



Abu Dhabi, March 02, 2024

## HERO MOTOSPORTS TEAM RALLY WINS THE ABU DHABI DESERT CHALLENGE 2024

**AARON MARÈ CLAIMS VICTORY FOR THE TEAM**

### THE INDIAN FACTORY TEAM LEADS FIM WORLD RALLY-RAID CHAMPIONSHIP 2024

**Hero MotoSports Team Rally**, the motorsport team of the world's largest manufacturer of motorcycles and scooters - **Hero MotoCorp**, won the 33rd edition of the prestigious Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge today. This is the 7-year young team's first triumph at a World Championship race and follows their historic Dakar Rally podium finish in January 2024.

Rally GP class rider Aaron Marè won the race for Hero MotoSports, showcasing a phenomenal performance at the 6-day desert rally. Even though Aaron joined the team as a substitute for factory rider Sebastian Buhler (who is still recovering from his Dakar crash), the young South African, residing in Dubai, performed at his peak to win 2 Stages, lead the race for four straight days, and eventually finish on the winner podium.



Collecting several points from the round win, Hero MotoSports has catapulted to the top of the manufacturers' leader board in the FIM World Rally-Raid Championship (W2RC) 2024 – this is also the first time an Indian manufacturer has reached this level on a global stage. y from the podium, owing to an unfortunate delay from a mechanical issue in Stage 1.



The second factory rider for the team, Ross Branch, finished just outside the podium, in fourth place. By finishing 2nd in the Rally GP class at this second race of the season, Ross has raised his total points to 50, making himself the leader of the World Rally-Raid Championship 2024 – another first for Team Hero MotoSports.

Fondly known as the 'Kalahari Ferrari', Ross started well at the start of the rally, with a win in the Prologue stage. However, while leading the race on Stage 1, he faced a mechanical issue. With a bit of luck and smart effort, he could continue in the race and make it to the finish. Even though the issue set him back by over 45 minutes from the lead, Ross made continuous efforts until the end, winning multiple Stages.

The Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge is popular for its 100% sand & desert terrains and a highly intensive week of racing under the hot sun in the Rub Al' Khali (Empty Quarter). Team Hero, however, faced a few setbacks even before the race commenced. Customs clearance issues and a last minute rider replacement left the team with just under a day to prepare for the race. Regardless, the lean team consistently outperformed their competition, and eventually won the Rally.





The next challenge for the team arrives in less than a month - the BP Ultimate Rally-Raid to be held in Portugal and Spain - the third round of the W2RC 2024. As leaders of the World Championship in both the Rider rankings and the Manufacturer rankings, the team will aim to continue their strong run and chase better results.

### **Wolfgang Fischer, Team Manager & Head, Hero MotoSports Team Rally::**

*"We are very happy to be at the finish line as winners of this iconic race! As a team, our achievement is triple-fold - it's our first victory at a World Championship race, it's the first time we are leading the World Championship Rider rankings (with Ross), and it's also the first time Hero is leading the Manufacturer rankings in a World Championship! It has been a roller-coaster week for us – a last minute replacement for Sebastian, and then delayed arrival of our bikes from customs. However, I am really happy with how Aaron stepped up to the challenge and did a wonderful job all through the race, bringing us this fantastic result. Ross was also able to earn the maximum points in the World Championship. I'm extremely happy with what the team has achieved, and look forward to the rest of the season. A big thank you to all our partners and fans for their continued support and love."*

### **Aaron Maré:**

*"I'm super happy to get the overall victory at ADDC. I can't thank Hero MotoSports, Waffi and the team enough for getting me up here. It was an amazing opportunity, and I made the most of it. I was also fortunate to ride along with Ross Branch who came fresh from his Dakar podium, and learnt a lot from him. We were teammates several years back, and it was a wonderful time spent with him here. I look forward to the upcoming races in the year."*

**Ross Branch:**

*"This was a bittersweet rally for me. After our setback in Stage 1, we managed to gather up the maximum Championship points - which was our main objective. I got to the finish line safe, and I'm really happy with how the race went. I got to open the stages on several days, won a couple of Stages, had a lot of fun and gained some more experience. A big thank you and heartfelt appreciation to the team and everyone else who got us here. We will now head to Portugal on a high!"*

**Provisional Rankings – Stage 5:**

1.	<b>Ross Branch</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	<b>2h 32m 58s</b>
2.	Konrad Dabrowski	Duust Rally Team	+ 2m 42s
3.	Jean-Loup Lèpan	Duust Rally Team	+ 5m 22s
4.	<b>Aaron Maré</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	<b>+ 8m 00s</b>
5.	Abdulla Lanjawi	SRG Motorsports	+ 11m 28s

**Provisional Overall Standings after Stage 5:**

1.	<b>Aaron Maré</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	<b>16h 36m 13s</b>
2.	Konrad Dabrowski	Duust Rally Team	+ 4m 56s
3.	Jean-Loup Lèpan	Duust Rally Team	+ 19m 27s
4.	<b>Ross Branch</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	<b>+ 39m 55s</b>
5.	Jan Brabec	Strojrent Racing	+ 1h 47m 37s

**2024 FIM World Rally-Raid Championship Standings (After Round 2)**

1.	<b>Ross Branch</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	<b>50 points</b>
2.	Ricky Brabec	Monster Energy Honda Team	38 points
3.	<b>Aaron Maré</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	<b>25 points</b>
4.	Adrien Van Beveren	Monster Energy Honda Team	24 points
5.	Ignacio Cornejo	Monster Energy Honda Team	20 points

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**For more information:**

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