



December 1st, 2008
For Press Information

Paris-Dakar Rally Moves Halfway Round the World Grueling cross country event slated for South America in 2009

THE YOKOHAMA RUBBER CO., LTD. is sponsoring former F1 driver Ukyo Katayama and former WGP motorcycle rider Takuma Aoki in the Dakar Rally 2009.

Ukyo Katayama is making his third challenge in the Dakar Rally. This year, he will drive a car that runs on 100% recycled biodiesel fuel. Unfortunately, the 2008 event was cancelled because of deteriorating safety conditions, but in 2009, he aims to complete the race, of course, and improve on his 68th place in 2007 in the general category. The tyre Ukyo chose is the YOKOHAMA's GEOLANDAR A/T-S, tuned especially for the Dakar Rally.

Takuma Aoki is a former WGP motorcycle racer. He participated in the WGP500cc class in 1997 and took fifth place. In 1998, he was involved in an accident during a test drive in the off season, suffered a severe spinal injury, and was confined to a wheelchair. But he came back to 4-wheel competition in 2007. In 2008, Aoki participated in the Asia Cross Country Rally and took first place in the stock diesel commercial vehicle class. He is committed to entering the Dakar Rally 2009. Aoki will be running on YOKOHAMA's GEORANDAR M/T+ tyres tuned for this rigorous event.

Argentina-Chile 2009: 100% Dakar

The Dakar Rally 2009 takes on a new continent. A harsh stage lying between two countries is waiting for the challengers.

The pinnacle of cross country racing, the Paris-Dakar Rally started in 1978. Eighty 4-wheel cars and 90 motorcycles left Paris, and not a single car crossed the finish line.

In the past, the rally started in European cities such as Marseille and Barcelona, but it was always known as the name "Paris-Dakar" in Japan, and as "The Dakar" overseas, and has been acclaimed as the pinnacle of cross-country rallying.

During the opening event for the first Dakar Rally in 1978 rally founder Thierry Sabine said "A challenge for those who go. A dream for those who stay behind." Wake up your adventurous spirit while opening the door to all challengers, and building friendship among all human beings. — That is the spirit of "The Dakar."



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In all, 180 4-wheel cars and 245 motor cycles participated in the 29th rally in 2007. And although the organizer called off the 30th event on the eve of the race, a 4,500km race was held as the Central Europe Rally in April.

And now, a new “door of adventure” is going to be open in the event’s 30-year history. The place is South America. The rally returns with a course that goes from Argentina to Chile and back, with the slogan “Argentina-Chile 2009: 100% Dakar.”

On the new route, the Special Stage covers 6,000km. The total length of course is nearly 9,000km. The rally starts in Argentina’s capital city of Buenos Aires and heads south. A high-speed, hard road surface welcomes challengers, giving way to soft desert sands just waiting to swallow up cars and motorcycles. Then it’s across the Andes Mountains to the Pacific coast, and through Chile’s volcanic zone. Challengers must be ready for anything. Then the route turns back toward Argentina, going 4,600km above sea level. This route runs downhill all the way to the goal in Buenos Aires at Latitude 34 south, where January is a pleasant summer month. Nevertheless, the course will have various faces, requiring high-speed performance in harsh conditions. This is 100% Dakar, and it will demand more out of the competitors than any event ever has before.

Official site: http://dakar.com/inex_DAKus.html

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