



Press Release

Promising future for the Circuit of Dakar Baobabs!

Dakar, capital of the Republic of Senegal, a town whose name is engraved for posterity, thanks to the rally raid of the same name, and which formerly started from Paris. An event which could not be held this year for safety fears along the route. Would this leave Dakar void of any motor sport? Not exactly... Since 1958 the 6 Hours of Dakar has been a highly appreciated international event, notwithstanding the fact that being a non permanent circuit it created problems inherent in street racing. But all this seems to be behind them, because now, in Dakar, a permanent circuit has seen the light of day: Dakar Baobabs !

A dream that lasted a quarter of a century... In fact back in 1975 an official model depicting a permanent circuit in Dakar was presented to the Senegalese Ambassador in Paris. But nothing materialised. Nothing that is until a Belgian, Paul Libens, an entrepreneur established in Senegal for some 27 years gave the course of history a push, acquiring an 80 hectares site at Sindia, 60 km south of Dakar, but also some twenty kilometres from the coastal resort of Saly, with a wealth of hotels and all told some 6000 beds.

Jean-André Collard (Trace Events), his son in law, inspired by the Spa and Istanbul circuits drew up the plans for a track, and very quickly the tarmac was laid. 4700 meters long, with 21 bends, both fast and technical as also two requiring hard braking, the Circuit of Dakar Baobabs enjoys a minimum width of 12 meters, with a 15 meters wide start straight. All the ingredients appear to be on hand to ensure a bright future for this track.

"This is in fact the first permanent private circuit in West Africa ", Jean-André Collard explains. "We intentionally drew up the plans with the FIA norms in mind and the circuit is presently awaiting homologation by the Fédération Internationale Automobile. In fact the dossier is managed by Mr Roland Bruynseraede, the former Formula 1 Race Director. In the coming months the control tower will be built, as also a pitlane some 800 metres in length, modern stands, sanitary installations, parking areas and a cafeteria. Everything must go quickly as there are already international racing projects on the horizon for 2009. "

Amongst other advantages the Circuit of Dakar Baobabs is a site under customs control, as such avoiding the administrative costs of ATA carnets as also all export formalities. The clement Senegalese climate, guaranteeing summer temperatures without a single drop of rain from November through to May, is an additional asset for all future users of the circuit, be they manufacturers, constructors, race organisers, teams, drivers and so forth. *"For the time being we contemplate the organisation of 20 races of 4 days per year, and this for cars as well as bikes, karting and 4x4s ", Jean-André Collard continued. "The Senegalese motor sport Federation is already committed to organising six of these weekends. Our objective is quite clearly to promote motor sport in West Africa, through the development of incentives, driving schools for both two and four wheels, etc. In short, there is no lack of projects."*

On 21st and 22nd June, the 28th edition of the 6 Hours of Dakar was held for the first time on the Circuit of Dakar Baobabs, and was a resounding success. Notwithstanding victory being clinched by the Porsche of the Belgian duo Gérard de Ville de Goyet and Gérard Marcy, it was above all the unique environment of this race that kept everyone in awe. And amongst some of the personalities present none other than... Jacky Ickx, former record holder of the prestigious 24 Hours of Le Mans and ex-Formula 1 driver.

"It appears to be a beautiful circuit and I truly believe that it will give great pleasure to all motor sport fans in the Senegal ", Jacky Ickx declared to the national Senegalese media."I discovered Senegal quite a few years ago, and I competed in this mythical race back in 1980. With the organisation you have in place here and all those who conceived this modern and enticing circuit it will attract plenty of races in years to come, and I believe the "6 Hours of Dakar" has a bright future ahead. In my eyes the creation of this track is quite exceptional. I'm obviously very interested in motor sport, which is why I have come here, as also for my friendship with the Senegal because I love this country and I'm one of its supporters.."

Undoubtedly the start of a major and superb adventure for the Circuit of Dakar Baobabs, and there is talk of organising GT3 events, Fun Cup races, Touring cars, as also single-seaters in the not too distant future. Definitely a bright outlook...

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