

Red Bull Desert Wings get off to a flying start at the 2021 Dakar Rally in Saudi Arabia

Defending Dakar champion Carlos Sainz on the prologue stage © Marcelo Maragni/Red Bull Content Pool

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Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Racing is underway at the [2021 Dakar Rally](#) and right from the off it's the Red Bull Desert Wings squad who are in the thick of the action. Some of the biggest names in rally-raid wasted no time in putting themselves at the business end of the rankings on today's 11-kilometre prologue stage. Now comes the small matter of 12 stages spread over 7,500km of desert terrain as the convoy heads off to tackle the toughest race on the planet.

Holding an early lead in the car race is three-time Dakar winner [Nasser Al-Attiyah](#). Today's prologue victory gave the Qatari his 36th Dakar stage win and will see him opening the road on tomorrow's 277km timed special stage.

"Things get serious tomorrow with a long opening stage." – **Nasser Al-Attiyah**

There were fast times posted by Al-Attiyah's fellow Toyota Hilux drivers [Kuba Przygoński](#) and [Giniel De Villiers](#). Meanwhile, the MINI JCW Buggies of [Carlos Sainz](#) and [Stéphane Peterhansel](#) were also able to stay close to the front on the prologue.

"We feel so lucky to be starting the race, I want to say a big thank you to everybody who has made this possible." – **Stéphane Peterhansel**

Frenchmen [Sébastien Loeb](#) and [Cyril Despres](#) can be happy with their first Dakar kilometres with their respective new projects. Nine-time WRC champion Loeb was only 17 seconds off Al-Attiyah's time and Despres just 30 seconds further back.

The bike contest got underway with Red Bull KTM Factory Racing looking to reassert their dominance after witnessing their 18-year winning streak come to end last year. It was defending champion Ricky Brabec who won the prologue, but former winners [Toby Price](#), [Matthias Walkner](#) and [Sam Sunderland](#) all finished within a minute of the leader.

Dakar debutant [Daniel Sanders](#) enjoyed an impressive prologue with the day's third fastest time. Fellow first-timers [Camille Chapelière](#) and [Mohammed Jaffar](#) can also reflect on a good day's work.

"The bike was flying and I really had a good day. It was good to get rid of some nerves ahead of our first big day tomorrow." – **Daniel Sanders**

Elsewhere in the bike race top female [Laia Sanz](#) along with Dakar regulars [Stefan Svitko](#) and [CS Santosh](#) got their rally up and running with a solid prologue stage.

Sanders was not the only Dakar rookie parking himself on the prologue podium today as [Seth Quintero](#) scored second place in the Lightweight Vehicles category. The 18-year-old was denied the chance to race the Dakar last year on account of his age and is clearly in the mood to make up for lost time.

"We ran a nice, smooth pace. I was even a little timid because it was the first run in the new car." – **Seth Quintero**

Quintero's fellow Red Bull Off-Road Junior Team racers [Mitch Guthrie Jr.](#) and [Cristina Gutiérrez](#) also equipped themselves well on the prologue. Elsewhere in the Lightweight Vehicles mix after day one at Dakar are [Chaleco López](#) and [Mattias Ekström](#).

"The car is amazing, zero issues with it." – **Mitch Guthrie Jr.**

Serial truck race winners [Team Kamaz Master](#) are well set up after the prologue with all four of their crews within a minute of race leader Siarhei Viazovich. The closest Kamaz trucker to the top of the leaderboard is [Anton Shibalov](#) who stands just seven seconds off the pace.

[Ignacio Casale](#) enjoyed his first taste of racing since returning to the truck category, sharing a time with Kamaz's [Dmitry Sotnikov](#) on the prologue.

Things get a whole lot more serious tomorrow with a total of 623 kilometres to be tackled on the route to Bisha. The timed special stage measures 277 kilometres and will take the convoy over fast, stoney tracks. Expect the gaps on the leaderboard to widen considerably tomorrow.

Keep up-to-date with the entire Red Bull Desert Wings convoy on Red Bull Motorsports' social media: [Red Bull Motorsport Instagram](#) / [Facebook](#) / [Twitter](#) / [Desert Wings Instagram](#)

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STANDINGS

2021 Dakar Rally Car Race Top 5 (after Prologue Stage)

1. **N. AL-ATTIYAH (QAT) TOYOTA 00:05:48**
2. B. BARAGWANATH (ZAF) CENTURY +00:00:00
3. Y. AL RAJHI (SAU) TOYOTA +00:00:08
4. **J. PRZYGONSKI (POL) TOYOTA +00:00:12**
5. B. TEN BRINKE (NDL) TOYOTA +00:00:14

2021 Dakar Rally Bike Race Top 5 (after Prologue Stage)

1. R. BRABEC (USA) HONDA 00:06:01
2. J. BARREDA BORT (ESP) HONDA +00:00:06
3. **D. SANDERS (AUS) KTM +00:00:13**

4. R. BRANCH (BWA) YAMAHA +00:00:14
5. S. BÜHLER (DEU) HERO +00:00:16

2021 Dakar Rally Lightweight Vehicle Top 5 (after Prologue Stage)

1. K. MEEKE PH-SPORT 00:06:40
- 2. S. QUINTERO OT3 +00:00:02**
3. A. JONES CAN-AM +00:00:03
4. R. VARELA CAN-AM +00:00:07
5. A. DOMZALA CAN-AM +00:00:09

2021 Dakar Rally Truck Top 5 (after Prologue Stage)

1. S. VIAZOVICH MAZ 00:06:38
2. A. VISHNEUSKI MAZ +00:00:01
3. M. MACIK IVECO +00:00:03
- 4. A. SHIBALOV KAMAZ 00:00:07**
5. M. VAN DEN HEUVEL INTER +00:00:08