



## ROAD BOOK D5

# THE UPS AND DOWNS OF THE MERZOUGA DUNES

### Key points :

- In RallyGP, Luciano Benavides (Husqvarna Factory Racing) won his first stage of the race. Toby Price (Red Bull KTM Factory Racing), 3<sup>rd</sup> on the day, retains his overall lead. In Rally2, Michael Docherty (BAS World KTM Racing) took the win. His team-mate Bradley Cox, 2<sup>nd</sup> on the day, retained his overall lead. In Rally3, Richard Hodola won. Cheikh-Yves Jacquemain retains the overall lead. In the quad category, Manuel Andujar (Drag'on Rally) retired from the stage. Alexandre Giroud (Team Giroud) won the day. The Frenchman replaces the Argentinian in the overall standings.
- A day full of twists and turns in the cars! Guerlain Chicherit (Overdrive Racing), Sébastien Loeb (BRX), Nasser Al Attiyah (Toyota Gazoo Racing) and Carlos Sainz (Audi Sport) took it in turns to come to a halt for long periods. Stéphane Peterhansel (Audi Sport) won the day. Overall, Yazeed Al Rajhi (Overdrive Racing) took the lead ahead of "Peter". In T3, Austin Jones (Red Bull Can-Am Junior Team) was forced to retire from the stage. Michal Goczal (BBR) takes the win. In the overall classification, his brother Marek Goczal leads (BBR).

### ON TRACK

**Luciano Benavides**, who had been lying in wait just off the overall podium since the start of the race, made his move today, winning the 10<sup>th</sup> stage of his W2RC career. Starting from 4<sup>th</sup> position, the Argentinian beat '**Nacho**' **Cornejo** (Monster Energy Honda) by 1'18" and **Price** by 2'24" without benefiting from the slightest bonus, unlike his two challengers! It was a performance dictated by the Argentinian's need not to let the race leader slip away as he fights for the world championship title, that will be decided tomorrow. **Luciano** is 3<sup>rd</sup> overall this evening, 6'24" from first place and 28" from the second step of the podium currently occupied by **Ross Branch** (Hero MotoSports). In the overall standings, the four Honda riders still in the race are all ready to pounce. **Pablo Quintanilla** (Monster Energy Honda) is best placed, 4<sup>th</sup> at 8'00" from the leader. The Chilean is also just 1'36" behind **Benavides**, who will have to fend off a possible comeback from the HRC rider if he doesn't want **Price** to be crowned world champion tomorrow (see *W2RC*)! In Rally2, **Docherty** won his second stage ahead of **Cox** by just 3 seconds, who retains the overall lead he has held since the first stage. The South African has a 14'16" lead over **Romain Dumontier** (Dumontier Racing) and 17'04" over his compatriot. In Rally3, **Richard Hodola** put an end to the Africa Rallye Team's hegemony! He won the stage 33 seconds ahead of Moroccan **Souleymane Addahri** (ART) and his team-mate **Cheikh-Yves Jacquemain**. In the general standings, the Senegalese rider maintains his lead with a margin of more than three quarters of an hour over the Hungarian. In the quad category, defending champion **Andujar** suffered a mechanical problem which forced him to return directly to the bivouac. **Giroud** wins and takes the overall lead. The Frenchman has a lead of 8'55" over **Juraj Varga** (Varga Motorsport).

