

Paris, 24 May 2024

DESAFIO RUTA 40 YPF INIFINIA 2024
FIA-FIM WORLD RALLY-RAID CHAMPIONSHIPS

AL ATTIYAH AND SCHAREINA FAVOURITES

Key points

- Eight days to go until the Desafío Ruta 40 YPF INIFINIA, the fourth and penultimate round of the championship. From 1 to 7 June, the 12th edition of the Argentinian rally will start and finish for the first time in Córdoba. 3,057 kilometres, including 1,792 kilometres of special stages passing through San Juan and La Rioja await the 115 vehicles registered, including 46 W2RC competitors.
- Among the 20 FIA entrants in the championship, the last winner in Argentina, Nasser Al Attiyah (Nasser Racing by Prodrive), will line up as the leader of the general classification for the first time this season. The two-time reigning world champion has a 33-point lead over Yazeed Al Rajhi (Overdrive Racing).
- Rokas Baciuška (Can-Am Factory), the Challenger category leader, has a 39-point advantage over Argentinean Nicolás Cavigliasso (Taurus Factory by Wevers). Yasir Seidan (MMP) will again start atop the SSV general classification despite his retirement in April. The Saudi is still 37 points clear of Sebastián Guayasamin (BE Racing).
- Of the 26 FIM entries in the championship, RallyGP leader Ross Branch (Hero MotoSports) is 21 points ahead of Adrien Van Beveren (Monster Energy Honda). The Botswanan will be up against a full squad of factory Hondas, including Tosha Schareina, the title holder in Argentina and recent winner of the BP Ultimate Rally-Raid Portugal.
- In Rally2, Hero and Honda are making pre-rally news. The Indian manufacturer will enter a young rider in the category for the first time. Likewise, the Reds have decided to put their faith in the leader of the general classification, Romain Dumontier. For the Rally3s, this will be the second race of their season. Overall leader Manuel Andújar (7240 Team) is the favourite in the quad category.

AL ATTIYAH AT THE HELM

Like in 2023, **Nasser Al Attiyah** heads to Argentina for the second successive year as championship leader. But as was the case last year, the Qatari's trajectory has not been a long, tranquil wadi! A year ago, the reigning world champion retired in Abu Dhabi after rolling on stage 3. This season, it was on the Dakar that the double world champion went home empty-handed (retirement at the end of the 48 Hour Chrono). With new co-driver **Edouard Boulanger** at the controls of a Hunter remodelled to his specifications in record time by his new Prodrive team, **Al Attiyah** took the reins of the championship with authority, scoring two wins in quick succession. With 112 points and victories in Saudi Arabia and Portugal on his Hunter's tally sheet, **Nasser** now leads the championship ahead of **Carlos Sainz**. But like last year, **Yazeed Al Rajhi** is his main threat in Argentina. The Saudi Arabian has also had an eventful season, marked by two rollovers in his Overdrive Racing Hilux. The first on stage 6 of the Dakar forced him to retire. The second, on stage 3 in Portugal, ended his chances of victory, which he had control of at the time. **Yazeed** is nevertheless firmly anchored in third place overall with 79 points. A position on the championship podium that **Lucas Moraes** (Toyota Gazoo Racing) covets. The Brazilian has 76 points and recently finished third in Portugal. To stay in the title race through to the season finale in Morocco this October, the two Toyota drivers know they have no margin for error.

Local raiders **Juan Cruz Yacopini** and **Sebastian Halpern** could find them self among the protagonists in the race for the championship. Not in contention for the title, the younger Mendoza-born Overdrive Racing driver finished runner-up in last year's race. The experienced X-raid Mini JCW driver has won twice on the Desafio Ruta 40 (2016 and 2018).

Seth Quintero (Toyota Gazoo Racing), who finished on the podium at the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge, is looking to leave his mark on his inaugural season in the category. The **Baumgart** brothers (X Rally Team Motorsport) are gaining momentum in their Prodrive Hunter. **Cristian** recently finished 6th in the Ultimate class in Portugal. **Marcos** finished 4th in the category in Abu Dhabi. Veteran **Denis Krotov** (Overdrive Racing) will drive the third Overdrive Hilux. A total of 9 Ultimate entries are expected to compete in W2RC.

