



Wadi Ad-Dawasir, Saudi Arabia | 12 January 2026

HERO MOTOSPORTS COMPLETES STAGE 08 AT DAKAR 2026 WITH CONSISTENT RESULTS

CORNEJO, BRANCH REMAIN INSIDE THE OVERALL TOP-10

Hero MotoSports Team Rally, the motorsport team of the world's largest manufacturer of motorcycles and scooters - **Hero MotoCorp**, has successfully completed Stage 08 of the Dakar Rally 2026 with another strong performance. The team's Chilean rider, Nacho Cornejo finished the stage with the 8th fastest time, while Ross Branch from Botswana crossed the finish line in 11th place. After eight tough days of racing, Cornejo continues to hold 6th position overall, with Branch maintaining his 8th position close behind, keeping both riders firmly inside the Top-10.



Cornejo once again showed calm and consistency on a demanding day. While the result did not fully match his pace, he brought the bike home safely and remains focused on pushing forward, with eyes firmly set on finishing the rally comfortably inside the overall Top-5.



Branch, on the other hand, faced an unpredictable day. Sandstorms and poor visibility made the stage challenging, but the “Kalahari Ferrari” kept his composure and guided the bike back to the bivouac in good condition — a key result as the rally moves into its toughest phase.

With 483 kilometres against the clock, Stage 08 was the longest special of Dakar 2026. The route took the rally to Wadi ad-Dawasir for the first time since 2022, offering a mix of fast plateaus, narrow canyon sections and constant changes in direction. It was a day that tested both speed and concentration for the competitors from start to finish.

On Tuesday, the rally moves into the second Marathon Refuge stage of this year's Dakar. This format replaces the old 48-hour chrono and brings one of the toughest challenges of the race. Riders will face rocky and tricky tracks, sharp changes of rhythm, and a final stretch through the dunes. Without team assistance and only basic material to sleep in a remote desert camp, both rider and machine will be pushed to their limits once again. The ninth special stage of the rally will have 541 kilometres on the menu, of which 418 kilometres will be timed.

**Nacho Cornejo, Hero MotoSports Team Rally:**

"Stage eight is done and we're back at the bivouac. It was another very fast and really long day — the longest special of the rally. We didn't finish where we wanted to today, but the fight is far from over. We'll keep pushing, stage by stage, to get back into the overall Top-5. Thank you to everyone for the support — we're still in this."

Ross Branch, Hero MotoSports Team Rally:

"Stage eight is over and, honestly, I'm not too happy with the overall result today. I lost more time than I wanted, but the stage itself was incredible — fast, intense and full of sandstorms that made it really interesting to ride. The most important thing is the bike is good and I'm in one piece. Now the focus shifts to the marathon stage. We'll ride smart, take care of the bike, and make sure we bring it home strong."

Provisional Classification - Stage 08:

1.	Luciano Benavides	Redbull KTM Factory Racing	04h 26m 39s
2.	Daniel Sanders	Redbull KTM Factory Racing	+ 04m 50s
3.	Ricky Brabec	Monster Energy Honda HRC	+ 05m 02s
8.	Nacho Cornejo	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 17m 13s
11.	Ross Branch	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 20m 20s

Provisional Classification after Stage 08 (Overall):

1.	Luciano Benavides	Redbull KTM Racing Team	33h 18m 50s
2.	Daniel Sanders	Redbull KTM Racing Team	+ 00m 10s
3.	Ricky Brabec	Monster Energy Honda HRC	+ 04m 47s
6.	Nacho Cornejo	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 45m 58s
8.	Ross Branch	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 01h 55m 02s

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