

Loeb takes fight to the finish as BRX close in on Dakar history

Team eyes record as first to complete world's toughest rally on sustainable fuel

● **Sebastien Loeb reduces Nasser Al Attiyah's overall lead to 32 mins 40 secs**

TDT | Manama

Sebastien Loeb's pursuit of a first Dakar victory will continue for at least another day as Bahrain Raid Xtreme close in on another piece of rally history in Saudi Arabia.

By the end of yesterday's 375-km tenth, the nine-times World Rally Champion and co-driver Fabian Lurquin in a BRX Prodrive Hunter had reduced Nasser Al Attiyah's overall lead to 32 mins 40 secs.

While it will require a major drama on one of the two remaining stages to block a fourth Dakar win for Al Attiyah, Loeb will take the fight to the end, with BRX team-mate Orlando Terranova tracking him home in fourth position.



Sebastien Loeb steers his BRX Prodrive Hunter during Stage 10 of Dakar Rally

Stéphane Peterhansel won the Wadi Ad Dawasir to Bisha stage from Carlos Sainz, as Terranova and Dani Oliveras finished third

in their Prodrive Hunter and Loeb clocked the fifth best time, 1 min 25 secs ahead of Al Attiyah in seventh.

Two-dimes Dakar winner Nani Roma and Alex Haro, whose challenge was almost ended by first week problems

“Tomorrow is the last big chance to take time but as I've been saying from the beginning, we will see where we are on Friday in Jeddah. We cannot try more than what we are doing now as we are pushing to the maximum on all the sections

SEBASTIEN LOEB

in the Saudi desert, also kept the third Prodrive Hunter on course for a finish in Jeddah on tomorrow.

It means BRX is on the verge of becoming the first top Dakar team to complete the toughest motorsport endurance event in the world with a full complement of cars running on next generation advanced sustainable fuel.

“It was a good day out there,” said Loeb. “The first part of the

stage was really fast and then the second part was much more interesting with tracks and real driving so I could make quite a difference at the end of the stage.

“Tomorrow is the last big chance to take time but as I've been saying from the beginning, we will see where we are on Friday in Jeddah. We cannot try more than what we are doing now as we are pushing to the maximum on all the sections.”

Terranova said: “Today was a really good day for us as I said we will push and we did because nothing is over yet. There are still two more days and we need to be on the pace ready for the finish.

Roma completed the stage to say: “It was a stage with so many different surfaces today but the thing that was hardest was the sun in my eyes at the start of the stage. That was really tricky because climbing a dunes you have to angle your car over to one side to not look at the sun directly, but that's all part of the adventure of rally raid.”

MMA Super Cup to inject \$225,000 in the development of MMA through prize pool

TDT | Manama

The MMA Super Cup, a single elimination tournament between the best ranked nations in amateur MMA, announced this Monday in a press conference in the Kingdom of Bahrain, will inject a grand total of US \$225,000 in the development of the grassroots level of the sport through the largest prize money to be awarded to national federations in Mixed Martial Arts history.

In addition to the unique opportunity to showcase their best talents and test their biggest stars against the greatest amateur fighters in the world, the nations winning gold, silver, and bronze medals will be awarded a prize check each.



Kerrith Brown - IMMAF President and Mohammed Qambar - BMAAF President at the press conference

The champion nation will take home the very first MMA Super Cup trophy and a US \$100,000 prize money. The runner-ups will take US \$75,000 and the winner of the third place match

BETTER YOU KNOW

The champion nation will take home the very first MMA Super Cup trophy and a US \$100,000 prize money. The runner-ups will take US \$75,000 and the winner of the third place match will be granted US \$50,000

will be granted US \$50,000.

On top of rewarding the most prominent nations and their results, the initiative serves as a huge incentive to reinvestment for established federations and a foment to investment and growth to developing nations, with local governments and companies more prone to invest in their national heroes due to the financial and visibility return brought by them.

The first edition of the MMA Supercup will take place between 7 and 12 of March, during the 2022 BRAVE International Combat Week. The 8-nation tournament will see the top 6 ranked nations in the senior IMMAF ranking plus two wild cards.

Muguruza 'manages anxiety' to make winning start to season



Garbine Muguruza
AFP | Sydney

Australian Open third seed Garbine Muguruza made a confident start to her season with a straight-sets win over battling Ekaterina Alexandrova yesterday at the Sydney Classic.

The Spanish world number three, who had a first-round bye in Sydney, withstood a fightback from the 40th-ranked Russian in the second set to win 6-1, 7-6 (7/4).

Muguruza will now play another Russian, Daria Kasatkina, in the quarter-finals after she upset Belgian Elise Mertens 6-3, 6-4.

Muguruza, a former world number one and two-time Grand Slam champion, will be one of the main contenders for next week's Australian Open.

Her best result at Melbourne Park was in 2020, when she finished runner-up to surprise winner Sofia Kenin.

Playing her first match since winning the WTA Finals in November, the 28-year-old Muguruza said she was encouraged by the way she had stayed strong when facing five set points in the second set.

Djokovic admits 'errors' as he fights to avoid Australian deportation

AFP | Melbourne

Novak Djokovic yesterday admitted “errors” in his travel papers and for not isolating after a claimed coronavirus infection, as he battled to stay in Australia and fight for a record 21st Grand Slam.

The world number one said his team had offered fresh information to the Australian government, which is pondering whether to cancel his visa, again, and throw him out of the country.

“We are living in challenging times in a global pandemic and sometimes these mistakes can occur,” the unvaccinated 34-year-old said in a statement released as he practised on the courts of the Australian Open, which starts Monday.

The Serbian star flew into Melbourne a week ago claiming a vaccine exemption because of a positive PCR test result on December 16.

Border agents rejected his exemption saying a recent infection did not qualify,



Serbia's Novak Djokovic practices in Melbourne

tore up his visa and placed him in a detention centre.

But the vaccine-sceptic Djokovic's high-powered legal team dramatically overturned the visa decision in court on Monday on a procedural matter related to his airport interview.

“I felt obligated to go ahead ... but did ensure I socially distanced and wore a mask except when my photograph was being taken. While I went home after the interview to isolate for the required period, on reflection, this was an error of judgment

NOVAK DJOKOVIC

Now, Immigration Minister Alex Hawke says he is considering cancelling the visa another time, as fresh doubts emerge.

In an update to Australian media, his spokesman acknowledged receiving “lengthy further submissions” from the player's lawyers.

“Naturally, this will affect the timeframe for a decision,” he said.

'Error of judgement'

Djokovic, a nine-time Australian Open champion, described reports about his post-infection outings in Serbia as “misinformation”.

On the day of his claimed positive test in Serbia, he appeared at a ceremony to honour him with stamps bearing his image. The following day he attended a youth tennis event. He appeared at both apparently without a mask.

Djokovic, who made no mention of the stamp ceremony, said he only received the PCR test result after attending the children's tennis event.

But he admitted that he also went ahead with an interview and photoshoot with French sports newspaper L'Equipe on December 18.

“I felt obliged to go ahead and conduct the L'Equipe interview as I didn't want to let the journalist down but did ensure I socially distanced and wore a mask except when my photograph was being taken,” he said.