



SAN JUAN, ARGENTINA | 24 MAY 2026

HERO MOTOSPORTS TEAM RALLY SET FOR PROLOGUE CHALLENGE AT DESAFÍO RUTA 40

Hero MotoSports Team Rally officially got its 2026 Desafío Ruta 40 campaign underway today with the completion of the opening Prologue stage in San Juan, Argentina.

Following the successful completion of administrative and technical checks earlier in the week, the entire Hero MotoSports Team Rally entered the first competitive action of the rally fully prepared for the demanding week ahead.

The Prologue stage served as an important opening test for competitors, offering an early indication of the terrain, pace, and navigation challenges expected throughout the event, while also determining the starting order for Stage 1. Set across the rugged and varied landscapes surrounding San Juan, the opening kilometers featured a combination of fast riverbed sections, open roads, and technical tracks characteristic of the Desafío Ruta 40.

The 2026 edition of the rally will cover five demanding stages across Argentina, with competitors set to face long liaison distances, challenging navigation, changing terrain conditions, and high-speed special stages over the coming days.





The Hero MotoSports Team Rally rider line-up of Ross Branch, Nacho Cornejo, and Michael Docherty approached the Prologue with a strategic mindset as the team looks to build momentum early in the rally.

For Chilean rider Nacho Cornejo, the Latin American event continues to hold special significance with the rally taking place close to home and in terrain conditions highly familiar to him through years of experience racing across the continent.

Meanwhile, Michael Docherty marked an important milestone as he made his competitive debut with Hero MotoSports Team Rally following his impressive performances in the Rally2 category. The South African rider enters the event looking to continue his strong progression in rally-raid competition at the highest level.

Ross Branch also returns to Desafío Ruta 40 carrying valuable experience from previous editions of the event and will once again be aiming to challenge at the front as he continues his pursuit of success in one of rally-raid racing's toughest competitions.

For Hero MotoCorp, Desafío Ruta 40 remains an important platform for strengthening the brand's growing presence across Latin America. The rally provides an opportunity to engage with distributors, partners, customers, and motorsport fans throughout the region while showcasing Hero's international rally program on one of the continent's premier off-road events.

PROLOGUE PERFORMANCE UPDATE

Hero MotoSports Team Rally made a steady start to the 2026 Desafío Ruta 40 with all three riders successfully completing the short but technical 9 km Prologue stage in San Juan.

Ross Branch led the team with an 11th place overall finish and 9th in the RallyGP category despite losing some time following small navigation difficulties in the opening kilometers of the



stage. Michael Docherty impressed in his first competitive outing with the team, finishing 12th overall and securing 3rd place in Rally2 after encountering dust after catching another rider during the sprint stage. Meanwhile, Nacho Cornejo delivered a clean and controlled ride to finish 19th overall and 12th in RallyGP, with the Chilean rider feeling comfortable on the bike and confident heading into the longer stages ahead. While the Prologue is not traditionally suited to Cornejo's riding style, the result positions him well to utilise his navigation strengths once the rally settles into the more demanding stages of the event.

Prologue was short and sweet, and sets the team up with a diverse race strategy for each rider.

Wolfgang Fischer, Team Manager, Hero MotoSports Team Rally:

“We are very pleased to officially begin our Desafío Ruta 40 campaign and it is especially exciting to welcome Michael into the Hero MotoSports Team Rally line-up for his first race with the team. Latin America remains a very important region for Hero MotoCorp, and events like this allow us to strengthen our connection with distributors, partners, and motorsport fans across Latin America while competing in one of the toughest rally environments in the world.

The Prologue result was not completely ideal as we narrowly missed having a rider inside the top ten, but strategically we are still in a strong position heading into Stage 1. Nacho will have the opportunity to use his navigation strengths from the front, Ross remains close enough to push with the leading group, and Michael can benefit from starting slightly further back with good reference points ahead of him. Overall, we are confident and looking forward to the stages ahead.”

Ross Branch, Rider, Hero MotoSports Team Rally:

“Overall, it was a decent start to the rally, although of course I'm a little frustrated not to be exactly where I wanted to be after the Prologue. We had a small issue early on, but the race is still very long and there's a lot of opportunity ahead. The important thing is that we keep building day by day and work towards the result the team deserves.”

Nacho Cornejo, Rider, Hero MotoSports Team Rally:

“I had a good feeling on the bike today and overall I’m happy with how the Prologue went. This type of short stage is not always where I am strongest, but the most important thing is feeling comfortable and confident heading into the longer stages. Now the focus is on navigation, staying consistent, and enjoying the race.”

Michael Docherty, Rider, Hero MotoSports Team Rally:

“It’s been a really exciting start to my first race with the team and I’m happy to begin the event with a solid result in the Prologue. The team has made me feel very welcome and comfortable from the beginning, so I’m looking forward to building through the stages ahead and continuing to learn and improve every day.”

Provisional Overall Rankings – Prologue

01.	Luciano Benevides	Redbull KTM Racing Team	00h 04m 56.5s
02.	Ricky Brabec	Monster Energy Honda HRC	+ 00m 01s
03.	Tosha Schareina	Monster Energy Honda HRC	+ 00m 02s
11.	Ross Branch	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 00m 30s
12.	Michael Docherty	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 00m 30s
19.	Nacho Cornejo	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 00m 49s

For more information:

www.heromotocorp.com | FB: /HeroMotoCorpIndia | Twitter: @HeroMotoCorp | IG: @HeroMotoCorp

Press Contact:

corporate.communication@heromotocorp.com

Follow the team:

www.heromotospports.com | IG: @Heromotospports | FB: HeroMotoSports | Twitter:@hero_motospports

