



Stage 2: Frétiigné: One Down...; Volkswagen Takes The Lead

The day's special stage goes to David Frétiigné, who gets his eighth stage victory in a Dakar finishing 43" ahead of David Casteu, who still remains leader in the overall standings. In the cars category, Volkswagen is putting its cards on the table with Nasser Al Attiyah, who achieved both best clock and nr.1 position in the standings. Four of the Race Touareg are in the day's Top 5.

After David Casteu, it is the turn of David Frétiigné to confirm the great potential of the 450cc bikes on this edition of the Dakar. Riding a Yamaha he has been designing and refining since 2004 to try and get to the ultimate victory, the multiple enduro-racing French champion won - on the road to La Rioja - his first stage victory in Latin America. Last year, Frétiigné had reached the final podium finishing third without however increasing his number of stage victories. Moreover, Frétiigné had not had the pleasure of any stage victory since his last special stage victory on the 2006 Dakar between Tambacounda and Dakar. This eighth stage victory also has a particular meaning in the context of the fight between big and small-engine bikes. The new rule adopted to rebalance the power of the bikes could be opening up new opportunities to Frétiigné, but also to David Casteu, who was the second fastest today and arrives 43" behind the day's winner.

The situation is however no reason to worry yet for title holder Marc Coma, who lost 1'08" to Frétiigné, but who is still in ambush 37" behind Casteu in the overall standings. Cyril Despres, who arrived 4th today, lost 2'50" to Frétiigné but keeps his place on the provisional podium by a short 4 seconds 2'10" behind David Casteu. If the 450cc are all-in-all fairly at ease in the beginning of the rally raid, the one of Frans Verhoeven, who is experimenting a brand new BMW model, has had serious trouble since the beginning of the special stage today. After breaking his gear box, the Dutch rider - who finished 8th in 2009 - waited for his assistance hoping to be able to get back in the saddle but was finally forced to withdraw.

In the cars category, the wind is also blowing in a new direction to the full benefit of Volkswagen, winning its first Dakar special stage thanks to Nasser Al Attiyah. The Qatari driver, who had already won four special stages in a previous life with BMW X-Raid, keeps collecting successes behind the wheels of a Race Touareg. On the side of the German manufacturer, the day ends with a major show of power. If Al Attiyah was announced as the star new recruit for the team, Volkswagen had been more discreet on the potential of another driver, Brazil's Mauricio Neves, who achieved 3rd position in the day's ranking. The winner of the Rally dos Sertoes was just faster than Carlos Sainz and Mark Miller, who complete the - mainly VW Blue - Top 5.

The day was tougher on the BMW crowd as Nani Roma, who was opening the trail in the rain, only took two kilometers to make a double somersault and end up in the gulch. The incident was harmless but cost the Spaniard a good 15 minutes and his first place in the general standings now going to Al Attiyah. The X-Raid clan can

nevertheless rejoice at the demonstration of driving of Guerlain Chicherit. Despite new electronic problems that brought his engine to fail several time, he managed to squeeze onto the day's podium ranking 2nd of the stage 1'08" behind his former team mate Nasser Al Attiyah.

source: www.dakar.com