



## Cat and mouse strategy starts on Stage One of 2025 Dakar Rally



(clockwise) Lucas Moraes, Cristina Gutiérrez, Gonçalo Guerreiro and Daniel Sanders © Marcelo Maragni/Flavien Duhamel/Red Bull Content Pool

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A massive 500 kilometre mission raised the stakes on Stage One of the [2025 Dakar Rally](#). It was straight into the deep-end for the convoy of brave racers taking on the world's toughest race. Despite hazardous terrain, the pace of

**the frontrunners was fierce throughout. Let's find out which [Red Bull Desert Wings](#) speedsters got their noses in front on the mammoth loop around the Bisha bivouac...**

In the Ultimate Class it looked like tomorrow's 48-hour Chrono Stage had started a day early. [Lucas Moraes](#) led the 412-kilometre special stage for the majority of the day, but decided to hit the brakes before the finish line to ensure a favourable starting position for the 48-hour challenge on the horizon.

*"Thanks to the team for giving me the perfect strategy. It gives me goosebumps because we knew we were going quite well. The strategy was to stop for five minutes at the end. I think we ended up finishing fourth or fifth so the strategy went perfectly."* – **Lucas Moraes**

While Moraes finished the stage with the eighth fastest time of the day it was his Toyota Gazoo Racing team-mate [Seth Quintero](#) who took the win. Quintero's stage win puts the 22-year-old in the outright lead of the Ultimate class.

*"It's always good to get the first one done. We got past quite a few cars. Then we saw Laia had a big crash so we stopped there and did what we could to help."* – **Seth Quintero**

Joining Quintero and Moraes in the Top 10 on Stage 1 were the Dacia Sandrider of [Cristina Gutiérrez](#), the Ford Raptor T1+ of [Carlos Sainz](#) and the Toyota Hilux driven by [Toby Price](#). There were no vehicles that got through Stage 1 without any issues and all cars sustained their fair share of damage due to the numerous trees and vegetation that lined the route.

*"The stage was quite tough. In many places it was difficult to see the line. Many places were also very narrow and the car got quite damaged."* – **Carlos Sainz**

Then came [Guillaume De Mévius](#), [Mitch Guthrie Jr.](#), [Mattias Ekström](#), [Nani Roma](#), [Nasser Al-Attiyah](#) and [Sébastien Loeb](#) all within 11m30s of the lead. These drivers will find out tomorrow if they got their strategy spot on or not.

It was a tough first stage in the Ultimate class for [Rokas Baciūška](#) who suffered from mechanical issues on the loop around the Bisha bivouac. Baciūška eventually returned to the bivouac over two hours off the overall lead.

As night fell over the Bisha bivouac it was still unclear if [Laia Sanz](#) would be able to finish the stage or not. The finisher of 14 consecutive editions of the Dakar was involved in a crash 330km into the stage and had to wait for assistance to try and get her Century CR6 moving again.

There was a second consecutive runners-up finish for [Gonçalo Guerreiro](#) of the Red Bull Off-Road Junior Team in the Challenger class. The Portuguese driver followed up his impressive Prologue performance with another display of speed in his Taurus T3 Max on Stage 1. Guerreiro is just four seconds behind early Challenger class leader

**Nicolas Cavigliasso.**

*"That's the first stage of the Dakar done. The navigation was tricky but my co-driver Cadu did a very good job. The car is perfect."* – **Gonçalo Guerreiro**

Guerreiro is joined in the Top 5 of the Challenger class by fellow Red Bull Off-Road Junior Team driver [Corbin Leaverton](#). The 23-year-old American is clearly enjoying the early days of his Dakar debut.

Also keeping themselves in the hunt for Challenger class prizes are [Dania Akeel](#) and [Pau Navarro](#) who both have their Taurus T3 Max machines inside the Top 10 overall ahead of tomorrow's 48-hour Chrono Stage.

*"This stage was a reminder of how challenging the Dakar is. I had a puncture and this cost a couple of minutes. I also had about 200km in the dust. Then an issue with the GPS during the last 100km so we had to improvise."* – **Dania Akeel**

In the SSV race [Francisco 'Chaleco' López](#) sits second overall. The Chilean driver is less than eight minutes behind SSV leader Xavier De Soultrait with 11 stages remaining at the 2025 Dakar Rally.

