**BRABEC WINS DAKAR, BRANCH THE HERO, COX STARS**

*Brabec wins toughest Dakar, Branch second, Cox third in R3*

Ricky Brabec has won Dakar 2024 for Honda from Hero Rider Ross Branch and Honda Teammate Adrien van Beveren. Californian Brabec ended sixth on the final day to consolidate his 10-minute advantage over the Botswana rider Branch as KTM duo Kevin Benavides and Toby Price took the day from Luciano Benavides. South Africa’s Bradley Cox meanwhile ended third overall in the Rally 2 class.

Brabec, and more so Honda in truth fully deserved the win. The Japanese giant’s factory machines won 8 out of 12 stages, with every rider contributing to the cause. Nacho Cornejo won three stages, Adrien Van Beveren took two day wins, Ricky Brabec and Pablo Quintanilla one apiece and Tosha Schareina the Prologue. KTM man Kevin Benavides took three stages, but for many, Ross Branch and his Hero Moto were the heroes of Dakar 2024.

The Kalahari Ferrari, Branch was the only Hero Moto rider to last the distance and as such, man alone against the might of Honda. Leading for the first few days overall, he never slipped further back than second overall throughout the two weeks. It was also a huge coup for the tiny Indian motorcycle brand Hero Moto, for one of its machines to split the Hondas in second, and beat the might of KTM, Husqvarna, GasGas and the rest.

In the final outcome, Ricky Brabec’s Honda won the 2024 Dakar bike race after 5,000 km of racing and 8,000 km overall over two weeks, by 10 minutes 53 seconds from Ross Branch on his Hero. Frenchman Adrien van Beveren made it a Honda 1-3 less than two minutes further back, from KTM duo Kevin Benavides and Toby Price. Jose Cornejo Florimo was sixth for Honda from Luciano Benavides’ Husqvarna and Daniel Sanders’ GasGas.

Indian Harith Noah took the ‘amateur’ Rally 2 win from Frenchman Romain Dumontier on a Husqvarna and South African champion Bradley Cox on his BAS KTM. Austrian Tobias Ebster took no service Malle Moto honours on his KTM.

Of the other Southern Africans, Charan Moore was provisionally 37th on Friday to end up 21st overall, and ninth in Rally 2. Ash Thixton ended 30th on the day to clinch 32nd overall, and 19th in R2, both of them riding Husqvarnas. KTM man Ronald Venter was 61st on the day and 59th overall, and Malle Moto man Stuart Gregory 64th on Friday and 60th overall. They rode home 48th and 49th respectively in Rally 2.

One of the toughest Dakars on record, the 2024 race was great for Southern African riders, with South African Cross Country champions Ross Branch second overall and Bradley Cox third in Rally 2. It was even better for overall winners Ricky Brabec and Honda.

Brabec, Branch and van Beveren, as well as Dumontier, Cox and the rest of the Rally Raid riders will now continue their fight for the 2024 the World Championship in a series of races across the globe.