

Córdoba, 2 June 2024

2024 DESAFÍO RUTA 40 YPF INFINIA  
FIA-FIM WORLD RALLY-RAID CHAMPIONSHIPS  
**NO TIME TO WASTE FOR THE LEADERS**

Key points:

- *The scrutineering for the 12<sup>th</sup> edition of the Desafío Ruta 40 YPF INFINIA wrapped up this morning at the Complejo Ferial de Córdoba. 44 vehicles in the W2RC field (out of 79 vehicles in the race, with 51 FIM and 28 FIA) were cleared to start the prologue this afternoon.*
- *Among the 24 motorbikes and quads on the FIM start list, the leader of the Rally GP competition, Ross Branch (Hero MotoSports), will feel the heat from his closest pursuer, Adrien Van Beveren (Monster Energy Honda). The Botswanan can count on a new teammate, "Nacho" Cornejo, on the Chilean's first outing with Hero.*
- *Among the 20 FIA crews in the W2RC, Nasser Al Attiyah (Nasser Racing by Prodrive) is starting a championship round perched at the top of the ranking for the first time this season. The Qatari, who will be competing in his last race with Prodrive, hopes to take his third world championship title in a row in Argentina before heading to the Rallye du Maroc for his debut with Dacia. It would be a first for the Prodrive works team.*
- *The afternoon prologue in Córdoba is set to unfold on the course of a historic WRC special. A crowd of die-hard fans awaits the rally raid convoy along the El Cóndor-Copina stretch. The ten fastest riders in the FIM Rally GP class and their counterparts in the FIA Ultimate class will get to pick their starting order for tomorrow's stage 1.*

## HERO COVER THEIR BACKS

Second in the Dakar and the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge in Rally GP and fifth in the BP Ultimate Rally-Raid Portugal, **Ross Branch** still tops the world championship despite the Honda riders organising a counterstrike in the previous round. **Adrien Van Beveren**, third in the Dakar and in Portugal, has slashed his deficit to the leader to a mere 21 points. **Ricky Brabec** (Monster Energy Honda), sitting third in the standings with 38 points, is back in the championship after his Dakar victory. **Pablo Quintanilla** (27 points) and **Tosha Schareina** (25 points), the reigning champion in Argentina and victor of the third round, are in fourth and fifth place, respectively. Red alert for **Branch**, whose team has shored up its defences since the battle of Portugal. "Nacho" Cornejo, who jumped ship from Honda, is set to make his debut in Hero colours. Commanded by **Wolfgang Fisher** and tactically guided by the team's former ace **Joaquim Rodrigues**, the mantra is crystal clear: One for all and all for Branch... and a manufacturers' title up for grabs (see the quote from **J-Rod**). 8 Rally GP championship entrants are revving up for the race.

In Rally 2, among the 6 W2RC pilots cleared to start, **Romain Dumontier** (Honda Team) is currently basking in an idyllic prep week with the Honda factory squad (see his quote). The 2023 World Cup winner and leader of the class has been entrusted with a previous-generation HRC mount for the race, a first in his career. It is every privateer's dream come true. The Frenchman will need to get his feet back on the ground on the track. Finishing second in Portugal, behind **Bradley Cox** (BAS World KTM Racing), catapulted him back to the championship lead with 58 points after his Dakar win, but the South African is hot on his case. **Cox**, the DR40 reigning champion, is just 3 points behind the leader with a total of 55.

In Rally 3, there is a single rider with the championship chops and three Dakar rallies under his belt in Rally 2. **John Medina** (Xraids Experience), fourth in Portugal, is set to meet three new Argentinian rivals. The 14 points he pocketed last month ought to keep him in the lead if he can steer clear of trouble in his debut in this race.

In the quad competition, the man at the top of the leader board and DR40 reigning champion is none other than the local legend and two-time Dakar winner (2021 and 2024) **Manuel Andújar** (Team 7240). The *Albiceleste* has brought his entire team to celebrate his last world championship round on a quad and aims to bow out in style by winning the race and clinching the World Cup ahead of schedule (see his quote). Sitting on 51 points, Andújar could seal the deal on 7 June, for example if he takes the win and **Hani Alnoumesi**

(34 points) finishes third or lower. 4 W2RC riders are revving up to potentially wedge themselves between the two, including **Kamil Wiśniewski** (Orlen), fresh off his victory in Portugal.

