

## NEWS RELEASE

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# Garland D-MAX is Dakar's top diesel ute

**In a fitting subtext to the first diesel-powered Dakar Rally victory, the top-placed diesel ute was the Garland MotorSports Isuzu D-MAX of Sydney's Bruce Garland and Harry Suzuki, which finished the 2009 Dakar in a laudable 11<sup>th</sup> place outright and first T1/2 Amateur in the 177-starter 'car' class, plus highest placed Australian.**

Garland started the rally in 51<sup>st</sup> position on the road and after dropping to 65<sup>th</sup> on the second day, then relentlessly climbed up the leaderboard with consistently fast but measured driving.

Garland strategically paced himself to finish the 9000km event and when necessary let the tearaways pass him in the blinding dust, only to pass them when they speared off the road, punctured their tyres, crashed into other competitors or the scenery or just broke down. At times, he had to do a few 'desperates' to pass slower or less competent drivers or cars in the dust and sand dunes. Nearly half the 177 car class competitors failed to finish.

His D-MAX was a model of reliability – in line with Isuzu's reputation — while being fast enough to keep him near the chopped, carbon-fibre rocketships at the front.

Garland's Swedish teammates Pelle Wallentheim and Olle Ohlsson (Tubus Racing) had some off-track excursions and consequent car damage but finished strongly in 44<sup>th</sup> place.

The two Isuzu D-MAX utes driven by Garland and Wallentheim were prepared in Garland's Sydney workshop and ran standard 3-litre turbo-diesel engines, just reprogrammed for the moderately higher outputs of 160kW of power (up 33 per cent on the standard engine) and 500Nm of torque (up 39 per cent).

"We've done it and it's a huge achievement," says Garland, who admitted to initial emotions of relief and exhaustion.

"I think less than 10 per cent of the cars did the entire course and our D-MAX was one of them, so we're really proud of that. It never missed a beat. We put a year's work into preparing for the event, so to get both the cars home, with just a few problems for Pelle, that's pretty special.

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“Obviously Harry and I would have liked to have snuck into the top 10 and we gave it our best shot, but 11th, given the strength and experience of the top competitors and everything this event has thrown at us, is a fantastic achievement.

“The last stage was great. Real rally roads, very fast and flowing, absolutely flat-out, top-speed stuff, with square corners around farm fields. A great way to finish – and the crowds were fantastic, treating us like rock stars.

“Our small team of just eight technicians and one logistics lady has done the most amazing job to get Pelle and I here – and so have all our sponsors. Without a lot of hard work by a huge number of people who have supported us and encouraged us in so many ways, this just would not have happened.”

While he would have liked to finish higher up the order, Wallentheim had an extra reason to celebrate – he’s in remission after recently beating a rare form of bone and blood cancer that hospitalised him for two years and came close to ending his life. Dakar is the dream that kept him going.

### **Garland’s competitors**

Garland diced with multi-million dollar factory teams from VW, BMW and Mitsubishi plus heavily manufacturer-involved teams running petrol-engined Navaras, Tritons and Hummer.

First and second places went to the factory VW Touaregs of South African Giniel de Villiers and American Mark Miller, with the Hummer of US NASCAR/Indycar star, Robby Gordon in third.

The Touaregs were very radical factory specials, the third-placed Hummer was a nose-up rear-driver powered by 6+ litres of Chevy Corvette V8 and the factory Mitsubishi that finished immediately in front of Garland was the sole survivor of four special “Racing” Lancer coupés.

The fastest cars outsped the fastest bikes, trucks and quads.

### **Mother**

Originally known as the Paris-Dakar, the Dakar Rally has been staged in Africa since 1978, but last year’s event was cancelled on the eve of the start after terrorists killed seven people in the area and made direct threats to the rally organizers, hence the move to South America.

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This mother of all motor sport events in its new locale was originally set to be one of the longest Dakars, but of the original 9500km total route distance, including 5600km of special competitive stages, just over 1200km of racing had to be scrapped because of various safety concerns. The rally took competitors from Buenos Aires on the Atlantic to Valparaiso in Chile on the Pacific and back, via the precipitous Andes Mountains and the Atacama Desert, the driest place on earth with kilometre-high sand dunes.

The route climbed past 4700m, the highest in the rally's 31-year history, taxing crews and vehicles. Some competitive stages were over 600km without a break. The Dakar mixes cars with super-fast bikes, equally fast 12-tonne trucks plus buggies, in sometimes dangerously impossible conditions of visibility.

### **D-MAX team background**

The Australian/Swedish/Isuzu Dakar mission was first announced in March last year but the planning began in mid-2007 when Garland managed a car for Wallentheim in the Australasian Safari offroad race in outback Western Australia.

The D-MAX had its first competitive run in the 'Condo 750' over Easter 2008, a two-day desert race in outback New South Wales, finishing fourth outright. The next test was the eight-day Australasian Safari last August where Garland's D-MAX finished third outright and first diesel podium in that event's long history.

With all the development work done on the prototype, Garland MotorSports built two more D-MAX utes, with the second car for Wallentheim/Ohlsson unveiled for competition at the UAE Desert Challenge last October where valuable lessons in driving in steep and deep sand in hot weather were learnt. The three cars were then shipped to Argentina.

(Ends)