

SA teams flew local manufacturing flag high at 2024 Dakar Rally

In the 2024 Dakar Rally, South African competitors and vehicle manufacturers showcased their global competitiveness, securing numerous accolades after two strenuous weeks of racing over 4,700km which were timed from Al-'Ula to the Red Sea, navigating the formidable dunes of the Empty Quarter.



Team Woolridge and Dreyer at the 2024 Daka Rally

The 46th edition of this demanding rally-raid race, spanning nearly 8,000km, was won by the Spanish duo of Carlos Sainz and Lucas Cruz in a hybrid Audi. This marked the fourth victory for 61-year-old Sainz, despite not winning a stage this year. The Ultimate Cars podium was completed by Guillaume de Mevius and Xavier Panseri in their South African-built Overdrive Toyota Hilux, with Sebastian Loeb and Fabian Lurquin of Bahrain Raid Xtreme finishing third.

The results highlight the success of the South African Rally-Raid Championship, with local vehicle manufacturers Toyota, Ford, Century Racing, and Red-Lined Motorsport all achieving remarkable results. This success also underscores the effectiveness of the SARRC in establishing the foundation for high-level international participation.

Of the 22 Toyota Hilux vehicles that started the Dakar Rally, all were built in South Africa, with only two failing to finish the event. There were also 12 Century Racing vehicles, with seven completing the event; two Neil Woolridge Motorsport Ford Rangers started and finished, and two of the three Red-Lined Motorsport REVO T1+ crossed the finish line.



2024 Dakar stage 12 results – The final day

19 Jan 2024



All five Toyota Gazoo Racing (TGR) GR IMT Hilux T1U, including two rookie drivers, Guy Botterill and Saood Variawa (18), received their finishers medals, with three of the teams finishing in the top 10. Botterill, who won the rookie award after completing his maiden Dakar Rally, paired with Brett Cummings to finish sixth overall.

Giniel de Villiers and Dennis Murphy finished 7th after losing time due to punctures and navigational issues. The Brazilian/Spanish team, Lucas Moraes and Armand Monleon, had to settle for 9th after a suspension issue on the

penultimate stage cost them valuable time.

De Villiers sets new Dakar Rally records

The consistent former winner and multiple SA champion now holds the record for starting and finishing the most Dakar Rally races consecutively – 21 – while he has only once not finished in the top 10.

It was the ultimate learning curve for the young Saood Variawa, who was the youngest driver in the Ultimate Class. He showed his talent by finishing 16th overall together with French navigator, Francois Cazalet.

The fifth TGR team, the American Seth Quintero and navigator Dennis Zenz had to settle for 42nd place due to a time penalty for an engine change.



Giniel de Villiers set new Dakar records

Two more SA built Toyota Hilux vehicles finished in the top 10 with Chicherit/Winocq 4th and Vanagas/Sikk 8th.

Another SA built vehicle, the 4x2 Century Racing CR6-T in the hands of the French crew, Mathieu Serradori and Loic Minaudier, also finished in the top 10. The team were 5th overall after Stage 9 but dropped to 10th after their vehicle was damaged. They were, however, the winners of the T1.2 class for 4x2 vehicles with four more CR vehicles finishing in the top 10 of the T1.2 Class.

Seven of the 12 Century Racing vehicles that started the Dakar Rally, finished the race with the SA team of Brian

Baragwanath/Leonard Cremer finishing 38th – they were second fastest on Stage 10 – after completing an eventful race with the new 4x4 CR7. Faulty vehicle parts resulted in the team missing two stages in the first week while waiting for parts to be flown in from South Africa and the team receiving a time penalty.

Keep on rolling

The newly crowned SA Rally-Raid Champions, Gareth Woolridge and Boyd Dreyer completed their maiden Dakar Rally in the NWM M-Sport T1+ Ranger in 44th place after a steep learning curve that saw them rolling their vehicle in Stage Seven.

The team made a calculated decision, taking advantage of the rules, with Woolridge/Dreyer missing Stage 8 and incurring the penalty, which paid dividends in the closing stages of this epic event. Their team-mates, former winner on two and four wheels, Nani Roma and Alex Haro, finished a hard but enjoyable event and were 44th in the Ultimate Class despite experiencing mechanical difficulties.

Another Midrand vehicle manufacturer, Red-Lined Motorsport, was represented by three REVO T1+ vehicles at the 2024 edition of the Dakar Rally with two teams successfully seeing out the distance.

The 19 year-old lady driver, Aliyyah Koloc and her experienced navigator, Sébastien Delaunay finished in an impressive 25th place overall. The Belgian driver, Stefan Carmans and Dutch navigator, Antonius van Tiel, romped home in 34th place in their REVO T1+.



All the Toyota Hilux vehicles that entered the 2024 Dakar Rally were built in SA

'SA vehicle manufacturers come up trumps'

Of the 70 competing vehicles in the Ultimate Class, a total of 39 were built in SA with 31 finishing this gruelling event while nine of the 11 South African competitors in the vehicle category completed the event.

“Once again South African vehicle manufacturers and their technical crews have come up trumps on this gruelling event,” said SARR chief executive officer Archie Rutherford. “It is more proof of the high standards and professionalism that abound in Rally-Raid racing in this country.”

“We can be unashamedly proud of the South African connection at Dakar 2024, and these performances will set the tone when the SA Rally-Raid Championship gets underway in April this year.”

