

World's most challenging race extends over 7,500-km, starting in Jeddah and ending in Qiddiya

Saudi desert ready to host Dakar Rally's first adventure in Asia

RIYADH, Dec 14: Three weeks is all that separates the world of motorsport from the launch of the world's most challenging race when Dakar Rally Saudi Arabia 2020 begins in Jeddah on Jan 5.

It will be the first time this adventurous race comes to Asia, where Saudi Arabia's desert will play host to the 7500-km long adventure over 13 days of action and 12 stages of challenging navigation across the kingdom's remarkable desert.

Taking place from Jan 5-7, the first edition of Dakar Rally in Saudi Arabia will see more than 550 drivers from 62 nations explore the vast and formidable desert terrains of Saudi Arabia.

"We were really excited by the extremely beautiful landscape and the deserts were exactly what we expected with the dunes, the nice mountains and small canyons. We have some stages along the sea also, so it will be a mixed landscape, which is very interesting," 13-time Dakar Rally winner Stéphane Peterhansel said.

RALLYING

"Saudi Arabia is a big country, so there are a lot of possibilities. It has a lot of deserts, which makes it the perfect place to organise Dakar for sure," the French driver added.

Dakar Saudi Arabia 2020 gets underway in Jeddah before drivers and crews navigate their way through the fast and winding dunes and stones for 752-km.

The intimidating challenge continues up north along the coast for nearly 900-km through the Red Sea Project till it reaches the futuristic megacity of Neom, where the marvellous journey reaches its highest point at an altitude of 1,400 metres amid a series of canyons and mountains.

A combination of sandy stretches and gravel await Dakar's thrill-seeking competitors as they cruise next through 676-km of the formidable trip from Neom to Al Ula in Dakar's Fourth Stage before the sandy hills of Ha'il put the navigation skills of competitors to the test while descending south onto Riyadh.

A rest day in the capital will be followed by Dakar Saudi Arabia's longest stage of 741-km as the route takes a turn to the west in the centre of the kingdom's enormous desert before looping back towards Haradh in the Eastern Governorate of Al Ahsa, marking the entrance to the Empty Quarter and building up to the grand finale in the future entertainment, sports and cultural destination of Qiddiya, where the winner will be crowned on the final podium.

"Here in Saudi you can find anything. I think everybody is surprised and shocked by what they are seeing. The country is very very big and very beautiful. You can find winter and summer on the same day whether in the north or the west [or elsewhere]. It is a very big country and you can find every terrain in it," Saudi driver Yazeed Al Rajhi said of his country hosting Dakar Rally for the first time.

Spanish rally driver Carlos Sainz added: "I think everyone finds it very exciting because of what we have seen. It seems to be really really what Dakar needs, and we are hoping to enjoy it



Sir Winston Churchill Cup 2019 Winner - Mahra-LLVC



Runners Up - Habtoor Polo



MVP Frederico Potobsky



Best Playing Pony Cosmetica

Mahra/LLVC Polo Team win Sir Winston Churchill Cup 2019

and have a good race."

Saudi Automobile and Motorcycle Federation had officially confirmed route details of the world's most challenging rally at an international press conference in Paris. Dakar Saudi Arabia 2020 will see pilots drive specially modified vehicles, trucks, quad, SxS, and motorbikes, designed to handle 12 stages of various challenging terrains.

Another polo tournament has come to an exciting close as Habtoor Polo faced Bangash/LLVC at the Final of the Sir Winston Churchill Cup 2019.

The match kicked off with a half goal lead for Mahra/LLVC polo team, and the first chukker ended with 2 goals to 2.5. past halftime, Mahra/LLVC were at a 2.5 goal advantage over Habtoor that continued until the end of the penultimate chukker. Habtoor Polo raced to score goals to take the lead from its opponent at the final chukker and nearly created a tied score situation. Not missing a beat, Mahra/LLVC defended its position and delivered 2 more goals that secured the win for the team at 8.5 goals to 6.

The Club had offered its usual Friday Polo Picnic – a tailgating tradition in the polo circuit. Guests watched the match under gazebos, and the chil-

dren spent their time in a dedicated Kids Area. The anticipated Run-N-Hunt drew participation from the crowd and the lucky winners won prizes worth a total of AED 10,000 in cash and gift items. The best-dressed lady and gent were also recognized and

were given prizes worth AED 2,000 each. Shirley Laurel, Marketing Manager of Conmix Ltd (a Bukhatir Group company) awarded the teams with Frederico Potobsky as the Most Valuable Player and Cosmetica as the Best Playing Pony.

The tournament is sponsored by Bukhatir Group, one of the largest and most diversified business houses in the United Arab Emirates. Its main interests straddle Construction, Education, Information Technology, Real Estate, Shopping & Retail, Sports & Leisure and Services.



Al Ula – Neom race 2019

Weber State outlasts Montana 17-10

James Madison shuts out Panthers in FCS quarters

HARRISONBURG, Va., Dec 14, (AP): Percy Agyei-Obese ran 33 times for 124 yards and a touchdown and No. 2 seed James Madison dominated defensively in a 17-0 win over Northern Iowa in the FCS playoff quarterfinals on Friday night.

James Madison (13-1) won its 13th straight and will face No. 3 seed Weber State in the semifinals on Dec 21.

Northern Iowa (10-5) had 58 yards of total offense through the first three quarters and did not cross into James Madison territory until the final drive of the game with less than two minutes left.

The Panthers drove 55 yards on 11 plays before turning it over on downs and the Ducks ran out the clock, finishing with a 346-114 edge in total offense.

Northern Iowa had seven first downs, three on the final drive, and went 2 of 12 on third-down and 0 of 2 on fourth-down conversions.

