



Press Release

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HERO MOTOSPORTS TEAM RALLY RECREATES HISTORY AT THE DAKAR RALLY

ROSS BRANCH WINS STAGE 8

Hero MotoSports Team Rally, the motorsport team of the world's largest manufacturer of motorcycles and scooters - **Hero MotoCorp**, created history once again by winning a stage at the world's toughest rally – Dakar Rally.

Ross Branch finished Stage 8 in the fastest time, securing the second Dakar Stage win for himself, and for Hero MotoSports Team Rally.



For Hero MotoSports Team Rally, which entered rally racing only seven years ago, this is the second taste of victory, and in consecutive Dakar rallies, making it one of the flag-bearer of Indian motorsports. In 2022 it had become the first Indian manufacturer team ever win a Stage at the Dakar.

Sebastian Buhler also made it in to the top-10 of stage 8, finishing in the 6th position, just 8 minutes behind Ross. Franco Caimi continued his steady performance and finished the stage in the 16th position in the Rally GP class.

Ross' stunning dash to the finish today has revitalized the morale of the team, ending the first leg of the Rally on a high note. Even though they started well with a podium in the Prologue, and another podium in Stage 2, the week took a tough turn with Joaquim Rodrigues crashing and exiting the race, and quite a few problems for Ross and Buhler in the later stages.



After a cancelled Stage 7, Stage 8 was an 824 km long ride from Al Duwadimi to Riyadh, of which 346 kms formed the special section. Aligning with the ad-hoc marathon stage that was designed by the race organizers, the competitors spent the previous night at the Al Duwadimi bivouac, while the service crews camped 500 kms away in Riyadh. Tough and tricky, Stage 8 was fast and not without its fair share of sand, stony tracks and dunes. The team had fun on the stage, riding as fast as they could.

Franco Caimi has put in a consistent performance so far, and enjoys a 15th place in the overall standings. Sebastian Buhler and Ross Branch follow him in the 18th and 20th positions respectively, in the overall Rally GP class rankings.

Re-united with the rest of the team in Riyadh, the riders will enjoy a quick rest day and recover as best possible to fight in the remaining six days of the Rally. Stage 9 on 10th January will be a 686 km route eastward to Haradh, taking the riders through some majestic wadis and canyons.



Wolfgang Fischer, Team Manager:

"It has been eight long days plus prologue for us at the Dakar so far. It started really nice for us with a podium in the prologue stage, and soon a 2nd & 4th place in stage 2. But we had a really rough time after that, with JRod crashing out and exiting the race, some technical problems for Ross and Buhler - it has been a topsy-turvy week for all of us.

However, we are thrilled to finish the first leg on a high note - with a stage victory for Ross and for Hero MotoSports, a 6th place for Buhler, and Franco keeping it steady and gunning for an overall top-10 result. I'm grateful that all our riders are safe and healthy. Some good news on JRod also today - he is on the way back home on a medical plane, after a successful surgery here in Riyadh. Along with the team, I am happy, and quite hopeful of the next week that starts after the rest day."

Ross Branch:

"It's amazing to be here! We worked really hard for it. It has been a tough week, and I'm really happy to go into the rest day with a Stage Win. This morning I felt really good, the bike was excellent, and I decided to push as hard as I could. It was a good stage, the navigation was fine, and I thoroughly enjoyed it as I went all out and raced the whole thing! A big thank you to the team for all the amazing effort, and for not giving up on me. It's a happy day, and hopefully we'll gather some more wins next week!"

Sebastian Buhler:

"Today was a fun stage. It was quite a fast stage with some rocks in between, but we did well. I'm happy with the result today, and content with how the first week has gone by. I had some problems in some stages, but towards the end we've gathered some good stage results - so I'm happy with how this first leg has ended. Looking forward to the next week."

Franco Caimi:

"Really happy to be with the team after this ad-hoc marathon stage. We did more than 800 kms today. We're ready to take the rest day, recover a bit for the week that lies ahead."

Provisional Rankings – Stage 8 (Rally GP Class)

1.	Ross Branch	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 03h 46m 18s
2.	Daniel Sanders	Red Bull Gas Gas Factory Racing	+ 3m 15s
3.	Mason Klein	BAS World KTM Racing Team	+ 3m 33s
6.	Sebastian Buhler	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 8m 13s
16.	Franco Caimi	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 14m 40s

Provisional Overall Rankings – at the end of Stage 8 (Rally GP Class)

1.	Skyler Howes	Husqvarna Factory Racing	30h 34m 16s
2.	Kevin Benavides	Red Bull KTM Factory Racing	+ 0m 13s
3.	Mason Klein	BAS World KTM Racing Team	+ 0m 13s
15.	Franco Caimi	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 1h 15m 29s
18.	Sebastian Buhler	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 3h 49m 57s
20.	Ross Branch	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 6h 21m 43s

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