Rokas Baciūška is the man in form at the moment among the 5 Challengers competing in the championship. The two-time reigning SSV category title winner clarified his intentions from the season's outset. His target is the hat trick. Three consecutive titles would mean victory in his new category in his debut year in the Challenger category. A challenge that is fast becoming a reality. Since his maiden round victory this season in Portugal, which coincided with the disappointment of **Austin Jones**, who won the first two rounds of the calendar, the Lithuanian has pulled away from the American. **Baciūška** has 160 points, 34 more than his teammate (126 pts). He is 39 points ahead of local contender **Nicolás Cavigliasso** (121 pts), who will be his main adversary at the start of June. BBR pair **Dania Akeel** and **Marcelo Gastaldi** and local racer **David Zille** (Taurus Factory by Wevers) complete the W2RC entry list.

Among the 6 SSVs competing in the championship, **Yasir Seidan** will have to rediscover the good form he lost when he retired in Portugal. The Saudi, winner of the W2RC on the Dakar and the ADDC, still has 155 points versus 118 for second in the points table, **Sebastián Guayasamin**, a margin of 37 points. **Ricardo Ramilo** (Ramilo Scuderia) is behind them on 92 points, battling it out with **Rebecca Busi** (Only Fans Racing) and her 84 points for the final podium spot. In a match within a match of SSVs, the veterans' match will feature **Claude Fournier** (MMP) and **Enrico Gaspari** (TH-Trucks). With just one point separating the Frenchman and the Italian!

HERO AND HONDA ON ALL FRONTS

This season, Hero and Honda are engaged in a pitched battle. First on the tracks in the RallyGP category, for the last few weeks behind the scenes in the transfer market, and soon in Argentina for the first time in the history of the W2RC, the match will extend to the Rally2 category.

The Indian team, led by **Ross Branch** (61 pts), continues to lead the way ahead of four Monster Energy Honda riders: **Adrien Van Beveren** (40 pts), Dakar winner **Ricky Brabec** (38 pts), **Pablo Quintanilla** (27 pts) and **Tosha Schareina** (25 pts). The Spaniard, the most recent addition to the factory squad, retired after crashing on the Dakar and made a stunning comeback last April with victory in Portugal. Despite his fifth-place status in the championship, **Schareina** could be the revelation of the W2RC's third season. Keeping his crown in Argentina would put him on track for this distinction. 8 RallyGP riders competing in the championship are expected in Córdoba.

To cover their backs after the Reds' victory in Portugal and counter the numerical superiority of the Japanese team, which also counts on **Skylar Howes**, Hero MotoSports has been quick to recruit directly from the ranks of its rivals. **'Nacho' Cornejo** replaces the retired **Joaquim Rodrigues**. The Chilean dragon, one of the best rally-raid riders in the world, is the new superhero chosen by **Wolfgang Fisher**, the manager of the Indian outfit, to join **Ross Branch**, **Sebastian Buhler** and **Aaron Mare**, bringing his squad down to four RallyGP riders compared to Honda's five, who have lost a rider.

The fifth rider in Hero's colours, competing in the Rally2 championship category, has no W2RC experience. **Ramiro Barco** will contest his first round of the FIM World Championship. A two-time Peruvian cross-country champion, 'RamiroBarco48' on his social networks, has already competed in the South American Rally Race (SARR) in Argentina in 2020 in the San Juan and La Rioja regions before participating in the Atacama Rally in 2022. It will be the 22-year-old's first test. The same goes for veteran **Romain Dumontier**. The 2023 Rally2 World Cup winner will see his efforts as a private rider rewarded after two introductory seasons. Overall leader since Portugal, the 35-year-old has joined the Honda Team alongside the factory team. The Frenchman will benefit from an older-generation 450 CRF and technical assistance from the Honda factory. A nice recognition for the rider.

