

2 January 2012

Stage 2: Santa Rosa de la Pampa – San Rafael

Section: 487 km Special: 295 km

Laia Sanz goes up 24 places

- The rider from Corbera has come through a very tough stage marked by high temperatures and now holds 56th place.
- Dust in the air is turning out to be one of the greatest difficulties that the competitors have to face.

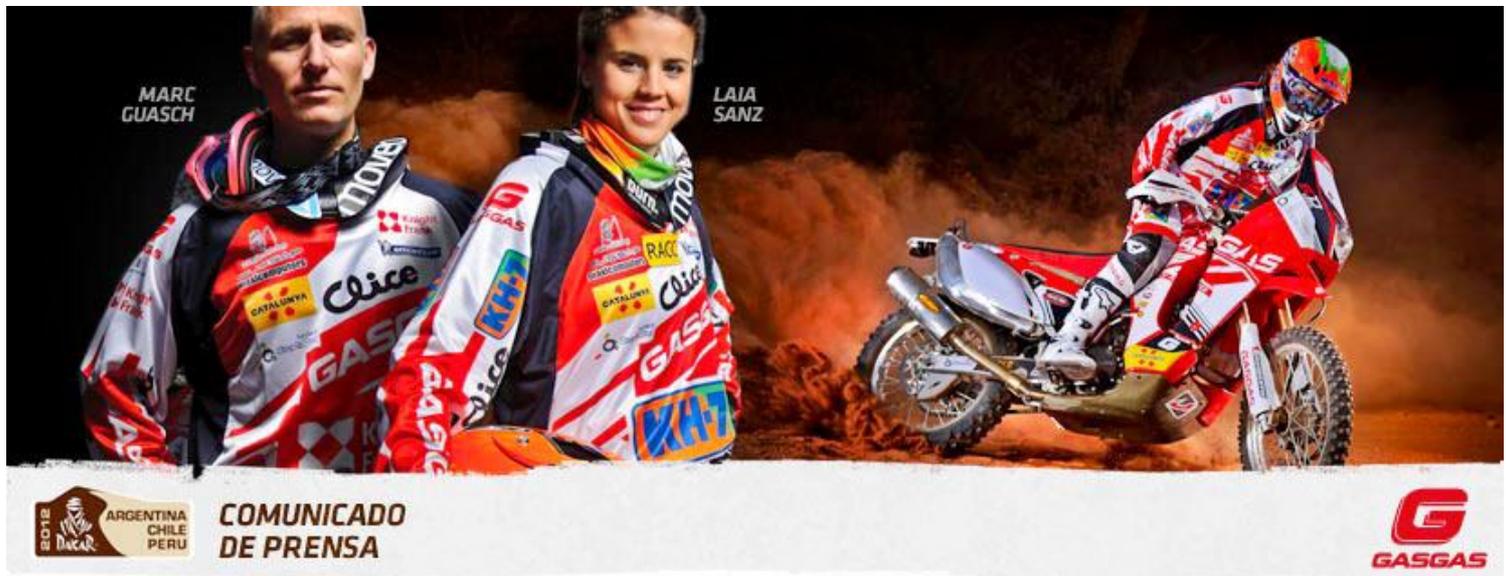
The second stage of the Dakar Rally 2012 was more exacting than the competitors expected. The very long sections travelled by the riders in two days were tedious and monotonous, but these were easy compared with the really tough special time trial facing them. Rocks, dry river beds and the dunes near Nihuil, where the riders met temperatures of over 45oC.

Sanz has recovered 24 places in just one day to cross the finishing line in 56th place in the general ranking. She was 54th in the stage, a result which she sees as “very positive”. “I am very happy because it has been an exhausting day with the heat and very difficult to handle”, she said.

In spite of the tough conditions of the stage, Laia Sanz felt strong and kept up a good pace, taking into account that she started in 80th position and had to ride for much of the time in the dust thrown up by others. “Today was quite dangerous, because there was not much visibility on the track and there are a lot of stones and other hazards which could throw you off the bike”, she explained.

One of the most difficult moments of the day for the 11 times Women’s Trial World Champion was when she found rider Bruno da Costa lying on the ground: “The scene was nightmarish. He must have hit a donkey or horse. When I got there, the animal was dead on the ground, the bike was on fire and Bruno was just lying there while





someone was attending to him. He did not look good and it made me feel so bad that for a good while I slowed my pace down”.

In the chain of dunes the difficulty was made worse by high temperatures and by difficulties in navigation. *“It was hard because the heat was terrible and the sand was so soft that the bike sank in. There were a lot of people in trouble there, mostly because of mechanical failures. Fortunately, my Gas Gas bike has got over this problem and we didn’t suffer any setbacks”*, she said.

Marc Guasch, Laia’s “bodyguard”, dropped from the 41st place he won yesterday in order to follow the progress of his team-mate, so that they could be together to face any mishap which could occur. According to Guasch, *“yesterday’s classification was a bit misleading because there were a lot of fast riders who were left at the back and others slower who were among the first 50 or 60 and this has complicated everything. The fastest found themselves facing dust from the slower riders and this can easily cause situations of danger”*.

“I am pleased that we have got through this very complicated stage with one part where the navigation was really difficult. Also, many bikes failed because of the temperature. Our fuel boiled, but we suffered nothing worse than that”, he told us.

The Catalan rider was 68th in the stage and is number 62 in the general classification.

For more information:
Mediagé Comunicación
 Gerard Gil
 +34 609 880 755
 ggil@mediage.es

