**CRYPTIC THRILLS IN DAKAR CHRONO BIKE STAGE**

*Wild two-day stage drama shakes up the Dakar order*

Nobody really knew the exact state of affairs as Dakar 2024’s innovative Chronos bike stage came to a close and riders stopped at one of seven secret bivouacs along the route on Thursday evening. Honda rider Adrien van Beveren’s Honda was however quickest to the furthest of the camps, while second placed teammate Ricky Brabec took command of the overall lead from Botswana Hero rider Ross branch.

Honda men, Ricky Brabec, Adrien van Beveren and Pablo Quintanilla led a 1-2-3 early on, but there was drama for the men in red, when Skyler Howes’ machine broke and he was out early in the day. Then Quintanilla ran out of fuel and lost over an hour, leaving Brabec leading van Beveren, Toby Price’s KTM, Luciano Benavides on his Husqvarna, Daniel Sanders GasGas, and Jose Florimo’s Honda.

Botswana ace Ross Branch sat seventh on his Hero at the 245 km waypoint. South African lad Bradley Cox had run as high as the top six on his BAS KTM early on but he was 13th at that midpoint, with Husqvarna duo Charan Moore sat 32nd and Zimbabwean Ashton Thixton 42nd, and KTM men, no service rider Stuart Gregory 64th and Ronald Venter 103rd.

The surviving Hondas piled on the pressure as the most exhausting day in recent Dakar bike history progressed. Van Beveren went ahead of Brabec to lead the way from Price, Sanders, Luciano Benavides, Branch, and Kevin Benavides and Florimo’s Hondas as the bikers sped into the final hour before that 4 pm bell sounded.

Thirteen machines had passed Bivouac E by 4 pm, which meant that Adrien van Beveren technically led Brabec, Price, Sanders, Luciano, and Branch into the 513 km Bivouac F for the overnight stop. Running sixteenth and 26th, Cox and Moore camped at Bivouac E, Thixton in 43rd was in Bivouac D, Gregory stopped at Bivouac C and Ronald Venter at Bivouac D.

Overall results are of course provisional, but Brabec’s pace on the Chronos stage means that he has leapfrogged Branch to lead Dakar 2024 by 3 minutes and 44 seconds. Branch is second, a further minute and 50 clear of Florimo, with van Beveren 13 minutes off the lead and well clear of Price, Kevin, Sanders, and Luciano Benavides in 8th. Bradley Cox is 16th overall and fifth in Rally 2, Moore 24th, Thixton 32nd, Gregory 75th and Venter 97th.

The bikes and cars start Friday’s second part of Stage 6 together from each camp, with leading crews facing as little as 100 km to the finish of the demanding Chronos stage ahead of Saturday’s rest day. Your daily Dakar Daily Bike Report is powered by Tork Craft tools.