

Merzouga, October 18, 2023

## A REMARKABLE END TO TEAM HERO'S CAMPAIGN AT RALLYE DU MAROC 2023

### BOTH HERO RIDERS FINISH IN TOP-10

**Hero MotoSports Team Rally**, the motorsport team of the world's largest manufacturer of motorcycles and scooters - **Hero MotoCorp**, successfully concluded their campaign at the 2023 edition of the Rallye Du Maroc, with both team riders Ross Branch & Sebastian Buhler finishing in the overall top-10.



In the last and 5th Stage of the rally, Ross finished 4th, missing the Stage podium by a mere 2 seconds. Buhler crossed the finish line in the 9th fastest time of the day. In the overall Rally GP Class standings, Ross and Buhler finished on the 4th and 8th positions respectively.

After 6 days of intense racing and consistent top results - including a Stage Win and a Stage podium - Ross Branch was one of the most promising contenders for the overall Rally win, up until the final moments of Stage 5. Even in the middle of the last stage, he was the leading man for several kilometers, until a minor crash in the dunes set him back by a few minutes. The nail-biting suspense that prevailed until the last kilometer eventually ended with Ross finishing 4th overall – 4' 44" behind the winner of the rally, and missing the podium by just 1.5 minutes.



Sebastian Buhler also performed consistently well throughout the rally, with the exception of a few technical problems that slowed him down in a couple of stages. He feels much more confident with his riding and navigation skills, and the Maroc rally has served as a great arena for his preparations towards the mighty Dakar.

On Wednesday, the Rallye Du Maroc crossed 6 days, and 2,200+ kms of racing through the varied terrains typical to Morocco – stony tracks, rugged mountains, fast tracks, sandy patches, stretches of dunes, camel grass, and much more. The organizers made every effort to make this edition of the “mini Dakar” more difficult, by introducing complex navigation. The temperatures in the land of the Sahara soared high at 35-40 degree Celsius, making the task at hand all the more challenging. The exhausting week also saw as many as 28 withdrawals at different stages, of which 4 were top Rally GP class competitors.



Rallye Du Maroc was also the 5th and final race of the FIM World Rally-Raid Championship 2023 season. Over the last week, Morocco witnessed world class pilots pushing their limits at breakneck speeds, in a bid to make it to the Championship podium, or improve their points in the last hours of this season. After almost 40 hours of saddle time, the top 5 riders crossed the finish line of the Maroc Rally with a mere 8-minute gap between them. Ross Branch made it to the top-5 of the 2023 World Championship, bagging an admirable 4th position.

Next up for Team Hero MotoSports is the big one in January, 2024 – the Dakar Rally 2024 – the first race of the 2024 Championship season. The team will continue with their final preparations to reach Saudi in the best shape.



**Wolfgang Fischer, Team Manager:**

*"The last round of the W2RC 2023 season is done and dusted. We have some really positive takeaways from Morocco - we've been able to fight for podium positions all through the race, up until the last day. Ross did a fantastic job, showcasing the great potential of our bikes and of the team. Unfortunately, in the last day he lacked a bit of luck - missing the podium by a very thin margin. Anyhow, this is part and parcel of racing.*

*Buhler had some unfortunate situations, and was not able to attain his full potential on the ground. But all in all, his feeling on the bike was better, and he is in a great shape to hit the Dakar. It was unfortunate that JRod couldn't take part in the rally as everyone wished, but we expect a fast recovery, and hopefully we will have him with us for some final rounds of training before the Dakar.*

*Our preparations for the Dakar are in full swing, and we hope to reach there in the best form. A big thank you to all our teams, partners and fans for their continued support and motivation."*

**Ross Branch:**

*"This was indeed a good rally, and we made some good steps in the right direction. I believe it was a good ending for the 2023 season. Of course, I would've liked to have been on the podium, but the other competitors were going all out today on the last stage. Everyone was pushing their limits, so I had to too, and unfortunately I made a small mistake towards the end in the dunes.*

*It was a fabulous effort by all the competitors – I enjoyed this awesome week of racing. Congratulations to the world champions! We're ready to fight again in the next year, starting with the Dakar Rally coming up soon!"*

**Sebastian Buhler:**

*"It was quite a nice race, the organizers made good efforts to give us nice routes to ride on. It was also a difficult rally, as Maroc usually is. I'm happy to reach the finish in good shape – I'm happy with my riding and navigation through the week. I feel I'm better now with my navigation and feel more confident on the bike. Luck was not always on my side this week, and I lost some time due to a few mechanical problems - but this is Rally. We will continue our hard work towards the Dakar, and I hope for a good performance in Saudi."*

**Provisional Rankings – Stage 5 (Rally GP Class)**

1.	Pablo Quintanilla	Monster Energy Honda Team	1h 49m 17s
2.	Luciano Benavides	Husqvarna Factory Racing	+ 1m 24s
3.	Tosha Schareina	Honda Team	+ 3m 34s
4.	<b>Ross Branch</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	<b>+ 3m 36s</b>
9.	<b>Sebastian Buhler</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	<b>+ 8m 45s</b>

**Provisional Overall Standings after Stage 5 (Rally GP Class)**

1.	Toby Price	Red Bull KTM Factory Racing	15h 56m 43s
2.	Luciano Benavides	Husqvarna Factory Racing	+ 3m 00s
3.	Pablo Quintanilla	Monster Energy Honda Team	+ 3m 12s
4.	<b>Ross Branch</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	<b>+ 4m 44s</b>
8.	<b>Sebastian Buhler</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	<b>+ 1h 12m 16s</b>

**2023 FIM World Rally-Raid Championship Standings (After Round 5)**

1.	Luciano Benavides	Husqvarna Factory Racing	100 points
2.	Toby Price	Red Bull KTM Factory Racing	96 points
3.	Adrien Van Beveren	Monster Energy Honda Team	76 points
4.	<b>Ross Branch</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	<b>58 points</b>
5.	Pablo Quintanilla	Monster Energy Honda Team	55 points



**For more information:**

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