It could be a date to remember for the W2RC motorbike scene, which sees the Rally2 category supported by two of the biggest manufacturers on the rally-raid planet. Others could emulate these initiatives and create the bridge between the Rally2 and RallyGP categories that private riders have been waiting for.

It is the dream that **Bradley Cox** continues to pursue. The BAS World KTM Racing rider, son of former official rider **Alfie Cox**, aspires to join a top team. Third overall with 55 points to **Dumontier's** 58, the South African is just 3 points adrift of the championship lead. **Bradley** won last year's Desafío Ruta 40 ahead of **Konrad Dabrowski** (Duust Rally) and **Romain Dumontier**. The Pole is currently fourth behind the South African on 47 points and has been riding strong since his first win in the category in Abu Dhabi.

A total of 11 Rally2 riders will compete in the W2RC event.

4 riders are entered in Rally3. Three Argentinians will debut in the 2024 championship, while Chilean **John Medina** (Xraids Experience) scored his first points in Portugal.

In the quad category, 7 riders will battle in the W2RC category, including national hero **Manuel Andújar**. The Dakar winner, who leads the championship on 61 points, will be joined by regulars including Saudi Arabian **Hani Alnoumesi** (GM Motorsport) third overall (34 pts), Pole **Kamil Wisniewski** (Orlen) fifth (25 pts) and Brazilian **Marcelo Medeiros** (Tagatur Racing).

Pablo Eli, Sport Director of Desafío Ruta 40 YPF INFINIA: "This year's Desafío Ruta 40 YPF INFINIA has a new format, starting in Córdoba, which is a province that although it has received the Cross Country with the Dakar, it has not been part of any Ruta 40 previous editions. So, it is a turning of the page of what we have been doing in other years.

In Córdoba, we will be welcomed by the rally fans that haven't had the WRC for years and will surely be at the side of the route; fans are like a landmark in this province, in addition to having very nice places as rally stages with mountains and super good roads.

In Córdoba, there are very unique roads with constant changes of pace. We have very fast areas, like in WRC rallies, and other areas with narrow tracks where the traffic is not very fluent. That offers mixed stages with non-stopping excitement.

San Juan is a 100% Dakar land. All the Dakar Rallies that have passed through this province have left their mark. It is a place where we will hit again off-road competition.

At the same time, La Rioja is a province that has already shown that it is super competent for this kind of race. I think it is a well-balanced rally where we will have everything."

Programme

- 27 May: bivouac opening
- 31 May: opening of the press centre and accreditations (from 9 am)
- 1 June: FIA/FIM administrative checks (8 am-5 pm) and technical checks (9 am-6 pm) / press conference (12:30 pm) / FIA private tests (2-5 pm) / welcome reception for competitors (8 pm)
- 2 June:
 - 9:30 am: publication of starting orders for the prologue
 - 10 am: general briefing and team photos
 - 1 pm: prologue in Córdoba (Liaison: 148 km / Special Stage: 17 km / Total: 165 km)
 - 6:30 pm: start order selection ceremony in stage 1
 - 7:15 pm: publication of the starting order in stage 1
 - 7:30 pm: start ceremony
- 3 June - stage 1: Córdoba-Córdoba (Liaison: 124 km / Special Stage: 381 km / Total: 505 km)
- 4 June - stage 2: Córdoba-San Juan (Liaison: 301 km / Special Stage: 423 km / Total: 724 km)
- 5 June - stage 3: San Juan-San Juan (Liaison: 137 km / Special Stage: 341 km / Total: 478 km)
- 6 June - stage 4: San Juan-La Rioja (Liaison: 254 km / Special Stage: 412 km / Total: 666 km)
- 7 June - stage 5: La Rioja-Córdoba (Liaison: 301 km / Special Stage: 218 km / Total: 519 km)

The above programme is in local time: GMT-3

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PRESS CONTACTS

FIA
press@fia.com

FIM
Isabelle Larivière
isabelle.lariviere@fim.ch

W2RC
w2rc@aso.fr