## ONE LAST DANCE FOR PRODRIVE

In just three races, **Nasser Al Attiyah** has revved into the record books as the most successful driver in the fledgling history of the Prodrive rally raid team, now in its third consecutive W2RC season (see FIA stats). The Desafío Ruta 40 YPF INFINIA will be the last dance for the Hunter factory driver, as **Al Attiyah** will swap his Prodrive car for a brand-new Dacia at the Rallye du Maroc. Looking to close the Prodrive chapter with flair, the back-to-back reigning world champion is dreaming big: clinching the race and his third consecutive title in Córdoba next week. It would be Prodrive's first rally raid title and a three-peat for the Qatari, who commands a 33-point margin over **Yazeed Al Rajhi** (Overdrive Racing). To make history, the lead over his W2RC arch-rival needs to hit 55. It is a daunting challenge for the front-runner among the 9 Ultimate cars cleared to start.

In the Challenger class, 5 lightweight prototypes are lined up for the W2RC start, with **Rokas Baciūška** also eyeing a three-peat. The Lithuanian, the back-to-back SSV reigning champion, has shifted gears to Challenger this season and is targeting the crown in his first season in this new arena. The Can-Am Factory driver, who has 160 points to his name, needs to keep tabs on his closest rival, **Nicolás Cavigliasso** (Taurus Factory by Wevers), 39 points behind, marking the widest gap in the FIA classes. This will be the first time that the championship leader enters the DR40. Combined with the fact that he never got to race in the editions of the Dakar held in Argentina, it means he will have to proceed with caution (see his quote). He is also teaming up with a new co-driver, **Sébastien Delaunay**, stepping in for **Oriol Mena** at short notice. The Spaniard is sitting this one out after he was diagnosed with two herniated discs in the run-up to the rally. The Frenchman brings to the table three Ruta 40 starts and two Dakar rallies in the region. **Cavigliasso** has an edge too, having entered his national quad race three times, with a win in 2018 to his name. Last year, he got acquainted with the Taurus in the race and is keen to keep his title hopes alive for Morocco.

Among the 6 SSV W2RC entrants gearing up for the prologue, **Yasir Seidan** (MMP) may be ruing the turbo breakdown that knocked him out of the Portuguese round. Even so, with 155 points, the Saudi holds a 37-point lead over **Sebastián Guayasamín** (BE Racing). **Seidan**, much like **Baciūška**, is about to embark on his first DR40, but with the experience of two Dakar rallies in Argentina to his credit, he is making no secret of his ambition to clinch the championship in the penultimate round, all while eyeing a fresh start in a new class in Morocco (see his quote).

## FIA STATS: AL ATTIYAH ROARS INTO THE PRODRIVE RECORD BOOKS

Set to take aim at the skeet shooting competition at the Paris Olympic Games, Nasser Al Attiyah is on track for his seventh Games. Meanwhile, the Qatari has already hit the bullseye in the Prodrive record books. After bagging two wins so far this season (Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge and BP Ultimate Rally-Raid Portugal), he has edged past **Guerlain Chicherit**, who got the Hunter off the mark in the 2022 Rallye du Maroc for GCK Motorsport, and **Sébastien Loeb**, who clinched the Andalucía Rally shortly after his countryman's triumph in Africa. **Al Attiyah** has one last shot this week to bolster Prodrive's record. The Desafío Ruta 40 YPF INFINIA is the last W2RC round on the schedule of the factory team run by **David Richards**, who will take on a new role as the man in charge of Dacia's technical development from the Rallye du Maroc in October.

## FIM STATS: VBA JUST CAN'T GET ENOUGH (PODIUMS)

**Adrien Van Beveren** is the only rider to consistently hit the podium in both of the previous W2RC seasons. Finishing third in 2022 and 2023, VBA had already taken the runner-up's spot in the world championship in 2021 before the FIM and FIA titles were merged. Standing on the third step of the podium in the Dakar last January, the stage win record holder, who brought his career total to 13 in Portugal, poses the most direct threat to **Ross Branch**.

## PROLOGUE: WRC MODE ON

The prologue, set to roar into action at 1 pm (GMT-3) on Sunday in the Córdoba area, is charting a course through the legendary WRC special El Cóndor–Copina. Featuring a bridge that serves as a postcard snapshot of the sector, this special has been run both uphill and downhill in the World Rally Championship.

