

Córdoba, 3 June 2024

# 2024 DESAFÍO RUTA 40 YPF INFINIA FIA-FIM WORLD RALLY-RAID CHAMPIONSHIPS

# SCHAREINA AND AL RAJHI LEAD IN CÓRDOBA

### **Key points:**

- Slippery ground and a succession of bewildering corners —that was the W2RC convoy's introduction to the region in stage 1, a loop around Córdoba.
- Among the Rally GP motorbikes, Tosha Schareina (Monster Energy Honda) came 1 second short of his teammate Ricky Brabec. The Spaniard clung to a slender overall lead over the American and his Honda stablemate Adrien Van Beveren.
- Bradley Cox (BAS World KTM Racing) wrested the Rally 2 lead back from Romain Dumontier (Team Honda). John Medina (Xraids Experience) leads in Rally 3, while Manuel Andújar remains in command of the quads.
- In the Ultimate car class, Yazeed Al Rajhi (Overdrive Racing) seized the lead ahead of Nasser Al Attiyah (Nasser Racing by Prodrive). Starting from last, Lucas Moraes (Toyota Gazoo Racing) sits third overall tonight.
- The world championship leader, Rokas Baciuška (Can-Am Factory), kept his streak going in the Challenger class to maintain the category lead. In SSVs, Yasir Seaidan (MMP) was forced to retire from the special in a repeat of his nightmare scenario in Portugal. Sebastian Guayasamín (BE Racing) grabbed the lead with the title fight wide open again.
- Tomorrow's stage 2 will be the longest of the week at a total of 724 km, including 423 km of special en route to San Juan.

#### FIM: BRABEC BY A WHISKER!

The time it takes to read this sentence is longer than the gap between **Ricky Brabec** and **Tosha Schareina** at the finish of the stage. Just one second split the two at the end of the 381 km special, with the Californian gaining the upper hand. The Spaniard, who clinched the prologue, was caught off guard in the mad dash to the line by his teammate, who surged from sixth place at km 241 to erase a 42-second deficit and vault into the lead. That same second is their difference overall, but this time with **Schareina** on top. **Adrien Van Beveren** made it a Honda clean sweep on the podium, 44 seconds back in the special and 1'29" down in the overall. The Hero riders **Sebastian Bühler** and **Ross Branch** rounded out the top 5 at 2'06" and 2'29". In fact, the German had led the special until km 148 before running out of steam.

The Rally 2 victor also produced a comeback on Argentina's slippery tracks. **Bradley Cox**, 1'52" down on **Romain Dumontier** at km 98, ended up taking the win by 1'25". The Peruvian hopeful **Ramiro Barco** hauled his Hero to third, 29'04" adrift. Mechanical gremlins cost the podium contender **Konrad Dąbrowski** (Duust Rally) a great deal of time. **Cox** seized the overall lead by 1'23" over "**Dudu**". The Frenchman must absolutely defend his championship lead, as the 3-point gap to the South African makes their DR40 duel crucial in the scrap for the title.

Rally 3 welcomed a new winner. The day after **Fernando Hernández** (MED Racing) bagged his maiden W2RC win, it was his rival **John Medina** (Xraids Experience) who opened his account. The Argentinian had initially prevailed by 12 seconds, but he copped a 6-minute penalty for breaching neutralisation rules, versus 2 minutes for **Medina**. In the end, the Chilean ended up 3'48" ahead and now leads the standings by 2'55" over **Hernández**.

**Manuel Andújar** was in a league of his own among the W2RC quads, taking the win ahead of **Kamil Wiśniewski** (Orlen Team) at 39'03" and **Wilson Ceron** at 44'05". The other key moment of the day came when his title rival **Hani Alnoumesi**, 17 points down in the championship, ran into mechanical trouble. The Saudi can continue the race, but he is now far behind in the standings. As it stands, with **Andújar** first and **Alnoumesi** sixth, the Argentinian would wrap up the title at the finish.



