



Stage 10: Just Like At Home For Coma, First For Sainz

Way behind in the general standings, Marc Coma used the last special stage in Chile, measuring 238 km, to add a line to his roll of honour in the form of a 3rd victory on the Dakar 2010. The Catalan, on a KTM, beat Frétygné and Rodrigues. Despres still has a comfortable lead in the general standings. On 4 wheels, the duel between Sainz and Al Attiyah promised to be breath-taking. In the end, the Spaniard had the better day, picking up his first stage victory this year and increasing his lead in the general standings. In the truck race, Vladimir Chagin has become the lone record holder for special stage victories on the Dakar with a 55th triumph.

Goodbye to the Atacama Desert and hello again to winding roads and specialists of skids and accelerations. In the rolling décor of the mountain landscape Marc Coma, the previous day's winner, set things going. The Catalan spent a lonely day out on his own. Whilst the title holder went speeding away, David Frétygné probably had his mind on a 10-minute penalty handed out to him yesterday for failing to respect the flags at the finishing line. The Yamaha rider consequently started in 13th position today, which was not ideal for tackling a special that could have been beneficial for his smaller cylinder machine, though the day ended up turning out well for him.

On tracks that were very similar to those in his native Catalonia where he trains, Marc Coma outshone the rest at the front of the race, from start to finish. Within a little more than 3 hours, the KTM rider beat David Frétygné, who managed to overcome this morning's setback, by 2'06 and Helder Rodrigues by 2'36. The Portuguese rider put in the day's best performance, closing in on 3rd place in the general standings. He is currently only 52" behind Francisco "Chaleco" Lopez and 2'10 behind Ullevalseter, current runner-up to Despres. The battle for the podium therefore promises to be exciting, especially since tomorrow could smile upon the 450cc machines rather than Ullevalseter's 690cc.

The race leader, Cyril Despres, who is still out in front by more than one hour, protected his lead, keeping Coma at a respectable distance without taking too many risks. The two times winner of the Dakar (in 2005 and 2007) now boasts a lead of 1 hour and 22 minutes over Ullevalseter.

In the car race, with a backdrop worthy of a Western, the WRC specialists enjoyed themselves. However, the risk of losing it all was very present in the minds of the three Volkswagen drivers leading the rankings and their 'boss' Kris Nissen. At the start, only 8'26 separated the leader Carlos Sainz and second placed Nasser Al Attiyah, who opened the road on the 10th special. It was a battle in the combat between a two times world rally champion and his rival, who is by no means the worst competitor when the tracks become winding.

Like the day before, Giniel De Villiers let himself be overtaken in order to provide

assistance to his VW team-mates if needed, but he had the best seat to admire the Hispano/Qatari duel. Al Attiyah, in the role of the hunted, logically lost ground (1'30 after 100 km, 1'25 after 148 km) to Sainz, who occasionally had the current runner-up in his sights on the undulating tracks. However, as an experienced driver and especially after last year's mishap, the native of Madrid did not go for all out attack and did not attempt to overtake. His performance was sufficient to give him the best time of the day with a lead of 28" over Stéphane Peterhansel and 1'02 over Mark Miller.

With six second placed finishes since the start of this Dakar, El Matador won his first special stage this year, although it is probably a mere detail for Sainz, who is likely to be more focused on outright victory. In the general standings, he now has a lead of slightly more than 10 minutes over Al Attiyah.

In the truck category, whilst yesterday the 'Russian bear' Vladimir Chagin left a small part of the cake for his faithful lieutenant Firdaus Kabirov, today the five times winner of the Dakar set matters straight. The "Tsar" picked up an 8th stage victory in 2010 and steals a march on Peterhansel as record holder with 55 triumphs in total. He beat Kabirov by 1'24 and the surprising Frenchman Joseph Adua by 1'38. Chagin now boasts a lead of 1 hour 12 minutes over his team-mate in the general standings.

source: www.dakar.com