



Press Release

**Ha'il, Saudi Arabia, January 04, 2023**

## **HERO MOTOSPORTS TEAM RALLY FACES A CHALLENGING DAY AT THE DAKAR RALLY 2023**

**Hero MotoSports Team Rally**, the motorsport team of the world's largest manufacturer of motorcycles and scooters - **Hero MotoCorp**, endured an exceptionally tough day at the Dakar Rally 2023.

Franco Caimi finished Stage 4 in the 16<sup>th</sup> position, followed by Sebastian Buhler in the 22<sup>nd</sup> and Ross Branch in the 23<sup>rd</sup> positions in the Rally GP class. Joaquim Rodrigues met with an unfortunate crash around the 90kms mark, due to which he had to exit from the race.

Living up to its expectation of being “the toughest Dakar so far in Saudi”, Dakar 2023 has been throwing varied challenges to competitors since Day 1. With unusually tall sand dunes and tricky navigation through sandy tracks, Stage 4 was not short of drama.



Joaquim Rodrigues is the latest in the list of top competitors who have exited the Dakar 2023 due to injury. Around the 90km mark today, JRod suffered a fall that rendered him immovable due to a broken left femur. Airlifted to the hospital in Ha'il by the Dakar medical assistance team, JRod will now undergo surgery, and hopes to recover soon.

Seeing his team mate injured was psychologically demanding for Franco Caimi. However, he mustered courage and picked up pace to finish the stage in good time. Franco currently holds the 13<sup>th</sup> position in the overall Rally GP class standings.



It was an even more difficult day for Sebastian Buhler and Ross Branch, both of whom ran out of fuel in the 250km-long first part of the stage. The rains from the previous day rendered the sandy terrain wet and hard, and their machines battled with technical issues that consumed more fuel than normal.

Both of them had to wait considerable amount of time before receiving help from trailing competitors who lent them fuel to reach the refueling point. However, even with the heavy time losses, they battled on to the finish line, demonstrating the true spirit of Heroes. Undeterred, Ross and Buhler will continue their fight in the race, even though their overall ranks have been adversely affected today.

The entire Hero MotoCorp team wishes a fast recovery for Joaquim and hopes for his speedy return to racing.



The second loop around Ha'il in Stage 5 will take the competitors eastward on another 645 km stage, a vast expanse of soft sand, peppered with dunes and camel grass. Dune jumping proficiency will play a huge role in gaining or losing minutes in this slalom-type section.



**Franco Caimi:**

*"Today was a really challenging day, much more than the usual. Yes, it was physically demanding as has been the story so far. But psychologically too, it was a really tough stage for me. Seeing your team mate injured in the beginning of the stage is not something you can emotionally overcome quickly. So, it's been a tricky stage, but happy to reach back in the bivouac safe. We're doing some small changes on the bike to have a better stage tomorrow."*

**Sebastian Buhler:**

*"It was not an easy day today. I was doing very well in the beginning, but a few kilometers before the Neutralization zone, I ran out of fuel. The sand was wet and very hard from the rains, and the bike takes up more fuel than usual in these conditions. After waiting for quite a long time, another competitor helped me with some fuel to reach the refueling point. My time loss today affects my overall standing, but we're not giving up. I'm grateful to have finished the stage, and will continue the race. I also wish JRod a speedy recovery from his leg injury, and hope to see him soon."*

**Ross Branch:**

*"I had a really long and unlucky day. At 66km we had a small technical issue that set us back by a lot of minutes. Anyway, I managed to get going, and finally brought my bike back to the*

*finish line - which is the most important. I'm a little disappointed, but I'm getting ready to go back to the start line for tomorrow, and put my Hero 450 Rally on the map."*

**Joaquim Rodrigues:**

*"I had a crash and it broke my leg. I'm feeling much better now at the hospital, and will be undergoing a surgery. I thank all our fans and partners for the concern and support, and I hope to be back in action soon."*

**Provisional Rankings – Stage 4 (Rally GP Class)**

1.	Joan Barreda Bort	Monster Energy JB Team	04h 28m 18s
2.	Pablo Quintanilla	Monster Energy Honda Team	+ 0m 16s
3.	Skyler Howes	Husqvarna Factory Racing	+ 1m 05s
16.	<b>Franco Caimi</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	+ 19m 53s
22.	<b>Sebastian Buhler</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	+ 3h 14m 26s
23.	<b>Ross Branch</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	+ 4h 23m 31s

**Provisional Overall Rankings – at the end of Stage 4 (Rally GP Class)**

1.	Daniel Sanders	Red Bull Gas Gas Factory Racing	18h 40m 03s
2.	Skyler Howes	Husqvarna Factory Racing	+ 3m 33s
3.	Kevin Benavides	Red Bull KTM Factory Racing	+ 4m 05s
13.	<b>Franco Caimi</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	+ 48m 06s
21.	<b>Sebastian Buhler</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	+ 3h 43m 40s
22.	<b>Ross Branch</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	+ 4h 41m 06s

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**For more information:**

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