Stage 4 was announced as "the most difficult of the five" by **David Castera**. And the Rallye du Maroc organiser proved spot on with his analysis! **Chicherit** did a double somersault and landed on the roof of his new Hilux. **Loeb** hit a step on the climb at kilometre 231, terminally damaging his Hunter. Later on **Al Attiyah** came to a halt in the middle of Erg Chebbi with transmission problems, just 11km before the finish. As if magnetised by the phenomenon, **Sainz** stopped at exactly the same point, when his Audi started overheating. Out of all this chaos it was '**Mister Dakar**' who emerged as stage winner (see today's *Figures*) ahead of '**Orly**' **Terranova** (BRX). Overall, **Al Rajhi** takes first place, 3'49" ahead of the Frenchman (see *Declarations*) and 24'10" ahead of **Juan Cruz Yacopini** (Overdrive Racing). **Al Attiyah** is now 9<sup>th</sup>, more than an hour behind the leader. **Chicherit**, the title holder on the Rallye du Maroc is out after his chassis was found to be bent. In T3, it was **Austin Jones** who had a bad day. Third overall this morning, **AJ** was forced to retire from the stage. Today **Michal Goczal** wins ahead of **Mitch Guthrie** and **Seth Quintero** of the Red Bull Off-Road Jr Team USA by BFG. Overall, **Marek Goczal** leads **Seth Quintero** by 13'08". **Cristina Gutiérrez** (Red Bull Can-Am Factory) moves up to 3<sup>rd</sup> at over 20 minutes. In T4, the ping-pong match that began on stage 2 between **Sara Price** (see *Radio Bivouac*) and her South Racing Can-Am team-mate **Joao Ferreira** continued. After two wins in a row for the American, it's the Portuguese rider who is ahead of her today by 21 seconds! Overall, **Joao** leads **Sara** by 11'49". In the T5 category, **Janus van Kasteren** (Boss Machinery Team

#SOUTIENSINISTRESMAROC

MAIN PARTNERS



OFFICIAL SPONSOR



OFFICIAL SUPPLIER



INSTITUTIONAL PARTNER



SPORT INSTITUTIONS





De Rooy) won his 2<sup>nd</sup> stage ahead of **Martin Macik** (MM Technology), just as he did on stage 2. The Czech, who won the other two stages, retains the overall lead.

## RADIO BIVOUAC

**Sara Price** might be relatively unknown in the world of rally raid, the 24<sup>th</sup> Rallye du Maroc being her first FIA T4 entry, but over in the States she's a very big deal indeed. She started riding dirt bikes at the age of 8 and in 2010 became the first fully supported factory MX racer when she signed with Monster Energy Kawasaki. In addition she's a multi X Games medal winner and was the first woman to race in Stadium Super Trucks. In 2017 she finished second in the Best in the Desert Laughlin Desert Classic and in 2019 she finished second in International Baja 1000 Ironman class. More recently she's been racing in Extreme E series. You're getting the picture - she a tough competitor and something of a pioneer. Entered in the 2024 Dakar after winning the Road to Dakar category of the Sonora Rally she won her first ever special on stage 2 aboard her South Racing Can-Am and to prove it was no fluke backed that up with another stage win the very next day! Most definitely one to watch for the future.

## STAT OF THE DAY: 643

"It has been 643 days since **Stéphane Peterhansel** has won a rally-raid special. The last time was on stage 10 of the 2022 Dakar with the first version of the Audi RS-Q e-tron. If tomorrow '**Peter**' were to make up the 3'49" that separates him from the leader of the 24<sup>th</sup> edition of the Rallye du Maroc, he'd would win his first rally raid since the 2021 Dakar."

## W2RC

**Luciano Benavides** prevailed on the eve of the denouement. The championship leader moved up to third in the rally, behind second-placed **Ross Branch** and the front-runner, **Toby Price**, who is also his rival for the title. As it stands, their 9-point difference would melt to zero and the tie-breaking mechanism would kick in, crowning the rider with the best season results. In this scenario, they would have one victory apiece (**Benavides** in the DR40 and **Price** here), but the Argentinian would have two second places (ADDC and Sonora Rally) and **Price** just one (Dakar)... So **Benavides** would be the champion! All this would change if the Argentinian were to slip any further down the standings, which is a problem because the fourth-placed rider, **Pablo Quintanilla**, is just 1'36" behind him. Sparks will fly in Merzouga!

In Rally2, **Bradley Cox** seems to have the rally in the bag, while the championship is **Romain Dumontier**'s to lose. The Frenchman is 16'22" ahead of his closest pursuer, **Paolo Lucci** (BAS World KTM Racing). In Rally3, **Richárd Hodola** picked up his maiden win. **Cheikh-Yves Jacquemain** is firmly in control of the general standings and **Ardit Kurtaj** (Xraids Experience) is mathematically assured of the title. **Juraj Varga** was the man of the hour in the quad race and is in command of the standings, but **Laisvydas Kancius** (Story Racing), fourth overall, seems ideally placed to claim the title.

