

BMW G 450 X and José Manuel Pellicer win the Africa Race rally

A Spanish BMW rider has won the 'Africa Race' rally on a G 450 X sport enduro. José Manuel Pellicer battled through Morocco, Mauritania and Senegal on a modified 450cc BMW to win the race that closely followed the old Dakar Rally route across approximately 7,500 kilometres of north African terrain.



Although security fears led to the cancellation of last year's Dakar Rally and its subsequent transfer to South America for 2009, a number of rally riders and drivers ignored potential terrorist threats and braved the Saharan Desert to participate in this 'Africa Race' rally, organised by former BMW Dakar Rally champion Hubert Auriol. Spanish rider José Manuel Pellicer was one of those who opted for the Africa Race, which started in Marseille on 28 December and finished on 11 January in Senegal.

The rider from Benicarló in the Castellón province managed to cross the finish line with his BMW in first place in ten out of 12 stages of this competition. Furthermore, he not only has managed to dominate the race from beginning to end, but he was also the fastest participant on many of the stages, beating even the best times of some of the car drivers!

Despite the toughness of the opening trails, as well as having to lead the navigation through the African wilderness, José Manuel Pellicer's professionalism and outstanding riding ability shone through, as did the flawless performance of his BMW G 450 X. His excellent result was the first time that a 450cc motorcycle has won a rally raid in Africa, and what's even more remarkable is that his G 450 X BMW didn't even need a single part replacing throughout the rally's duration. All that was required was an oil change and filter cleaning.

We had brought a spare engine with us and had planned to change it during the rest day, which is something that is usually done in these kind of raids,” said José Manuel. “But when we realised that the one we were using was in perfect condition, we decided to continue with the same engine until the end of the race.”



For BMW this achievement signals the first victory in a raid since 2000, when BMW Motorrad Motorsport won the Dakar Rally with Richard Sainct the victor and Óscar Gallardo finishing in second position on the factory F 650 RR. In 2001 BMW also took part in this competition with the twin GS – where the late great John Deacon finished in sixth place on the R 900 RR and Andrea Meyer won the ‘Ladies Cup’ on an F 650 RR – but between then and Pellicer’s recent African success, no other BMW has won a raid.

“I have so many interesting stories from this Africa Race,” said José Manuel Pellicer. “For instance, the BMW motorcycle I was riding was so fast that once I arrived at the end of the stage before anybody had even set the finish line up! I was timed from the helicopter and I had to wait on my own in the desert for one hour before anybody arrived!”

José Manuel Pellicer managed to win nearly all the stages of the rally, with just two exceptions. One involved a harmless crash; the other – which took place during the final stage, near the Lac Rose – saw him stop to help French rider Olivier Le Cocq, who’d had a severe accident.

BMW Motorrad Spain was understandably delighted with José Manuel’s results in this Africa Race, especially after having provided him with sponsorship and technical assistance in preparation for this rally raid. With very little time to prepare a G 450 X for the rally, BMW Motorrad Spain pulled out all the stops to help prepare the bike for the competition. Fortunately, it only needed a few modifications, such as front and rear fuel

tanks, a support platform for the navigation devices, a rubber device in the rear wheel to soften the acceleration, a modified exhaust system, and Öhlins suspension.

The finished bike, which remained close to the series production model, took a delighted José Manuel Pellicer to the victory: "I was very surprised by the capability of the BMW G 450 X and I'm sure this motorcycle will leave a legacy," he said.