*"The rally has now started and for now we've had no big problems, this makes me happy."* – **Francisco 'Chaleco' López**

It's so far, so good on two wheels for Red Bull KTM Factory Racing rider [Daniel Sanders](#). The Australian was able to follow up yesterday's Prologue victory with a win on Stage 1. Sanders now goes into the 48-hour Chrono Stage holding top spot in the Bike race.

*"There was a lot of dust so it probably wasn't the smartest thing to start at the back. In the end, everyone caught up with each other so you had to stand your ground and stay strong."* – **Daniel Sanders**

[Luciano Benavides](#) joins his KTM team-mate Sanders in the overall Top 5 after an impressive Stage One ride. Luciano's older brother [Kevin Benavides](#) is also still in the mix along with rookie [Edgar Canet](#) and [Mohammed Balooshi](#).

*"It was a tough first stage, like two days of Baja in one day. We asked for it to be tough and that's what we got. I had to dig deep to get through this stage."* – **Mohammed Balooshi**

Unfortunately this Dakar Rally has ended prematurely for Indian biker [Harith Noah](#) who suffered a fractured wrist during yesterday's Prologue. We wish Harith a speedy recovery from his injury.

The full gas start to the 2025 Dakar Rally continues tomorrow with the arrival of the 48-hour Chrono Stage! This ground breaking format of racing over 1,000km across two Dakar days makes its second appearance at the rally. The convoy will enter the stage tomorrow morning and when the clock strikes 5pm competitors must stop at the

next rest area they arrive at (there are six rest areas in total dotted along the route). On the morning of January 6, the remainder of the enormous timed stage must be completed.

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Nasser Al-Attiyah © Marcelo Maragni/Red Bull Content Pool



Carlos Sainz © Marcelo Maragni/Red Bull Content Pool



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Edgar Canet © Flavien Duhamel/Red Bull Content Pool



Kevin Benavides © Flavien Duhamel/Red Bull Content Pool



Luciano Benavides © Flavien Duhamel/Red Bull Content Pool

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# SELECTED STANDINGS AFTER STAGE 1

## ULTIMATE

- 1: Seth Quintero (USA) / Dennis Zenz (DEU) – Toyota 04:35:08
- 5: Cristina Gutiérrez (ESP) / Pablo Moreno (ESP) – Dacia +02:13
- 7: Carlos Sainz (ESP) / Lucas Cruz (ESP) – Ford +03:17
- 8: Lucas Moraes (BRA) / Armand Monleon (ESP) – Toyota +03:18
- 9: Toby Price (AUS) / Sam Sunderland (GBR) – Toyota +03:58
- 11: Guillaume De Mévius (BEL) / Mathieu Baumel (FRA) – MINI +05:37
- 13: Mitch Guthrie Jr. (USA) / Kellon Walch (USA) – Ford +05:57
- 16: Mattias Ekström (SWE) / Emil Bergkvist (SWE) – Ford +08:02
- 18: Nani Roma (ESP) / Alex Haro (ESP) – Ford +09:28
- 19: Giniel de Villiers (ZAF) / Dirk von Zitzewitz (DEU) – Toyota +10:26
- 20: Nasser Al-Attiyah (QAT) / Edouard Boulanger (FRA) – Dacia +11:13
- 22: Sébastien Loeb (FRA) / Fabian Lurquin (BEL) – Dacia +12:16
- 58: Rokas Baciūška (LTU) / Oriol Mena (ESP) – Toyota +02:20:25

## CHALLENGER

- 1: Nicolas Cavigliasso (ARG) / Valentina Pertegarini (ARG) – Taurus 04:47:12
- 2: Gonçalo Guerreiro (POR) / Cadu Sachs (BRA) – Taurus +00:04
- 5: Corbin Leaverton (USA) / Taye Perry (DEU) – Taurus +15:25
- 8: Dania Akeel (SAU) / Stéphane Duplé (FRA) – Taurus +19:59
- 9: Pau Navarro (ESP) / Lisandro Sisterna (ARG) – Taurus +22:25

