

Abu Dhabi, 2 March 2024

2024 Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge

FIA-FIM WORLD RALLY-RAID CHAMPIONSHIP

AL ATTIYAH GOES BACK TO HIS WINNING WAYS AS BRANCH SEIZES THE LEAD

Key points:

- The Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge, the traditional second round of the season, delivered its verdict today by elevating new leaders in three categories and shaking up the fight for the car and motorbike titles.
- Ross Branch (Hero MotoSports) finished just outside the podium motorbike race and second among the RallyGP entrants, behind his teammate rider Aaron Mare. The Botswanan, second in the Dakar, snatched the championship lead from Ricky Brabec (Monster Energy Honda). The surprise winner of the ADDC jumped straight into third place in the championship standings. Thanks to its one-two finish in the Rally GP competition, the Indian maker leapfrogged Honda to take the lead in the manufacturers' ranking.
- Konrad Dąbrowski (Duust Rally) claimed second place overall among the Rally 2 motorbikes in the ADDC, beating his stablemate Jean-Loup Lèpan. The Pole climbed to third in the championship and the Frenchman toppled Romain Dumontier (Dumontier Racing) from the top spot.
- Abdulaziz Ahli scored his fourth straight win at the ADDC in the quad competition. The Emirati shot up to fourth place in the championship. Hani Alnoumesi, who finished behind him, moved up to second place overall.
- Nasser Al Attiyah (Nasser Racing by Prodrive) and Yazeed Al Rajhi (Overdrive Racing) grabbed the first two places in the car race. Seth Quintero (Toyota Gazoo Racing) rounded out the podium. The Qatari recovered to second in the championship and made up for his subdued performance in the Dakar. The Saudi scaled up to fifth place.
- Austin Jones and Rokas Baciūška (Can-Am Factory) were in a league of their own in the ADDC Challenger class. The Lithuanian now tops the championship ahead of the American. Yasir Seidan (MMP) padded his lead in the SSV class.
- The third round of the championship will take place on a second continent in exactly a month. The BP Ultimate Rally Raid will be held in Portugal from 2 to 7 April.

FIM: MARE AND BRANCH PUT THE "SUPER" IN SUPER-HERO

Wolfgang Fischer, who has been managing Hero MotoSports since they entered the discipline in 2016, must be glad that he gave **Aaron Mare** a shot to fill in for **Sebastian Bühler**, who is still recovering from his crash in the Dakar. The South African became the fifteenth rider to enter the hall of fame of the ADDC and landed the maker its first W2RC win. The super-sub made his debut in the championship standings in third place. **Ross Branch**, who shone in the Dakar and came second at the end in Yanbu, suffered a mechanical in the first stage that stopped him from challenging for the win, but the airline pilot who moonlights as a rally-raid competitor handled the turbulence and finished the race in fourth place. Second in the Rally GP motorbike ranking, behind his teammate, he scored 20 points and took over the championship lead. The **Kalahari Ferrari** brought his tally to 50 points and is now ahead of **Ricky Brabec** with 38 and **Aaron Mare** with 25.

The Hero riders pulled off a double whammy in Rally GP and helped their squad to overtake Honda. Hero MotoSports is heading out of the second round of the championship at the top of the manufacturers' standings, with 75 points to the reds' 62.

Duust Rally's two Rally 2 riders shone like gold dust in the spotlight this week! **Konrad Dąbrowski** and **Jean-Loup Lèpan** took the fight to the Hero factory riders and ended up in that same order behind the winner on the ADDC podium. First in the Rally 2 category, the Pole opened his W2RC account and moved up to third in

the championship. The Frenchman, second last year behind **Tobias Ebster**, who withdrew due to injury this week, as did **Michael Docherty**, ousted his compatriot **Romain Dumontier** (Dumontier Racing) from the lead of the standings, which **Dumontier** held after the Dakar. **Lepan** is the new Rally 2 front-runner (44 points), ahead of **Dumontier** with 38 and **Dąbrowski** with 36.

The withdrawal of the returning **Kamil Wiśniewski** (Orlen) due to a crash in stage 3 left the door open for **Abdulaziz Ahli** in the quad race. The Emirati trounced the competition again. He won all five stages and took his fourth home win in a row, jumping straight to fourth place overall with 25 points. **Hani Alnoumesi**, seventh in the Dakar and second in the ADDC, rose to second place with 34 points.

FIA: AL ATTIYAH AND AL RAJHI STRIKE BACK

The 2023 world champion and his runner-up had a dreadful start to the third season of the W2RC by failing to finish the Dakar. **Nasser Al Attiyah** and **Yazeed Al Rajhi** (Overdrive Racing) landed in Abu Dhabi in eighth and twelfth place in the championship, respectively. To get back in the game, the Qatari three-time winner of the ADDC and the Saudi reigning champion had no choice but to repeat their usual feats that saw them win all five rounds on the 2023 calendar between the two. **Nasser Al Attiyah**, by winning the ADDC for the fourth time in his career after his victories in 2008, 2016 and 2021, and **Yazeed Al Rajhi**, by taking second place, fully lived up to their status as the reigning number 1 and 2

Neither of them could have imagined that their rivals, who had been so strong in the Dakar, would flop big time in round 2, starting with **Guillaume de Mévius** and **Guerlain Chicherit**. The Overdrive Racing teammates, second and third respectively in the championship after the Dakar, were near the front before the former suffered a vertebral compression fracture in stage 2 and the latter had his co-driver airlifted for the exact same reason in stage 4. **Lucas Moraes** saw his Hilux go up in smoke at the end of stage 3. **Seth Quintero** (Toyota Gazoo Racing) dodged the bullet and was the only one to take on **Nasser Al Attiyah** for the win. Enscorced in the overall lead at the end of the infamous stage 3, the American finished on the podium of the race, as he had done last year behind the wheel of his lightweight prototype. **Al Attiyah** (67 points) rose to second place in the championship, behind the winner of the Dakar, **Carlos Sainz** (76 points). **Guerlain Chicherit** (64 points) and **Guillaume de Mévius** (62 points) slid down to third and fourth place, respectively, while **Yazeed Al Rajhi** (50 points) moved up to fifth. The new Toyota Gazoo Racing drivers, **Lucas Moraes** and **Seth Quintero**, are now in sixth and eighth place, respectively.

