



Al Ain, February 22, 2025

A SOLID START FOR HERO MOTOSPORTS AT THE ABU DHABI DESERT CHALLENGE 2025

RIDER DUO FINISH IN TOP-10 OF THE PROLOGUE STAGE

Hero MotoSports Team Rally, the motorsport team of the world's largest manufacturer of motorcycles and scooters - **Hero MotoCorp**, started its campaign at the second round of the World Rally-Raid Championship 2025 – the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge (ADDC), with a two-rider line-up.

Just under a month since their Dakar Rally outing, the team is back to the Arabian deserts for their next challenge. Team Hero MotoSports had emerged winners of the previous edition - ADDC 2024 – which also marked their first World Championship race victory. Back to defend their title, the Hero MotoSports team is represented by factory riders Ross Branch and Nacho Cornejo in this edition.





Competing in the premier Rally GP Class, riders Ross Branch and Nacho Cornejo crossed the finish line of the inaugural Prologue Stage in the 4th and 7th positions respectively - earning themselves good start positions for the first official Stage due on Sunday.

After successfully completing the administrative checks and technical scrutiny on February 21st (Friday), a total of 103 vehicles arrived at the start line of the Prologue stage on Saturday - 63 of which are competing in the FIM category. Unlike the usual sand conditions, the 11 km Prologue today in the outskirts of Al Ain city featured a fast gravel track with many sharp turns, few wadi crossings and dust, setting the context for a fiery battle ahead.

As the reigning FIM World Champion of 2024, Ross Branch aims to recover lost time and points from the last round. While running 4th overall in the 6th Stage of Dakar 2025, an unfortunate crash had cut short the ambitions of the Botswanan. As the only Hero rider left in the race, Nacho Cornejo made a triumphant run to the finish, making it to the 7th overall spot at Dakar 2025 – the 2nd best Dakar result for the Hero team. Nacho enjoys a solid chance to move up in the Championship, and looks forward to a successful ADDC. Their team mate Sebastian Buhler is currently recovering from his injuries from the Dakar.

The 34th edition of the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge (ADDC) marks a significant moment for this pioneering Middle Eastern rally-raid event. ADDC has been on the W2RC calendar for four consecutive years now, and recent editions have been known to shake up the championship rankings. Rebranded and relocated to Abu Dhabi in 2009, the ADDC has since adopted the current 5-day racing plus Prologue format, in line with the World Championship norms. The 2025 edition has broken with tradition by starting in the historic city of Al Ain instead of Abu Dhabi. Located 150 km east of Abu Dhabi, Al Ain is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the world's oldest settlements dating back to over 8000 years. Renowned for its ancient history, oases, and expansive palm groves, Al Ain is indeed a worthy choice by the EMSO (Emirates Motorsports Organization) to bring together the world's top rally-raid athletes and fans alike.

Evolving into a new identity, the Emirati classic will take competitors on a 1920 km journey across the desert, 60% of which is expected to be brand new terrains. After Al Ain, Mezeer'ah in Al Dhafra region – the gateway to the Empty Quarter (Rub' al Khali) - will host the central bivouac of the rally from Stage 2 to Stage 4, before finishing on the shores of Abu Dhabi on February 27th. Stages 3 and 4 will form a Marathon stage for both bikes and cars, and is hosted this time at one of the remotest parts of the UAE – the Al Qua'a Region, better known as 'the Milkyway Spot' – where competitors will have to survive without any external mechanical assistance.



Wolfgang Fischer, Team Manager, Hero MotoSports Team Rally:

"We are back to racing from a very short recess after the Dakar. Ross and Nacho did very well in the Prologue today, and have set a good tempo for the week ahead. It's a bold return for Ross after the heavy crash that he suffered at Dakar last month. ADDC is also a fantastic opportunity for Nacho to build on top of his solid 2025 Dakar result. Buhler will require some more time to recover from his Dakar injuries, and we wish to welcome him back soon."

Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge has always been known to be one of the most technical rounds on the World Championship calendar, and this year seems to be even more special, with a considerable amount of update in routes and terrains from what we've seen before. We are well prepared for the challenge - the bikes are doing great, and the team is charged up to make the best out of this week."

Ross Branch:

"I'm really grateful and happy to be back on the bike. I'm not 100% there yet, after my crash at Dakar, but we'll get there. The Prologue today was short and fast, and I'm happy for the good result. We'll push as best as we can, with a goal to make it to the finish line well. A big thank you to the entire team, and looking forward to a good week here in Abu Dhabi."

Nacho Cornejo:

"The Prologue went pretty well today. Prologues are not my strong suits, but today I did much better, so I'm happy about that! I've been working on my weak points, so this is a good step up. We have a good position to start tomorrow, and we're ready to enjoy a long week of sand and dunes in the desert."

Provisional Rankings – Prologue Stage

1.	Tosha Schareina	Monster Energy Honda Team	6m 53s
2.	Luciano Benavides	Red Bull KTM Factory Racing	+ 04s
3.	Ricky Brabec	Monster Energy Honda Team	+ 13s
4.	Ross Branch	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 16s
5.	Daniel Sanders	Red Bull KTM Factory Racing	+ 17s
6.	Skyler Howes	Monster Energy Honda Team	+ 19s
7.	Nacho Cornejo	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 38s

For more information:

www.heromotocorp.com / FB: /HeroMotoCorpIndia / Twitter: @HeroMotoCorp / IG: @HeroMotoCorp

Press Contact:

corporate.communication@heromotocorp.com

Follow the team:

www.heromotosports.com / IG: @Heromotosports / FB: HeroMotoSports / Twitter: @hero_motosports

