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HERO MOTOSPORTS TEAM RALLY REGISTERS AN IMPRESSIVE START TO RALLYE DU MAROC 2022

ROSS BRANCH WINS THE PROLOGUE STAGE

Hero MotoSports Team Rally, the motorsport team of the world's largest manufacturer of motorcycles and scooters - **Hero MotoCorp**, has begun its Rallye Du Maroc 2022 campaign with team rider Ross Branch emerging as the fastest rider in the qualifying stage (prologue) on October 1st.



This edition marks the third appearance of the Hero team at this pure desert race, often considered a “mini-Dakar”. Piloting the Hero Rally 450 bikes through the dunes of Morocco is the entire lineup of the Hero MotoSports team – Joaquim Rodrigues, Sebastian Buhler, Franco Caimi, and Ross Branch. Maroc is Branch’s second outing with the team, and it also features the return of Buhler, back from his injury. After months of rigorous preparations, the team is confident of returning with great exploits from Morocco.

After successfully completing the administrative checks and technical scrutiny on Friday, the riders took to the start line of the Prologue stage (Stage 1A) on Saturday, October 1st - a quick 9-km of special and 49 km of liaisons around Agadir – composed mainly of sands and winding tracks. Ross Branch won the Stage, followed by Joaquim Rodrigues at 7th position, Sebastian Buhler at 9th and Franco Caimi capturing the 11th spot in the Rally GP class. By having won the stage, Ross gains the advantage to start last in the first official stage due tomorrow, and hopes to utilise the headway towards a good run.

This edition of Maroc promises extreme action for 6 consecutive days in the desert, covering over 2330 km through varied terrains, and even offering some beautiful sea-side views for the first time.

The first full stage of the Rallye Du Maroc 2022 is due on Sunday, October 2nd, and this will give the riders a sweet taste of the desert they’ve missed for long – with a 322-km long special in the sands of Sahara. The team will start from the city of Agadir, and end the day in the desert, at Tan Tan, after completing transport sections of around 240 kms.



Wolfgang Fischer, Team Manager, Hero MotoSports Team Rally:

"We're happy to be here in Agadir, all set to start the Rallye Du Maroc 2022. We're back to racing after almost a 6-7 months break, and with the full team together for the first time! I'm glad to have Sebastian Buhler back in action after his injury almost a year ago, and Franco Caimi as well, who had about 3 months left to recover from his arm injury. We've utilized the long break well by preparing the team to its best shape.

It is very exciting to have started our Maroc campaign with a stage win for Ross in the prologue. I'm looking forward to a great run here at Maroc – it's a classic race on the calendar, which also resembles the Dakar in a lot of ways. Looking forward eagerly for all that unfolds in the next few days."

Ross Branch:

"It was really fun to be back on the track today on my Hero Rally 450. The 9 kms in the prologue was really short, but I had a lot of fun – it was just like my motocross days – the stage had quite a few big burns and jumps, and my Hero performed at its peak. I'm happy to have finished at the top; it's a good start to the week, and I look forward to the rest of the race."

Joaquim Rodrigues:

"The prologue here at Agadir was a good beginning, even though it wasn't my best performance. I'm still in the top-10 in the prologue, so that's good for the start tomorrow. We have been working hard, the bikes are running well, and I am feeling good. So, looking forward to a good rally!"

Sebastian Buhler:

"It's so great to be back after nearly one year of being away from races. I've been training a lot and recovering, and so, happy to see good results today. In the stage, I tried to get into the rhythm slowly, and not making any mistakes. The goal obviously is to reach the Dakar this time, and with a good pace."

Franco Caimi:

"I'm super happy to be back with the team and racing after seven months! It's a great feeling to enjoy the adrenaline pumping up again. The prologue today was not my best performance, but the race is just getting started, and I am super motivated to get back on the bike. Today was definitely a good first contact before

the show that starts tomorrow; it's a long stage tomorrow with some tricky navigation, and I'm excited to see how it goes!"



Provisional Rankings – Stage 1A (Rally GP Class)

1.	Ross Branch	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	01h 01m 28s
2.	Toby Price	Red Bull KTM Factory Team	+ 40s
3.	Luciano Benavides	Husqvarna Factory Racing	+ 56s
7.	Joaquim Rodrigues	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 2m 24s
9.	Sebastian Buhler	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 2m 48s
11.	Franco Caimi	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 3m 28s

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