

Friday the 13th brought Aliyyah Koloc a top 10 finish; Valtr and Šoltys helped each other out of trouble

The "cursed date" of Friday the 13th fortunately only came half true for the Buggyra ZM Racing team on today's 12th stage of the Dakar.

TALLIN, ESTONIA, January 13, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- While both of the Buggyra Can-Am DV 21 crews completed the second part of the marathon stage without any issues, Jaroslav Valtr and Martin Šoltys had some back luck in the dunes of the tricky Empty Quarter desert today. Debutant Aliyyah Koloc scored her second top 10 finish in the T3 - Lightweight Prototypes category in what is her first Dakar. The 18-year-old was 10th today, moving up to thirty-second overall. Josef Machacek finished 23rd today and remains 11th overall. Jaroslav Valter stalled in the dunes which meant only a 13th place in today's stage, making him fifth overall. Martin Šoltys is right behind him in the overall standings despite experiencing some issues today. He finished the stage with the 15th best time. Robert Kasák is one place behind Šoltys in the daily standings and 15th overall. In the Dakar Classic category, Radovan Kazarka came fifth, he is third overall.



Despite the fact that she is a newcomer to the Dakar Rally and is only eighteen, Aliyyah Koloc is driving like a seasoned pro through the Saudi Arabian desert. On today's stage she left behind names like Red Bull stars Seth Quintero from the USA and Chilean three-time Dakar winner

Francisco "Chaleco" Lopez. "We treated the car well yesterday, so we went into the second part of the marathon stage without any major technical problems. I tried to go faster today. I really love the dunes, I felt great in the car. I feel like it was my best day of the Dakar so far. I am happy," said the young driver.



It also helped that she slept well in the makeshift bivouac between the two parts of the marathon stage. "If there is nothing wrong with your car, the marathon stage is really great fun. I also got to enjoy the job of a mechanic a little bit as I had to attend the Can-Am service in the evening," Aliyyah Koloc explained with a laugh.



Josef Machacek understood the magic of today's date at the start. "On Friday the 13th, they started our stage by checking the flame retardant underwear and I wore my old socks. So

I had to go back to get the right ones. After the start, our engine went on two cylinders. We had to come back from the first dune, stop and fix it. We fixed one coil and went for a drive," the six-time Dakar champion described his difficult day. "After about two kilometres we hit the front of the car really hard. Fortunately, that was our last problem today and then we drove as fast as we could. It was very difficult but we really like it," said a satisfied Josef Machacek.

Navigator David Schovánek had only words of praise for his pilot: "Today was really challenging. Long dunes, high, hard. We had some critical moments. We had to go down, turn around and go up again. But Pepa handled everything beautifully and the two of us put it together nicely."

Jaroslav Valtr knew from the morning that something was going to happen. "I got up in the morning, looked at my phone and saw it was Friday the 13th. So I think to myself: That's not good."

And unfortunately, he was right. "We got to about kilometer 15 when we hit the dunes. I saw Van Kasteren struggling there, so I went carefully. I found a way that he seemed to have taken, and somehow he managed to get through that little hole in the sand. It was awfully narrow and I fell down in it. I had to wait for about half an hour until Martin Soltys arrived. Then we went for it."

Robo Kasák came too, so we pulled the Tatra with two trucks. We set it up, pulled it out and drove on. After another 30 km or so we saw Soltys on the highest dune. It was now his turn to have put his truck on the side. We didn't do too well today. But then we drove until the end without any problems," Jaroslav Valtr described his dramatic day.

His team-mate Martin Šoltys was not happy at the end of the stage either, because he had to put his Tatra back on to its wheels twice. "I am angry with myself. I made two big mistakes today today. That's more than in the last six years combined," said the Tatra Buggyra ZM Racing driver angrily.

"We started off pretty well. At about kilometer 40, three people waved at us and I didn't see any cars. It was only when we got closer that I saw that Jarda Valtr had fallen into a hole. You couldn't see the car at all. We fought it for an hour or two, I am not sure. It was difficult to get the car out in the heat, but Robo Kasák helped us," he said, describing how he helped his Buggyra team-mate.

Then Šoltys himself got into trouble. "We continued. But as I was tired and probably not concentrating properly, we drove up a big dune. As always, I tried to jump over it to the other side. I don't know what happened, but we just fell over the side. Unfortunately, it was a dune of about 200 meters high and we were stuck on top. When Jarda arrived, he pulled us up and back on to our wheels again, so we could continue. We then set off after him, but after about 30 to 50 km there was a standard turn, and we fell in again. I was thinking: This can't even be possible. Another team helped us and then we somehow made it to the finish," said Šoltys.

According to him, his navigator Roman Krejčí deserves a lot of credit. "Roman is a terrible fighter. No matter what happens, he always wants to go forward. Without him, I don't know how it would have turned out. I was very tired physically and mentally today. It doesn't seem like it, but when the truck falls on to its side, it's very hard. Roman was the one who got us to get back in the truck and pushed us on again."

Róbert Kasák and his Phoenix did not stay away either and helped both Tatrás back on their wheels. "It was challenging, but I quite enjoyed it. We did it, we are at the finish line. I just feel sorry for the guys that we had to push them back onto their wheels. But it happens. We lay down in the first part, they lay down in the second," said the Tatra Buggyra Slovakian pilot.

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