



Zagora, October 14, 2022

## **ARMED WITH A STAGE WIN, HERO MOTOSPORTS TAKES THE LEAD AT A WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP RACE**

### **ROSS BRANCH WINS STAGE 1 OF RALLYE DU MAROC '23**

**Hero MotoSports Team Rally**, the motorsport team of the world's largest manufacturer of motorcycles and scooters - **Hero MotoCorp**, completed the longest day of the 2023 edition of Rallye Du Maroc bagging a Stage win. With this win, the Indian manufacturer finds itself at the top of the rankings table, at the 5th and final race of the FIM World Rally Raid Championship 2023.



Continuing his success streak, factory rider Ross Branch crossed the finish line of a 700 km+ Stage 1 in the fastest time. With a 3rd place in the Prologue yesterday, and topped with a victory today, the #KalahariFerrari now enjoys the top position on the overall leaderboard of the Maroc Rally.

Sebastian Buhler, who was tasked with the difficult job of opening today's Stage delivered a fantastic performance as well – riding alone all through the day, and still navigating well to finish in the top-10 without making any mistakes. His commendable 9th place finish today in the Rally GP class earns him an overall 10th position in the Rally.



The first full stage of the Rallye Du Maroc 2023 on Saturday, October 14th presented the competitors with an extremely exhausting day – a 314 km long special in the rough and rocky terrains, spiced with over 397 kms in transport sections. Starting as early as 4 AM in the morning from Agadir, the riders spent a full 12 hours to reach the bivouac at Zagora. Stage 1 included a variety of conditions - some rough rocky tracks, quite some amount of dirt, stretches of dunes and sand, and puzzling navigation all throughout, under the scorching Moroccan sun.

A confident Ross Branch, after his podium in the Prologue stage found good luck in getting to start late in the 12th position. His steady navigation right from the early hours, and a fast pace throughout the stage helped him cross the finish line in the fastest time. This comes as a sweet victory for the team, a strong boost in confidence during their final preparations for the mighty Dakar. Today's stage win requires Ross to open the stage tomorrow, and he hopes to make minimal navigation errors, and earn as many bonus points as possible.

Stage 2 tomorrow is a 396 km loop around the desert camp in Zagora, of which 296 kms will form the timed special. This will be another navigational maze under the hot sun, even as the competitors enjoy the beautiful sceneries of the grand Sahara.



**Ross Branch:**

*"It was a very long day on the saddle - we started around 3 AM this morning, and rode over 700 kms on the bike. The liaisons were quite long, but when I got to the stage, it felt amazing! The stage was quite hard and rocky, but I enjoyed it. I was able to navigate well right from the beginning; I caught up with some other competitors around refuel, and we pretty much rode together till the finish.*

*I'm very happy with my result - finally got a Stage win this year!! This is exactly what I and the team needed before the Dakar, and we're happy with our progress, and where we are physically and mentally now. Tomorrow is going to be interesting opening Stage 2, but I'm up for the challenge!"*

**Sebastian Buhler:**

*"Opening the stage today was really tough on the mental side - having to ride all alone, carefully, and without making any navigational errors. Even though it was very long, I enjoyed the stage, and tried to focus on my navigation. I'm happy with my result, and look forward to the next stage."*

### Provisional Rankings – Stage 1 (Rally GP Class)

1.	<b>Ross Branch</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally 03h 13m 17s</b>
2.	Pablo Quintanilla	Monster Energy Honda Team + 1m 41s
3.	Matthias Walkner	Red Bull KTM Factory Racing + 4m 18s
9.	<b>Sebastian Buhler</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally + 15m 28s</b>

### Provisional Overall Standings after Stage 1 (Rally GP Class)

1.	<b>Ross Branch</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally 04h 08m 42s</b>
2.	Pablo Quintanilla	Monster Energy Honda Team + 2m 41s
3.	Matthias Walkner	Red Bull KTM Factory Racing + 5m 38s
10.	<b>Sebastian Buhler</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally + 31m 23s</b>

#### **For more information:**

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