

Paris, 18 August 2023

FIA-FIM WORLD RALLY-RAID CHAMPIONSHIPS BACK TO THE SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS!

Key points:

- Just eight days to go until the fourth of five championship rounds —the eleventh Desafío Ruta 40 YPF— takes place in Argentina from 26 August to 1 September.
- The 99-strong field, including W2RC entrants as well as local competitors, will face a gruelling 2,804 km route between La Rioja, Belén (Catamarca) and Salta, split into five stages.
- Among the 15 W2RC FIA entrants, Nasser Al Attiyah (Toyota Gazoo Racing) leads the pack with a 30-point cushion over Yazeed Al Rajhi (Overdrive Racing). The Hiluxes at the top of the leader board are set to face off against the two-winner and reigning champion Sebastián Halpern (X-raid Mini JCW) in front of his home crowd.
- Among the 24 W2RC FIM entrants, Toby Price (Red Bull KTM Factory Racing) is perched at the summit of the RallyGP standings with a 7-point margin over the local hero Luciano Benavides (Husqvarna Factory Racing) and a 9-point gap over Adrien Van Beveren (Monster Energy Honda). KTM commands the manufacturer ranking with 113 points, but Honda, second with 95, will find strength in numbers. There will be four red riders against just two for the orange team and the same number for Hero MotoSports. Husqvarna and GasGas are fielding one competitor apiece.

AL ATTIYAH EAGER TO FARE WELL IN HIS FAREWELL

In the car category, the penultimate race of the 2023 season will have a special flavour for **Nasser Al Attiyah** (136 points). The reigning world champion has announced that this will be his last race for Toyota. **Sébastien Loeb** (Bahrain Raid Xtreme), third in the provisional standings with 101 points, is sitting this one out, leaving **Al Attiyah** to contend with **Yazeed Al Rajhi** (106 points). However, the Qatari and the Saudi will have to watch out for two local drivers with shared ambitions. Fourth in the provisional standings with 74 points to his name, **Sebastián Halpern**, who has scored a brace in the DR40 (2016 and 2018), and his compatriot **Juan Cruz Yacopini** (Overdrive Racing), fifth overall with 69 points, have a decent shot at toppling the Frenchman from the provisional podium by the end of their national race. While the two Argentinians may share the same personal goals, they will be battling for different constructors. **Yacopini** will race for the Toyota armada, led by **Al Attiyah** and **Al Rajhi**, on top of the manufacturer standings with 175 points, whereas **Halpern**, the defending DR40 champion, will be the only one to fly the flag for the Mini JCWs of the X-raid team, second in the manufacturer standings with 107 points. **Denis Krotov** is back in the game at the wheel of his new car, an Overdrive Racing Hilux.

In the T3 category, the Red Bull Off-Road Junior Team USA trio in charge of the category after three events will be on the start line. **Austin Jones** (146 points) holds a wafer-thin margin over **Seth Quintero** (145 pts), while **Mitch Guthrie** is just 20 points behind the leader (126 pts). Further down the classification, the teammates **Cristina Gutiérrez** and "**Chaleco**" **López** (Red Bull Can-Am Factory) are tied on 78 points, only 4 points ahead of **João Ferreira** (X-raid Yamaha). **Mattias Ekström** (54 points) is again showing up in a South Racing Can-Am.

In the T4 category, the battle-hardened Polaris works driver **Umeda Shinsuke** (Xtreme Plus) should be able to benefit from the absence of the competitors ahead of him in the overall to increase his 79-point haul.

