

San Juan, 5 June 2024

2024 DESAFÍO RUTA 40 YPF INFINIA
FIA-FIM WORLD RALLY-RAID CHAMPIONSHIPS
BRABEC AND QUINTERO REACH FOR THE STARS

Key points:

- Stage 3 of the 12th edition of the Desafío Ruta 40 YPF INFINIA unfolded in a pure cross-country blaster around San Juan, a change of scenery following two rally-style stages.
- Ricky Brabec (Monster Energy Honda) took his second win of the week in Rally GP and vaulted into the overall lead. Tosha Schareina is still second. The overnight leader, Adrien Van Beveren, slipped to the bottom step of an all-Honda podium. The world championship leader, Ross Branch (Hero MotoSports), is fifth.
- In Rally 2, Romain Dumontier (Team Honda) triumphed over Bradley Cox (BAS World KTM Racing) again and retained the pole position. Fernando Hernández (MED Racing) also claimed a second consecutive win in Rally 3 and padded his lead. Manuel Andújar (7240 Team) struck again in the quad race and expanded his advantage to over an hour.
- In the car competition, Seth Quintero outgunned Nasser Al Attiyah (Nasser Racing by Prodrive) and Yazeed Al Rajhi (Overdrive Racing) to pick up his first win of the week. The Saudi remains in command of the overall, leading the Qatari and Lucas Moraes (Toyota Gazoo Racing).
- Rokas Baciūška (Can-Am Factory) missed out on the Challenger stage win for the first time this week, but he defended his lead over Nicolás Cavigliasso (Taurus Factory by Wevers). In SSV, Ricardo Ramilo (Ramilo Scuderia) claimed victory to regain the lead he lost yesterday.
- Tomorrow, the rally will head to La Rioja on a 676 km course, including 412 km against the clock.

FIM: BRABEC CALLS THE SHOTS

Pablo Eli, the mastermind behind the route of the rally, had warned that stage 3 would be an absolute nightmare for navigation. **Adrien Van Beveren**, who started first after his win yesterday, paid the price, as did the Hero riders **Ross Branch** and **Sebastian Bühler**, who lost precious minutes searching for their bearings. The sixth man on the road, **Ricky Brabec**, avoided any errors. A true nail-biter at the halfway point, with three riders in a dead heat (!) at km 174, the special ultimately swung in the American's favour. He added a second success to his triumph in stage 1, while Honda swept the podium (see "FIM stat") with the biggest gaps seen all week: 3'27" ahead of **Skyler Howes** and 3'38" clear of **Tosha Schareina**. **Van Beveren** dropped 5'52" and surrendered the overall lead to the stage winner. **Brabec** now leads **Schareina** by 1'34", **VBA** by 3'38" and **Howes** by 5'28". **Branch** is fifth at 9'28", but the Botswanan has leapfrogged his teammate **Bühler** and is poised to gain an extra point in the fight for the championship, which he currently leads. It could be a crucial point in the scrap for the riders' and manufacturers' titles, which increasingly seem destined to go down to the wire in Morocco...

The big kahunas of the Rally 2 class, **Romain Dumontier** and **Bradley Cox**, stayed glued together until the Frenchman made his move in the mad dash to the line. "**Dudu**" prevailed by 1'47" and now leads his rival by 3'12" in the overall.

In Rally 3, the seasoned **Fernando Hernández** (MED Racing) is slowly but steadily powering away from **John Medina** (Xraids Experience). Victorious today by 6'28", the Argentinian now commands a 14'30" lead over the Chilean, with **Eduardo Alan** still third.

The solid leader of the quad race, **Manuel Andújar**, extended his unbeaten streak in W2RC and is now over an hour clear of **Kamil Wiśniewski** (Orlen Team). The duel for bronze rages on between **Suany Martinez** and her father **Leonardo**, with the woman from Bolivia 8'18" ahead.

FIA: QUINTERO GOES FOR GLORY

Seth Quintero claimed his second career win in the Ultimate class. The Toyota Gazoo Racing factory driver prevailed with a gap of 1'09" over **Nasser Al Attiyah** and 2'07" over **Yazeed Al Rajhi**, who fought hard before fading a bit towards the end. **Lucas Moraes**, the second Toyota factory driver and winner of yesterday's stage, finished 6'16" back after opening the road. This second consecutive stage win for TGR (see "FIA stat") brings their season tally to five. **Al Rajhi** remains ensconced in the overall lead with 2'21" in hand over **Al Attiyah**. The two-time world champion and Ruta 40 title holder clawed back 58 seconds from the Saudi. The clash of titans continues. Moraes is still running third, but now 9'03" back. **Quintero** is over half an hour off the pace, courtesy of an excursion while attempting to overtake another competitor in stage 1. He did close to within 5 minutes of **Sebastián Halpern** (X-raid Mini JCW Team) in fourth place, the top-ranked representative of the host nation. High-octane drama on every level, both for the podium places and for positions further down.

