



Zagora, October 07, 2024

## TEAM HERO MOTOSPORTS CLINCHES THE LEAD AT RALLYE DU MAROC 2024

### ROSS BRANCH WINS STAGE 01

**Hero MotoSports Team Rally**, the motorsport team of the world's largest manufacturer of motorcycles and scooters - **Hero MotoCorp**, crossed the finish line of the first stage at Rally Du Maroc 2024 recording an impressive performance. Ross Branch became the fastest rider of the Stage, and with his victory, the Indian manufacturer has taken the lead position at the race.

Rallye Du Maroc is the 5th and final race of the FIM World Rally-Raid Championship (W2RC) 2024. Hero team pilot Ross Branch has maintained his #1 spot on the rankings table since the 2nd race of this season. An impressive start now at the Maroc Rally further solidifies his fighting chance to claim the World Championship title.



Even though the first Stage was quite daunting, the Hero team showcased remarkable performances. Competing in the premier Rally GP Class, riders Ross Branch, Sebastian Buhler and Nacho Cornejo crossed today's finish line in the 1st, 6th, and 8th positions respectively. Having completed the first of five Stages, Ross, Buhler, and Nacho find themselves at the 1st, 6th and 9th spots in the overall Rally GP class standings.



By finishing 2nd in the Prologue yesterday, Branch had the privilege of choosing a late 11th start position for Stage 1. The Botswanan made the best of this strategic opportunity, and finished first with a 48 second margin over his nearest competitor. Nacho Cornejo - on the other hand - was tasked with the challenging responsibility of opening today's Stage. The Chilean too, made a steady attempt to carefully navigate through the extremely tricky terrain, making it to the finish without any major mistakes.

The first full Stage of the 2024 edition comprised of 180 km of timed sections, with another 200 km in liaisons. After floods delayed the arrival of vehicles at the bivouac in Zagora yesterday, the race organizers were forced to make last minute adjustments to the race plan. In Stage 1, competitors were sent on the route originally planned for Stage 2, but with a reduced distance, and later start timings. This loop around Zagora, however, ended up becoming one of the toughest Stages seen at Maroc in recent years. The day started on rough, stony tracks that were severely damaged by the rains. The trails ahead proved treacherous as well, where the original paths were mostly washed away - leaving the competitors in confusion. Risking their ride over tight dunes, the riders finally got some consolation in the last stretch, where visible, rolling tracks led the way to the finish line.



In Stage 2, the participants will switch back to the route originally planned for Stage 1. This second loop around Zagora will be one of the longest specials in this edition - featuring 314 kms in the mighty Sahara, plus an additional 158 km in road sections.

**Ross Branch:**

*"I'm happy to have finished Stage 1 with a good result. It was a really tough one—definitely one of the most challenging Stages I've ever ridden at Rallye Du Maroc! The tracks were really beaten up and washed away from yesterday's rains, but I managed to pull through. Nacho did an amazing job opening the track, I can only imagine how much more difficult it would have been for him. Opening the Stage tomorrow will be a mammoth task, but we're pushing forward with confidence."*

**Sebastian Buhler:**

*"It was a very difficult Stage—perhaps one of the hardest I've ever ridden here at Maroc. The terrain was full of rocks and rivers, making it challenging to maneuver. I tried to maintain a good pace, but it wasn't easy - every time I went full on the gas, I seemed to be hitting something. I'm glad to have finished well, and I hope tomorrow will be a bit smoother."*

**Nacho Cornejo:**

*"Stage 1 is complete, and it was very rough, thanks to the rains from yesterday. I did my best opening the Stage, and lost a few minutes here and there. But overall, I'm happy with my focus and navigation. Tomorrow is a new day, so we'll keep pushing and doing our best - one day at a time."*



### Provisional Rankings – Stage 1 (Rally GP Class)

1.	<b>Ross Branch</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	02h 16m 57s
2.	Daniel Sanders	Red Bull KTM Factory Racing	+ 48s
3.	Tosha Schareina	Monster Energy Honda Team	+ 01m 48s
6.	<b>Sebastian Buhler</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	+ 10m 07s
8.	<b>Nacho Cornejo</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	+ 14m 03s

### Provisional Overall Standings after Stage 1 (Rally GP Class):

1.	<b>Ross Branch</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	02h 34m 09s
2.	Daniel Sanders	Red Bull KTM Factory Racing	+ 48s
3.	Tosha Schareina	Monster Energy Honda Team	+ 01m 30s
6.	<b>Sebastian Buhler</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	+ 10m 37s
9.	<b>Nacho Cornejo</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	+ 15m 55s

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### For more information:

[www.heromotocorp.com](http://www.heromotocorp.com) / FB: /HeroMotoCorpIndia / Twitter: @HeroMotoCorp / IG: @HeroMotoCorp

### Press Contact:

[corporate.communication@heromotocorp.com](mailto:corporate.communication@heromotocorp.com)

### Follow the team:

[www.heromotosports.com](http://www.heromotosports.com) / IG: @Heromotosports / FB: HeroMotoSports / Twitter:@hero\_motosports