The W2RC will take it on in a downhill charge. A fan favourite among rally enthusiasts in the region, El Cóndor–Copina will be the first highlight of the race. If you are following from afar, via smartphone or desktop, [the Race Center](#) will swing open its virtual doors every day 30 minutes before the first competitor hits the road. Tune in from 12:30 pm [here](#) today to get in on the action.

#### QUOTES:

**Joaquim Rodrigues (Hero MotoSports):** "Our main goal is to propel Ross Branch to the world championship. Our secondary ambition is to secure the manufacturers' title for Hero. It would be a phenomenal feat for the team and a game-changer for the sport to see a new manufacturer take the crown. Every rider on the team has the championship standings etched in their mind and we have trained with these targets in sight. Signing "Nacho" Cornejo, who can win and stay close to Ross on the track if the need arises, boosts our prospects. Sebastian Bühler is young, fast and also capable of supporting Ross. Both pilots are clued into their roles and the fact that we operate as one unit. From day one, a family spirit has been our mantra, and it's here to stay. Our new recruits understand that."

**Manuel Andújar (Team 7240):** "It goes without saying that, as an Argentinian, the Ruta 40 has a special flavour for me. I have entered it three times and won it once, last year. It's also here that I claimed my maiden stage win back in 2018. And this year, it'll be my final race in the quad category. My entire team has tagged along to share this moment. My goal is to secure a strong result in an attempt to win the W2RC title in Córdoba, one race before the championship finishes. I'm looking towards the future in the SSV or Challenger classes. I'm looking for a sponsor for this new challenge because, if I move into one of those categories, I want to do it with one of the top teams to achieve results. I'm giving myself three years to make that happen."

**Romain Dumontier (Honda Team):** "I know they'll be keeping a closer eye on my results now I'm on a Honda. I don't want to put pressure on myself, but I reckon subconsciously I'm piling a little bit on anyway. I've just got to keep doing what I was doing before. The upside is I can concentrate solely on the racing, which I wasn't used to since, as well as riding, I had to take care of logistics. Now, it's almost like everything's being handed to me on a plate, with info fed by team members tasked with those responsibilities. I'm thinking more about performing well than the title I've already won. Retaining it would be a nice bonus, but the two go hand in hand. Riding well equals a good championship result. There are two races remaining, I only have a 3-point lead, it's like we're at the first round of the championship."

**Nasser Al Attiyah (Nasser Racing by Prodrive):** "This is my last race in a Prodrive Hunter. It's a shame because this car has become so competitive that it allowed us to win the two previous championship rounds. But I can find solace in the knowledge that the customers it's now reserved for will get to benefit from it and there's more demand for it since our victories. The one I'll be driving this week will be the last official entry and I'll try to acquire it for my museum. My dream is to win this race and clinch a third consecutive world championship title before the finale. We'll give it our all to make it happen. It would be incredible to then start a new adventure with Dacia in the Rallye du Maroc. I took the car out for a test drive last week in France and I can tell you it's been born to win."

**Rokas Baciūška (Can-Am Factory):** "This will be my first participation in the race and since I made my Dakar debut in 2022, I've never competed in the editions held in Argentina. The goal is to bring home as many points as possible and attack flat out. But there are quite a few local drivers, so I'm not preparing for an easy fight."

**Yasir Seaidan (MMP):** "The plan coming into Portugal was to wrap up the title before the finale out here in Argentina, but luck wasn't on our side. The objective now is to win again and increase the gap so I can still be crowned champion despite everything and use the four months until the Rallye du Maroc to prepare in a new car. I want to start in a new class at the Dakar next year and Morocco is the ideal preparation for that. But to do it, I need to win the race and every stage, if Guayasamín finishes second behind me."

### Programme

- 2 June
  - 1 pm: prologue in Córdoba (road section: 148 km / special: 17 km / total: 165 km)
  - 6:30 pm: selection of the starting order for stage 1
  - 7:15 pm: publication of the starting order for stage 1
  - 7:30 pm: ceremonial start
- 3 June — stage 1: Córdoba – Córdoba (road section: 124 km / special: 381 km / total: 505 km)
- 4 June — stage 2: Córdoba – San Juan (road section: 301 km / special: 423 km / total: 724 km)
- 5 June — stage 3: San Juan – San Juan (road section: 137 km / special: 341 km / total: 478 km)
- 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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Official 2024 Desafío Ruta 40 YPF INFINIA [here](#)

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List of FIA crews authorised to start [HERE](#)

List of FIM riders authorised to start [HERE](#)

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