

Peking to Paris 2019

Day 08. Tsagaan Uul camp - Undurkhangai camp. 341km

Sometimes you're the hammer and sometimes you're the nail. That's the way it goes on the Peking to Paris Motor Challenge and today, our two class leaders also bore witness to the fact that you don't win this rally in Mongolia.

Both Martti Kiiikka in a Volvo PV544 and Brian Scowcroft in a Chevy Fangio, suffered a multitude of mechanical issues on a day which was one of the toughest we've seen in this event.

Martti lost his driveshaft and spent most of the day sat beside the road alongside the Time Control manned by Jim Smith and Pete Stone. Brian meanwhile first lost his clutch but soldiered on in second gear, then his steering began playing up before a puncture out paid to his chances of making the MTC in camp on time.

It was a beautiful day but it was also a cruel one, despite the fact that, acting on intelligence from the 48 hour car, the Organisers had adjusted the timing to better suit the road conditions but even with this taken into account there were some crews who also opted to take a penalty and to check out early so they were able to take the rough at their own pace.

In 341km we saw not one metre of tarmac and spent the entire day blasting over an endless 1800m plateau ringed variously by snowcapped peaks and wooded hills. As for sharing the road with other traffic, it would be fair to say that we saw more horsemen than cars and we passed no more than a handful of local vehicles. This was a wilderness driving adventure at its very best.

With an 8.00am start in the book, the rally was up bright and early and everyone who could, was keen to press on. Alan and Tina Beardshaw however have had to call in a flat bed for their Volvo. The suspension couldn't be repaired last night so the plan is to truck it into a well equipped Russian workshop, whilst the crew follow on with the rally in the Nomads sag wagon and by Novosibirsk, they should be back with the pack.

Those who did make it out of camp, found themselves straight into the thick of the action with a river crossing, a selection of rickety old bridges (which Borghese must surely have recognised), rocky climbs and sandy piste.

There were times to push on and there were times to slow down and think about the best line. On such a day, car preservation had to be front and centre of the gameplan.

Unfortunately for a few of the rally, this strategy didn't quite work out as they intended. Manuel Dubs and Robi Huber for example were seen lying under their Rockne trying to sort out the broken rear suspension.

Rainer Wolf and Hans Geist lost a wheel from their Mercedes but they managed to get it back together and made the campsite in plenty of time.

Tim Guleri and Raj Judge were struggling again, this time with the fuel system beneath their 1948 Bentley whilst an entire family of nomads sat alongside watching and giggling at the crew who were frantically working underneath the big beast.

Mark Gudaitis and Nico Samaras lost the clutch in their Porsche 912 and also spent a few hours whiling away the time by the side of the track.

Erik van Droogenbroek's Volvo and John Beresford's VW were victims of the sand and both suffered the ignominy of being towed to freedom by the Organisation vehicles. The low slung Jaguar Mk2 with Philip and Trish Monks aboard seemed to handle the sand very well but it had a slow and frustrating time dodging the rocks and boulders strewn along the route.

It's been a busy day for all of us but most especially for the sweeps who, as usual have performed heroically doing all they can to leave no car behind.

We've all earned our beds tonight.

Syd Stelvio