HONDA TURNS OUT IN FORCE

There are 10 entrants in the RallyGP category for pro riders. **Toby Price**, the overall leader with 62 points, will be escorted by a single Red Bull KTM Factory Racing teammate, **Mathias Walkner**, after **Kevin Benavides** crashed again during training. The *albiceleste* star, fourth in the championship (43 points), who claimed his second Dakar in January and is a two-time winner of the DR40 (2016 and 2017), will not be on the start line, but his brother **Luciano Benavides**, second overall with 55 points, is already revving up his motorbike for the home crowds. The Argentinian will be the only rider sporting the crowned H-mark. Over at Red Bull GasGas Factory Racing, **Sam Sunderland** will also have to fend for himself in the absence of **Daniel Sanders**. India's **Hero MotoSports** has again picked **Ross Branch** and **Sebastian Bühler** as its champions. All in all, no factory team will be fielding more than two riders. As usual, Monster Energy Honda is going for a "shock and awe" strategy, with no fewer than four factory riders. **Adrien Van Beveren**, third overall with 53 points, is the highest ranked of them. In the manufacturer ranking, the red riders —the reigning world champions— will once again rely on their numerical superiority to try and catch up with the orange team, who are dominating the season so far. KTM now has 113 points to Honda's 95 and Husqvarna's 89.

There are 8 riders on the Rally2 start list. **Paolo Lucci** (BAS World KTM Racing), perched at the top of the standings with 66 points, is up for a rematch with **Romain Dumontier** (Husqvarna HT Rally Raid). The Frenchman only needs to make up 3 points on the Italian. Third overall with 45 points, another Frenchman, **Jean-Loup Lèpan** (Duust Diverse Racing), will be flanked by riders of the calibre of his teammate **Konrad Dąbrowski** and regulars such as BAS World KTM Racing's **Michael Docherty** and **Bradley Cox**.

The 8 Rally3 competitors will be tackling their second race ahead of the finale in the Rallye du Maroc.

Finally, there will be 3 championship entrants in the quad race. The top two riders in the standings, **Laisvydas Kancius** (69 points) and **Pablo Copetti** (38 points), are skipping this one, clearing the way for **Rodolfo Guilioli** (Pepitas Racing), third with 33 points, and his closest pursuer, **Juraj Varga** (30 points), to inch closer to the lead in a star-studded field that also includes local hero **Manuel Andújar**.

PROGRAMME*:

- 22 August: Opening of the bivouac at the Estadio Superdomo de La Rioja at 8 am
- 25 August: Opening of the press room and distribution of accreditations at the Estadio Superdomo de La Rioja from 9 am
- 26 August:
 - Administrative scrutineering at the Estadio Superdomo de La Rioja from 9 am to 5 pm
 - Technical scrutineering at the Estadio Superdomo de La Rioja from 10 am to 6 pm
 - Press conference at the Estadio Superdomo de La Rioja at 12 pm
- 27 August:
 - Completion of the administrative and technical scrutineering at the Estadio Superdomo de La Rioja from 8:30 to 10 am
 - Publication of the starting order at 11:30 am
 - General briefing at the Estadio Superdomo de La Rioja at 12 pm
 - 9 km prologue at Dique Los Sauces at 3 pm
 - Choice of starting order by the top 10 in the prologue at the Estadio Superdomo de La Rioja at 6:30 pm
 - Ceremonial start at the Estadio Superdomo de La Rioja from 7:30 to 8:30 pm
- 28 August: stage 1 - La Rioja–Belén (road section: 362 km / special: 334 km / total: 696 km)
- 29 August: stage 2 - Belén–Belén (road section: 121 km / special: 339 km / total: 460 km)
- 30 August: stage 3 - Belén–Belén (road section: 196 km / special: 268 km / total: 464 km)
- 31 August: stage 4 - Belén–Belén (road section: 236 km / special: 348 km / total: 584 km)
- 1 September: stage 5 - Belén–Salta (road section: 304 km / special: 257 km / total: 561 km)
 - Finish of the first competitors at 2 pm
 - Finish podium ceremony at the Centro de Convenciones de Salta from 5 to 6 pm

* Local time: GMT -3

List of FIM riders registered for the race [HERE](#); FIA crews registered for the race [HERE](#)

Desafío Ruta 40 official website [here](#)

W2RC official website [here](#)

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