Rokas Baciūška missed out on the Challenger stage win for the first time this week. **Nicolás Cavigliasso** (Taurus Factory by Wevers) snatched his first win among the W2RC entrants, beating **Marcelo Gastaldi** (TH-Trucks) and **Dania Akeel** (BBR). The Lithuanian retained the overall lead by a reduced margin of 5'55" to **Cavigliasso**, 9'25" to the Brazilian and 17'31" to the Saudi.

Ricardo Ramilo (Ramilo Scuderia) emerged victorious from a day of pandemonium in the SSV class. The Spaniard traded blows second by second with **Enrico Gastaldi** (TH-Trucks), yesterday's winner, before the Italian crashed out late on —also clearing the way for **Sebastián Guayasamín** (BE Racing) to sneak through. **Ramilo** romped home with over 7 minutes to spare, overturning his deficit to go from fourth to first overall. He now has 2'58" in hand over **Gastaldi** and 4'16" over **Guayasamín**, who dropped one place in the standings and conceded over 3 minutes. **Rebecca Busi** is fourth at 10'34".

FIM STAT: THE RULE OF THREE

Stage 3 yielded the third different leader in Rally GP. After **Tosha Schareina** and **Adrien Van Beveren**, it is now **Ricky Brabec** who tops the leader board. These 3 riders, who also happen to be the 3 stage winners so far, hog the top 3 at the Ruta 40. Today's podium was, fittingly, a Honda 1-2-3, with **Brabec** ahead of his teammates **Skyler Howes** and **Schareina** by... you guessed it, 3 minutes. No shock either that, in the other motorbike classes, it marked a third stage win apiece for **Romain Dumontier** (Rally 2) and **Fernando Hernández** (Rally 3).

FIA STAT: DOUBLE DELIGHT FOR QUINTERO... AND TGR

Seth Quintero, an Ultimate rookie, landed his second career win in the class. His maiden victory came in stage 3 of the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge back in February. This stellar performance also catapulted the American from seventh to fifth overall. It was also a second consecutive triumph for Toyota Gazoo Racing, after **Lucas Moraes** won yesterday.

DID YOU KNOW? The Star-Spangled Banner

It is rare to see two riders from the same nation claim FIM and FIA wins on the same day. In fact, it is a first for the United States, courtesy of the Californians **Ricky Brabec** and **Seth Quintero**. Four such doubles had previously occurred in W2RC history. The first time was stage 11 of the 2022 Dakar, with victories for the Argentinians **Kevin Benavides** (FIM) and **Lucio Álvarez** (FIA). Then came two doubles for the French duo **Adrien Van Beveren** (FIM) and **Sébastien Loeb** (FIA) in stages 2 and 5 of the Rallye du Maroc. The fourth and most recent was... Wait for it... Last year's Desafío Ruta 40! The local heroes **Luciano Benavides** (FIM) and **Juan Cruz Yacopini** (FIA) won stage 2 as local fans roared with delight. It is no coincidence that these three countries —France, the United States and Argentina— have accrued the most W2RC victories.

THE LOWDOWN ON TOMORROW'S STAGE from the race director, Pablo Eli:

"The special will head straight into the only dune section in this edition. It'll follow a track in the middle of the dunes, not off-piste, but with changing terrain. There'll be chotts, uphill and downhill dunes, rocks, a lovely sandy *río* crossing and another serving of dunes. The exit comes via a huge chott, with fiendish navigation because there are lots of tracks to follow on the CAP. A 110 km road section on tarmac punctuates the timed part, which resumes on a very technical WRC-style track. It's a varied stage but, unlike yesterday, the changes come in distinct blocks."

Programme:

- 6 June — stage 4: San Juan–La Rioja (road section: 264 km / special: 412 km / total: 676 km)
- 7 June — stage 5: La Rioja–Córdoba (road section: 301 km / special: 218 km / total: 519 km)

Local time: GMT-3

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