



Joaquim Rodrigues breaks into top 10, C.S. Santosh improves his overnight position

Salta, Argentina January 10: After spending six days in the Bolivian Altiplano, the Dakar Rally commenced its return to Argentina today. Hero Motosports Team Rally riders, Joaquim Rodrigues and C.S. Santosh, continued with their impressive performance in the eighth stage, which formed the second part of the marathon special. Today, the team hit an important milestone as Joaquim broke into the top 10 since the start of the world's toughest rally in his debut attempt.

As has been the norm in this edition of the Dakar, the stage from Uyuni to Salta was once again modified because it was impossible to ford an overflowing river. As a result, the original special of 392 km, was split into two parts and was shortened by 68 km.



But that didn't prevent Rodrigues from mounting a serious charge to break into the top 10 on his first Dakar appearance. Even as more rains rendered the tracks slippery and treacherous, Rodrigues attacked the course with loads of courage and skill to string together a stupendous race. The Portuguese rider powered his bike across the finish of the special stage in 4 hours 44 minutes 57 seconds, just 16 minutes

and 36 seconds behind the stage winner. Rodrigues finished the tough day in 16th place that helped him move into highly commendable 10th place in the provisional overall classifications.

Santosh, who started the special in 38th place, also came up with a good ride despite the challenging riding conditions that forced many of the frontrunners to stop in the middle of the stage to change their riding goggles and gloves. He completed the timed section in 47th position with a time of 5 hours 14 minutes 01 second. His performance in this special stage helped him climb to the 62nd place in the provisional overall general classifications, up from his overnight 67th position.

It was also an action-packed day for the assistance crews, who were travelling from La Paz to Salta. But a massive landslide about 200 km north of Salta forced both the assistance crews and the participants to undertake a detour of 150 km through the back roads as the last liaison was modified by the organisers.

The ninth stage from Salta to Chilecito will test the riders with a distance of 977 km out of which 406 km make up the special stage. With almost 1000 km on the agenda, the “Super Belen” stage, as it’s being called in the Dakar Paddock, will put a heavy premium on the navigation skills of the riders.

Provisional Stage 8 General Classification

1. Joan Barreda Bort, Monster Energy Honda Team, Honda, 4:28:21
2. Matthias Walkner, Red Bull KTM Factory Team, KTM, 4:32:12
3. Sam Sunderland, Red Bull KTM Factory Team, KTM, 4:32:15
- 16. Joaquim Rodrigues, Hero Motosports Team Rally, Hero Speedbrain, 4:44:57**
- 47. C.S. Santosh, Hero Motosports Team Rally, Hero Speedbrain, 5:14:01**

Provisional Overall General Classification

1. Sam Sunderland, Red Bull KTM Factory Team, KTM, 22:01:08
2. Pablo Quintanilla, Husqvarna Factory Team, Husqvarna, 22:22:06
3. Adrain Van Breven, Yamaha Official Rally Team, Yamaha, 22:29:57
- 10. Joaquim Rodrigues, Hero Motosports Team Rally, Hero Speedbrain, 23:37:08**
- 62. C.S. Santosh, Hero Motosports Team Rally, Hero Speedbrain, 29:13:12**

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