



Grândola, Portugal | 18 March 2026

HERO MOTOSPORTS TEAM RALLY POSTS STRONG RESULTS IN STAGE 01 AT RALLY RAID PORTUGAL 2026

ROSS BRANCH FINISHES FOURTH

Hero MotoSports Team Rally – the motorsport arm of the world’s largest manufacturer of motorcycles and scooters, Hero MotoCorp – has successfully completed Stage 01 of the Rally Raid Portugal 2026.

Ross Branch delivered a strong performance, crossing the finish line with the 4th fastest time, while teammate Nacho Cornejo secured 16th place on the stage. At the end of Stage 01, Branch holds 4th position in the overall standings, comfortably inside the Top-10. Cornejo sits 16th in the overall general classification.





Branch had a confident and controlled ride through the day's challenging conditions. The stage was wet and slippery, with multiple deep water crossings demanding constant focus. He maintained a steady rhythm throughout and continued to build confidence in the bike. With the machine performing reliably, Branch wrapped up the stage satisfied and well-placed heading into the next phase of the rally.

Cornejo also had a positive outing, taking on a long and technical stage marked by mud and water crossings. He stayed consistent and adapted well to the changing terrain, gaining confidence as the stage progressed. With valuable learnings from the day, Cornejo now looks to build momentum in the upcoming stages.

Earlier in the rally, the opening special stage introduced riders to sandy sections. Wednesday's stage marked the first full competitive test, featuring a loop around Grândola with a total of 180 km of timed sections. The stage was divided into two parts—a 177 km main special, followed by a short 3 km final sprint.

The rally now moves into Stage 2 on Thursday, taking competitors across the border into Spain on entirely new tracks. Riders will face fresh terrain in the Extremadura region, adding a new dimension to the challenge. The stage will have 377 km of timed sections with 171 km of liaisons. This transition also reinforces Rally Raid Portugal's unique position in the W2RC calendar as the only cross-border event, truly living up to its reputation.



Ross Branch, Rider, Hero MotoSports Team Rally:

“It was a good day overall. The stage was demanding—very wet, slippery, and with a few deep water crossings that kept you on your toes—but I really enjoyed the ride. I felt comfortable on the bike, and it’s performing really well, which is encouraging. There’s still some work to do to improve my pace in these conditions, but we’ll keep pushing and learning as the week progresses. I’m happy with today and excited for what’s ahead.”

Nacho Cornejo, Rider, Hero MotoSports Team Rally:

“Overall, it was a really positive day for me. The stage was long, wet, and quite tricky with a lot of mud and some deep water crossings, so you had to stay focused throughout. I really enjoyed being out there on the bike, and it was a lot of fun despite the conditions. The bike felt great all day, which gives me a lot of confidence. While I know there’s still room for improvement, especially in these kinds of conditions, we’ll keep working on it through the week. I’m happy with how things went and looking forward to building on this in the coming stages. Thanks to everyone for the support.”

Provisional Rankings – Stage 01

01.	Daniel Sanders	Redbull KTM Racing Team	01h 32m 01s
02.	Tosha Schareina	Monster Energy Honda HRC	+ 02m 10s
03.	Adrien Van Beveren	Monster Energy Honda HRC	+ 02m 18s
04.	Ross Branch	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 04m 42s
16.	Nacho Cornejo	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 11m 40s

Overall Provisional Rankings – After Stage 01

01.	Daniel Sanders	Redbull KTM Racing Team	01h 35m 02s
02.	Tosha Schareina	Monster Energy Honda HRC	+ 02m 11s
03.	Adrien Van Beveren	Monster Energy Honda HRC	+ 02m 23s
04.	Ross Branch	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 04m 50s
16.	Nacho Cornejo	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 12m 00s

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