

Press release

date 15 September 2024

topic BMW Motorrad International GS Trophy 2024, Namibia.

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## **BMW Motorrad International GS Trophy 2024 Namibia.**

### **Day 1.**

**A clean GS is a dirty shame.**

#### **Recap of Day 1.**

Location: Ai Aiba, Namibia

Weather: Sunny, 14°C – 34 °C

Course: 270km: Midgard – Okahandja – Omaruru – Ai Aiba

Terrain types: Tarmac 30km, off-road 240km

Tests: SP1: Namibia Welcome Trial, SP2: The AKRAPOVIČ Enduro

Challenge, SP3: Photo Challenge

Top three teams male:

1. South Africa, 2. Germany, 3. International Team

Top three teams female:

1. Japan, 2. Benelux, 3. France

**Ai Aiba, Namibia.** The 9th BMW Motorrad International GS Trophy began with a beautiful African sunrise. After breaking camp, the riders packed their gear into bags, which were later transported to the next camp. As is tradition, 2 or 3 teams were randomly selected to handle the task of loading the bags onto the transportation truck. After a hearty breakfast, the moment everyone had been eagerly anticipating arrived. Stefanie Grund, Senior Project Manager of the event, waved the checkered flag, signaling the start of this year's adventure riding event. At 7:45 am local time, Team Brazil, the International Female Team, and Female Team Japan crossed the start line to cheers from the crowd.

The competitors formed groups of 7-9 motorcycles and, guided by their appointed Marshals, embarked on the first day and first Special Challenge. Only a few kilometers away from the Midgard Country



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Estate Lodge, still within its perimeter, the riders faced their first Special Challenge.

Day 1, Special Challenge 1: **The Namibia Welcome Trial**. Near the ruins of an abandoned copper mine, the participants lined up their bikes at the starting point. The first rider's departure marked the start of the timing for the challenge, with the other two riders (or one for a female team) following after a 5-second interval. Navigating a narrow, short trail through marked gates, the riders tackled sand, steps, drops, and tight turns. At the end, they parked their bikes side by side and rushed to the mine's closed entrance to ring a bell. The timer stopped when the third rider hit the bell – an ideal warm-up for both the teams and the Marshals.

Although the trial seemed easy initially, many riders were caught by surprise by its narrow passes. Rider **Yasuhiro Maehara (212) from Team Japan** said before the start of the challenge, "I think it's very easy, and we're really excited to get in there!" After completing the challenge with only a few deductions, he added, "I'm sorry. It was not so easy. I had to put my foot down a few times. The short corner and the deep sand caught me off-guard."

Rider **Dev Venkatesh (202) of Team India**, said: "This was the best welcome for a special challenge for me. It is the first time I ride the 1300 GS off-road and it felt incredible. Smooth like butter. The challenge was short but very technical. You don't have room for improvement, you have to stick to your lines. But we completed the trial without any mistakes and did a clean run, so we're very excited to learn about the results."

Rider **Sunghee Kim (301) of Female Team South Korea**, said: "Although it was an easy course, we had a little bit of hard time. But we didn't drop the bike, which was great. And we feel very welcome," quoting the name of the special challenge.

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Leaving behind this historic estate's lush, serene landscape along the Swakop River, known for its acacia woodlands, wildlife sightings, and scenic views, the riders headed west. The nearly 200-kilometer ride offered a real warm-up, with constantly changing terrain from hard-packed dirt to loose gravel and deep sand. The magnificence of Namibia began to unfold, with rock formations dating back nearly 700 million years. The riders experienced a sense of isolation, encountering little traffic along the way while staying alert for freely roaming cattle and wildlife crossings.

Namibia's rainy season typically begins in December and can last until April, but this past year, the last rain fell quite early, making the riding conditions extremely dusty. The lack of wind didn't help, leaving both riders and motorcycles looking as though they'd been on an adventure of epic proportions. This added an element of danger, as the old Enduro saying warns: "If there is dust and you can't see the road, there will be a rock right in front of you." However, it was remarkable to see nature thriving despite the dry conditions, with trees growing on rocks, proving that even a little dirt is enough for a seed to sprout.

After the long and dusty ride, the riders arrived in Omaruru, a charming town known for its vineyards, art scene, and cultural heritage. Omaruru is home to local wineries, such as Kristall Kellerei, Namibia's only wine estate, which produces unique wines from specially adapted grape varieties. The town also boasts art galleries and the Omaruru Artist's Trail, where local artists display and sell their work.

After a much needed refueling and lunch break, the riders were ready for their first true taste of Africa. Just a few kilometers from their afternoon stop, the second special challenge awaited them.