Nasser Al Attiyah and his new co-driver, **Édouard Boulanger**, hit the ground running in their first race together. It is the Frenchman's second triumph in the race, following his success with **Peterhansel** in 2022. Prodrive got its third W2RC victory, following **Sébastien Loeb**'s win in the 2022 Andalucía Rally and **Guerlain Chicherit**'s top spot in the Rallye du Maroc the same year. **Marcos Baumgart** (X Rally Team Motorsports), in the other Prodrive Hunter, bagged sixth place in the ADDC. In the world constructors' championship, these two performances helped Prodrive to grab second place, with 78 points to Toyota's 108.

In this second round, it was also worth noting the solid final positions of the young **Pau Navarro** in a Mini JCW T1+ from X-Raid, ninth ahead of **Saood Variawa** who, at the tender age of 18, made his W2RC debut this season with Toyota Gazoo Racing South Africa. **Aliyyah Koloc** (Buggyra ZM Racing) and her Red-Lined came in thirteenth. Talk about whiz kids!

The old-timers **Denis Krotov** (Overdrive Racing) and **Martin Prokop** (Orlen Jipocar) got bogged down together in stage 3 before **Juan Cruz Yacopini** rear-ended the Czech. Out of the game, the driver of "Shrek" was unable to repeat his podiums from the last two years, despite some flashes of brilliance that proved that he remains an ADDC expert.

Austin Jones and **Rokas Baciūška** nailed a Can-Am Factory double in the Challenger class as well as fourth and fifth places overall. **Dania Akeel** (Taurus Factory Wevers) rounded out the podium among the championship entrants. In the W2RC standings, the Lithuanian (114 points), a two-time SSV world champion, and the American (100 points) headed out of Abu Dhabi by toppling **Mitch Guthrie** (85 points).

Yasir Seaidan (MMP) beat **Sebastián Guayasamín** (FN Speed) and **Rebecca Busi** (OnlyFans Racing) in the SSV race. The Saudi has put in a virtuoso performance since the start of the season and now leads the championship with 146 points to the Ecuadorian's 87. The Italian climbed up to sixth with 45 points.

2024 W2RC podiums after the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge (2/5):

FIM

FIM World Rally-Raid Championship:

1. Ross Branch (Hero MotoSports): 50 pts
2. Ricky Brabec (Monster Energy Honda): 38 pts
3. Aaron Mare (Hero MotoSports): 25 pts

FIM Rally-Raid World Cup for Rally2 riders:

1. Jean-Loup Lèpan (Duust Rally): 44 pts
2. Romain Dumontier (Team Dumontier Racing): 38 pts
3. Konrad Dabrowski (Duust Rally): 36 pts

FIM Rally-Raid World Cup for Quad riders:

1. Manuel Andújar (7240 Team / Dragon Rally Service): 38 pts
2. Hani Alnoumesi: 34 pts
3. Alexandre Giroud (Yamaha Racing - SMX - Drag'on): 30 pts

FIM World Rally-Raid Championship for Manufacturers:

1. Hero MotoSports Team Rally: 75 pts
2. Monster Energy Honda Team: 62 pts

FIA

FIA World Rally-Raid Championship for drivers:

1. Carlos Sainz (Team Audi Sport): 76 pts
2. Nasser Al Attiyah (Nasser Racing by Prodrive): 67 pts
3. Guerlain Chicherit (Overdrive Racing): 64 pts

FIA World Rally-Raid Championship for co-drivers:

1. Lucas Cruz (Team Audi Sport): 76 pts
2. Alexandre Winocq (Overdrive Racing): 64 pts
3. Édouard Boulanger (Nasser Racing by Prodrive): 62 pts

FIA Rally-Raid Championship for Challenger drivers:

1. Rokas Baciуска (Can-Am Factory Team): 114 pts
2. Austin Jones (Can-Am Factory Team): 100 pts
3. Mitch Guthrie (Red Bull Off-Road JR Team USA by BFG): 85 pts

FIA Rally-Raid Championship for Challenger co-drivers:

1. Oriol Vidal Montijano (Can-Am Factory Team): 114 pts
2. Kellon Walch (Red Bull Off-Road JR Team USA by BFG): 85 pts
3. Valentin Pertegarini (Taurus Factory Wevers): 80 pts

FIA Rally-Raid Championship for SSV drivers:

1. Yasir Seaidan (MMP): 146 pts
2. Sebastian Guayasamin (FN Speed Team): 87 pts
3. Sara Price (South Racing Can-Am): 74 pts

FIA Rally-Raid Championship for SSV co-drivers:

1. Adrien Metge (MMP): 91 pts
2. Fernando Acosta (FN Speed Team): 87 pts
3. Jeremy Gray (South Racing Can-Am): 74 pts

FIA World Rally-Raid Championship for Manufacturers:

1. Toyota Gazoo Racing: 108 pts
2. Nasser Racing by Prodrive: 77 pts
3. Team Audi Sport: 76 pts

More results of the championship [here](#)

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