

Aliyyah Koloc takes her best-ever cross-country result with Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge podium

Aliyyah Koloc recorded the best cross-country result of her career, finishing third among the registered FIA World Rally-Raid Championship runners in the T3.

TALLIN, ESTONIA, March 4, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Following their maiden appearance on the iconic Dakar Rally in January, Aliyyah and French navigator Stéphane Duplé embarked on another new adventure in the United Arab Emirates, contesting the ADDC for the very first time. In total, the rally covered five special stages and a prologue, covering over 1000 kilometres across six days. At the end of the gruelling event, Aliyyah and Stéphane brought their #310 Buggyra ZM Racing Can-Am home fifth overall among the T3 runners but, more importantly, third in T3 of the W2RC registered competitors.

"It was great to finish third out of the W2RC runners. I did not expect to get a podium finish coming into this rally, but I am really happy!" said an elated Aliyyah at the end of the rally. "A big thank you to the team for repairing the car after the Dakar Rally, it is now good as new."

Buggyra ZM Racing team principal, Martin Koloc, was equally as impressed: "It's the best result for Aliyyah, for the team, there's not much more to say. A great job by all the guys, Aliyyah and Stéphane, it was really impressive."



Prologue, Stages 1 & 2

The rally kicked off on Sunday 26 February with a short 6km prologue in Abu Dhabi. Aliyyah placed inside the top 10, dropping just 22 seconds to the fastest time before the first proper stage of the rally the following day.

Aliyyah and Stéphane then enjoyed a largely trouble-free opening stage of the event, a 242km stretch from Al Dhannah City to Qasr Al Sarab. Despite suffering a brief scare over a broken dune, the pair made it to the finish setting the ninth quickest time; the experience gained was the most important takeaway from stage one.

“It’s my first time racing here,” said Aliyyah post-stage. “It’s not easy because it’s only sand. There were a lot of broken dunes. There were some moments where I got a little jump scare from a dune, I didn’t see and it was really sharp down, but we didn’t have major problems.”

Stage two was also a good one for Aliyyah and Stéphane despite a minor driveshaft issue towards the end of the 257k loop around Qasr Al Sarab. Upon reaching the finish, Aliyyah sat in an impressive fifth place overall, and third in W2RC.

Stages 3 – 5

After two hot days of action, stage three was decidedly cooler in temperature, which meant a faster stage for Aliyyah and Stéphane. A missed waypoint forced the pair to circle back so as not to incur a heavy penalty, which dropped them around 30 seconds, but Aliyyah showed super pace throughout the stage despite a broken belt 20km before the end, to finish ninth fastest.

“Today was cooler and cloudy so it was refreshing after the past two days which had been really hot. The stage was faster, it went smoother, so I enjoyed it a lot. A car passed us so we were behind them for a long time. It was pretty fun. Around 20 km to the end we broke the belt, so we



were stuck in there and it took a lot of time to get it out. We got most of it out and changed it.”

Aliyyah and Stéphane consolidated their third place in the W2RC order on stage four, a shortened stage due to inclement weather in the region. A bent axle after a misjudged jump forced the pairing to stop and make repairs early in the stage, losing half an hour. After limiting the time loss, Aliyyah managed the pace well amid myriad broken dunes ahead of the final stage.

The last stage went smoothly for Aliyyah and Stéphane who brought the car home safely to secure their first World Rally-Raid Championship podium finish in the T3 Lightweight Prototype category.

Despite their issues, they finished just over two hours down on the winner, Seth Quintero, but comfortably ahead of the fourth-placed crew at the end.

“Today, we are really happy, we finished the rally whereas many others crashed, so this is a good point for us,” said Duplé at the finish. “It wasn’t easy, today was very cool, very fun. Aliyyah managed the car really well, we had no issues driving, no issues with the car, no issues with the navigation, today was perfect. “We had a lot of big and small dunes; we finished third overall in the T3, so this is a great result for us because there are some really good competitors in this category.”

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