



Dakar 2011

Nani Roma joins forces with Overdrive

At the last minute, the Belgium-based team Overdrive has successfully enlisted the services of one of cross-country rallying's most prominent drivers for next January's Dakar. Spain's Nani Roma and his French co-driver Gilles Picard have chosen to contest the event in a Nissan Navara prepared by the Villers le Bouillet-based outfit. Roma – who followed up an outright win on the Dakar on two wheels in 2004 with third place in the car category in 2006 – is targeting a top-five finish this time round in his 'Made in Belgium' pick-up.

This morning (Thursday, November 25) saw the impressive Overdrive convey leave its base for the French port of Le Havre where technical scrutineering ahead of the 2011 Dakar is due to take place before all the vehicles are loaded on a ship bound for Buenos Aires, Argentina. The four Nissan crews that the Belgian squad will run on January's cross-country classic consequently includes a top class Franco-Spanish pairing...

"The deal was only wrapped up a few days ago," relates Overdrive boss Jean-Marc Fortin. "When I heard that Roma's plans to drive a Mitsubishi Pajero on the 2011 Dakar had failed to materialise, I sent him a text message informing him that we perhaps had an alternative solution. He got back to me at once. I've known Nani for some time and I have a great deal of respect not only for the driver but also for the person. The good relationship we have built up over the years during cross-country events played a big part in enabling us to seal the deal so quickly."

Targeting a top-five finish

The association means that Overdrive will have the pleasure of working with a former winner of the world's most famous rally-raid event:

"We are obviously very flattered that the Spanish champion has agreed to put his confidence in us," confirms Fortin. "Our team was founded in September 2006 and here we are today with one of the discipline's best drivers about to compete in the Dakar in a vehicle prepared and run by Overdrive."

There was clearly insufficient time, however, for Roma and Picard to test drive the pick-up. *"We will organise a short run before the departure for Argentina," says Jean-Marc. "In any case, the opening stages generally aren't decisive when it comes to laying the foundations for a top result on an event such as the Dakar. Nani is a professional, just like his co-driver who, in addition to his acclaimed navigational skills, is also a first-rate mechanic. I believe*

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the Nissan Navara 306 can reasonably target a top-five finish. That, in any case, was our objective this time last year, before the plan was scuppered when the car sustained a little too much damage after taking off over a rut. It's now down to Nani and Gilles to finish off the job we started!"

The vehicle gave a timely display of its competitiveness only recently:

"Krzysztof Holowczyc and I contested the Baja Portalegre in a Nissan Navara and wrapped up the 2010 FIA World Cup," observes Jean-Marc. "Our pick-up underwent a thorough service ahead of the Portuguese event and has since been stripped and rebuilt again."

On the stages in Argentina and Chile, Roma and Picard will spearhead a line-up of four Overdrive-run Nissan Overdrives:

"Alfie Cox, who is another former top Dakar biker, is onboard again for the second year running," notes Fortin. "We will also be looking after the cars of Russia's Mirolenko and Chile's Garafulic who will be making his Dakar debut."

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