



**Puerto Peñasco, Sonora (Mexico), April 25, 2023**

## **HERO MOTOSPORTS FINISHES STRONG AT STAGE 2 OF THE SONORA RALLY 2023**

### **ROSS BRANCH MOVES UP WITHIN OVERALL TOP-10**

Hero MotoSports Team Rally, the motorsport team of the world's largest manufacturer of motorcycles and scooters - Hero MotoCorp, continued their steady performance at Stage 2 – one of the longest days at the Sonora Rally 2023.

Team rider Ross Branch brought his Hero 450 Rally home in the 5<sup>th</sup> fastest time of the day. His team mate Sebastian Buhler completed the Stage in the 13<sup>th</sup> position amongst Rally GP class riders.



Continuing their exploration of the unknown terrains of Mexico, the W2RC competitors embarked on Stage 2 of the Sonora Rally as early as 05 AM today. The 501 km long ride from Hermosillo to the coastal city of Puerto Peñasco was one dotted with difficult maneuvering around desert vegetation, fesh fesh, and some severe danger zones. The route also ran quite near the Sea of Cortez, offering the competitors some magnificent views of the Mexican coastal landscape. Due to unforeseen circumstances and to ensure maximum safety for competitors, the timed section of the stage was cut short to 162 km instead of the 286 km initially planned.



Ross Branch found the morning quite tough with several dangers lined up in the first half of the stage. However, he found a good rhythm in the latter part and finished on a high, just 4 minutes behind the winner of the Stage. His brilliant performance today pushes him up to the 8<sup>th</sup> position in the Rally's overall rank tally.

Sebastian Buhler too, found the stage quite dangerous and difficult. Early on in the stage, he slipped down a big wash out in the middle of the track, and lost some time getting back to a good pace. At the end of 2 stages, the German finds himself at the 11<sup>th</sup> place in the overall rankings table of the Rally GP class.

The Rally has set up camp in Puerto Peñasco for three nights in a beach camp-like bivouac for Stages 3 & 4, which will loop around the fishing port and its famous beaches. Stage 3 tomorrow, which marks the halfway point of the race will also be the longest special featuring over 350 km of timed sections.



**Ross Branch:**

*"Today was a relatively good stage for me. This morning was quite difficult with some big dangers. However, halfway through the stage I found a good rhythm and I really enjoyed the second half. We finished in a good position, and I'm happy with my performance. Looking forward to the long stage tomorrow, and to closing the rally on a high. I thank the team for their incredible support."*

**Sebastian Buhler:**

*"We're done with the 2nd Stage - it was supposed to be longer, but got cut short due to some hazards. We had some big dangers all through the stage, and around the beginning I got stuck in one which was not really in the road book. It kind of dampened my positive feeling, but we have 3 more days to go, and I'll keep pushing harder."*

**Provisional Rankings – Stage 2 (Rally GP Class)**

1.	Daniel Sanders	Red Bull Gas Gas Factory Racing	1h 28m 08s
2.	Tosha Schareina	Honda Team	+ 1m 15s
3.	Ricky Brabec	Monster Energy Honda Team	+ 2m 18s
5.	<b>Ross Branch</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	+ 4m 10s
13.	<b>Sebastian Buhler</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	+ 7m 22s

**Provisional Overall Standings after Stage 2 (Rally GP Class):**

1.	Daniel Sanders	Red Bull Gas Gas Factory Racing	3h 46m 59s
2.	Tosha Schareina	Honda Team	+ 0m 21s
3.	Ricky Brabec	Monster Energy Honda Team	+ 4m 16s
8.	<b>Ross Branch</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	+ 8m 23s
11.	<b>Sebastian Buhler</b>	<b>Hero MotoSports Team Rally</b>	+ 12m 30s

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**For more information:**

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