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HERO MOTOSPORTS TEAM RALLY COMPLETES DAKAR RALLY 2026 WITH AN IMPRESSIVE DOUBLE TOP-10 FINISH

NACHO AND ROSS FINISH WORLD'S TOUGHEST RALLY AT 7TH AND 8TH POSITIONS RESPECTIVELY

Hero MotoSports Team Rally, the motorsport team of the world's largest manufacturer of motorcycles and scooters - **Hero MotoCorp**, has successfully completed the 48th edition of the Dakar Rally 2026. Team riders Nacho Cornejo and Ross Branch finished the world's toughest rally inside the overall Top-10, marking a historic milestone for the team and underlining its steady rise in the global rally-raid competition.

Spread across 13 gruelling stages in the vast Arabian desert, Dakar 2026 proved to be a demanding and revealing test for Team Hero. The rally pushed riders, machines, and the entire team to their limits. Through resilience, teamwork, and consistency, Hero MotoSports achieved its first-ever double Top-10 finish at Dakar. While the final results fell short of podium ambitions, the rally delivered valuable championship points, key technical learnings, and strong momentum to the team for the season ahead.



Nacho Cornejo delivered a calm and composed performance throughout the rally to finish 7th overall. The young Chilean showed strong consistency across stages and managed the demanding conditions with control. Close behind, Ross Branch secured an overall 8th place finish, displaying determination as he battled through multiple challenges to reach the finish.



In the final Stage 13, Cornejo and Branch crossed the finish line at 8th and 12th positions respectively, bringing an intense two-week campaign to a successful close. As the opening round of the 2026 FIM World Championship comes to an end, Cornejo and Branch opened their points tally with 14 and 12 points respectively. Tobias, on the other hand, was unable to score any points this time due to his unfortunate exit from the rally.

Hero MotoSports entered Dakar 2026 with a three-rider line-up—Nacho Cornejo and Ross Branch in Rally GP, and Tobias Ebster in the Rally2 category. The campaign began on a strong note, with Branch finishing 5th in the Prologue, and also being the fastest man in Stage 1. However, a six-minute speeding penalty in a controlled zone pushed him down the overall order. The Runner-up of last year's Rally2 Championship, Tobias Ebster's promising campaign came to an unfortunate end on Stage 3 after a crash. He was evacuated to the bivouac, where medical checks confirmed a fractured scaphoid. He is currently recovering back home.

As the rally progressed further, Branch faced setbacks on Stage 5 after a rear tyre issue during the first marathon-refuge stage cost him valuable time. Stage 9 brought another tough test for him, with two heavy crashes damaging the bike, leaving Ross with an injured ankle and bruises all over his body. With no external assistance permitted during the marathon-refuge stage, Branch and Cornejo worked together in the desert bivouac to fix the bike. Branch then rode the repaired bike safely to the finish the following day. Despite numerous challenges, both Hero MotoSports riders stayed within the overall Top-10 throughout the rally, highlighting the team's consistency, focus, and mental strength.

The Hero 450 Rally once again proved its reliability, completing the entire Dakar without a single technical issue—a strong statement of Hero MotoCorp's engineering capability on the toughest stage in the world of motorsports.

In its seventh year in Saudi Arabia, Dakar 2026 featured a new route covering nearly 8,000 kilometres, with nearly 5,000 kilometres of timed stages. The rally started and finished in Yanbu, passing through the heart of the country, including Riyadh. Replacing the 48h chrono from the previous editions, this year's route included two marathon-refuge stages, where riders spent the night in the desert without any mechanical support, completely self-reliant.



A total of 317 vehicles and 564 competitors from 49 nationalities took the start of this year's rally. The motorcycle category featured 115 riders, including 15 Rally GP and 100 Rally2 entrants, making Dakar 2026 one of the most competitive editions in recent years.

Hero MotoSports Team Rally now sets its sights on the BP Ultimate Rally Raid Portugal, taking place across Portugal and Spain from March 17–22, 2026. Building on the momentum, optimism, and hard-earned lessons from Dakar, the team heads into the next challenge sharper, stronger, and more determined than ever.



Wolfgang Fischer, Team Manager, Hero MotoSports Team Rally:

"Dakar 2026 is done and dusted, and we are safely at the finish in Yanbu after an intense rally filled with challenges, highs, and lows. What matters most is that every single person in this team gave 100 percent from start to finish and fought relentlessly for the result. I am extremely proud of this group—an incredible set of people who never stopped believing. While the final outcome was not exactly what we were targeting, Dakar is a long and unpredictable race, and the most important thing is that we never gave up and brought the bikes to the finish."

"This year marks a historic milestone for Hero MotoSports, with two riders finishing inside the top ten for the first time—seventh and eighth positions for Nacho Cornejo and Ross Branch. We leave Dakar having scored valuable championship points, gained crucial learnings, and with a clear understanding of what we need to improve to fight for podiums in the future. We also wish Tobias a speedy recovery as he continues his rehabilitation back home. A heartfelt thank you to everyone in the team and to Hero MotoCorp for their unwavering support."

Nacho Cornejo, Hero MotoSports Team Rally:

"Dakar Rally 2026 was a very tough one for us. We didn't achieve the goals we came here for, but standing at the finish line in one piece is always something to be grateful for. We will keep fighting and improving together as a team. I'm very thankful to everyone involved—mechanics, technicians, engineers, management, physios—every single person played their part. The team did an incredible job, and we'll come back stronger next year. Thank you to everyone for the support."

Ross Branch, Hero MotoSports Team Rally:

"We've finished the Dakar, and it was a tough rally for us. It didn't go the way we wanted, and we were aiming to fight at the front, but that's the Dakar—it can change at any moment. Despite the challenges, the team has been incredible throughout. The bike performed really well, and I can't thank everyone enough for their hard work and support. We're already looking ahead to a strong year and building from here."

Final Classification – Stage 13

1.	Edgar Canet	Redbull KTM Factory Racing	49m 03s
2.	Luciano Benavides	Redbull KTM Factory Racing	+ 00m 06s
3.	Tosha Schareina	Monster Energy Honda HRC	+ 00m 47s
8.	Nacho Cornejo	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 03m 11s
12.	Ross Branch	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 04m 26s

Final Classification after Stage 13 (Overall)

1.	Luciano Benavides	Redbull KTM Factory Racing	49h 00m 41s
2.	Ricky Brabec	Monster Energy Honda HRC	+ 00m 02s
3.	Tosha Schareina	Monster Energy Honda HRC	+ 25m 12s
7.	Nacho Cornejo	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 01h 39m 50s
8.	Ross Branch	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 02h 49m 15s

2026 World Rally-Raid Championship Standings (After Round 1)

1.	Luciano Benavides	Redbull KTM Factory Racing	38 Points
2.	Ricky Brabec	Monster Energy Honda HRC	30 Points
3.	Tosha Schareina	Monster Energy Honda HRC	24 Points
7.	Nacho Cornejo	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	14 Points
8.	Ross Branch	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	12 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

