



Issy-les-Moulineaux, 14th of December 2005

Car race: "Peter" for a treble

Stéphane Peterhansel is without doubt the man who has dominated the Dakar in the last fifteen years. Winner for the first time on a bike back in 1991, he since then added to his six successes on two wheels a double in the car category. The Team Mitsubishi Ralliart leader masters his subject more than anyone else and has again based his season on the big event of the beginning of the year. His recent victory in the UAE Desert Challenge, where he conquered all eight specials of the event, just shows how impressive he is coming closer to the Dakar.

The title holder is therefore still very hungry for success. To manage a treble, "Peter" will have to be wary of all the dangers of the Dakar, that had cost him deeply in 2003, but also keep an eye on his rivals. His team mate Luc Alphand, who doesn't officially have race instructions, showed last year (2nd) that he had gained enough experience to worry his older partner. Victories in the Tunisia rally and the Portuguese Baja have added to his confidence. Two-time winner Hiroshi Masuoka, also a member of the "Mitsu" family will also be a title contender.

The danger menacing the star driver however comes from the rival constructor, Volkswagen, that looks impressive since a return in the Dakar three years ago. The new version of the Race Touareg will be driven by Bruno Saby, winner of the rally-raid World Cup with three successes in Argentina, Morocco and Turkey. The 1993 Dakar champion, will share the team leadership with Jutta Kleinschmidt, victorious in 2001 and 3rd last year, but also with the record holder of WRC rally victories Carlos Sainz, that many predict could enjoy a "Vatanen" type of career in rally-raids.

Thanks to the change of rules that authorises the automatic inflating system again, the two-wheel drive buggies should also be battling it out for victory. Jean-Louis Schlesser, winner in 1999 and 2000, will lead a three car armada including Thierry Magnaldi as a new recruit.

THE MAIN FAVOURITES: Peterhansel-Cottret (Fra/Fra – MIT), Alphand-Picard (Fra/Fra – MIT), Masuoka-Maimon (Jap/Fra – MIT), Saby-Périn (Fra/Fra – VW), Kleinschmidt-Pons (Ger/Ita – VW), De Villiers-Thörner (Saf/Swe – VW), Sainz-Schulz (Spa/Ger – VW), Schlesser-Borsotto (Fra/Fra – SCH), Magnaldi-Debron (Fra/Fra – SCH), Sousa-Lurquin (Por/Bel – NIS)

Get the list of all the competitors on www.dakar.com

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