Ben DiNucci was 19 of 28 for 157 yards, one touchdown and one interception for James Madison.



Agyei-Obese

Weber State 17, Montana 10

In Ogden, Utah, Ja'Kobe Harris blocked a punt and recovered it in the end zone early in the fourth quarter and No. 3 seed Weber State beat No. 6 seed Montana 17-10 in the quarterfinals of the FCS playoffs on Friday night.

Harris' touchdown gave the Wildcats a 17-7 lead with 9:41 left in the game. The Wildcats (11-3) will visit No. 2 seed James Madison in the semifinals on Dec 21.

Dalton Sneed gave the Grizzlies (10-4) a 7-0 lead with a 1-yard TD pass to

FOOTBALL

Colin Bingham in the middle of the second quarter. But Sneed threw interceptions on four of Montana's next six possessions. The first interception created a short field which led to Weber State's opening plays, Trey Tuttle's 41-yard field goal with 4:29 left in the half.

In the third quarter, Jake Constantine led an eight-play, 72-yard drive capped by an 11-yard TD pass to Josh Davis to put the Wildcats in front 10-7.

Weber State was outgained 274-113 in total offense but committed no turnovers compared to Montana's five, all interceptions by Sneed.

DALLAS, Dec 14, (AP): The Vegas Golden Knights went on the offensive in OT, and the aggressive approach quickly paid off.

Max Pacioretty scored on a backhander 51 seconds into overtime and the Knights beat the Dallas Stars 3-2.

Vegas coach Gerard Gallant put Pacioretty, the team's scoring leader, and Mark Stone on the ice to start the overtime.

ICE HOCKEY

Dallas' Jamie Benn had tied it with 5:11 remaining in the third period. He worked a give-and-go, passing from behind the net to Tyler Seguin, then skating into the slot to deflect Seguin's return pass past goalie Malcolm Subban.

Taylor Fedun put the Stars ahead 1-0 in the first period. The Golden Knights took a 2-1 lead in the second on goals by William Karlsson and newcomer Chandler Stephenson.

Subban made 28 saves for his first win in three career games against Dallas. Ben Bishop stopped 28 shots for Dallas, which had won three in a row and 10 of 11 home games.

Karlsson led the Golden Knight's resurgence in the second period. Bishop stopped Karlsson's shot from the left faceoff circle 3:35 into the period, but 45 seconds later Karlsson beat the goalie with a snap shot into the left side of the net. That tied the game at 1.

The Golden Knights came back just 37 seconds later for a 2-1 lead when Stephenson eluded Fedun for a wrist



New Jersey Devils center Nico Hischier, (left), looks around Colorado Avalanche goaltender Pavel Francouz for a pass in front of the net in the second period of an NHL hockey game on Dec 13, in Denver. (AP)

shot from the left circle. In six games since being traded from Washington, he has two goals and an assist while playing nearly three minutes more per game for Vegas.

Avalanche 3, Devils 1

In Denver, Nathan MacKinnon had a goal and an assist to reach 50 points this season and lead the Colorado Avalanche over the struggling New Jersey Devils 3-1.

The Devils pulled forward Taylor Hall from the lineup just before the game for precautionary reasons, the team said. Hall, who leads New Jersey in scoring with 25 points, has been the subject of trade rumors of late and was not held out due to injury.

Gabriel Landeskog and Valeri

Nichushkin also scored and Pavel Francouz had 37 saves but just missed getting his first career shutout for the second straight game.

Colorado moved back to the top of the Western Conference standings with its eighth win in nine games. The Avalanche's only loss in that stretch came in overtime, giving them a nine-game points streak.

Nichushkin extended the lead with his sixth of the season at 7:56 of the second. Nichushkin went 91 games without a goal and now has six in the last 10. He also has a career-best four-game points streak.

Domingue made 15 saves before being replaced by Mackenzie Blackwood midway through the second period. Blackwood had 20 saves.

Francouz has 37 saves, Avalanche beat Devils 3-1

NHL Results/Standings

WASHINGTON, Dec 14, (AP): Results and Standings from the NHL games on Wednesday.

Vegas 3 Dallas OT 2

Colorado 3 New Jersey 1

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Boston	33	20	7	46	111	84
Buffalo	33	16	11	6	38	105
Montreal	32	15	11	6	36	104
Tampa Bay	30	16	11	3	35	108
Florida	31	15	11	5	35	107
Toronto	33	15	14	4	34	106
Ottawa	32	13	17	2	28	86
Detroit	33	8	22	3	19	72

Metropolitan Division

GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Washington	33	23	5	5	120	95
NY Islanders	30	21	7	2	44	89
Carolina	32	19	11	2	40	85
Pittsburgh	32	18	10	4	40	105
Philadelphia	31	17	9	5	39	97
NY Rangers	31	16	12	3	35	100
Columbus	31	12	14	5	29	74
New Jersey	31	9	17	5	23	75

Western Conference

Central Division

GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Colorado	32	21	8	3	45	117
St Louis	33	19	8	6	44	98
Winnipeg	32	19	11	2	40	94
Dallas	33	18	11	4	40	86
Minnesota	32	15	12	5	35	98
Nashville	30	14	11	5	33	101
Chicago	32	12	14	6	30	86

Pacific Division

GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Arizona	34	19	11	4	42	96
Edmonton	34	18	12	4	40	105
Calgary	34	18	12	4	40	95
Vegas	35	17	13	5	39	103
Vancouver	32	16	12	4	36	105
San Jose	34	15	17	2	32	92
Anaheim	32	13	15	4	30	83
Los Angeles	33	13	18	2	28	82

Note: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.