



Merzouga, October 17, 2023

## HERO MOTOSPORTS FINISHES A DIFFICULT 4TH STAGE AT RALLYE DU MAROC 2023

### ROSS BRANCH STILL IN CONTENTION FOR THE TITLE

**Hero MotoSports Team Rally**, the motorsport team of the world's largest manufacturer of motorcycles and scooters - **Hero MotoCorp**, completed a rather tough Stage 4 at the Rallye Du Maroc 2023, with both riders finishing well within the top-10 positions.



Ross Branch who has been in the run for the overall top prize crossed Stage 4 finish line in the 6th fastest time, just 3.5 minutes behind the winner of the stage. Meanwhile, his fellow team mate Sebastian Buhler finished the stage right behind him, in the 7th position.

Touted the most difficult stage of this edition of the Rally, Stage 4 was a harsh mix of all that Morocco has to offer – stony tracks, rough wadis, alternating fast and winding tracks, sandy pistes, off-pistes, stretches of dunes and big camel grass. The competitors were tested on all fronts –speed, handling, navigation, and more – on a long 343 km special from Zagora to Merzouga. The extreme heat of the Sahara Desert made the ride all the more difficult, even though this stage of the rally explored some of the most beautiful terrains of the country.



Ross and Buhler have been making top results right from the start of the race, finishing in the overall top-10 consistently. Even though both riders finished Stage 4 well, the day was not without troubles for the Botswanan and the German. Ross, who has been under a lot of pressure in his fight for an overall win at the Rally, lost some precious time over some minor mistakes in the dunes. Buhler too, got caught behind a rider in the dust, and eventually lost some time. With just 1 stage left in the race, Ross and Buhler find themselves in the 2nd and 8th overall positions in the rally.

Armed with a Stage win earlier in the race, Ross topped the leaderboard for 2 days. Currently in the 2nd overall position after 4 stages of the rally, he is still in contention for the top prize on the last day tomorrow. After almost 2000 kms on the saddle, he lags behind the current leader of the Rally by just 6 minutes.



As Rallye Du Maroc inches towards its final kilometers, the competition among the top Rally GP class riders are understood to be extremely tight, with just a 10-minute gap currently existing within the top five positions. The last and final deciding stage tomorrow will be a short 152 km special loop around the bivouac in Merzouga. Stay tuned!



**Ross Branch:**

*"Stage 4 was not my best - I struggled a lot today. I just couldn't get a good flow or pace like the others, and I lost some time. But overall it was a good stage, we stayed on the bike and didn't make any big mistakes - just a couple of small ones that in fact cost me dearly, especially in the dunes. So I've got a lot of work to do tomorrow. Anyhow, we're still in the race. The bike's good, I'm healthy, the team has been amazing - so, I'll give it my all tomorrow."*

**Sebastian Buhler:**

*"It was a nice stage and I was having fun. Around 100 kms, I caught a rider in front of me - and maybe he didn't see me - I ended up spending a lot of the day behind him in the dust. It was a bit frustrating because I was feeling fast, but could not get into a good rhythm. Overall, it was a good stage - I did have some dreadful moments in the dust, but I'm happy with the result. Looking forward to the last stage tomorrow."*

### Provisional Rankings – Stage 4 (Rally GP Class)

1.	Luciano Benavides	Husqvarna Factory Racing	3h 35m 12s
2.	Ignacio Cornejo	Monster Energy Honda Team	+ 1m 18s
3.	Toby Price	Red Bull KTM Factory Racing	+ 2m 24s
6.	<b>Ross Branch</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	<b>+ 3m 34s</b>
7.	<b>Sebastian Buhler</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	<b>+ 8m 04s</b>

### Provisional Overall Standings after Stage 4 (Rally GP Class)

1.	Toby Price	Red Bull KTM Factory Racing	14h 02m 38s
2.	<b>Ross Branch</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	<b>+ 5m 56s</b>
3.	Luciano Benavides	Husqvarna Factory Racing	+ 6m 24s
8.	<b>Sebastian Buhler</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	<b>+ 1hr 08m 19s</b>

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