## SSV

- 1: Xavier De Soultrait (FRA) / Martin Bonnet (FRA) – Polaris 04:52:43
- 2: Francisco López (CHL) / Juan Pablo Latrach (CHL) – CAN-AM +07:35

## BIKE

- 1: Daniel Sanders (AUS) – KTM 04:58:18
- 6: Luciano Benavides (ARG) – KTM +10:42
- 14: Edgar Canet (ESP) – KTM +32:24
- 17: Kevin Benavides (ARG) – KTM +36:01
- 51: Mohammed Balooshi (UAE) – Fantic +01:12:40

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## QUOTES

**Seth Quintero:** “It’s always good to get the first one done. We got past quite a few cars. Then we saw Laia had a big crash so we stopped there and did what we could to help.”

**Cristina Gutiérrez:** "I didn't expect such a good result on the stage because we had some issues on the stage and stopped two times. Now we're looking forward to tomorrow."

**Carlos Sainz:** "The stage was quite tough. In many places it was difficult to see the line. Many places were also very narrow and the car got quite damaged."

**Lucas Moraes:** "Thanks to the team for giving me the perfect strategy. It gives me goosebumps because we knew we were going quite well. The strategy was to stop for five minutes at the end and hope to not be leading. I think we ended up finishing fourth or fifth so the strategy went perfect."

**Guillaume De Mévius:** "It was not the easiest stage for us. It was nice to open and I'm happy with how we worked. It got tough when we caught the motorbikes because of all the bushes and trees."

**Mattias Ekström:** "It was a long stage with a lot of dust and I have no idea in what position we finished."

**Nani Roma:** "It was a hard day from the beginning. We had a problem with the antenna of the sentinel so that made it difficult to get past slower cars, but we made it."

**Giniel de Villiers:** "We had no power for the first 120km of the stage before all of a sudden it came right. Because quite a few cars came past us we were in the dust all day."

**Nasser Al-Attiyah:** "We finished today's stage without any problems, only one flat tyre. We took it easy to give ourselves a good position for tomorrow."

**Sébastien Loeb:** "It was a clear stage for us with no risks. The goal was not to win the stage so we decided to stop for a few minutes at the end so we would not be first on the road tomorrow."

**Gonçalo Guerreiro:** "That's the first stage of the Dakar done. The navigation was tricky but Cadu did a very good job. The car is perfect and I'm happy."

**Corbin Leaverton:** "The Dakar showed its colours today. It was tough starting up the front of our class. I felt like we had a good pace going. We weren't taking any risks, just playing it safe."

**Dania Akeel:** "This stage was a reminder of how challenging the Dakar is. We had a little bit of everything today except dunes. I had a puncture and this cost a couple of minutes. I also had about 200km in the dust. We also had an issue with the GPS during the last 100km so we had to improvise."

**Pau Navarro:** "Today we had to eat a lot of dust. Also we are still working out things with our new car. Tomorrow the mission will be to get back some time."



**Francisco López:** "There was so much dust today. For 100km it was impossible to pass the car in front of us. Closer to the end of the stage we were able to push. The rally has now started and for now we've had no big problems, this makes me happy."

**Daniel Sanders:** "There was a lot of dust so it probably wasn't the smartest thing to start at the back. In the end, everyone caught up with each other so you had to stand your ground and stay strong."

**Luciano Benavides:** "It was a long stage and the speed was really crazy. Also the navigation was tricky in some points. I tried to stay calm and consistent. I think that paid off so I'm happy."

**Edgar Canet:** "I felt good on today's stage and had a good speed from the beginning. After the refuelling I'm not totally sure what happened but I got lost four times in the same place. Now I need to check what was the issue and also rest before tomorrow's 48 hour stage."

**Kevin Benavides:** "Today was a really tough and long opening stage. There was a lot of navigation and I wasn't expecting that today. My strategy was to start slow and build my rhythm. It was a five-hour stage so it was a real test on day one."

**Mohammed Balooshi:** "It was a tough first stage, like two days of Baja in one day. We asked for it to be tough and that's what we got. I had to dig deep to get through this stage."

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