



**Joaquim Rodrigues finishes in 20th place, C.S. Santosh in 38th in the Marathon Stage Day 1**

**Uyuni, Bolivia January 9:** Hero Motosports Team Rally riders, Joaquim Rodrigues and C.S. Santosh enjoyed yet another consistent day on the seventh stage following the rest day in La Paz in the 2017 Dakar even as the original course underwent drastic changes.

Rains in Bolivia continued to play havoc with the Dakar this year, forcing the organisers to drastically alter the seventh stage of the rally. The original 322 km of marathon special between La Paz and Uyuni was rearranged by combining sections of the cancelled sixth stage and parts of the original seventh special for a reduced distance of 161 km, which was sandwiched between an opening liaison of 400 km and a closing road section of 240 km.



Rodrigues, who was placed in 11th position after six stages, was among the lead pack of riders to enter the seventh special. But being a marathon stage with no access to assistance at the end of the day, Rodrigues chose to ride with caution to conserve the bike for the second part of the marathon from Uyuni to Salta. The Portuguese rider completed the timed section in 2 hour 19 minutes 46 seconds to finish the day in 20th position in the stage seven classifications. However, in

the provisional overall general classifications, Rodrigues still retains his 11th place, 1 hour 23 minutes 18 seconds behind the leader.

*"I made some mistakes with my roadbook while doing the corrections. I just had to follow the lines from the other guys. Once in the dunes, I navigated really well and I didn't get lost. There was a little bit of pressure in the dunes, but nothing major. After that I just took it easy to the end. I am happy to bring the bike back to the marathon bivouac in good shape for tomorrow's stage,"* said Rodrigues.

Santosh too came up with a much-improved performance. Having slipped down the overall rankings due to the time penalty on the third stage for missing a waypoint, he has been on a salvage mission since then. Tackling the seventh special that was run in the dunes for a substantial part, which is his favourite surface, the Indian rider completed the timed section in 2 hour 35 minute 14 seconds that put him in 38th place in the provisional stage seven classifications. It also helped him to climb to 67th place in the provisional overall general classifications.

*"I also made mistake while correcting the roadbook after the stage got changed yesterday. I was without navigation for the first 60-65 km, after that the roadbook matched. I did what I could today, made some good time. I passed a lot of riders. So, to finish in 38th place today is pretty good. The bike is running fine and I am looking forward to tomorrow's stage,"* said Santosh.

The eighth stage from Uyuni to Salta, which forms second part of the marathon, will take the riders over the international border back into Argentina for the business end of the 2017 Dakar. If the entire special is run, then the riders will have another long day with 492-km of special marked by some dune section in the beginning before they would need to ford some rivers.

#### **Provisional Stage 7 General Classification**

1. Ricky Brabec, Monster Energy Honda Team, Honda, 2:02:05
2. Paulo Goncalves, Monster Energy Honda Team, Honda, 2:03:49
3. Sam Sunderland, Red Bull KTM Factory Rally, KTM, 2:06:48
- 20. Joaquim Rodrigues, Hero Motorsports Team Rally, Hero Speedbrain, 2:19:46**
- 38. C.S. Santosh, Hero Motorsports Team Rally, Hero Speedbrain, 2:35:14**

#### **Provisional Overall General Classification**

1. Sam Sunderland, Red Bull KTM Factory Rally, KTM, 17:28:53
2. Pablo Quintanilla, Husqvarna Factory Rally, Husqvarna, 17:46:28
3. Adrain Van Breven, Yamaha Official Rally Team, Yamaha, 17:51:09
- 11. Joaquim Rodrigues, Hero Motorsports Team Rally, Hero Speedbrain, 18:52:11**
- 67. C.S. Santosh, Hero Motorsports Team Rally, Hero Speedbrain, 23:59:11**

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