



Laâyoune, October 03, 2022

HERO MOTOSPORTS BATTLES THROUGH A TOUGH STAGE 2 AT RALLYE DU MAROC

ROSS BRANCH AND FRANCO CAIMI MAINTAIN TOP-10 POSITIONS

Hero MotoSports Team Rally, the motorsport team of the world's largest manufacturer of motorcycles and scooters - Hero MotoCorp, had a steady run in the second stage of the Rallye Du Maroc on Monday, October 3rd. Battling several difficulties in the desert, the riders arrived at the finish line safely.



Team rider Franco Caimi started the stage at the 9th position and rode steadily to make it to the finish line in the top 10 yet again. He finished the day at 8th, followed by Ross Branch at 12th, and Sebastian Bühler at 14th in the Rally GP class rankings. Unfortunately, Joaquim Rodrigues suffered from a crash and could not complete the stage.

Stage 2 started from the coastal town of Tan-Tan and took the competitors further down south of the country to Laâyoune, covering a total of 435 km. The 316 km special section had a varied terrain as compared to the earlier stages, featuring a lot more sand and dunes. Navigation skills were crucial today as well, as the riders met with several parallel tracks and multiple dune stretches.



Having won the first stage on Sunday, Ross Branch was handed the mantle to open this tricky stage today. He led with a good pace for over 150 km, and ultimately finished the stage without making any navigational mistakes. His great run today places him at the overall 6th position in the Rally GP class.

Franco has been consistent in his performance so far in the rally, and his steady run today helps him maintain his top-10 overall Rally GP class ranking, at the 10th spot. Sebastian Bühler has been constantly striving since Prologue to improve his rhythm, and he rode well today to claim his 13th position in the overall rankings table.



Joaquim 'JRod' Rodrigues started the stage well at the 16th position, pushing back stronger from his setback in the previous stage. By the 46 km waypoint, JRod was leading at the top; however, he met with an unfortunate crash, and found it difficult to continue racing in the stage. To avoid aggravating his injuries from the previous crash, the 2022 Dakar stage winner exited from the race and headed back to the bivouac. He hopes to rest, recover and be back for the next race due in another 2 weeks.

In Laâyoune, the competitors have reached the new bivouac set up in a majestic site which overlooks a wadi, and will race here for the next two days. Stage 3, due tomorrow, will take the riders on a 342 km rider further south into the Moroccan plains, and promises a lot more dunes to jump over.

Franco Caimi:

"Every day that we reach the bivouac safe and sound - it's a good day! Stage 2 today was quite a tricky one - I made some minor navigation mistakes towards the end, went off-piste for a while, and ended up losing some time. Anyway, I am happy with my overall performance, and I take back all the learnings from the stage to keep improving, and pushing harder tomorrow."

Ross Branch:

"Today was difficult, but not so much of a bad day for me. I knew it was going to be tough opening this long stage, and I just had to manage my time well right from the beginning. The first kilometre was full of big rocks, and that got me worried about the rest of the stage. But luckily, it slowly opened up and we even had some soft dunes towards the end. I was doing well at the start, and got caught up by the riders behind me only around 150 km. They then picked up pace, and we rode together for a long time. I'm

happy to be back in one piece, and without making any navigational mistakes - which was my goal for today. Looking forward to tomorrow!"

Sebastian Buhler:

"I felt like I had a better day today, having gained my momentum back and a good rhythm with my bike. Towards the end of the stage I faced a slight problem finding a particular waypoint, and lost some time at that. However, I am happy with my performance, and excited to catch a good pace with my Hero again."



Joaquim Rodrigues:

"I had bruised my hands yesterday, and I didn't know how today would turn out; but I still gave it my best shot. I did quite well in the first part of the stage, and was in the leading positions. However, after a little crash - even though it wasn't major - I felt I couldn't grab the bike back up, and decided to stop before I hurt my hands any further. It's unfortunate, but I'm hoping to recover well before the next race."

Provisional Rankings – Stage 2 (Rally GP Class)

1.	Adrien Van Beveren	Monster Energy Honda Racing	03h 18m 44s
2.	Kevin Benavides	Red Bull KTM Factory Team	+ 2m 54s
8.	Franco Caimi	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 8m 56s
12.	Ross Branch	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 12m 09s
14.	Sebastian Buhler	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 13m 47s
17.	Joaquim Rodrigues	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	DNF

Provisional Overall Standings after Stage 2 (Rally GP Class)

1.	Skyler Howes	Husqvarna Factory Racing	08h 12m 44s
2.	Toby Price	Red Bull KTM Factory Team	+ 1m 40s
3.	Luciano Benavides	Husqvarna Factory Racing	+ 3m 42s
6.	Ross Branch	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 4m 33s
10.	Franco Caimi	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 14m 12s
13.	Sebastian Buhler	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 30m 28s

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