

## 2014 CHINA GRAND RALLY

Scrutineerings and opening ceremony



### Communiqué de presse 1

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## SCRUTINEERINGS AND OPENING CEREMONY AT THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA!

Badalin, August 31<sup>st</sup> 2014

**Following its initial success, China Grand Rally is back for another edition in 2014, equal to its predecessor in the richness of its plateau quality as well as in its racetrack diversity ingeniously designed by Hubert Auriol and Gilles Picard. The organisation has a grand plan, which used the Great Wall as an astoundingly picturesque location for the launch of 2014 China Grand Rally.**

The traditional administrative and technical checks took place Friday the 29<sup>th</sup> and Saturday the 30<sup>th</sup> of August at the foot of the Great Wall, in Badaling, situated at approximately 80 kilometres north-west of Beijing. Badaling is the most famous and most visited of the vast number of sites along the Great Wall with millions of visitors flocking each year to its heights in order to admire a unique panorama.

These first two days of checks served as a stage for the competitors to size each other up, gauging their respective strengths. It is clear that, despite a slight decline in enrolment when compared to the previous year, the "heavyweights" of the 2013 edition are back in full force and are very well prepared.

**Zhou Yong**, the winner of last year's event is back again. With his eyes on the prize, the champion arrived in a Toyota pick-up truck Overdrive and shall try to defeat his opponents once more, specifically the big favourite teams hired by Team Great Wall and prepared by **Philippe Gache** and his team from Fréjus. **Christian Lavieille** and **Jean-Pierre Garcin**, flanked by the number 102, are among the favourites. The two friends are expecting an epic and tricky race. "This is my first time participating in a rally in China. I heard a lot about the specifics of the deserts here thanks to the first edition of the China Grand Rally and the Transorientale in particular. I must admit though that I much prefer crossing large dunes. I think I'll be well served ... ". Christian on the other hand sees things differently since among other passages, crossing large dunes within central Mongolia will be inevitable in the CGR.

**Wei Han** will be the other driver of Haval. The man greatly impressed everybody last year, finishing second overall in a yellow Nissan Navara. His excellent performance drew the attention of the leadership of Team Great Wall, and it is only natural that he will occupy the second spot on the team. "I'm quite surprised at everything happened to me. To me, driving this car is a gift. I'll do everything to the fullest of my ability to be worthy of the trust placed in me." The rivalry looks tight between the two teammates, promising a thrilling race.

In a Nissan M05 prepared by Team Dessoude, **Miao Ma** does not expect any miracles. Having won in two different stages last year with their driver **Kun Liu**, the team's ambitions have reached new heights. Indeed, this year they have completely redone the car and shall use the CGR as a stage to test the vehicle and assess its potential use in future races.

As to the motorcycles, the race is more open and anticipated than ever. The decisive victory and thus achieving the glorious places on the winning podium will most likely be a race between the motorcycles of Team Jincheng prepared by **Gérard Anthony** already present in the desert and Honda's three vehicles. **AiDong Hu**, the winner of two specials last year, shall be back with his trouble loving, daredevil driving style often involving knocking his competitors sideways to gain an advantage.

Today, Sunday the 31<sup>st</sup> of August, in the early hours of the morning, the competitors headed to the opening ceremony of 2014 China Grand Rally where a large crowd awaited them with great anticipation. Sheltered by the Great Wall, the opening ceremony gave each competitor an hour of attention and then launched into full festivities involving traditional Chinese groups of entertainers among several others, all broadcasted on live television, specifically CCTV-5. In the evening, the competitors congregated in Hangjinqi after a long day of travel of over 700 kilometres to the racetracks.

The first special of the China Grand Rally will take place tomorrow. Covering a distance of 580 kilometres, 198 of those shall be chronometrically timed, involving covering 50 kilometres of sand dunes, this racetrack promises to be a great challenge providing exhilarating entertainment. Following a 260 kilometre race, those arriving shall reach Alxa Zuoqi in central Mongolia where the day's first bivouac is located.