

Aliyyah Koloc ready for her third Dakar, racing in the highest class against the likes of Al-Attiyah and Loeb

On January 3, the mythical Dakar Rally will begin with its traditional prologue, it will already be the third time that 20-year-old Aliyyah is at the start.

MONACO, FRANCE, December 31, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- It will also be the second time that Aliyyah, racing for Buggyra ZM Racing, is fighting in the Ultimate category, the top class of cross-country rallying, against big names like 5-time Dakar winner Nasser Al-Attiyah or 9-time WRC winner Sébastien Loeb. Like last year, she will be navigated by experienced Frenchman Sébastien Delaunay in a Red-Lined REVO T1+ with start number 234.

After a season of racing in both the 24h European Series as well as selected events of the FIA World Rally-Raid Championship and after testing in Abu Dhabi in mid-December, Aliyyah Koloc is about to start her third Dakar, at just 20 years old. "The test was pretty beneficial, and we learned a lot in two days. We did a lot of kilometers and ran on the same stages that are used for the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge. We found a couple of issues with the car which we fixed, so I feel confident for the Dakar."

Extensive testing due to a complete rebuild of the car



Thorough testing was particularly important this time as at her final rally-raid of 2024, the Rallye du Maroc in October, Aliyyah had a big accident that wasn't her fault. Luckily, both Aliyyah and her navigator Sébastien Delaunay were OK but the car had to be rebuilt completely. Martin Koloc, Buggyra's CEO and team principal explains: "After the accident in Morocco, we built a brand new car in just about two weeks, so testing was really important to finalize all the details and remedy any glitches that can occur with a new car. The test showed us what we needed to adapt to improve even more, and we mainly focussed on the car's reliability."



The expectations for the 2025 Dakar

While the main routes of the Dakar have remained unchanged compared to last year, there will be some interesting modifications, like the 48h Chrono stage very early in the race.



"The 2025 Dakar route looks like it will

be very tough, and every day we will have to cover a lot of kilometers. Running the 48h Chrono stage already on the second day will be very interesting," Aliyyah says of the Dakar route.

Aliyyah's Dakar results are very promising already. After finishing the race at her first attempt last year in a Can-Am and a 25th place overall in January of this year, Aliyyah wants to improve further. "I have improved my driving skills a lot this year, for which I have to thank Sébastien to a large extent. I'm feeling pretty good for this Dakar. In the years before, I didn't know what to expect, so I was very nervous. But now I have already done the Dakar in a T1+ and Sébastien and I have developed a good working relationship, so my target is to improve from my result last year," Aliyyah explains.

Sébastien Delaunay, Aliyyah's navigator, has been racing in rally-raids for over two decades. He has participated in more than 200 rallies, including 14 participations in the Dakar. "At first, it wasn't easy for Aliyyah. Coming from circuit racing, she had to learn everything, like having a navigator or driving on rocks. She's improved a lot in every aspect and she is also able to feel the car a lot better and to tune it the way she wants. Now it's about consistency, reliability. It's hard

to say if we will be Top 15, Top 20, Top 30... If she can maintain the pace we had in Morocco over the whole race, it will be a strong result," Sébastien is sure.

The mental side of things

But it is not just the car's reliability and the speed that bring good results, it is also the driver's mindset that makes a difference. "I've learned that the Dakar is a very long mental race. So, I've been trying to work on my mindset over the last few months and I think I improved. My target is to be more positive and stay focused," Aliyyah says.

The Dakar will consist of a prologue as well as 12 stages over the two-week period in January 2025, including a 48h Chrono stage and a marathon stage. The route starts in Bisha and stretches for about 7,700 kilometers, including 5,100 kilometers of specials. The notorious difficult area of the Empty Quarter will test all participants before the rally finishes in Shubaytah on January 17.

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