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HERO MOTOSPORTS REGISTERS A STRONG FINISH AT RALLYE DU MAROC '22 WITH TWO RIDERS IN THE TOP 10

Hero MotoSports Team Rally, the motorsport team of the world's largest manufacturer of motorcycles and scooters - **Hero MotoCorp**, concluded their campaign at the 2022 edition of Rallye Du Maroc, with two riders finishing in the top 10 positions. This was indeed a mini-Dakar, with the riders covering 2330 km in pure desert conditions.



The Hero MotoSports team of four was back racing on the desert terrains after almost a 7-month gap since Abu Dhabi, owing to the cancellation and postponement of certain races. Having utilised the break well to train and prepare, the team showcased a phenomenal performance in Morocco. They bagged the top positions on multiple days, and even led the overall scorecard of a World Championship race – a first for an Indian manufacturer team.

Stage 5, the last stage of the race started today from the bivouac in Tan-Tan taking the riders on a 380 km final sprint along the Atlantic Coast and back to the city of Agadir. The coastal setting offered magnificent landscapes for the competitors to pass through in what was a spectacular conclusion to Rallye du Maroc.

Ross Branch, in his second appearance in Hero colours, delivered a stellar performance all throughout the rally - bagging two consecutive stage wins, a stage podium and another top 5 stage finish. In the fifth and final stage today, he finished with the 7th fastest time. However, a time penalty that he faced in one of the earlier stages cost him a good overall finish. Back safe in Agadir after a week in the desert, the Botswanan finds himself at 8th in the overall Rally GP class standings.



Continuing his steady performance all through the race, Franco Caimi finished today's stage at 6th, just ahead of Ross. Having constantly improved his performance throughout the six days of racing, the Argentine has earned himself a commendable 9th place on the overall Rally GP Class rankings table.

For Sebastian Bühler, Rallye Du Maroc was a return to the saddle after almost a year of absence from races, owing to an injury. The young rider from Portugal faced some difficulty getting into rhythm at the start of the rally. However, his persistent run through the week gave him a great opportunity to reclaim his pace and feeling with the bike. Having finished the last stage in top 10, Buhler has moved up to the 12th place in the overall Rally GP class standings.

For Hero's veteran Joaquim 'JRod' Rodrigues, Maroc did not go as well as expected. With two crashes in two consecutive stages, the Dakar stage winner made the tough decision to exit from the race after Stage 2 to avoid further injury that would hamper his preparations for the upcoming races - especially the Dakar 2023. In spite of that, JRod stayed on with the team till the end, in a bid to keep the riders motivated.

With Rallye du Maroc completed, the teams are now making their quick move to the next bivouac in Seville, Spain, to start the Andalucia Rally next week. This will be the last and final run of tests and preparations for the teams before they hit the Dakar Rally 2023, rumoured to be tougher than ever.

WOLFGANG FISCHER, TEAM MANAGER, Hero MotoSports Team Rally:

"The Rallye du Maroc was as usual, tough for man & machine - a perfect proving ground for our preparations for the Dakar. We are quite happy with the overall team performance here, with the entire team having put their best foot forward. Ross achieved three stage podiums, with 2 of them being wins. JRod showcased a really competitive speed until he had to unfortunately leave the race, to avoid the risk of a bigger injury. Three of our riders were also coming back from injury - Ross, Franco and Bühler. It's promising to see them getting back up to speed again, with their focus on the Dakar. For Ross, we were hoping for a podium finish, but unfortunately his overall results were affected by a 15-minute penalty; but we see him absolutely fit to be fighting for podiums in the next races.

Our team is fit and ready for the next race that starts in just a couple of days in Andalucia - the last and final round of the W2RC 2022. Thanks to the entire team for their tireless efforts, even as we make our last preparations for the next race, and of course, the Dakar."

ROSS BRANCH:

"It's been some time since I finished a rally, and I'm extremely happy to be here at the finish of the Maroc rally! I'm glad how the whole week turned out – we had some great times, and of course some unfortunate things, but that's all part of racing. The team is incredible, and we are in a really good position; I know our future is bright. Personally, I'm much more confident now with my speed, and very comfortable with my bike. Looking forward to Andalucia, and of course the big one, the Dakar."

FRANCO CAIMI:

“Rallye Du Maroc was a really challenging race, almost like the Dakar, and I’m happy to reach the finish. Today was a good stage, and I ended up with a good feeling on the bike – which is really important. I have been working daily on my navigation skills, and there are still some areas to improve. However, I’m very happy with what we could achieve – the improvements and the overall performance. Eager to race again in a week’s time, in Andalucia.”

SEBASTIAN BÜHLER:

“I’m happy to have finished yet another Rally. Overall, it was a good race for me, and for the team. It has been so long for us - without any racing, and also any desert action. Each day here I have been gaining my confidence back. I feel much better now than at the beginning, and I’m grateful for that. We will continue working hard to get in the best shape for Dakar.”



Final Rankings – Stage 5 (Rally GP Class)

1.	Adrien Van Beveren	Monster Energy Honda Team	01h 37m 30s
2.	Skyler Howes	Husqvarna Factory Racing	+ 06s
6.	Franco Caimi	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 4m 06s
7.	Ross Branch	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 5m 44s
10.	Sebastian Bühler	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 7m 34s

Overall Standings after Stage 5 (Rally GP Class)

1.	Skyler Howes	Husqvarna Factory Racing	16h 30m 29s
2.	Luciano Benavides	Husqvarna Factory Racing	+ 7m 13s
3.	Ricky Brabec	Monster Energy Honda Team	+ 10m 48s
8.	Ross Branch	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 26m 26s
9.	Franco Caimi	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 33m 44s
12.	Sebastian Bühler	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 58m 28s

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