



Wadi Ad-Dawasir , Saudi Arabia | 11 January 2026

HERO MOTOSPORTS ENTERS DAKAR'S DECISIVE SECOND WEEK WITH BOTH RIDERS IN TOP-10

CORNEJO, BRANCH HOLD STRONG POSITIONS AT 6TH AND 8TH RESPECTIVELY

Hero MotoSports Team Rally, the motorsport team of the world's largest manufacturer of motorcycles and scooters - **Hero MotoCorp**, has completed Stage 07 of the Dakar Rally 2026 with another steady and controlled performance as the rally moved into its second half. Ross Branch delivered a strong ride to finish 8th on the stage, with Nacho Cornejo close behind in 9th position. With these results, Cornejo is currently at 6th place overall, while Branch climbs up to 8th in the general classification after the end of Stage 07.



The Stage marked the beginning of the decisive second week of the rally. After the tough marathon stages, the route returned to a faster and more open format. The focus was on maintaining high speeds over long distances while managing navigation and bike reliability. It was a day that required complete concentration as the battle for overall positions intensified.



Both Hero MotoSports riders delivered composed rides in these demanding conditions. Cornejo lost some time to the front runners but kept his pace under control and protected the bike, keeping himself firmly in the fight for the days ahead. Branch, meanwhile, enjoyed the high-speed nature of the stage and brought the bike home safely after one of the fastest days of Dakar 2026 so far.

Following the rest day on 10 January, the field returned refreshed but fully aware that the toughest part of the rally still lies ahead. Stage 07 featured fast sandy tracks, with dense bushes lining parts of the route. While there were no major technical dangers, the biggest challenge was managing speed and focus. With close to 900 kilometres of total distance and 462 kilometres against the clock, it was one of the longest and most demanding days of this year's Dakar.

The rally now heads to Wadi ad-Dawasir for the first time since 2022, with Stage 08 set to deliver one of the standout challenges of Dakar 2026. The stage will feature the longest special of the rally at 481 kilometres, along with a 236-kilometre liaison. Riders will face a wide mix of fast plateaus, technical canyon crossings and constant changes in direction. It promises to be a true test of speed, navigation and endurance as the second week of the rally moves into full swing.



Nacho Cornejo, Hero MotoSports Team Rally:

"Stage 07 was the first test of the second week and we went full gas from the start. We gave everything today, but unfortunately, we lost some time to the riders at the front. The important thing is that both the bike and I are in one piece, and we're ready to keep pushing, stage by stage. Thank you to everyone for the support — it really means a lot."

Ross Branch, Hero MotoSports Team Rally:

"That's Stage 07 done — and it was a wide-open, high-speed day. It was a lot of fun, with plenty of flowing sections and fast riding. I think it was one of the quickest stages I've ever done, almost 450 kilometres flat out. I really enjoyed it and I'm looking forward to getting back out there tomorrow."

Provisional Classification - Stage 07:

1.	Luciano Benavides	Redbull KTM Factory Racing	04h 00m 56s
2.	Edgar Canet	Redbull KTM Factory Racing	+ 04m 47s
3.	Adrien Van Beveren	Monster Energy Honda HRC	+ 04h 57s
8.	Ross Branch	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 08m 47s
9.	Nacho Cornejo	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 09m 10s

Provisional Classification after Stage 07 (Overall):

1.	Daniel Sanders	Redbull KTM Racing Team	+ 28h 47m 31s
2.	Ricky Brabec	Monster Energy Honda HRC	+ 04m 25s
3.	Luciano Benavides	Redbull KTM Factory Racing	+ 04m 40s
6.	Nacho Cornejo	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 33m 25s
8.	Ross Branch	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 01h 39m 22s

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

