



Córdoba, Argentina, June 07, 2024

A STRONG FINISH FOR HERO MOTOSPORTS AT THE 2024 EDITION OF DESAFIO RUTA 40

ROSS BRANCH RETAINS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP LEAD

Hero MotoSports Team Rally, the motorsport team of the world's largest manufacturer of motorcycles and scooters - **Hero MotoCorp**, completed the 2024 edition of Desafio Ruta 40 with a top-5 result. Hero's factory rider Ross Branch put up a strong fight, and finished well in the 5th overall position. Sebastian Buhler finished close behind him in the 7th place, and Nacho Cornejo made it to the 9th position in the Rally GP class standings.





This was the 12th edition of the Desafio Ruta 40, and team Hero's second appearance at the race so far. Clocking over 3100 kms through some of the most challenging terrains of Central Argentina, the rally also encountered added trials due to the harsh winter in the region. Starting on June 1st in Córdoba – a popular motorsports destination – the rally moved across the different provinces of San Juan and La Rioja, before finally returning to the start city a week later. The race was quite challenging – laid with long liaisons, tough stages through a wide mix of terrains, and puzzling navigation.

At this fourth and penultimate round of the World Rally Raid Championship (W2RC) 2024, the pace among the top competitors was also exceptionally high, as each attempted their best to gather maximum points from this round. Team Hero entered the race with the main goal to defend their World Championship lead titles. With a strong 5th place finish at DR40, Hero pilot Ross Branch has managed to retain his leadership for the 3rd consecutive round in this season – now with a 9-point margin over the nearest competitor.

The final Stage of the Desafio Ruta 40, 2024 was a 519 km long ride from La Rioja to Córdoba, of which 218 km were timed. Continuing the trend from the week, broken pistes and fast WRC type tracks featured on this route as well. Ross Branch and Sebastian Buhler showed exceptional resilience all through the week, fighting strong against the tight competition. On 3 days, the duo were leading the Stages for considerable lengths, and finished with solid timings just outside the podium.

Nacho Cornejo, who joined the team in May 2024, struggled to find a good rhythm with his new bike; but with the help of his team, he hopes to reach the next race much stronger. The team also fielded Ramiro Barco as a test rider in the Rally 2 category in this race. Ramiro met with an unfortunate crash in Stage 3, and retired with an injured leg.

Coming up next is the final round of the FIM World Rally Raid Championship 2024 – the Rallye Du Maroc – in October 2024. Hero MotoSports Team Rally will devote the upcoming months to rigorous training and preparations for the final showdown, to reach the last round in the best possible shape.



Wolfgang Fischer, Team Manager & Head, Hero MotoSports Team Rally:

"This was our first outing in South America this year with our latest addition to the team, Nacho Cornejo, and our new test rider Ramiro Barco. Our main target was indeed to defend the World Championship lead, which we managed with Ross' 5th place finish. We did push for more, but the competition was very strong.

Overall the bikes have been working great, and the riders enjoyed the race well. Unfortunately, Ramiro had a crash and injured his leg, and we wish him a speedy recovery.

Now we look forward to the big showdown in Morocco in October, for the World Championship finals. I extend my gratitude to all our sponsors, partners, and fans for your continued support."

Ross Branch:

"What a great week it has been at Desafio Ruta 40! Excellent route, and a lot of hard work - definitely a tough rally, but I enjoyed it well. Our competition has been really strong here, so we've got some work to do before we head to our next race in Morocco.

We continue to hold the World Championship lead position, so we're still in a good place. I look forward to defending it again at the last round. A huge thank you to team Hero MotoSports, for all the hard work put in this week."

Sebastian Buhler:

"It was a nice week of racing. It's always hard to race in Argentina, but this week was especially difficult due to the cold weather, long liaisons and the hard stages. The pace was really high among the competition, but I'm happy with my riding, and I know where I need to improve before the next race. I'm really happy with my bike's performance and the team's hard work. We didn't have any issues except for Ramiro's crash - I hope he will be back to racing soon."

Nacho Cornejo:

"I'm quite happy to have joined my new team at a race in my region. The Hero MotoSports team has welcomed me very well, and everyone has been working hard to get me adapted to the bike. I'm a bit disappointed with not being able to give them the expected results, but we'll work hard from now to reach the next race stronger. I'm really stoked for my teammates Ross and Basti for their good results. We'll all work together to gather the best results in the final championship round in Morocco."

Final Rankings – Stage 5 (Rally GP Class):

1.	Toscha Schareina	Monster Energy Honda Team	2h 35m 50s
2.	Ricky Brabec	Monster Energy Honda Team	+ 1m 12s
3.	Adrien Van Beveren	Monster Energy Honda Team	+ 2m 17s
4.	Ross Branch	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 3m 43s
7.	Sebastian Buhler	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 5m 47s
9.	Ignacio Cornejo	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 11m 48s

Overall Standings after Stage 5 (Rally GP Class):

1.	Ricky Brabec	Monster Energy Honda Team	18h 08m 37s
2.	Toscha Schareina	Monster Energy Honda Team	+ 15s
3.	Adrien Van Beveren	Monster Energy Honda Team	+ 5m 33s
5.	Ross Branch	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 14m 57s
7.	Sebastian Buhler	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 25m 25s
9.	Ignacio Cornejo	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 1h 20m 39s

2024 FIM World Rally-Raid Championship Standings (After Round 4)

1.	Ross Branch	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	72 points
2.	Ricky Brabec	Monster Energy Honda Team	63 points
3.	Adrien Van Beveren	Monster Energy Honda Team	56 points
4.	Toscha Schareina	Monster Energy Honda Team	45 points
5.	Pablo Quintanilla	Monster Energy Honda Team	37 points

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