



Press Release

Haradh, Saudi Arabia, January 10, 2023

## **A POWERFUL START FOR HERO MOTOSPORTS IN THE SECOND LEG OF THE DAKAR RALLY 2023**

### **TWO RIDERS IN TOP-15 OF STAGE 9**

**Hero MotoSports Team Rally**, the motorsport team of the world's largest manufacturer of motorcycles and scooters - **Hero MotoCorp**, completed the first stage after the rest day (Stage 9) of Dakar 2023, with Franco Caimi and Sebastian Buhler finishing in the top 15 positions.

Franco Caimi showcased a fine performance, finishing in the 8<sup>th</sup> fastest time of the day. He was closely followed by Sebastian Buhler, who finished in the 12<sup>th</sup> position in the Rally GP class. Ross Branch opened the stage today, and finished 19<sup>th</sup> in the Rally GP class.



Starting the second leg of the Dakar Rally 2023 after a well-deserved rest day, Stage 9 today was a 686 km long route taking the competitors from Riyadh eastward to Haradh. The 359 km special section was a good mix of everything that typifies the Dakar – sand, dunes, wadi crossings, stony passages, canyons, fast tracks and sandy tracks. Navigation was also exceptionally tricky today, perhaps the most difficult so far in the 2023 edition.

Ross Branch, the winner of the previous stage was handed over the mantle to open today's stage, and he knew it would be a difficult task in this tricky route. He rode with caution, and lost some time in the process. Still reeling from his time losses earlier in the race, the Botswanan star finds himself in the 19<sup>th</sup> place on the overall Rally GP class standings.



Continuing his highly consistent performance so far in the race, Franco finished the race in good time, finishing just 10 minutes behind the winner. His 8<sup>th</sup> place finish today helped him move a position up to 14<sup>th</sup> in the overall Rally GP class ranks.

Sebastian Buhler found the day to be throwing quite some difficult navigation, and ended up losing some time trying to find a particular waypoint. However, the determined pilot picked up pace and finished well in the 12<sup>th</sup> place, and is currently at the 17<sup>th</sup> overall position in the Rally GP class standings.

Foraying into the infamous Empty Quarter, the race will now move from Haradh to Shaybah, with a 624 km ride. However, the special section in Stage 10 will only be 113 kms - deliberately kept short in this tricky stage which is constituted 90% by sand dunes.



**Franco Caimi:**

*"The first stage after rest day is done. I felt really good on the bike today. It was a complete stage today - dunes, rocks, and some tricky navigation. I lost some time trying to find a waypoint, but eventually I found it and made up for the lost time. Super happy to have completed the stage, and I'm looking forward to tomorrow."*

**Sebastian Buhler:**

*"Another stage done here at the Dakar. It was a very difficult stage today with tough navigation - I think it was probably the most difficult navigation so far in the race. I lost some time looking for a particular waypoint, but I'm happy with the final result."*

**Ross Branch:**

*"It was a crazy day! Having opened the stage today, I was a bit too cautious, a bit too slow maybe - to be on the safe side. But it was still fun to open, and I knew the guys behind were coming in at a good pace. Before refuel we got into a group of guys riding together, and we continued after refuel too. In the dunes I also witnessed something crazy today - Adrien Van Beveren and Mason Klein crashing into each other in the middle of the desert. I'm glad everyone is okay, and I look forward to tomorrow."*

## Provisional Rankings – Stage 9 (Rally GP Class)

1.	Luciano Benavides	Husqvarna Factory Racing	03h 18m 44s
2.	Toby Price	Red Bull KTM Factory Racing	+ 1m 02s
3.	Skyler Howes	Husqvarna Factory Racing	+ 2m 57s
8.	<b>Franco Caimi</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	+ 10m 07s
12.	<b>Sebastian Buhler</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	+ 16m 55s
19.	<b>Ross Branch</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	+ 25m 56s

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

1.	Skyler Howes	Husqvarna Factory Racing	33h 55m 57s
3.	Toby Price	Red Bull KTM Factory Racing	+ 0m 03s
3.	Kevin Benavides	Red Bull KTM Factory Racing	+ 5m 09s
14.	<b>Franco Caimi</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	+ 1h 22m 39s
17.	<b>Sebastian Buhler</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	+ 4h 03m 55s
19.	<b>Ross Branch</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	+ 6h 44m 42s

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