



Press briefing

World Rally-Raid Championship: Defender Rally and BILSTEIN achieve one-two-three finish at the bp Ultimate RallyRaid Portugal

Essen/Ennepetal, 25 March 2026 - Following their successful debut at the 2026 Dakar Rally, Defender Rally and Official Partner BILSTEIN are continuing their winning streak in the FIA World Rally-Raid Championship (W2RC): at the bp Ultimate Rally-Raid Portugal, the three Defender Dakar D7X-R vehicles finished 1st, 2nd and 3rd in the production-based Stock class. A strong statement of performance and reliability under extreme conditions.

The bp Ultimate Rally-Raid Portugal is one of the most demanding events in the FIA World Rally-Raid Championship: the rally took participants along technically challenging and extremely fast routes through Portugal and Spain. Mud, water crossings, narrow sections and changing terrain presented enormous challenges for the vehicles, equipment and teams.

BILSTEIN BLACK HAWK shock absorbers performing over 6,600 kilometres

Under these conditions, the Defender Rally team showed its strength: all three vehicles remained consistently fast and absolutely reliable over a combined distance of 6,600 kilometres. The BILSTEIN BLACK HAWK high-performance dampers played a crucial role, ensuring impressive performance and exceptional consistency.

With an overall time of 11:57:33, Stéphane Peterhansel and co-driver Mika Metge secured victory in the production-based 'Stock Class'. Their team-mates Rokas Baciūška and Oriol Vidal took second place (12:00:02), whilst Sara Price and Sean Berriman secured third place (13:09:58) in the Stock class under extremely changeable conditions.

Performance in Portugal highlights the competitiveness of the partnership

The one-two-three finish in Portugal is impressive proof of the competitiveness of the Defender Dakar D7X-R, fitted with BILSTEIN BLACK HAWK shock absorbers, in its first year in the World Championship. The team had already secured a class victory at the 2026 Dakar Rally. This success on the Iberian Peninsula now highlights the performance of the whole package of vehicle, team and technology under completely different terrain and weather conditions.

The Defender Dakar D7X-R is based on the production model Defender OCTA, the most powerful Defender. The chassis was manufactured on the same production line as Defender cars and features the same gearbox, drivetrain and D7x chassis architecture as the OCTA. With modifications such as a BILSTEIN high-performance off-road suspension, improved cooling and a wider track, the Defender has been modified to withstand the extreme conditions of the W2RC.

„What an incredible performance from all three of our Defender Rally crews“

Ian James, Team Principal, Defender Rally, said: "What an incredible performance from all three of our Defender Rally crews, especially Stéphane and Mika who take first place in the Stock class. Portugal offers a terrain like no other in the W2RC,

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consisting of tight tracks, fast routes, and a plethora of difficult terrain. The performance of the Defender Dakar D7X-Rs in said conditions goes to show the impeccable engineering, versatility and durability of Defender, and to be so close to the pace of cars in the Ultimate class exemplifies it perfectly. The engineers and mechanics have worked tirelessly to ensure the cars are in the best possible set-up for each stage, and it's paid off. We've got lots of learnings to take forward to round three."

The next round of the World Rally Raid Championship will take place from 24 to 29 May 2026 at the Desafio Ruta 40 in Argentina.

About BILSTEIN

BILSTEIN is part of thyssenkrupp AG and has its headquarters in Ennepetal, Germany. The company develops and produces suspensions, shock absorbers and springs for cars and vans and is one of the world's largest suppliers with an annual production of around 13 million shock absorbers. BILSTEIN is a technology leader and a global player with more than 4,100 employees at nine locations in six countries – including the UK, the USA, Romania, China and Mexico.

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