



Bivouac Refuge, Saudi Arabia | 13 January 2026

HERO MOTOSPORTS SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETES STAGE 09 AS DAKAR 2026 ENTERS ITS SECOND MARATHON REFUGE

CORNEJO, BRANCH HOLD ON TO THEIR OVERALL TOP-10 RANKINGS

Hero MotoSports Team Rally, the motorsport team of the world's largest manufacturer of motorcycles and scooters - **Hero MotoCorp**, has successfully completed Stage 09 of the Dakar Rally 2026, as the rally moved into its second Marathon Refuge. Ross Branch from Botswana finished the stage in 15th position, while Chile's Nacho Cornejo crossed the finish line at 19th place. After the completion of the stage, Cornejo continues to hold 6th place in the overall classification, with Branch close behind in at 8th.



It was a demanding day for both riders. Around kilometre 34, Cornejo missed a tricky roadbook note and followed the wrong tracks, losing around 17 minutes before finding his way back. Branch, meanwhile, delivered a clean navigation run but suffered a heavy fall just before the refuelling point at kilometre 196. Despite the impact, he managed to bring the bike safely to the finish.

With no team assistance allowed in the Marathon Refuge tonight, the two riders are working together in the remote desert camp to repair Branch's bike and prepare it for the next stage. While some time was lost to their closest rivals, Cornejo and Branch successfully protected their strong overall positions inside the Top-10.



Stage 09 marked the start of the second Marathon Refuge, replacing the old 48-hour chrono from the previous editions of the rally. Riders faced a tough mix of rocky tracks, changing rhythms and a final stretch through the dunes. With only basic supplies and no outside assistance allowed from their crews, they will spend the night in tents deep in the desert. The stage covered 541 kilometres in total, including 418 kilometres of timed special stage.

Stage 10 on Wednesday will take the rally from the Marathon Refuge to Bisha, last year's Dakar start city. The day will feature 418 kilometres in total, with 371 kilometres against the clock. Tomorrow's stage may be shorter, but it will be one of the most sand-heavy and dune-filled days of the entire Dakar. With super-soft sand and long dune sections, it will be a key stage where riders can both gain and lose a lot of time. It promises to be a demanding and decisive day.



Ross Branch, Hero MotoSports Team Rally:

"Stage 09 was one of the toughest days I've had at Dakar in a long time. I crashed at around kilometre 190 and hurt my foot, and then had another crash later in the stage. After that, the priority was simply to slow down and bring the bike safely to the finish. A big thank you to Nacho for helping me repair the bike here at the marathon bivouac. Now the focus is on getting through tomorrow and continuing the rally."

Nacho Cornejo, Hero MotoSports Team Rally:

"That was the end of Stage 09, the first part of the marathon, and it was a tough day for me. I made a couple of big mistakes early on, so I take full responsibility for the time we lost. I'm sorry to the team and to everyone supporting us. We are still sixth overall, and we will keep fighting to defend that position. We will put our best effort to move up the overall rankings in the days to come. Thanks to everyone again for the continued support!"

Provisional Classification - Stage 09:

1.	Tosha Schareina	Monster Energy Honda HRC	03h 45m 42s
2.	Daniel Sanders	Redbull KTM Factory Racing	+ 04m 35s
3.	Michael Docherty	BAS World KTM Team	+ 04m 50s
15.	Ross Branch	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 20m 02s
19.	Nacho Cornejo	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 23m 57s

Provisional Classification after Stage 09 (Overall):

1.	Daniel Sanders	Redbull KTM Racing Team	37h 09m 17s
2.	Ricky Brabec	Monster Energy Honda HRC	+ 06m 24s
3.	Luciano Benavides	Redbull KTM Factory Racing	+ 07m 05s
6.	Nacho Cornejo	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 01h 05m 10s
8.	Ross Branch	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 02h 10m 19s

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