



SILK WAY 2019 RALLY 丝绸之路拉力赛



PRESS RELEASE

Dunguang, July 16th 2019 GMT +8

S.10 – JIAYUGUAN - DUNHUANG

Distance: 556,30KM - Selective section: 255,00KM

Sunderland, Al-Attiyah and Shibalov, the new 'White Tigers'!

With snow-capped mountains in the background, the final podium of the SILK WAY RALLY 2019, set up at the Grand Cultural Centre in Dunhuang, celebrated its winners. Sam Sunderland (Red Bull KTM Factory) in the bikes, Nasser Al-Attiyah and Mathieu Baumel (Toyota Gazoo Racing Overdrive) in the cars and Anton Shibalov (Kamaz-Master) in the trucks, today became the new 'White Tigers' of rally-raid. At the end of a thrilling race, run over more than 5000 kilometres of varied terrain – from the Siberian forests, across the Mongolian steppes, to the giant dunes of the Gobi Desert - this 9th SILK WAY RALLY sees three new names go down in the race's history books.

@ OF NOTE

Bikes: Sunderland wins first ever bike class Silk Way Rally

Cars: Al-Attiyah-Baumel, 10 out 10

Trucks: Shibalov goes up a rank

S.10 – The race





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Credit MCH Photo/Marian Chytko

Bikes: Sunderland wins first ever bike class Silk Way Rally

It is never over until it's over – especially in rally-raid. So even if he had a comfortable lead going into this last stage, Sam Sunderland was clearly relieved to get across the finish line to take victory in the first ever Silk Way Rally for bikes. In the process he increases his lead in the FIM World Championship by a substantial margin. **Sam Sunderland (Red Bull KTM Factory):** *"It has been an amazing experience, going through so much different scenery, seeing so many different sights. It is one of the things I really like most about our sport. Congratulations to the organisers for putting it all together – they did a great job. As far as the race was concerned it was a tough one. Especially these last three days in China. Fortunately, by the time we got here I had a small lead and was able to manage my race a little bit. Many thanks to my team for all their hard work."*

If there weren't too many surprises as far as the win was concerned, Andrew Short certainly wasn't the favourite to take second overall. Opening the track this morning – something he'd never done before – with both Van Beveren and Kevin Benavides just seconds behind him, not even Andrew thought he had much of a chance. **Andrew Short (Rockstar Husqvarna) 2nd:** *"For me it was the best-case scenario. I think I was very fortunate that it was really fast and defined on the roads. In terms of navigation it wasn't too critical today. There were a couple of sections that were tricky and my speed wasn't bad either. A good experience because in the future I think I will know I can open and it will be OK. Really happy with my result and really happy to have this opportunity with the team to come and do this, because it is a really cool."*

Unfortunately for Adrien Van Beveren it was one of Short's 'tricky sections' that stopped the Frenchman from taking 2nd. Leading the special at the refuelling point and 'virtually' second overall, the Yamaha rider lost the lead he'd worked so hard to build up just 10 km from the end, only holding off Kevin Benavides by 36 seconds! **Adrien Van Beveren (Yamaha Rally Team) 3rd:** *"I rode really fast to try to catch Andrew (Short) and then right at the end I lost 2 or 3 minutes in the river bed to find the good way and I lost all the time I taken back til then. I'm disappointed because I pushed so much through all the special to make the difference – it is a shame to have this mistake at the end. It is difficult to take back seconds and so easy to lose minutes. It is like that..."*

In the quads Rafal Sonik from Poland won the race ahead of Aleksandr Maksimov from Russia, who won the last special to push his rival all the way to the end. **Rafal Sonik (Yamaha Raptor 700) 1st quad:** *"Neither my team or I made any big mistakes on this rally. You need to be racing right from the start, not look just on the big stages, find the right tempo and know when to be patient. The organisers did a great job, the rally has been organised in a very good way, especially the road book. I have not even one compliant, the road book was almost perfect. If*





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someone does the road book off-hand, not paying attention, I always complain but here no complaints whatsoever.”

Cars: Al-Attiyah-Baumel, 10 out of 10

Or 9 out of 9 if you don't count the liaison stage from Mongolia to China. Either way, difficult to do better. By winning every stage from Irkutsk to Dunhuang, Nasser Al-Attiyah and Mathieu Baumel (Toyota Gazoo Racing Overdrive) made their mark on this rally in no uncertain style, showing just how determined they were to add one of the few races that escaped them until now to their already impressive tally. **Nasser Al-Attiyah (Qat/Toyota Gazoo Racing Overdrive) 1st:** *“I am so happy to finally win this SILK WAY RALLY after having twice finished second. It was important to me because it is a big and beautiful race. We have crossed three very different countries, with completely different stages and terrain. I will never forget the first stage in China. I think it was one of the most difficult of my career. Winning all the specials since the start is simply the cherry on the cake, my seventh victory in row this season. It is the fruit, of course, of the work of a whole team and obviously my co-driver Mathieu, without which none of this would be possible.”*

The best crew currently racing, in the best car of the entry list: were these ingredients alone enough to achieve such a faultless drive? *“An essential ingredient, that we often forget, is that not only is Nasser the fastest driver here but also he drives in complete harmony with his machine,”* commented Jean-Marc Fortin, team manager of Toyota Gazoo Racing Overdrive.

