team-mates and brought to the finish, afterwards. The X-raid mechanics worked on the car throughout the night and got it ready to race short before the start of the stage.

The stewards have decided that Orlando Terranova and Bernardo "Ronnie" Graue (both ARG) will be allowed to compete again tomorrow in their MINI JCW Rally. Terranova had to give up after the first part of yesterday's special stage due to extreme symptoms of altitude sickness. The regulations have been changed this year: In case of illness, the participants have to contact the race organisation immediately and to see the official medical team as soon as possible. But even if the protocol has been observed, the stewards decide on a case-by-case basis.

new dimension



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"We have never experienced such a Dakar before", says X-raid team manager Sven Quandt. "It started out extremely hard - almost too hard. But we can say that so far there has been no technical defect. The MINI John Copper Works Buggy has proven its potential and the MINI John Copper Works Buggy Rally is also running great."