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HERO MOTOSPORTS CONTINUES TO STAY IN TOP 10 AFTER STAGE 3 OF DESAFIO RUTA 40

Hero MotoSports Team Rally, the motorsport team of the world's largest manufacturer of motorcycles and scooters - **Hero MotoCorp**, crossed the halfway mark of the Desafio Ruta 40 2024.

Factory riders and Rally GP class competitors Ross Branch, Sebastian Buhler, and Nacho Cornejo crossed the finish line of Stage 3 in the 6th, 8th, and 9th positions respectively. Ramiro Barco, who represented the team in Rally 2, suffered an unfortunate crash in the first half of the race, and had to exit from the rally due to injury.

Stage 3, a loop around the bivouac set up at *Circuito San Juan Villicum*, totaled 478 km, including 137 km of road sections and 341 km of special. By far the toughest day for the competitors, Stage 3 was a true Rally stage which challenged the riders on all fronts – confusing navigation, a variety of constantly changing terrains and an overall exhausting day. Gravel tracks and broken off-pistes, salt pans, and a maze of rivers with sand, rocks, stone slabs, and narrow tracks, cold temperatures – the organizers made every effort to spice up the Stage.

Ross Branch, in a tough, yet fulfilling day on his Hero 450 Rally, enjoyed as the race organizers included a true rally Stage right into the mix. Up until around the 127 km mark, Ross was leading the rally. However, a navigation mistake right before refueling cost the Botswanan dearly.

Sebastian Buhler, who has been showcasing impressive performances right from Day 1, however, lost some time, while finding his way out from a river. On the other hand, the team's latest signing - Ignacio Cornejo - has been constantly striving to find a better feeling with his new bike. In the overall Rally GP class standings, Ross maintained the 5th place, followed by Buhler in the 6th place. Nacho is the 9th man on the Rally GP class overall rankings table. With just two stages left in the race, the team will continue their fight, focusing mainly on maintaining their World Championship lead position.

Ross Branch:

"Stage 3 was amazing. I felt really good this morning and had a great pace going, really comfortable on the bike. Unfortunately, I made a big mistake 2 kms before refueling, and ended up losing a few minutes. It was a 50-50 chance which I had to take, and I took a wrong left turn instead of right. This is Rally! However, it was also nice to have a true rally stage in this race. I'm happy to be back, and look forward to the last two days."

Sebastian Buhler:

"Today was a difficult Stage, with very hard navigation and broken terrains. I lost some time as I couldn't find my way out of a river, twice. However, I'm happy to have finished safe without any crashes, and for being able to maintain my rhythm even while being lost in the river. Now let's look forward to Stage 4."

Nacho Cornejo:

"It was a long and very technical, demanding stage. I'm happy to be back here in one piece. I've been gaining more comfort daily; and while I'm still struggling in some parts, I'm really enjoying my new Hero 450 Rally. We'll keep working towards getting my speed back."

Provisional Rankings – Stage 3 (Rally GP Class)

1.	Ricky Brabec	Monster Energy Honda Team	3h 15m 15s
2.	Skyler Howes	Monster Energy Honda Team	+ 3m 27s
3.	Toscha Schareina	Monster Energy Honda Team	+ 3m 38s
6.	Ross Branch	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 6m 40s
8.	Sebastian Buhler	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 10m 46s
9.	Ignacio Cornejo	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 18m 10s

Provisional Overall Standings after Stage 3 (Rally GP Class):

1.	Ricky Brabec	Monster Energy Honda Team	11h 54m 03s
2.	Toscha Schareina	Monster Energy Honda Team	+ 1m 34s
3.	Adrien Van Beveren	Monster Energy Honda Team	+ 3m 38s
5.	Ross Branch	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 9m 28s
6.	Sebastian Buhler	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 11m 06s
9.	Ignacio Cornejo	Hero MotoSports Team Rally	+ 47m 08s

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