



Fernando Alonso Completes Successful Rally-Raid Training With Toyota Gazoo Racing

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Having formally announced his intention to prepare for a possible entry in the 2020 Dakar Rally earlier this week, Fernando Alonso has completed three days of intensive rally-raid training with Toyota Gazoo Racing in the Namibian desert. The reigning FIA World Endurance Champion completed nearly 1,000km at the wheel of the 2019 Dakar-winning Toyota Hilux.

Alonso previously tested with Toyota Gazoo Racing in South Africa in March this year, after which he decided to expand his already impressive racing experience by taking on the challenges of rally raid competition. Having spent his racing career to date on tarmac, the transition to gravel tracks and sand dunes made for a stern test, but he quickly adapted to the change in terrain.

Alonso was mentored in Namibia by former Dakar winner and Toyota Gazoo Racing team-mate Giniel de Villiers, who completed a test session at the same time.

While Alonso focused on spending as much time in the Hilux as possible, de Villiers was tasked with testing a variety of components for the 2020 version of the pick-up. The team completed almost 2,500km driving over the three-day test; further testing is scheduled for later this year.

Glyn Hall, Team Principal, said: "Fernando's progress this week has been astounding. It is clear that he has a huge amount of talent, which he is putting to good use during this transition from tarmac to gravel and sand racing. It is important for him to get a feel for the car in the dunes, and especially to learn how to read and deal with the varied terrain.

"So far, he has taken to driving the Hilux with a sense of purpose, and we look forward to continuing his development at the next round of the South African Cross Country Series, which takes place in September."

Alonso commented: "I'm very happy with my progress after this week's test and am starting to understand driving in the dunes a lot more. Thanks to the tuition by Glyn and Giniel, we made good progress. My mindset right now is to approach the preparation as an adventure and try to improve step-by-step every time I jump in the car.

"As a racing driver, there's always a competitive spirit inside of me which will come alive at the right time. With so much that I still have to learn, working with an experienced team like Toyota Gazoo Racing takes a really big weight off my shoulders. The team have a proven track

record and have been consistent over the years, allowing me to focus on the milestones I need to reach every day.”

De Villiers said: “Fernando is an extremely quick learner, and he is clearly a very talented driver. He quickly adapted to the Hilux, and if he continues to learn at this pace, I feel confident that he will be able to take on the rigours of the Dakar Rally. His professional approach to this project speaks to his discipline as a racer. I look forward to continuing on this journey with him.”

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