



## Sand racing masters speed up to dominate the dunes at the 2024 Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge



Ultimate class drivers Nasser Al-Attiyah and Seth Quintero in Abu Dhabi © Kin Marcin/Red Bull Content Pool

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**The 33rd edition of the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge (ADDC) provided plenty of twists and turns on the dunes. The vast Liwa Desert proved impossible to pass for some of the convoy, but there was a return to glory for other sand racing specialists. With five ultra-tough desert stages completed, let's check in on the biggest stories from the second round of this year's World Rally-Raid Championship (W2RC)...**

There was a rapid return to the top step of the podium for five-time [Dakar Rally](#) winner [Nasser Al-Attiyah](#). The reigning W2RC title holder in the Ultimate class hit the ground running with his new co-driver **Édouard Boulanger** to take the win in Abu Dhabi. It's the Qatari's fourth win at the ADDC and his first behind the wheel of the Prodrive Hunter.

*"We worked hard on the car in preparation for the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge. The crew did an amazing job and so did my co-driver Édouard. This was a very tough rally and we needed to put in maximum effort to get the result that we wanted."* – **Nasser Al-Attiyah**

Applying pressure to Al-Attiyah at the front of the rally across all five stages was Toyota Gazoo Racing's [Seth Quintero](#). The 21-year-old American kept on the pace throughout the week in Abu Dhabi alongside co-driver **Dennis Zenz**. Quintero eventually finished third at the ADDC, his first-ever overall podium in the Ultimate class.

*"It was a wild ride all week. We opened the road twice, we won a stage, got on the podium on four out of the five days and we finished on the overall podium. It's only our second race in the Ultimate class and we more than held our own."* – **Seth Quintero**

Quintero's fellow GR DKR Hilux driver [Lucas Moraes](#) created one of the rally's most memorable moments when he crossed the finish line of Stage 3 with his car on fire. Thankfully both Moraes and co-driver **Armand Monleon** escaped the blaze without injury, but the incident did see their rally come to a premature end.

*"A few metres from the end of Stage 3 a fire started at the back of our car. Armand and I were so focused on finishing the stage we didn't even notice the smoke. When we finished the stage we saw the people outside pointing to the fire. I've never got out of a car so fast in my life!"* – **Lucas Moraes**

Another driver with a recent podium finish at the Dakar who was forced into an early retirement at the ADDC was [Guillaume de Mevius](#). The Belgian's Toyota Hilux Overdrive suffered a rough landing at the base of a dune on Stage 2 that took him and co-driver **Xavier Panseri** out of the rally.

In the Challenger class there was a hard fought win for [Austin 'AJ' Jones](#) in his Can-Am Maverick. Jones was riding for the first time with co-driver **Oriol Mena** and the duo were quick to strike up a winning partnership on the dunes.

*"We've just finished up here in Abu Dhabi and we had a really good week. Shout out to my co-driver Oriol for stepping in at the last minute and riding*

*with me, we did a great job.” – Austin Jones*

Keeping Jones on his toes throughout the ADDC was his team-mate [Rokas Baciūška](#). The Lithuanian speedster and co-driver **Oriol Vidal** were snapping at the heels of Jones all week, eventually finishing as runners-up. Baciūška now leads the Challenger class of the W2RC thanks to the points he picked up in Abu Dhabi.

*"We spent the week fighting with Austin, all the time one and two. In the end Austin took the win and we came second. Now we're in P1 in the world championship with three rounds to go so there's plenty of points still to fight for." – Rokas Baciūška*

Completing the Challenger class W2RC podium in Abu Dhabi was [Dania Akeel](#) in her Taurus T3 Max. The Saudi Arabian driver, alongside co-driver **Stéphane Duplé**, relished the opportunity to improve her skills on the tough desert stages in Abu Dhabi.

*"The Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge offers a great experience to improve as a driver. On the dunes you have to work on a lot of skills at the same time and manage the car. We were the third fastest W2RC crew and those points helped us to climb the world championship rankings." – Dania Akeel*

There were lots of highs and lows at the rally for Spanish drivers [Cristina Gutiérrez](#) and [Laia Sanz](#) in the Challenger category. Both Gutiérrez and Sanz showed the speed needed in their Taurus T3 Max machines to compete at the front of the race, but overall podium finishes eluded them due to one too many rough days in the desert.