**Stéphane Peterhansel** finally opened his season account and moved within 3'49" of **Yazeed Al Rajhi**, the new leader of the race after **Nasser Al Attiyah** ran into mechanical trouble. **Juan Cruz Yacopini** (Overdrive Racing), third, continues to cement his third place in the championship, behind the Qatari and the Saudi. **Seth Quintero** is the virtual T3 championship leader and will now seek to wrap up the season in style with a victory in Morocco, where has to beat the leader **Marek Goczal**. **João Ferreira** won the T4 special and is just one stage away from his very first win in the W2RC. **Janus van Kasteren** won the T5 stage without making a dent in the overall lead of **Martin Macík**, but the Dutchman is on track to secure the title.

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

#SOUTIENSINISTRESMAROC

MAIN PARTNERS



OFFICIAL SPONSOR



OFFICIAL SUPPLIER



INSTITUTIONAL PARTNER



SPORT INSTITUTIONS





## ANALYSIS BY KEVIN BENAVIDES: THE EYE OF THE TIGER

On the sidelines with an injured wrist, the 2023 Dakar winner is closely following the race from the bivouac and gives us his daily analysis of the motorcycle race:

*"Today was a very important day. Luciano did an incredible job. He attacked all day and made up a lot of time. Now he's in a good position to fight for the title tomorrow. It's going to be complicated because he'll be opening, but on the other hand he'll have the most bonuses to fight for."*

## QUOTES

**Luciano Benavides (Husqvarna Factory Racing):** *"It was a crazy stage today. I rode flat out all day, from the start to the finish, but especially the last bit when we arrived in the Merzouga dunes. It is really tight in terms of points and time for the championship but I don't really want to think about that right now. Tomorrow I will just do my best, go all in and then, whether I'm first or second, the important thing is to know I've done my best."*

**Toby Price (Red Bull KTM Factory Racing):** *"Yeah a bit of a long day but it didn't go too badly. I made a few navigation mistakes but sorted them out pretty quickly. Its going to be a close fight (tomorrow) and last Dakar stage is coming back to haunt me a little bit. But it is what it is – we're doing our best here but it's going to be difficult. At the end of the day you want to be on the top step. No one remembers second."*

**Yazeed Al Rajhi (Overdrive Racing):** *"When we saw Loeb in the ditch we knew we were second and then at the end of the special we found out we were in the lead. Now we just have one day to go and hopefully at the end of it we will win this Rallye du Maroc. We just want to keep improving going into next season."*

**Stephane Peterhansel (Audi Sport):** *"03'49" behind the leader is too much. I think the win is out of our reach – especially as since the start of the race Yazeed has been very consistent, apart from today. So unless he makes a big mistake or a technical problem he should win, especially as we will be starting first. We haven't driven beyond our abilities and we'll try and keep the same pace and if we finish second we'll be happy, because at the beginning I felt I didn't have the necessary speed. Now we have a better set up and my race pace has returned but take back 4 minutes – forget it."*

## THE PROGRAMME\*

October 18:

- > Stage 5 - Merzouga-Merzouga (Liaison: 3 km / Special stage: 152 km / Total: 155 km)
- > 4pm: FIA W2RC Next Gen Tryouts
- > 7-8pm: Rallye du Maroc prize-giving ceremony
- > 9-10pm: W2RC prize-giving ceremony

\*GMT +1

Best of photos, press release, quotes:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/l7w2m9y0oyo45t2ghtgwz/h?rlkey=apuxu0vy4dwr0q24lpxb5kmdu&dl=0>

Videos news program:

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

Official website: [HERE](#).

## PRESS CONTACT

Matthieu Perez – [media@rallyedumaroc.com](mailto:media@rallyedumaroc.com)

# #SOUTIENSINISTRESMAROC

MAIN PARTNERS



OFFICIAL SPONSOR



OFFICIAL SUPPLIER



INSTITUTIONAL PARTNER



SPORT INSTITUTIONS