Day 1, Special Challenge 2: **The AKRAPOVIČ Enduro Challenge**. The trail led to a dry riverbed – synonymous with one thing: very deep

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sand. The riders had to navigate an extremely sandy riverbed and complete a marked course while being timed. It soon became clear why it was called "the AKRAPOVIČ Enduro Challenge," as they blasted through the sand, revving their engines to their limit, struggling to stay on their bikes and avoid getting stuck in the river bed. This was certainly no warm-up exercise and the roaring of the engines could be heard for many kilometers away.

Rider **Marion Linder (331) of the Female Team Germany**, said: "This was a very demanding challenge. The sand was very deep, but we got a real taste of Africa. In fact I even got it between my teeth."

Rider **Francisco Leyva (112) of Team Mexico**, after a phenomenal performance in the deep sand, was asked how many years of sand training the team had, and he said: "Four days. That's all the time we got with this bike. We don't know and we don't care about the results. Me and my friends are smiling, and that's the best outcome."

The day's final challenge took the riders on a detour through a phenomenal cluster of jeep tracks with challenging uphill covered by loose rocks and deep sand, leading them to the Ai Aiba Rock Painting Lodge. The camp, nestled amid imposing granite boulders at the foothills of the Erongo Mountain range, is rich in history. These ancient rock formations are the eroded remains of a volcanic complex around 130 million years old and are famous for countless rock painting sites, making Ai Aiba a mystical exploration of nature.

During today's route, the riders had also the chance to take pictures for the third Special Challenge, the **Photo Challenge**. This year, their pictures will be judged by BMW officials, and the scores will count towards tomorrow's results.

Competitors and crew were rewarded with a beautiful African sunset as they waited for the day's results.



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**Quotes:**

**Rider Ruhan De Villiers (233) Team South Africa:** "This was a very nice first day. Nice gravel roads with sandy bits in between. I think the two challenges went well for us as a team, and from what I can see, it will only get more challenging from tomorrow. Definitely the last section on our way here, was the highlight of the day. Back home, I have an R 1200 GS Rallye, and I love the 1300. I think I will try to buy one when I return."

**Rider Karen Weckx (351), Female Team Benelux:** "It was a fantastic day. It was tough, but it was fantastic. Beautiful scenery, beautiful tracks, especially in the afternoon, the more technical riding and that dry river crossing, I loved it. Our team did really well during the first challenge, but we struggled a lot in the second. So we're curious about the results."

**BMW Motorrad International GS Trophy 2024, Namibia.**

**Day One overall standings:**

**Male Teams:**

1. South Africa, 41 points
2. Germany, 31
3. International Team, 30
3. Benelux, 30
5. Italy, 22
6. Brazil, 21
7. Mexico, 19
8. China, 17
9. France, 16
10. Latin America, 15
11. South Korea, 13
11. Japan, 13
11. India, 13
14. USA, 10
15. Middle East, Africa, 8



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15. UK, 8

**Female Teams:**

1. Japan, 41 points
2. Benelux, 37
3. France, 36
4. International Team, 31
5. Germany, 26
5. South Korea, 26

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In case of queries, please contact:

Damien Cagnart, Spokesperson BMW Motorrad

Tel: +49-151-601-95806, [Damien.Cagnart@bmw.de](mailto:Damien.Cagnart@bmw.de)

Tim Diehl-Thiele, Head of Communications BMW Motorrad

Telephone: +49-151-601-57505, [Tim.Diehl-Thiele@bmw.de](mailto:Tim.Diehl-Thiele@bmw.de)

Web: [www.press.bmw.de](http://www.press.bmw.de)

E-mail: [presse@bmw.de](mailto:presse@bmw.de)

**The BMW Group**



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With its four brands BMW, MINI, Rolls-Royce and BMW Motorrad, the BMW Group is the world's leading premium manufacturer of automobiles and motorcycles and also provides premium financial and mobility services. The BMW Group production network comprises over 30 production sites worldwide; the company has a global sales network in more than 140 countries.

In 2023, the BMW Group sold over 2.55 million passenger vehicles and more than 209,000 motorcycles worldwide. The profit before tax in the financial year 2023 was € 17.1 billion on revenues amounting to € 155.5 billion. As of 31 December 2023, the BMW Group had a workforce of 154,950 employees.

The success of the BMW Group has always been based on long-term thinking and responsible action. The company set the course for the future at an early stage and consistently makes sustainability and efficient resource management central to its strategic direction, from the supply chain through production to the end of the use phase of all products.

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