



Press briefing

W2RC: BILSTEIN technology supports Defender Rally triumph in Argentina

Essen/Ennepetal, 2 June 2026 - Another extreme W2RC challenge, another strong result for Defender Rally and its Official Shock Absorber Partner BILSTEIN: At the 2026 Desafío Ruta 40 in Argentina – regarded as one of the toughest rally-raid events worldwide – all three Defender Rally crews reached the podium in the Defender Dakar D7X-R. The one-two-three result in the Stock class underlines the competitive capability of the Defender Rally programme, the robustness of the vehicle concept and the importance of suspension technology that delivers consistent control across some of the toughest terrain in international rally-raid competition.

Stéphane Peterhansel and Mika Metge took the Stock class victory with an overall time of 18:11:12. Their teammates Rokas Baciūška and Oriol Vidal finished second in 18:20:30, followed by Sara Price and Saydiie Gray in third with a time of 19:06:04 after five demanding days of rally-raid racing. Exceptionally impressive: The three Defender Dakar D7X-R cars also finished within the top 20 of the overall Car category, underlining their strong pace.

For BILSTEIN, Official Shock Absorber Partner of Defender Rally, the result in Argentina is another important proof point in the World Rally-Raid Championship (W2RC). The Defender Dakar D7X-R relies on BILSTEIN BLACK HAWK high-performance shock absorbers, developed for extreme off-road use, high damping forces and precise vehicle control across constantly changing terrain.

Extreme terrain. Constant loads. Maximum control.

The Desafío Ruta 40 is widely regarded as one of the most demanding rally-raid events of the season. The 2026 edition covered five stages with a total of 1,523 kilometres of timed sections. From San Juan into the Mendoza region, through the Andes mountain range and back to San Juan, the route combined dry riverbeds, high-altitude mountain sections, broken terrain and extensive sand dunes.

These conditions place extraordinary demands on suspension technology. High speeds, heavy impacts, rapidly changing surfaces, long stages and extreme temperature and altitude profiles require dampers that deliver consistent performance over the full distance. In Argentina, the BILSTEIN BLACK HAWK dampers in the Defender Dakar D7X-R were once again exposed to precisely the kind of loads for which they were developed.

The final result reflects both speed and durability: all three Defender Rally cars reached the finish, locked out the Stock class podium and delivered competitive performance among cars from higher categories.

A demanding test for BILSTEIN technology

For BILSTEIN, the FIA World Rally-Raid Championship is more than a motorsport programme. It is an extreme development and validation environment for suspension technology under conditions that can hardly be replicated anywhere else. Rally-raid competition combines endurance, thermal stress, mechanical load

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The BILSTEIN logo consists of the word "BILSTEIN" in white, uppercase, sans-serif font on a blue rectangular background. To the right of the text is a yellow square containing a black stylized graphic of a coil spring.

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peaks and rapid surface changes in a way that makes every stage a real-world test of performance and reliability.

The success in Argentina follows Defender Rally's strong start to the 2026 season with the class victory at the Dakar Rally and the one-two-three finish in the Stock class at the bp Ultimate Rally-Raid Portugal. With the latest result at the Desafío Ruta 40, Defender Rally and BILSTEIN continue to build momentum in their first W2RC season together.

Production-based capability on the rally-raid world stage

The Defender Dakar D7X-R competes in the Stock class for production-based cars and is derived from the Defender OCTA. Modified to meet FIA regulations, the vehicle features adaptations including a wider track, new suspension and enhanced cooling to handle the demands of W2RC routes. At the same time, it retains core elements such as the D7x body architecture, driveline layout and transmission.

For BILSTEIN, this close connection between production-based engineering and motorsport competition is a key element of the partnership. The extreme demands of rally-raid create valuable insights for the continuous development of future suspension solutions. Tested in competition. Proven for the road.

The next round of the FIA World Rally-Raid Championship will take place at the Rallye du Maroc in Morocco from 28 September to 3 October 2026.

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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