

# SA co-driver selected for Sealine Cross Country Rally in Qatar

South African co-driver Sandra Labuscagne will compete in the international Sealine Cross Country Rally, round three of the FIA Cross Country World Cup, in Qatar from 17 to 22 April.



Sandra Labuscagne via SANORA

## All female team

The experienced Labuscagne was chosen to attend a training camp organised by the FIA Women in Motorsport Commission and Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation in Qatar in November last year. Labuscagne will partner Spanish driver Christina Gutierrez-Herrero in Class T2 on the 1650 kilometre event.

Gutierrez-Herrero and Labuscagne will be part of a three car all female team. The other members of the team are New Zealander Emma Gilmour and Lisette Bakker, of the Netherlands, and Frenchwoman Charlotte Berton and Jordanian Yasmeen Elmajed.

Belgian Lara Vanneste was originally scheduled to co-drive for Gutierrez-Herrero, but has withdrawn from the Qatar event because of German Rally Championship obligations. Labuscagne was chosen as her replacement and, along with Gutierrez-Herrero, will attend a three day fitness, navigation and driver training camp before the start of the event.

Labuscagne was one of an original 85 applicants from 39 countries to attend the November training camp. Rally legend Michelle Mouton, who is president of the FIA Women in Motorsport Commission, headed up the selection panel. She was joined on the panel by Jutta Kleinschmidt and Fabrizia Pons, with the applicants whittled down to nine drivers and nine co-drivers. Kleinschmidt is the only woman to have won the iconic Dakar Rally, while Pons has a string of rally and cross-country successes as a co-driver.

Labuscagne has been competing at national level for a number of years, and she and father Coetzee finished sixth overall in the Special Vehicle category in last year's Donaldson Cross Country Championship. Labuscagne also took the award for the highest placed female competitor in the national championship.

## **A terrific challenge**

"The Donaldson series has been a terrific training ground," Labuscagne added, "and I am looking forward to the three day training camp before the event starts. I have done a lot of research into the Sealine Cross Country Rally, and it sounds like a really tough event so it is going to be something of an adventure, and the desert dunes will be a huge challenge."

SANORA CEO Siegfried Rousseau said coming after the incredible South African successes on the Dakar Rally, the appearance of Sandra in Qatar was another indication of the quality and professionalism in the Donaldson Cross Country Championship.

"All South African cross country enthusiasts will be rooting for Sandra, and I am sure she will do us proud," said Rousseau. "Apart from personal prestige, Sandra's participation in Qatar will also serve as a source of inspiration for other women competitors in South African motorsport."

The Sealine Cross Country Rally will be run over five days with varied terrain ranging from desert sand and rocky mountain sections to the challenging desert dunes in the scenic north Qatar. The gruelling event will be a stern test of driving and navigation skills.

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