



ROAD BOOK D1 AND THEY'RE OFF

Key points :

- Following scrutineering at the stadium in Agadir, 134 FIM bikes, 102 FIA cars and trucks and 9 Open class cars, a grand total of 245 vehicles, were authorized to take the start this morning.
- In the bikes victory went to Tosha Schareina (Honda Team). In the cars Mattias Ekstrom (Team Audi Sport) was quickest, while finishing 10th overall, it was young Eryk Goczal (Team BBR) who was fastest in the T3 lightweight protos. In the T4 SSVs Ferreira (South Racing Can-Am) was first home by a mere second.

ON TRACK

Over a 19 kilometre prologue laid out just outside Agadir, the on-form Spaniard **Tosha Schareina** posted the fastest time just 4/10ths of a second ahead of the American **Ricky Brabec** (Monster Energy Honda), with the Botswana Hero MotoSports rider **Ross Branch** third. The South African **Bradley Cox** (BAS World KTM Racing Team) was first Rally2 cross the line in 10th place. Quickest quad was the Lithuanian **Kancius** (AG Dakar School) with Senegalese Africa Rallye Team member **Cheikh Yves Jacquemain** first Rally3 Enduro Cup Afrika rider home (see Stat of the Day). Hoping to make a dream debut for Monster Energy Honda, the American **Skylar Howes** crashed in the prologue and was unable to finish. He will now return directly to the States for further examinations on his shoulder.

In the cars **Mattias Ekstrom** finished just ahead of his teammate **Stephane Peterhansel** with **Yazeed Al Rajhi** (Overdrive Racing) third. The current W2RC championship leader **Nasser Al Attiyah** (Toyota Gazoo Racing) finished way back in 38th place after apparently running into alternator problems. In the hotly disputed T3 category the Dakar's youngest ever winner **Eryk Goczal** was back in action, taking victory ahead of W2RC championship leader **Mitch Guthrie** (Red Bull Off Road Junior Team USA). His closest rival **Seth Quintero** was third. In T4 **Joao Ferreira** (South Racing Can-Am) won ahead of **Enrico Gaspari** (Xtreme Plus) second, with the American lady driver **Sara Price** (South Racing Can-Am) making an impressive rally raid debut to finish third. In the trucks **Martin Macik** (MM Technology) finished in front of championship rival **Janus van Kasteren** (Boss Machinery)

RADIO BIVOUC

It is not everyday that a major factory team turns up at the bivouac with a brand new bike. But that's exactly what Honda have done here in Agadir at the start of the 24th edition of the Rallye du Maroc. And what's got Radio Bivouac buzzing even more than usual is that there's been no accompanying official announcement, no press pack bulging with facts and figures to accompany the machine's appearance. Honda first made their rally raid comeback in 2012 with a modified enduro bike before bring out the full factory HRC CRF 450 Rally a year later. Although the bike didn't win straight out of the box, evolutions of that original machine went on the win the Dakar in the hands of **Ricky Brabec** in 2020 and **Kevin Benavides** in 2022. All that to say they already had a highly competitive bike and that logically its replacement will be even more so. We'll have a better idea at the end of this rally and some hard facts and figures at the official launch on 8 December. For now, with both Monster Energy Honda riders and management remaining tight lipped, all we can say is that like its predecessor, it's a thing of great beauty!

STAT OF THE DAY: 3

The 3 riders from the Africa Rallye Team's class of 2023 entered in the Rally3 Enduro Cup Afrika all finished in the prologue's Top 5! Among the 13 competitors in this category, reserved for lightly modified enduro bikes, **Cheikh Yves Jacquemain**, the Senegalese moto-x rider won ahead of Moroccan hard enduro fan **Souleymane Addahri** from Agadir. **Mamadou Bocoum**, the other Senegalese rider, finished fourth. Overall, the three ART members finished 32nd, 53rd and 69th. This year, the ART has these 3 riders in Rally3, two in Rally2 and a crew in the Open Maroc Telecom SSV category. The aim of this desert academy, supported by the Rallye du Maroc's principle partners, is to ensure that Africa, the home of rally-raid, also has its regional players on stage. In Rally3, they didn't need any rehearsal to play the leading roles today!

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W2RC

Championship leader **Nasser Al Attiyah**, 24th among the W2RC FIA entrants, will have some catching up to do in the 311 km special of stage 1. One of the drivers ahead of him will be his closest rival in the overall standings, **Yazeed Al Rajhi**, who finished third today. **Sébastien Loeb** (Bahrain Raid Xtreme), who needs to claw back 8 points from **Juan Cruz Yacopini** (Overdrive Racing) to snatch the third spot in the W2RC, was twelfth today and has a 29-second edge over the Argentinian. **Eryk Goczał** made a brilliant debut in T3, but the title fight between the Red Bull Off-Road Junior Team USA drivers grabbed all the attention. **Mitch Guthrie** gained 2 seconds on **Seth Quintero** (third) and 17 on **Austin Jones** (fifth). It was the perfect start in T4 for **João Ferreira**. The Portuguese went into the prologue with all guns blazing and ended up 1'22" clear of **Sebastián Guayasamín** (FN Speed). **Rebecca Busi** (FN Speed) came in third, ahead of **Shinsuke Umeda** (Xtreme Plus). The Japanese is five stages away from wrapping up the season having completed 100% of the rallies on the calendar. Meanwhile, the duel for the T5 title is on between **Martin Macík** (MM Technology) and **Janus van Kasteren** (Boss Machinery Team De Rooy). The Czech, 11 points adrift in the ranking, gained 47 seconds on the Dutchman today.