Beaten by the Qatari driver by 1h25, Han Wei (Buggy Geely SMG) used his knowledge of 'his' desert to finish 2nd, one place higher than his best result to date, back in 2017, when the rally finished in Xi'an. **Han Wei (Buggy Geely SMG) 3rd:** *“My cars has suffered from an engine problem since the start - sand in a cylinder inherited from a previous rally. It is why throughout the event we have constantly been adding oil, without ever knowing if we would be able to get to the end. I would like therefore thank my co-driver for his excellent job... and my sponsor for having supplied me with such excellent oil!”*

With a much-improved buggy, the French pairing of Jérôme Pélichet and Pascal Larroque (Optimus Raid Lynx) finished 3rd, a considerably better result than they'd dreamed of at the start. Proof that on such a long rally as the Silk Way 'more speed, less haste' is advise worth heeding... **Jérôme Pélichet (Fra/Optimus Raid Lynx) 3rd:** *“What joy to finish on this final podium. I knew there were about a dozen cars that were faster than us on the start line of this SILK WAY RALLY, so I was hoping for a place in the top 5. But finishing third? I would never have bet on it. This morning, after yesterday's problems, we set off in attack mode. I made a mistake in not asking to be reclassified, so we started 15th and I was worried about some strategy from the Shanxi Yunxiang team buggies. So I drove flat out, to post the third time on the stage and make sure of our third place on the podium, which will be one of the best memories of my career... Right now I'm ready to set off for another two days racing in the Gobi Desert!”*

Trucks: Shibalov goes up a rank

By winning the three last stages in China to take over from Viazovich (MAZ), Anton Shibalov (Kamaz-Master) has seen his status rise within the team from Nabereinye Tchelny. Kamaz-Master have dominated the truck category in rally-raid for the last two decades and so inevitably places within the team our highly coveted. With No 303 on the side of his vehicle, Anton Shibalov had, in accordance with team tradition, taken the start at Irkutsk, loaded with





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spares for his teammates starting ahead of him. Very quickly however he emerged as the most competitive challenger to the Siarhey Viazovich and his new long-nosed MAZ. Relieved of his load he put together a series of strong results to pull ahead of his teammates, Karginov and Mardeev. **Anton Shibalov (Kamaz-Master) 1st** *“I will never forget this race, my first victory on the SILK WAY RALLY. This edition has been really magnificent, but very tough. So my satisfaction is even greater. The most difficult thing was to navigate off-piste in the dunes on the first stage in China. I haven't quite taken in what we have achieved. I am going to have a rest before expressing my emotions.”*



STAT OF THE DAY

83

Of the 97 vehicles entered on this 2019 edition of the SILK WAY RALLY, 93 (24 bikes and quads, 51 cars and 16 trucks) officially took the start at Irkutsk on 6 July. At the finish, after ten days and some 5000 kilometres of racing there were 77 (22 bikes and quads, 43 cars and 12 trucks) at the final finish line in Dunhuang, an impressive 83% finish rate.

QUOTES

Vladimir Chagin (Silk Way Rally Director): *“With an international team of very dedicated people we put together a rally that crossed three countries, with very different types of terrain and today we have on the podium three very worth winners of three different nationalities. This spirit of cooperation, combined with adventure and discovery, is what makes our rally so special and motivates us to do something even more exciting for next year's 10 anniversary. Thank you to everybody who participated in the Silk Way Rally 2019; authorities, competitors, assistance, officials, media and organisers, for making it all possible.”*

Frédéric Lequien (Silk Way Rally Deputy Director): *“This SILK WAY RALLY 2019 provoked in us every emotion possible. The introduction of the motorcycle category as part of the FIM World Championship was a great success. The race was thrilling from beginning to end and I am certain that the many factory teams entered appreciated the diversity of the terrain and the professionalism of the organisation. Followed by millions of TV viewers worldwide, this 9th edition gave us amazing images of fantastic scenery that will stay in our collective memories for a very long time. The SILK WAY RALLY has entered a new dimension and is ready to take another big step next year for its 10th anniversary edition.”*



FAITHFUL PARTNERS

GAZPROM, the rally's main partner





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The Russian global energy company PJSC Gazprom has been engaged on the event as a main partner since the first edition of the Silk Way Rally in 2009.

TOYOTA, « official vehicles » of the organization

Toyota Hilux for the forth time already are the Silk Way Rally official cars.

Because of their unique design and capabilities, TOYOTA all-terrain vehicles have proved their extraordinary resistance during the various reconnaissance and on the rally. Toyota is producing vehicles that you can rely on in any situation. Distinguishing characteristics offroad, endurance, an amazing ability to adapt to harsh road conditions and climate.... Main idea is that Land Cruiser Prado, Land Cruiser 200, Fortuner and Hilux tackle the challenges delegated to them.

SIBUR, technical partner

PJSC SIBUR is the largest integrated petrochemicals company in Russia and the technical partner for innovative materials. They are sponsoring a special award for "impressive vehicle reliability and excellent skills demonstrated under extreme circumstances".

GAZPROM NEFT, official fuel partner

Gazprom will be filling up the Silk Way Rally's vehicles along the route with the company's branded diesel fuel, *Diesel Opti*. OPTI fuel performed excellently in extreme conditions, and our continuing cooperation is the best proof.

GAZPROMBANK, financial partner

Gazprombank is one of the largest multifunctional banks in Russia.

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