



Mezaira'a, UAE, February 23, 2025

HERO MOTOSPORTS POWERS THROUGH STAGE 01 OF ABU DHABI DESERT CHALLENGE '25

ROSS BRANCH IN OVERALL TOP-5

Hero MotoSports Team Rally, the motorsport team of the world's largest manufacturer of motorcycles and scooters - **Hero MotoCorp**, completed Stage 1 of the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge 2025, posting solid results.

Hero factory rider and reigning World Champion of 2024, Ross Branch finished the first stage in the 6th fastest time. His team mate, Nacho Cornejo crossed the finish line just 30 seconds behind Ross, earning the 7th position in Stage 1. At the end of the first official stage, Ross Branch finds himself in the overall top-5 of ADDC 2025 – with a gap of just over 5 minutes from the leader of the race. Nacho Cornejo follows close behind at the 7th overall position, 6 minutes down from the top.





Moving on from the inaugural bivouac at Al Ain, the first stage of ADDC '25 sent the competitors straight into the heart of the Abu Dhabi desert, on a 400 km route towards Mezaira'a. The challenging journey southwest to the Liwa region had a relatively fast profile, but also came with breathtaking views. A true test of endurance and navigation under the hot Arabian sun, this new route featured numerous broken dunes and slip face downhills. Treacherously soft sand in many areas across the 243 km special also required the riders to keep a close tab on their fuel consumption.

Ross Branch, who is still recovering from his Dakar injuries, doesn't feel he's "100% there yet". In the first leg of Stage 1, the Botswanan found himself lagging behind, unable to find a good rhythm. Catching up with another top rider, Ross was able to ride together and make up for lost time up until the finish. His powerful comeback earns him a coveted spot in the overall top-5. For Nacho Cornejo – "the dragon from Iquique" – Stage 1 was a fruitful day in the sand and dunes. Getting more comfortable with the Hero 450 Rally, the Chilean is confident of putting up a steady battle up until the last day of the race.

The second stage on Monday will be a 302 km loop around the Mezaira'a, of which 228 km will be timed. The competitors will be reintroduced to the legendary Liwa dunes of the Empty Quarter, running close by the Oman border.



Ross Branch:

"I'm happy to be back here at the end of Stage 1. It was quite tough for me in the morning to get a good flow and to maintain a good rhythm. After refueling, Ricky (Brabec) caught up with me, and then we rode together. He did a great job, so I just stayed on with him, trying to make up for lost time. I'm glad to be back here in one piece, and happy with my result. Looking forward to tomorrow."

Nacho Cornejo:

"It was a good day in the sand on Stage 1. I'm happy with my riding and how my bike has been performing. I'm getting more comfortable day by day, and today's result is also pretty good. We have 4 more days to keep fighting. Everyone is pushing real hard, and so it's going to be a great battle until the last day."

Provisional Rankings – Stage 1:

1.	Tosha Schareina	Monster Energy Honda Team	2h 54m 00s
2.	Ricky Brabec	Monster Energy Honda Team	+ 01m 54s
3.	Luciano Benavides	Red Bull KTM Factory Racing	+ 03m 18s
6.	Ross Branch	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+05m 08s
7.	Nacho Cornejo	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 05m 39s

Provisional Overall Standings after Stage 1:

1.	Tosha Schareina	Monster Energy Honda Team	3h 00m 53s
2.	Ricky Brabec	Monster Energy Honda Team	+ 02m 07s
3.	Luciano Benavides	Red Bull KTM Factory Racing	+ 03m 22s
4.	Michael Docherty	SRG Motorsports	+ 05m 04s
5.	Ross Branch	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 05m 24s
6.	Edgar Canet	Red Bull KTM Factory Racing	+ 06m 05s
7.	Nacho Cornejo	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 06m 17s

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