



Grândola, April 07, 2024

HERO MOTOSPORTS TEAM RALLY FINISHES 2ND OVERALL AT RALLY RAID PORTUGAL

SEBASTIAN BUHLER BAGS HIS FIRST W2RC PODIUM

ROSS BRANCH & HERO MOTOSPORTS MAINTAIN THEIR WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP LEAD POSITIONS

Hero MotoSports Team Rally, the motorsport team of the world's largest manufacturer of motorcycles and scooters - **Hero MotoCorp**, finished Rally Raid Portugal on the podium, with team rider Sebastian Buhler bagging the 2nd overall position of the race. Continuing their powerful victory streak, this is the third time the Indian manufacturer team has reached the podium of a World Championship race, since the beginning of this year.



This is the young German rider's first podium position in an FIM World Rally Raid Championship (W2RC) race. With a Stage victory and two Stage podiums, Buhler showcased consistent top performances throughout the challenging week, and raked in a highly deserving top result for the team. Having been raised in Portugal since he was 3 months old, Buhler had a good grasp over the topography of the region, and was able to push hard through the demanding stages. Coming back from strong from his Dakar 2024 crash, Buhler proved his strong mettle by finishing just 4 min 38 sec behind the winner of this Rally.



Finishing 6th overall in the Rally GP Class is Hero rider Ross Branch. The Botswanan found the terrain quite unfamiliar and tricky, and took some days to get accustomed to finding his pace through the narrow tracks and muddy landscape. While a major crash in the first Stage made it quite difficult for him to continue, a determined Ross pulled himself through over the rest of the week, and crossed the finish line just outside the top-5.

At the end of 3 rounds of the W2RC 2024, Ross Branch maintained his number 1 position in the Rider Rankings, having collected 11 more points, and increasing his padding further by 3 points over the 2nd place holder. Even though their closest competition - Honda Racing - fielded 4 riders at this race against 2 from Hero, Team Hero MotoSports managed to maintain their lead position in the W2RC 2024 Manufacturer rankings, consolidating a 3-point lead over Honda.

Based in Grândola, 60 kilometres from Lisbon, the 5-day Rally explored the Alentejo and Ribatejo areas, and also spent a day in the Spanish Extremadura. The Rally Raid Portugal thus became the 'first cross-border race in the W2RC'. Even though the race was set against beautiful Mediterranean landscapes, the 1,700+ km race was highly exhaustive for both the riders and the team. The Rally posed less navigational challenges, however, the Stages demanded highly technical riding - almost mimicking an endurance race on most days. A week of continuous rains before the start of the Rally rendered the sandy tracks full of water, puddles, and mud. The narrow tracks winding through fields of old oak trees were even more dangerous, owing to the thick roots that protruded onto the tracks.

Water crossings, steep mountain tops, narrow tracks, fast tracks and worn out tyres –competitors risked everything to make it to the top order. However, unlike the desert races, the Rally Raid Portugal attracted thousands of avid fans and spectators, who crowded up on the sides of the tracks on all days – cheering on for their favourite heroes. This was indeed a great delight and boost in confidence for the weary competitors.

Coming up in less than a month is the fourth round of the FIM World Rally Raid Championship – the Desafio Ruta 40 in Argentina. The team will focus on preparing well for the race, with an aim to retain their leadership in the W2RC 2024 Rider and Manufacturer rankings.



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

"We're really happy to bring both our riders to the finish here at the Rally Raid Portugal. They've gone through really different conditions than what we're used to - a lot of water, mud, and challenging situations all through the week.

It's a first World Championship race podium for Basti, and we're really happy for him! We also learnt we can be really competitive in these type of conditions. Ross endured a major crash and injury in Stage 1. However, he overcame the scares and was able to bring the bike home in a decent overall position - defending his lead in the World Championship well.

Overall it has been a great experience here in Portugal, and we enjoyed the fantastic crowd support too. We now look forward to the 4th W2RC round in Argentina in June. A big thank you to all our partners and fans for their continued support and love."

Sebastian Buhler:

"I'm really happy with how the Rally went overall. It became quite difficult due to the continuous rains we had before the race. The stages were challenging for me, and even for the mechanics to keep the bike in good shape throughout the week. It was still good, as I like this terrain, and I could push hard due to my familiarity with the region. On the first day I lost a bit of time due to a penalty, but I'm happy to have performed well overall. I think it was a good comeback after my Dakar crash earlier this year."

Ross Branch:

"I enjoyed this whole week of riding here in this beautiful area of Portugal, and amidst hundreds of spectators every day. Unfortunately, I wasn't fast enough in this terrain, and the competitors in the top order had a better pace. On Day 1 I had a really bad crash and it was quite difficult to continue in the race, but we came out well from the tough situation and finished decently well. A huge thank you to the team, and to everyone who supported us through this rough week. Looking forward to starting again from zero at the next race in Argentina, coming up in a month's time."

Final Rankings – Stage 5 (Rally GP Class):

1.	Adrien Van Beveren	Monster Energy Honda Team	48m 37s
2.	Tosha Schareina	Monster Energy Honda Team	+ 15s
3.	Sebastian Buhler	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 20s
4.	Ross Branch	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 1m 41s
5.	Antonio Maio	Yamaha Racing	+ 2m 33s

Overall Standings after Stage 5 (Rally GP Class):

1.	Tosha Schareina	Monster Energy Honda Team	10h 01m 15s
2.	Sebastian Buhler	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 4m 38s
3.	Antonio Maio	Yamaha Racing	+ 14m 12s
4.	Adrien Van Beveren	Monster Energy Honda Team	+ 14m 42s
5.	Skyler Howes	Monster Energy Honda Team	+ 17m 50s
6.	Ross Branch	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 20m 19s

2024 FIM World Rally-Raid Championship Standings (After Round 3)

1.	Ross Branch	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	61 points
2.	Adrien Van Beveren	Monster Energy Honda Team	40 points
3.	Ricky Brabec	Monster Energy Honda Team	38 points

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

