



SILK WAY 2017 RALLY 丝绸之路拉力赛



S.13 Despres and Sotnikov at the gates of Xi'an



Stéphane Peterhansel (Peugeot 3008DKR n°106) wins his 5th stage on the 2017 Silk Way Rally, on the penultimate leg between Alashan Youqi and Zhongwei. Overall his team mate Cyril Despres (Peugeot 3008DKR n°100), second on the day, extends his lead and looks to be on the verge of his second consecutive Silk Way victory this Saturday in Xi'an. In the truck class, Dmitry Sotnikov (Kamaz-Master n°303), winner of the stage seems to have taken the reins of power over his Kamaz team mates. Tomorrow, before the final podium held in the heart of the ancient capital of the Middle Empire, there remains a short but challenging special of just over 100 kilometres.

Key points

#5 for Peterhansel

#Sotnikov, the boss



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#Tomorrow: The little canyon

5 for Peterhansel

Sand and dunes as far as the eyes could see. Oasis lying at the bottom of cathedral dunes: the scenery for this 13th and penultimate Silk Way Rally stage was as beautiful as it was demanding, for both men and machines. Divided into two distinct timed specials, the stage victory went to the Peugeot 3008DKR n°106 of Stéphane Peterhansel and Jean-Paul Cottret. Continuing their rapid assistance role for their team mates and overall leaders Cyril Despres and David Castera (Peugeot 3008DKR n°100), the winningest duo in the history of the sport take their 5th stage win, whilst at the same time watching over their team mates, who look almost certain to take a second Silk Way Rally win in a row. Second on the stage and comfortable leaders overall, Despres and Castera have only a 100 km special to race before pulling off the feat this Saturday in Xi'an. If their performance was much anticipated, behind them the race was animated to say the least. Fighting it out 'cat and mouse style' in the dunes of the Tenger Desert, Christian Lavieille (Baïcmotor n°108), took third place on the day, 19m41s behind the winner and in doing so 'pinched' the 2nd place overall from the Chinese driver Han Wei (Geeley SMG Buggy n°107). The Minis had an even worse day. Yazeed Al Rajhi made it to the finish in 9th place after getting stuck in the sand, while his team mate Bryce Menzies, who was 4th overall this morning, got into even more difficulty in the soft dunes and isn't expected into the bivouac before nightfall....

Sotnikov, finishes on top

While it was almost certain this morning that it would be a Kamaz that would take the final victory on the 2017 Silk Way Rally, it was still unclear who would be on the top step of the podium tomorrow in Xi'an. With just a little over 3 minutes in the lead, Dmitry Sotnikov knew that his leadership was threatened by his young team mate Anton Shibalov. Attacking hard, Shibalov actually took the virtual overall lead at the end of the first special by just 2 seconds, but Sotnikov fought back in the second to actually increase his overall lead to 06:04. The last special tomorrow might be short but it isn't expected to be easy, so while it would be very unwise to declare Sotnikov the winner, after a shaky start earlier in the day, he is looking marginally more comfortable this evening than he was this morning. Mardeev, 3rd on the special, and overall, led in the Belorussians Viazovich (MAZ n°304) and Vasilevski (MAZ n°309) and the Kazakh Ardavicius. Bad day on the other hand for his team mate Gerard De Rooy (Iveco Powerstar n°302), forced to drive to the bivouac at Zhongwei by tarmac, before the start of the second special, after running into steering problems.

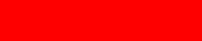
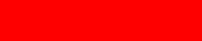
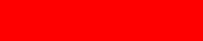
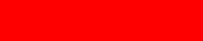
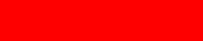
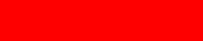
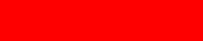
ROAD BOOK

Tomorrow: Stage 14 ZONGHWEI-XI'AN «The little canyon» 715,56 km

A very technical special (100.67 km) in the canyons for this last stage of the 2017 Silk Way Rally. A quite fast and technical route, it will require a last effort from the competitors before the final finish. Navigation, with numerous dried river bed crossing and changes of direction, will also be demanding. There follows a



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590 km liaison on the motorway to get to the final podium finish in Xi'an where the first vehicles are expected around 18h30 local time (GMT+8)

QUOTES

Cyril Despres

We started off a bit too slowly and finished the first special in 4th place then after we got on the gas a bit and in fact it was better. Not an easy stage though with some of the dunes being particularly tricky. Tomorrow we will take it easy but we will be staying focused because as we saw again today anything can happen in this sport.

Stéphane Peterhansel

Beating the record number of stage wins is meagre consolation. When you start a race it is to win overall. In the past I've won Dakars without winning even one special, just like Froome is doing on the Tour de France at the moment. Since our crash in Kazakhstan there were only two things to do: be Cyril and David's guardian angel and win as many specials as possible. And up until now we've succeeded in both missions. Today's stage was long. We spent more than 5 hours in the car and faced pretty much every kind of challenge the desert has to offer. We caught quite a lot of cars, including two Geely SMG buggies stuck, nose to nose in the sand. This was the hardest stage of the 2017 Silk Way Rally.

Christian Lavieille

We started the second special behind Han Wei which was strategically good. Then at CP1 Han Wei and his team mate did a loop in the hope that we would open the way but we followed them round and then off we all went. We got a little stuck, only for about 5 minutes and then shortly after that we saw Han Wei and Liu Kun both stuck and we knew it was our chance and we attacked really hard all the way to the finish to take the 2nd place overall.

Han Wei

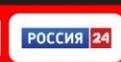
Today was not a good day for me. First we got stuck in the sand. Fortunately my teammate helped me out, after we adjusted the tire pressure. Then we went on the right track, but my navigator wasn't sure, so we had to go back to check the road book and on our way back we had a very bad crash with another car, we end up having a flat tire, that cost us a lot of time. We could have had a good stage following the other cars, it was a pity, but in another way it's not too bad, as now we have a reason to fight for next year.

Anton Shibalov

Today was probably the most difficult stage, a lot of off-road and sand. In the beginning the sand was wet after the rain, but, frankly, it was like a warm up for drivers as it was dry on the second part, more off-road,



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similar to in Astrakhan. Navigation is the same as in the past days, there were no especially tricky places for navigators. Now we need to go calmly and get our result.

Mardeev

The first 160 kilometers were not so hot, cool after the rain and the sand was hard, so not too complicated. We opened the track for trucks on both parts of special. The second part was completely different - hot, soft sand and low dunes, with a lot of ditches - real off-road!



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