



## Action-packed Stage Eight leads to well-deserved Rest Day in Riyadh



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Sébastien Loeb secured a second stage victory at the 2023 [Dakar Rally](#) on Sunday but it was Nasser Al-Attiyah who had plenty of reasons to smile as he remains more than an hour ahead of his nearest rival in the car race after eight gruelling stages through Saudi Arabia. Here is all you need to know:

Key Info

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January 8 | Stage 8 | Al Duwadimi - Riyadh | Distance - Total/Special: 476km/346km

- Despite hostile weather conditions throughout the week, the convoy of competitors reached Riyadh on Sunday and it

was Loeb who inherited the stage win after Carlos Sainz was handed a five-minute time penalty for speeding, stripping him of first place. However, defending champion Al-Attiyah remains in pole position to win a fifth Dakar title as he sits atop the car race leaderboard.

- In the bike race, Kevin Benavides of Red Bull KTM Factory Racing enjoyed a fruitful day and is now just 13 seconds off the lead, while team-mates Toby Price and Matthias Walkner are both in the Top 10. Benavides, 33, said: "I started at the back and caught the guys at the front after the last refuelling. Now we want to do our best in the second week."

- There was also a taste of the battle we can expect to see at the front of the T3 race in the second week of the Dakar as Guillaume De Mevius and co-driver François Cazalet maintained their overall lead in the category. But they know they will be under pressure – as they were during Stage Eight – from AJ Jones and team-mate Seth Quintero of Red Bull Off-Road Junior Team USA presented by BFGoodrich.

- Now the competitors will have 24 hours to rest, recover and tune up their vehicles for the second week of the Dakar.

January 7 | Stage 7 | Riyadh - Al Duwadimi | Distance - Total/Special: 528km/333km

- While Stage Seven was cancelled for bikes and quads, there was no break for the competitors on four wheels as cars, trucks and side-by-sides tackled the challenging route.

- There was no change at the front of the car race as defending champion Al-Attiyah and co-driver Mathieu Baumel hold an advantage of more than an hour over their closest competitor. The Qatari driver, 52, said: "This was really not an easy stage. We were really pushing a lot from the beginning. We lost a few minutes but we took care to put ourselves in a good position for tomorrow."

- It was another good day for Baciuška of the Red Bull Can-Am Factory Team as the Lithuanian and his co-driver Oriol Mena secured a third stage win and now sit top of the overall T4 rankings.

- There was also a hat-trick of stage wins for the Red Bull Off-Road Junior Team USA presented by BFGoodrich thanks to American Guthrie Jr. and co-driver Kellon Walch. The duo took the win after some tight racing against team-mates Seth Quintero/Dennis Zenz and race leaders Guillaume De Mevius/François Cazalet.

- Tomorrow sees the bikes and quads rejoin the rally for Stage Eight. A 345km timed special stage will be the final business of this Dakar's first week.

January 6 | Stage 6 | Ha'il - Riyadh | Distance - Total/Special: 560km/358km

- Stage Six required the field to think on their feet over the shortened special stage and huge liaison route to Riyadh - changed due to heavy flooding in the Al Duwadimi region of Saudi Arabia - as car leader Al-Attiyah scored a second consecutive stage win with co-driver Mathieu Baumel while Team Audi Sport rivals Stéphane Peterhansel/Edouard Boulanger and Carlos Sainz/Lucas Cruz saw their title hopes sadly end in separate crashes.

- The four-time Dakar champion now has a lead of over an hour with rookie crew Lucas Moraes/Timo Gottschalk enjoying another good day in third overall. Qatari Al-Attiyah, 52, said: "We pushed a lot and for the last 40km we had a broken steering pump. We lost steering and a lot of oil. Thankfully we could make it to the end of the stage."

- Less than 20 minutes separate the top eight riders in the bike race as two-time winner Price claimed third on the day to consolidate second overall, while it was a good day for Belgian De Mevius and co-driver François Cazalet as they set the day's fastest T3 time to increase their overall lead - the Red Bull Off-Road Junior Team USA presented by BFGoodrich crews of Seth Quintero/Dennis Zenz and AJ Jones/Gustavo Gugelmin also shining behind.

- There will be no bike race for Saturday's reconfigured Stage Seven due to competitor fatigue with the rest of the convoy going from Riyadh to the Al Duwadimi bivouac via a 333km timed special and, at the end of the special stage, competitors will be permitted two hours with their mechanics then competitors only will head to the Al Duwadimi bivouac where their vehicle will spend the night in parc fermé.

