

Transsyberia Rally 2008 powered by Sony Ericsson: Mongolia challenges the participants Armin Schwarz continues race to catch up

The expanses of Mongolia seduce you to accelerate, especially when the sky is blue. The hidden trenches and bumps force unintentional stops with big material losses. Armin Schwarz knows this from 2007 and is driving fast, but level-headed. Now he was able to reduce his lag time to the leading Team France with Lavieille and Borsotto by more than 30 minutes.

Sunshine, azure skies, bounteous highlands surrounded by gentle mountains and off-road vehicles ready for take off – the right setting for a marathon rally day. With 407 km, today's longest special stage of the Transsyberia Rally 2008 powered by Sony Ericsson took place. The entire leg ran for 529 kilometers from the village of Altai to the district of Bayankhongor. Mechanics and service crews worked all night in order to prepare the cars for the long stage. 24 of the former 34 teams, who started off in Moscow, were able to accept today's challenge. "It proves true that the Transsyberia is the most difficult rally in the world for near-series vehicles.", the organizer Richard Schalber said about the loss of meanwhile almost one third of the participants.

Bayankhor, July 23rd, 2008

Team Germany 1 continued its winning streak during the final spurt of the rally. Just as they did yesterday, duo Armin Schwarz/Andi Schulz were the first to speed across the finish-line. While the sun set, the winner of the day gave his statement in the best mood: "On this terrain, one can easily overlook something. In the steppe one is fast, and then suddenly a ditch appears, which the water has torn. We didn't go full throttle, because else one easily overlooks those kind of traps. Andi did a perfect job today. We gave everything that was difficult a wide berth and could therefore play out our speed." The team was able to make up 30 minutes in the overall standings and will be starting tomorrow with a 1:24 hour lag to Christian Lavieille and Francois Borsotto (Team France), who have been in the lead for four stages. "To catch up with the French is pretty much impossible. They're a well-rehearsed team with off-road and Dakar experience. They don't make any navigation mistakes and they don't damage their car. In order for us to catch up with them before Ulaanbaatar, they would have to make a really crass mistake. Sure we want to make them a little nervous by driving well. Maybe a chance will then present itself to us."

Pilot Pau Soler (Team Spain) steered his car into second place. The Spaniards pushed ahead into third place in the overall standings (2:24:06 hours lag time), thanks to the perfect navigation by co-pilot Laia Peinado, who already gave prove of her abilities by winning the first Mongolian stage.

After yesterday's setback, Team Portugal was on the road to success again today. With 32:36 minutes lag Pedro Gameiro and Pedro Figueiredo drove into fourth place in the special stage, as well as in the overall standings. Difficult, but still possible is a place on the podium in the Mongolian capital for the fifth placed in the overall standings, the Russians Denis Levyatov and Sergey Talantsev.

About nine kilometers before the destination, Team Qatar drove into a hidden lateral groove and broke the rear suspension of their car. Adel Abdulla and Norbert Lutteri had to take risks, and held an ideal position for 390 kilometers. Then however the impassable terrain took its toll and they lost valuable time getting caught behind team France's dust cloud. Nevertheless: First Top 3 placement at the Transsyberia 2008 for the experienced duo Abdulla/Lutteri, who rolled across the finish line on three wheels.

Today went terrific for the Danner Racing Team too. The Austrian Christof Danner drove his Mercedes G 320 into the destined camp in 8th place. "After the malfunctions it was about time! The repairs were worth it. The stretch was variable, we were always on the move and we didn't get lost". Navigator Jan Szekeres made a good job of it and was also satisfied. "I just had to slow Christoph down, when the helicopter with the TV crew and the photographers flew over us. He automatically sped up to present himself well. But I had to still follow the drawings in the road book and apply them at the same time."

Navigation and considerate driving played a major part during the longest special stage of the Transsyberia Rally 2008 powered by Sony Ericsson. Characteristic for the stretches of the expanses in Mongolia are the bumps and potholes, which are easily overlooked and can have fatal consequences. A day beforehand Ryan Millen, Team USA got caught. He “parked” his Cayenne across a 6.6 feet deep gorge. His rearmost starting place today made him a dust catcher on this hot and dry day. “Attack was the only chance to play in the upper league of the rally again”, said Ryan Millen/USA. In the second section the teams ran smoothly, almost each one had found its rythm. Unfortunately Lars Kern and Daniel van Kan (Team Germany 3) didn’t. Yesterday’s second placed weren’t able to continue the stage, due to presumed engine failure and were towed into the camp. Lots of grooves, potholes and hidden ditches hampered the crossing of the terrain. Tomorrow the second to last stage (339 kilometer) of the Transsyberia 2008 with the destination Mongol Els is taking place, before Ulaanbaatar is reached on Friday.

 Daily standings Transsyberia Rally 2008, July 23rd, Altay – *Bayankhongor*

1. Schwarz/Schulz	Team Germany 1	Porsche	05:43:42 hrs.
2. Soler/Peinado	Team Spain	Porsche	00:21:02 hrs. leg
3. Abdulla/Lutteri	Team Qatar	Porsche	00:32:01
4. Gameiro/Figueiredo	Team Portuguese	Porsche	00:32:36
5. Levyatov/Talantsev	Team Russia 1	Porsche	00:32:39
6. Lavieille/Borsotto	Team France	Porsche	00:34:53
7. Millen/Godby	Team USA	Porsche	00:50:46
8. Celma/Unger	Team Germany 2	Porsche	00:51:22
9. Danner/Szekeres	Danner Racing Team	Mercedes	01:06:14
10. Ogawa/Kaneko	Team Japan	Porsche	01:24:23

 Overall standings as of July 23rd, 2008

1. Lavieille/Borsotto	Team France	Porsche	22:46:08 hrs.
2. Schwarz/Schulz	Team Germany 1	Porsche	01:24:54 hrs. lag
3. Soler/Peinado	Team Spain	Porsche	02:24:06
4. Gameiro/Figueiredo	Team Portuguese	Porsche	02:33:00
5. Levyatov/Talantsev	Team Russia 1	Porsche	03:31:21
6. Celma/Unger	Team Germany 2	Porsche	06:54:15
7. Baier/Steinbring	Teambuctou	Toyota	09:05:58
8. Pfeil-Schneider/Steuer	Colombian Arrow	Porsche	10:27:56
9. Szustkowski/Kazberuk	STT Racing/Poland 2	Porsche	13:12:33
10. Millen/Godby	Team USA	Porsche	15:35:06

Spectacular images free of charge at: <http://www.transsyberia-rallye.de/en/presstart/pressphotos/>.

Which team is in which position? What's the up-to-date course of the stages? You can follow each team of the Transsyberia Rally 2008 closely on the screen via the Live Tracker at <http://www.transsyberia-rallye.de/en/route/live-trackingen/>.

The Transsyberia Rally 2008 can be followed from the perspective of the participants in a daily photo blog at www.transsyberia-rallye.com. The teams are recording their personal impressions and experiences with the new water- and dirt resistant Sony Ericsson C702 Cyber-shot-cell phone.

TV and Online

REBEL Media accompanies the teams for the entire rally with a TV production crew and records the rally events in HD quality. Daily news feeds, rough cuts and video clips are guaranteed and downloadable via FTP server. We'll be happy to supply you with additional details upon request.

You'll find daily updated information, as well as downloadable text material of the Transsyberia Rally 2008 powered by Sony Ericsson at:

<http://www.transsyberia-rallye.de/de/presse/> (German)

<http://www.transsyberia-rallye.de/en/presstart/> (English)

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