



Press Release

**Shaybah, Saudi Arabia, January 11, 2023**

## **HERO MOTOSPORTS ACHIEVES SECOND STAGE WIN AT THE DAKAR RALLY 2023**

### **ROSS BRANCH WINS STAGE 10**

**Dakar 2023 is turning out to be historic for Hero MotoSports Team Rally, the motorsport team of the world's largest manufacturer of motorcycles and scooters - Hero MotoCorp.**

Hero MotoSports Team Rally **emerged victorious in a Stage for the second time** at the Dakar Rally 2023, making this the Indian manufacturer's second stage win at this year's edition and the third stage win overall, at the toughest race in the world.



Ross Branch bagged the top position of Stage 10, adding a second Stage Win to his tally in this season of the Dakar Rally. Starting the stage at the 28<sup>th</sup> position, he posted the fastest time at each checkpoint, and finally emerged the winner of the first stage in the Empty Quarter.

Since its first Dakar appearance in 2017, the seven-year young Indian manufacturer team has been constantly pushing the boundaries to make it into the league of top teams that have been leading the ranks for several decades. Hero MotoSports Team Rally became the only Indian manufacturer to have ever won at the Dakar with a Stage win in 2022.

Fueled by a strong passion to succeed in this difficult sport, the team has put in thousands of hours for rider training and towards developing a highly competitive race bike – the Hero 450 Rally. A second victory today at the Dakar 2023 serves as a testament to the team’s unwavering dedication, and their machine’s capability to survive and win at the toughest of challenges.



Having showcased a highly consistent performance so far in the Rally, Franco Caimi finished the stage yet again in the top-10, at the 8<sup>th</sup> place in the Rally GP class – just four minutes behind Ross. Sebastian Buhler made it to the finish line in the 17<sup>th</sup> fastest time among Rally GP class riders.

Leaving the bivouac at Haradh, Stage 10 took the riders towards Shaybah today, marking its entry into the notorious Empty Quarter. The 624 km route was mostly liaisons, with the

special section accounting for only 114 kms – deliberately kept short to reduce the risks in this difficult terrain constituted mainly by sand dunes. With the sun at its peak, navigating safely through the sea of steep dunes was particularly difficult for all competitors.

At the end of 10 long stages, Franco enjoys a 13<sup>th</sup> place in the overall Rally GP class rankings, followed by Buhler in the 17<sup>th</sup>, and Ross in the 19<sup>th</sup> position.

Making things a lot more complex, the race now moves deeper into Rub' Al Khali, or the Empty Quarter, with a Marathon Stage. The first part of the marathon in Stage 11 is a 428 km trip from Shaybah, ending at the Marathon bivouac. Keeping their bikes in one piece will be crucial for the riders, as there will be no assistance trucks or mechanics to lend them a hand at the bivouac.



**Wolfgang Fischer, Team Manager:**

*“Congratulations to Ross and the entire team! It’s indeed amazing to enter the Empty Quarter sea of dunes in great style. We’ve proved once again beyond doubt, the competitiveness of the Hero 450 Rally – a strong machine that succeeds in all conditions, and the great commitment of our Rally Team. I’m really proud of my team, and eagerly looking forward to the next stages as we enter Rub’ Al Khali, the largest continuous sand desert in the world.”*

**Ross Branch:**

*“It was a really good day, though it started off slow in the morning, and I battled to get going in the sand. But I started having a lot of fun halfway through the stage. I did make a few mistakes*

here and there, but I pushed on really hard, and I'm so grateful to get the win at the end. It has been a long week so far, and to get two stage wins in the Dakar means a lot. The bike was really amazing today, and I'm very proud of my team.

"Tomorrow I'll have to open the stage - a long one at 280 odd kilometers. I hope to stay out in the front as long as I can, and keep it as safe as possible."

**Franco Caimi:**

"Today was a fun stage, even though it was quite difficult navigating through the dunes without crashing. I'm happy with my result today, and looking forward to keep it steady in the marathon stage."

**Sebastian Buhler:**

"It was quite fast for a dune stage. The sun was right on top, which made it difficult to see ahead. Even though I enjoyed the stage, I put a safe rhythm to avoid any mistakes, as there were some big cut dunes. I couldn't find a fast flow, but let's try again tomorrow."

**Provisional Rankings – Stage 10 (Rally GP Class)**

1.	<b>Ross Branch</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	01h 44m 00s
2.	Adrien Van Beveren	Monster Energy Honda Team	+ 21s
3.	Kevin Benavides	Red Bull KTM Factory Racing	+ 1m 00s
8.	<b>Franco Caimi</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	+ 4m 07s
17.	<b>Sebastian Buhler</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	+ 8m 36s

**Provisional Overall Rankings – at the end of Stage 10 (Rally GP Class)**

1.	Kevin Benavides	Red Bull KTM Factory Racing	35h 46m 06s
2.	Skyler Howes	Husqvarna Factory Racing	+ 1m 29s
3.	Toby Price	Red Bull KTM Factory Racing	+ 2m 10s
13.	<b>Franco Caimi</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	+ 1h 20m 37s
17.	<b>Sebastian Buhler</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	+ 4h 06m 22s
19.	<b>Ross Branch</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	+ 6h 38m 33s

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**For more information:**

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