January 5 | Stage 5 | Ha'il - Ha'il | Distance - Total/Special: 645.04km/373km

- The compact sand on Thursday's Stage Five caused plenty of problems, but it couldn't have gone much better for defending car champion Al-Attiyah and co-driver Baumel in their Toyota GR DKR Hilux T1+.

- The reason they needed to push so much was the announcement by organisers that they will permit Team Audi Sport to increase the maximum power of their Audi RS Q e-tron E2 cars with Peterhansel/Boulanger and Sainz/Cruz both making use of the extra input for the second and third times respectively. The Frenchman revealed: "This was one of the hardest stages of my life. We took a lot of impact on the back and the neck."

- Illness and collisions have shaken up the bike standings with leader Daniel Sanders forced to ride well within himself after waking up feeling unwell, the Red Bull KTM Factory Racing duo of Price and Argentine Kevin Benavides taking advantage to move up to second and third overall.

- Sadly Spaniard Laia Sanz and co-driver Maurizio Gerini crashed - but were thankfully unharmed - as Rally2 biker Camille Chapelière returned early back to his French home to recover from his arm injury.

- In the T3 contest, Quintero and co-driver Zenz clawed back 15 minutes on leaders De Mevius/François Cazalet, while there was another stage win in T4 for Lithuanian Rokas Baciuška and co-driver Oriol Vidal.

January 4 | Stage 4 | Ha'il - Ha'il | Distance - Total/Special: 574.01km/425km

- The relentless pace of the 2023 race continued on Wednesday with 425km against the clock across camel grass, desert canyons and intimidating sand dunes as Dakar heavyweights Sébastien Loeb/Fabian Lurquin and Peterhansel/Boulangier battled it out.

- Both crews led the stage at various points during the day in the car category before nine-time WRC winner Loeb got over the line 13 seconds quicker than 14-time Dakar winner Peterhansel. Frenchman Loeb said: "We tried to push really hard on this stage. We were on full attack all the time."

- Australian Sanders finished eighth, however it was enough to claim the overall bike lead after the route had been drastically altered by heavy rainfall. The 28-year-old said: "I haven't really done any opening with roadbooks since the last Dakar. It was really tricky navigation."

- There was another T3 stage win for the Red Bull Off-Road Junior Team USA presented by BFGoodrich thanks to American Mitch Guthrie Jr. and co-driver Kellon Walch, who now lead the T3 rankings followed by De Mevius/Cazalet in second and AJ Jones/Gustavo Gugelmin in third.

The 2023 Dakar Rally is located in Saudi Arabia and runs from December 31, 2022 – January 15, 2023.



Nasser Al-Attiyah (QAT) of Toyota Gazoo Racing races during stage 07 of Rally Dakar 2023 around Al Dawadimi, Saudi Arabia on January 07, 2023



Cristina Gutierrez (ESP) of Red Bull Can-Am Factory Team races during stage 07 of Rally Dakar 2023 around Al Dawadimi, Saudi Arabia on January 07, 2023



Rokas Baciуска (LTU) from Red Bull Can-Am Factory Team races during stage 07 of Rally Dakar 2023 around Al Dawadimi, Saudi Arabia on January 07, 2023



Austin Jones (USA) of Red Bull Off-Road Junior Team USA presented by BFGoodrich races during stage 07 of Rally Dakar 2023 around Al Dawadimi, Saudi Arabia on January 07, 2023



Mitch Guthrie Jr (USA) of Red Bull Off-Road Junior Team USA presented by BFGoodrich races during stage 06 of Rally Dakar 2023 from Hail to Al Duwadimi, Saudi Arabia on January 06, 2023



2023 Dakar Rally under starter's orders as rivals draw up strategies for the dunes. **RESTRICTIONS:** Use of ASO race action footage is strictly limited to 3mins per day, with a maximum of 5mins total event footage for content produced and/or transmitted by User. The content is available to be downloaded and licensed by the User for editorial use, for up to and including seven (7) days commencing on the date of the event stage. For all Users who license the content during this period, the Licensed Content is In Perpetuity. No additional licenses permitted after 7 days from the date of the event stage. The Editorial Use restrictions of this content is as per the Red Bull Content Pool T&Cs.

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