



Media Information  
2019 Dakar Rally  
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**The big MINI three-way interview with Stéphane Peterhansel, Carlos Sainz and Cyril Despres – Peterhansel: “I have never experienced team spirit like this.”**

- Interview with the MINI JCW Buggy drivers Stéphane Peterhansel, Carlos Sainz and Cyril Despres ahead of Dakar 2019.
- Trio of Dakar legends has claimed a total of 20 overall wins.
- Sainz: “We have the strongest team that will be competing at Dakar 2019.”

**Munich.** The start of the 2019 Dakar Rally is imminent. The participating drivers will be taking on the challenges of the Peruvian desert from 6<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> January. A very special trio of drivers will be competing in the MINI John Cooper Works Buggy: Stéphane Peterhansel (FRA), Carlos Sainz (ESP) and Cyril Despres (FRA) have chalked up a total of 20 overall wins in the world’s toughest rally and have become rally legends. In this three-way interview, they discuss their outstanding team spirit, the fascination of Dakar and their chances of success with the MINI JCW Buggy.

**Peterhansel, Sainz, Despres: What do you think of this driver line-up?**

**Stéphane Peterhansel:** “My initial reaction is to think of the very, very good team spirit. We have been driving together for several years now and we have always shared the philosophy of fighting for the team. I have never experienced team spirit like this.”

**Cyril Despres:** “We really are a great team and we get on really well. Each of us is very experienced and we have recorded a lot of Dakar wins. I believe that takes the pressure off us a bit.”

**Carlos Sainz:** “From my point of view, we have the strongest team that will be competing at Dakar 2019. I believe and hope that MINI is proud of this crew.”

**Is strong team spirit particularly decisive in endurance rallies?**

**Sainz:** “You can’t be successful without very good team spirit - and that’s what we have. We also have a shared attitude and very high standards regarding our cars’ setup. That makes it easier for the team as we are all working together to get the car perfectly ready for the race.”

**Peterhansel:** “The fact that we are driving against the clock in rallying, not against one another, makes it easier to work together than with circuit races. Nonetheless, I have already driven for many teams and I have never experienced an atmosphere as good as between Carlos, Cyril and myself.

**Despres:** “I have experienced that myself over the last two years. A couple of incidents meant that my own race was effectively over and I then concentrated on helping Stéphane and Carlos if they had tyre problems, for example. Stéphane then returned the favour for me at the Silk Way Rally. That is not to be taken for granted in rallying, but in our team we have created an atmosphere in which we all help one another. That can really make the difference at the Dakar rally.”

**Why is the Dakar rally so fascinating?**

**Peterhansel:** “It is simply a crazy race. We know the route, we know the car – but we still never know what is going to happen. That’s why, after all this time, the primary objective is to finish the world’s hardest race. Only then can you think about winning.”

**Despres:** “I want to reach the top level in every job that I do. That is why I train so hard, and in the world of off-road rallies, there is no greater challenge than the Dakar rally. That’s why I keep coming back every year.”

**Sainz:** “A great deal of the fascination is down to the mental and physical challenge, in my case. There are days when it’s just not going well and you ask yourself why you are doing this. But at the end of it all, those are the days that motivate you to come back the following year. The Dakar rally is just something special.”

**How would you describe the MINI JCW Buggy in three keywords?**

**Sainz:** “I only need two. It is a great, strong car.”

**Peterhansel:** “Very strong, great performance and a very good chassis. And I’d like to add a fourth point. It is great fun to drive.”

**Despres:** “I see it like that too. The chassis and the power are very good. I also think that it is very reliable and I love how responsive the engine is. I would particularly like to emphasise the combination of toughness and comfort in the chassis that allows you to stay fast even on tough terrain. I think that may have been more than three keywords...”

**What you can achieve as a team in the Dakar rally?**

**Despres:** “We certainly have the opportunity to finish the Dakar rally high up on the podium, but you also have to realise that the Buggy project is still in its infancy. Anything can happen but we certainly have the ambition to battle for the win.”

**Peterhansel:** “Yes, we are definitely a strong team. X-raid has a lot of experience, as do we, the drivers. The Buggy delivers great performance and is easy to drive, which is especially important in the dunes. Of course, our aim is to be battling for the win.”

**Sainz:** “When Stéphane, Cyril and I compete together, it's clear that we are aiming to be involved in the battle for the win. I think we have done everything possible during our preparations to put ourselves in a good position.”

**How does it feel to cross the finish line and know that you have won the world's toughest race?**

**Peterhansel:** “I have experienced this on 13 occasions and I still ask myself every time how it can be possible. Ultimately, you can stumble into a trap at any point during the race – and then that's that. My co-driver and I do have a certain talent for this rally but it is still an extremely complicated task every time.”

**Despres:** “At the finish, you just feel extremely exhausted. It doesn't matter whether you are a pro and have just won, or you have just crossed the line as a semi-pro driver. Everyone feels the same at that moment. For me, the Dakar is not just about winning but also about an adventure on a foreign continent. That alone means that crossing the finish line is a great feeling.”

**Sainz:** “To start with, you can't be sure of winning the Dakar until you really have crossed the finish line. Anything can go wrong, right up to the final metres, but when you have made it, it's just a great day. You have been rewarded for the many months of hard work that have got you to this point. You can compete in the Dakar rally many times, but winning it is a rare event. That is one of the things that makes it so attractive.”

**How do you keep physically fit?**

**Despres:** “Fitness training to prepare for the rally is an important part of my life. I have discovered mountain biking, climbing and ski tours. I also do a lot of swimming and do weight training. I just love physical exertion.”

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**Peterhansel:** “I spend a lot of time on the bike – on the road and in the mountains with my mountain bike. I prefer outdoor sports in general.”

**Sainz:** “Of course, I keep fit so that I can meet the challenges of a tough event like the Dakar rally.”

**Complete the following sentence: Peterhansel, Sainz and Despres stand out as a team because...**

**Peterhansel:** “...we are the most successful Dakar team and have a fantastic team spirit.”

**Despres:** “...we have been driving together for several years and we get on really well.”

**Sainz:** “...we are the best.”

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