#### FIA: AL RAJHING BULL VERSUS AL ATTACK

Buoyed by back-to-back round wins in Abu Dhabi and Portugal, **Nasser AI Attiyah** arrived in Argentina dreaming of wrapping up a third world title early and in style by taking the rally victory. Perhaps overlooking the prime quality of his usual sparring partner, **Yazeed AI Rajhi** —tenacity. Third in 2022, runner-up in 2023, the Saudi has just one step remaining to claim his maiden world crown. **AI Rajhi** and **AI Attiyah** are the W2RC's "usual suspects", and today's duel swung the former's way after he was bested yesterday in the prologue by the Qatari. Trading seconds in the morning, "**AI Rajhing Bull**" then dominated proceedings to win by 2 minutes at the flag. A 20-second speeding penalty for **AI Attiyah** extended his overall deficit to 2'20". Post-stage, **AI Attiyah** revealed that he had encountered suspension issues that forced him to ease off.

Keeping one's cool is also a strength for **Lucas Moraes**, third (see "FIA Stat"). The opposite of his teammate **Seth Quintero**, who made a costly error, becoming stuck in a ditch while trying to pass an Ultimate car and dropping over 25 minutes.

In the Challenger class, **Rokas Baciuška** used the same verb as **Nasser AI Attiyah** to describe his day: to "survive" the slippery terrain, dust clouds and "incalculable" number of corners. It was mission accomplished for "**Rambo**" **Baciuška**, who leads the Argentinian round in his debut by 4'12" over the local **Nicolás Cavigliasso**, his main rival for the title. **Marcelo Gastaldi** and **Dania Akeel** (BBR) trail by just over 9 minutes.

In SSVs, **Yasir Seaidan** could have done without experiencing the law of serial events. After a turbo failure in Portugal, today it was a brand-new engine turbo that gave up the ghost while he was leading the special. The W2RC leader is 16 h 55'55" back, chasing stage points. **Sebastian Guayasamín** took over the rally lead, 2'52" clear of the impressive Rebecca Busi. The Italian even led the stage at one point! **Enrico Gaspari** thought that he had finished ahead of his compatriot, but he found out that haste makes waste, earning a 3'50" penalty that relegated him to 4'49" behind the leader.

#### FIM STAT: 7TH HONDA PODIUM SWEEP

**Brabec**, **Schareina** and **Van Beveren**: Honda had a field day, locking out the top 3 astride their CRFs. It is an increasingly familiar sight in W2RC, as it is the seventh time this season —and in history— that it has happened. That was the story too for the American's three wins this year, both in the Dakar (stages 3 and 10) and here in Argentina today.

#### **FIA STAT: MORAES OVERTAKES 18 CARS**

After losing a wheel in the prologue, **Lucas Moraes** started the stage in 28<sup>th</sup> position, dead last among the FIA entrants. The Brazilian faced an arduous task moving up the field, with all the winding mountain tracks making overtaking a nightmare.

#### **DID YOU KNOW?**

The caravan will reach San Juan tomorrow and set up camp there for two nights. The Desafío Ruta 40 last visited in 2018, which was also the last time the Dakar came to town. For this long-awaited reunion, the bivouac will be set up at the Circuito San Juan Villicum, which recently hosted the paddocks for two major FIM events: WorldSBK and the ISDE (International Six Days of Enduro). The United States emerged victorious last November. **Brabec** will be looking to channel some of that American enduro spirit, while **Schareina** can take heart from the fact that the last WorldSBK winner at San Juan Villicum was the Spaniard Álvaro Bautista.

#### THE LOWDOWN ON TOMORROW'S STAGE FROM THE RACE DIRECTOR, PABLO ELI:

"The first 150 km is more of the same winding mountain tracks as today. The remainder is very fast. This stage should cover 600 km from the start with only 10 hours between sunrise and sunset. There are 30 km of uncharted salt pans where the Dakar has never ventured before, with tortuous tracks, some sand and some fesh fesh. The last 100 km are packed with tracks. Expect dust to be a factor late in the final part of the special."

#### **PRESS RELEASE**



## **Programme:**

• 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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