

Liverpool (United Kingdom), 3 December 2023

## FIA-FIM WORLD RALLY-RAID CHAMPIONSHIPS

### 2023 FIM Awards

# The curtain falls on Benavides Bros. dream season

#### Key points:

- The world motorcycle racing elite descended on the Arena and Convention Centre Liverpool on 2 December 2023. The Fédération Internationale de Motocyclisme (FIM) honoured the winners of 58 FIM World Titles from its numerous categories at its prestigious award ceremony, held in the presence of FIM President Jorge Viegas.
- Consisting of five rounds —up from four in 2022—, the second season of the W2RC kept fans on the edge of their seats until the last minute and cemented the role of the World Rally-Raid Championship in the FIM universe.
- The Benavides Bros. were the movers and shakers of the season, with the elder brother, Kevin (Red Bull KTM Factory Racing), taking the opener and the younger one, Luciano (Husqvarna Factory Racing), bringing the family endeavour to a glorious conclusion. In both cases, it was Toby Price (Red Bull KTM Factory Racing) who saw victory slip through his fingers at the eleventh hour.

Chapter 2 of the W2RC followed up the success of the inaugural edition of this new paradigm, rolled out in 2022, with a new hit performance. Two new races were added to the calendar. The competition made its first foray into Mexico with the Sonora Rally. After that, the caravan headed to Argentina for the revival of the Desafío Ruta 40, last held in 2018. Boasting a total of five rounds and a cosmopolitan field of 62 competitors from 26 different countries, the championship doubled down on its foundational vision.

#### Two Benavides for the Price of one

The Dakar set the competition in motion in Saudi Arabia, where **Kevin Benavides** emerged victorious for the second time in his career, following his 2021 triumph. A mere 43 seconds separated the Argentinian from his teammate **Toby Price** at the finish. His brother, **Luciano Benavides**, finished sixth overall but was the most prolific stage winner, with three specials to his name. It set the tone for a season in which the two Argentinians would feature left, right and centre. **Luciano** came up one position short of victory in the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge, which went to **Adrien Van Beveren** (Monster Energy Honda), and in the Sonora Rally, where **Daniel Sanders** (Red Bull GasGas Factory Racing) took the spoils. A broken femur in February and an injured wrist in August prevented **Kevin** from challenging for the win. Instead, he embraced the role of senior advisor to his younger brother, assisting him and giving him tips in the two remaining rounds. This approach paid dividends straight away as the Husqvarna rider seized the championship lead with a triumph in the Desafío Ruta 40. The fact that the rally finished in the **Benavides** home city of Salta only added to the exuberance of the celebrations.

However, the title was still up in the air going into the Rallye du Maroc, the last race of the season, with **Toby Price** and **Adrien Van Beveren** still in contention for the championship. The high-octane drama went down to the wire as the Australian turned on the gas to claim the win in Merzouga. However, the outcome of the general standings echoed the result of the Dakar, this time with a different **Benavides** beating him to the line. **Luciano** held up well under the pressure to finish second in Morocco. At the finish, **Kevin** was as ecstatic as if he had won the title himself. It was good enough for **Luciano** to put on the world crown for the first time, a mere 4 points ahead of **Price**, with **Adrien Van Beveren** rounding out the podium at 24 points. The consistency of the Argentinian, who finished on the podium of every race bar one, also set a new W2RC record of 100 points in a season.

Monster Energy Honda also posted a record-breaking performance in the manufacturers' ranking to take their second title in a row, this time with a tally of 155 points.

More than 700 guests were present at the Arena and Convention Center Liverpool to honor the winners of the 58 FIM world titles awarded this season. The traditional gala was organized for the very first time in Great Britain. **Luciano Benavides** walked the red carpet alongside dozens of other champions present for the celebrations. He was one of the big stars of the event, since he was classified in the "Ultimate Champions" category with Toni Bou (TrialGP), Steve Holcombe (EnduroGP), Bartosz Zmarzlik (Speedway), Jorge Prado (MXGP), Alvaro Bautista (Superbike) and Francesco Bagnaia (MotoGP™). The Argentinian received his medal from the FIM President, Jorge Viegas.

## Europe returns in 2024

**Luciano Benavides** will start his title defence in the Dakar in January 2024, where his Husqvarna will sport race number 1, marking him as the world champion. The new edition of the race in Saudi Arabia, starting with a prologue in AlUla on 5 January and ending in Yanbu on 19 January, will get the ball rolling on the third season of the W2RC. A month later, the caravan will set course for the Emirates and the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge, scheduled from 25 February to 2 March. It will then tackle the inaugural BP Ultimate Rally-Raid, held in Portugal from 2 to 7 April. This visit to the Iberian Peninsula will mark the return of the W2RC to Europe. The fourth round, the Desafío Ruta 40, will explore the landscapes of Argentina from 2 to 8 June. Finally, the Rallye du Maroc will again wrap up the season from 5 to 11 October.

## Quotes:

**Luciano Benavides, 2023 FIM W2RC world champion:** *"It's a dream to be here. It has been a great season. I've been getting stronger and stronger in every race, getting a podium in every round except the Dakar. I'm very happy to receive this award, it's something very special because I'm the only Argentinian this year, and the first one to be here for rally-raid, so it's really nice. It's an honour and I must say thanks to A.S.O., the FIM and everyone involved in the championship. I'm now looking forward to 2024, my motivation is super high because I want to carry this moment to the Dakar and try to get that podium. That would be my second dream!"*

**Jorge Viegas, FIM President:** *"The FIM Awards are always a very special occasion, and tonight Liverpool has joined the great editions of this event with the support of the ACU. Again, it is so unique to have so many of our FIM Champions together in one place and at one time, and it is something that has been warmly appreciated by all those who have been present. I would like to thank every single person who has contributed in any way to making the 2023 season such a huge success, tonight it has been the perfect way to celebrate it and bring it to a close. Already we are planning and preparing to make 2024 even better."*

**David Castera, ASO / Promoter:** *"Luciano Benavides is a great winner. He has been there during all the events, always in a good position, he knew how to stay calm and push when necessary. I think he won the 2023 championship thanks to his 'quiet strength'. This second W2RC season is a success. Riders and teams are very involved, we are happy with our results and will continue to build for the future. A great program awaits us in 2024, with very different events which all have their own specificities. It's a nice calendar."*

## Did you know?

The five rounds that made up the 2023 W2RC season went to five different riders and four different constructors (see above). This goes to show just how open the competition was, how evenly matched the top manufacturers were and how narrow the differences were among the entrants. In fact, as many as ten riders picked up at least one stage win in the course of the season!

## 2023 FIM W2RC champions:

- World RallyGP Championship: Luciano Benavides (ARG — Husqvarna Factory Racing)
- Manufacturers' World Championship: Monster Energy Honda
- Rally2 World Cup: Romain Dumontier (FRA — HT Rally Raid Husqvarna Racing)
- Rally3 World Cup: Ardit Kurtaj (AUT — Xraids Experience)

- Quad World Cup: Laisvydas Kancius (LTU — Story Racing)
- Women's Trophy: Mirjam Pol (NED — HT Rally Raid Husqvarna Racing)
- Junior's Trophy: Jean-Loup Lapan (FRA — Duust Diverse Racing Team)
- Veteran's Trophy: Dominique Cizeau Girault (ESP — Xraids Experience)

More informations [HERE](#)

### **PRESS CONTACTS**

#### **FIM**

Isabelle Larivière  
[isabelle.lariviere@fim.ch](mailto:isabelle.lariviere@fim.ch)

#### **W2RC**

[w2rc@aso.fr](mailto:w2rc@aso.fr)