*"Once repairs had been made we were competitive on the remaining stages. We finish the race happy, knowing that we can be competitive in this category." – Cristina Gutiérrez*

The next stop for the World Rally-Raid Championship convoy is The BP Ultimate Rally Raid in Portugal. The only European stop of the 2024 season runs April 2–7 and promises to deliver yet another shake up of the championship standings.

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## RESULTS/STANDINGS

### Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge – Top 3 – Ultimate class

**1. N. AL-ATTIYAH/E. BOULANGER PRODRIVE 16:20:09**

2. Y. AL RAJHI/T. GOTTSCHALK TOYOTA +16:25
3. S. QUINTERO/D.ZENZ TOYOTA +27.46

#### **Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge – Top 3 – Challenger class**

1. A. JONES/O. MENA CAN-AM 17:10:50
2. R. BACIUSKA/O. VIDAL CAN-AM +4:38
3. H. GARCES ECHEVERRIA/J. LATRACH VINAGRE CAN-AM +46:12

#### **World Rally-Raid Championship – Top 3 – Ultimate class**

1. C. SAINZ AUDI 76 points
2. N. AL-ATTIYAH PRODRIVE 67
3. G. CHICERIT TOYOTA 64

#### **World Rally-Raid Championship – Top 3 – Challenger class**

1. R. BACIUSKA CAN-AM 114 points
2. A. JONES CAN-AM 100
3. M. GUTHRIE JR TAURUS 85



Nasser Al-Attyiah © Kin Marcin/Red Bull Content Pool



Dennis Zenz & Seth Quintero © Kin Marcin/Red Bull Content Pool



Austin Jones © Kin Marcin/Red Bull Content Pool





Dania Akeel © Kin Marcin/Red Bull Content Pool



Cristina Gutiérrez © Kin Marcin/Red Bull Content Pool



Rokas Baciūška © Kin Marcin/Red Bull Content Pool

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## QUOTES

**Nasser Al-Attiyah:** "We worked hard on the car in preparation for the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge. The crew did an amazing job and so did my co-driver Édouard. The Dakar was disappointing this year so it feels great to be back in the fight in the world championship. This was a very tough rally and we needed to put in maximum effort to get the result that we wanted."

**Seth Quintero:** "It was a wild ride all week. We opened the road twice, we won a stage, got on the podium on four out of the five days and we finished on the overall podium. It's only our second race in the Ultimate class and we more than held our own. To be competitive against some real legends is a special feeling."

**Lucas Moraes:** "A few metres from the end of Stage 3 a fire started at the back of our car. Armand and I were so focused on finishing the stage we didn't even notice the smoke. When we finished the stage we saw the people outside pointing to the fire. I've never got out of a car so fast in my life!"

**Austin Jones:** "We've just finished up here in Abu Dhabi and we had a really good week. Shout out to my co-driver Oriol for stepping in at the last minute and riding with me, we did a great job. Thanks also to the team for



giving me such a good car. We're coming away with the win and everything went about as well as it could."

**Rokas Baciūška:** "This was not an easy rally, the dunes were super tough to cross. We spent the week fighting with Austin, all the time one and two. In the end Austin took the win and we came second. Now we're in P1 in the world championship with three rounds to go so there's plenty of points still to fight for."

**Dania Akeel:** "We had a great time this week. The Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge offers a great experience to improve as a driver. On the dunes you have to work on a lot of skills at the same time and manage the car. We were the third fastest W2RC crew and those points helped us to climb the world championship rankings."

**Cristina Gutiérrez:** "We always know it will be a tough race when we come to Abu Dhabi. We knew that the dunes would be complicated. We started with some problems with the car, but the team worked quickly to fix the issues. Once repairs had been made we were competitive on the remaining stages. We finish the race happy, knowing that we can be competitive in this category."

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## MEDIA INFO

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Nasser Al-Attiyah's co-driver Mathieu Baumel and other navigation experts decode the Dakar Rally's roadbook. Watch [here](#)

Cristina Gutiérrez and rookie Tobias Ebster give us the lowdown on how to survive the all-new 48-hour Chrono Stage. Watch [here](#)

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Biker brothers Kevin and Luciano Benavides talk about the pros and cons of racing against your family at the Dakar. Watch [here](#)

Nasser Al-Attiyah and Carlos Sainz are Dakar legends, with a total of

**eight wins between them. Taking a break from the dunes, they join In the Dust to share a unique insight. Watch [here](#)**

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