Ricky Brabec (Monster Energy Honda) took the RallyGP prologue, although **Ross Branch** (Hero MotoSports) came within 2 seconds of stealing the win from under his nose. The championship leader, **Luciano Benavides** (Husqvarna Factory Racing), finished sixth and conceded 14 seconds to his closest rival in the general standings, **Toby Price** (Red Bull KTM Factory Racing), third. The last man in contention for the title, **Adrien Van Beveren** (Monster Energy Honda), was eighth.

The BAS World KTM Racing riders, **Bradley Cox** and **Michael Docherty**, dominated the Rally2 prologue. **Romain Dumontier**, perched at the summit of the championship standings, also had a good day at the office after finishing fourth among the W2RC entrants and gaining 14 seconds on his rival for the title, **Paolo Lucci**. **Ardit Kurtaj** (Xraids Experience), the W2RC leader in Rally3, clocked the fifth-fastest time, ahead of his closest rival in the championship, **Massimo Camurri**, who finished eighth.

Laisvydas Kancius showed exactly why he tops the W2RC quad leaderboard with a victory by 10 seconds over **Manuel Andújar**. His closest pursuer in the race for the title, **Rodolfo Guilloli**, shipped 1'43".

Find out more: <https://www.worldrallyraidchampionship.com/en/>
Media content: <https://www.worldrallyraidchampionship.com/en/media-area>

ME AND THE RALLYE DU MAROC – Roland Bruckner, mechanic for Ross Branch at Hero MotoSports

My first Rallye du Maroc

It was in 2003 with **Cyril Despres** at KTM and he won the race. At the time I was just a replacement mechanic not his full time one. He wanted a home mechanic like the other riders, so for a while it wasn't clear what the future was but then we found a solution and I stayed with him until 2013. When you're a mechanic it is always nice to win and you share the victor with your rider. It's a great feeling and with Cyril there were a lot of victories...

Me and the 2023 Rallye du Maroc

Now I'm with **Ross Branch** at Hero MotoSports. I really like the team and working with Ross. What you see is what you get. You see him walking around the bivouac smiling and chatting with everyone and that's what he's like in 'private'. But he's a quick rider, so he's demanding and there's always the stress of doing everything right. I had it with Cyril and I still have it with Ross but that's the price you pay of working in a factory team.

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QUOTES

Tosha Schareina (Honda Team)

"Yes a perfect beginning for us. But of course it is so close. Now we're focused on tomorrow. I haven't decided yet what start position I will choose but here in the desert I think it is better to start behind."

Ricky Brabec (Monster Energy Honda)

"I think about 8 kilometres into the prologue I saw the photographers making signs to slow down and Skyler on the ground. So I cruised past for about 400 metres. Skyler gave me the thumbs up so I carried on. Second's not bad but I'm bummed that my team mate fell."

Nasser Al Attiyah (Toyota Gazoo Racing)

"We started and suddenly we had a small issue with the alternator and we lost around 1 minute but OK its only the prologue. Tomorrow will be fun because we start for the first time 37th or 38th and we have a big big push, maybe its good for road position."

Mattias Ekstrom (Team Audi Sport)

"We had a very good run up to the halfway point and then we started to get dust and then towards the end we had a lot of dust, so happy I'm to win the prologue."

THE PROGRAMME*

- > October 12: general briefing at 8pm at the Palais des Congrès Dunes d'Or
- > October 13: Prologue - Agadir (Liaison: 90 km / Special: 19 km / Total: 109 km) / Rallye du Maroc Festival free of charge in Agadir Place Al Amal
- > October 14: Stage 1 - Agadir-Zagora (Liaison: 397 km / Special Stage: 313 km / Total: 710 km)
- > October 15: Stage 2 - Zagora-Zagora (Liaison: 100 km / Special: 296 km / Total: 396 km)
- > October 16: Stage 3 - Zagora-Zagora (Liaison: 108 km / Special stage: 333 km / Total: 441 km)
- > October 17: Stage 4 - Zagora-Merzouga (Liaison: 78 km / Special stage: 343 km / Total: 421 km)
- > October 18: Stage 5 - Merzouga-Merzouga (Liaison: 3 km / Special stage: 152 km / Total: 155km)
- > 18 October evening: Rallye du Maroc and W2RC prize-giving ceremonies

*GMT +1

MEDIA CONTENT

Best of photos, press release, quotes :

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/pq54pxay99ryxommu72xm/h?rlkey=p0rf3udakq0ruf1wx3v4hcy7a&dl=0>

Vidéos news program :

<https://e.pcloud.link/publink/show?code=kZsPiWZB7Puf8mcanQan589FIVEQVH3NLsk>

Official website / Sitio oficial: [HERE](#).

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