On the unforgiving, sun-baked dusty gravel of Bugesera, Karan Patel didn’t just win the Rwanda Mountain Gorilla Rally. He rewritten the event’s history books, and in doing so, effectively put one hand on the continental crown.

Alongside co-driver Tauseef Khan, the Kenyan ace delivered a spectacular race during the third round of the FIA African Rally Championship (ARC). Powering their Škoda Fabia R5 through Rwanda’s notoriously demanding stages, the duo were in a league of their own. They won a staggering 14 of the rally’s 18 speed tests, including a scorching final run through the Ruhuha Power Stage, to secure maximum points from the weekend.

With this victory, Patel secures his forth Mountain Gorilla Rally title, officially surpassing home heroes Rudy Cantanhede and Giancarlo Davite to become the most successful driver in the history of the Rwandan event since its inception in 2002.

“Patel took the overall victory and also emerged fastest on the final Power Stage,” confirmed Eric Gakwaya, the Rwanda Automobile Club’s Clerk of Course. It was a weekend of absolute, uncompromising dominance.

With that clean sweep, Patel’s championship tally expands to 118 points. For his rivals, the math ahead of October’s Mkwawa Rally of Tanzania has become incredibly bleak.

Before unloading his car in Rwanda, Patel already held a comfortable cushion courtesy of a stellar victory at the Pearl of Africa Rally in Uganda. His closest pursuer, fellow Kenyan Samman Singh Vohra, sat on 66 points but chose to skip the Rwandan leg entirely, a gamble that effectively ended his title aspirations and dropped him to fourth in the standings.

Instead, it is Kenya’s Aakif Virani who inherits the role of lone challenger. Driving alongside Zahir Shah, Virani claimed a hard-fought third-place finish in Kigali to elevate his points total to 85.

The battle further down the order remains tight. Tanzania’s Ahmed Huwel made a major splash by claiming second overall in his Toyota GR Yaris, snatching two stage wins along the way to pick up his first ARC points of the season.

Meanwhile, Kenya’s Jasmeet Chana battled severe overheating issues, at one point

driving with his bonnet wide open for 16 kilometers, to nurse his Ford Fiesta home in fifth, bringing his championship tally to 67 points.

Defending African champion Yasin Nasser of Uganda remains stalled on 34 points, while Kenya’s Nikhil Sachania celebrated a massive weekend of his own. Despite finishing second in the ARC3 class behind India’s Naveen Puligilla, Sachania did more than enough in his Ford Fiesta Rally3 to officially retain his ARC3 continental title.

The ARC circus now moves toward its grand finale at the Mkwawa Rally of Tanzania from October 2–4. But truth be told, the engraver might as well already start etching Patel’s name onto the trophy.

The math is entirely in his favor. The title race is now a straight fight between Patel and Virani. However, Virani can only overhaul the leader if Patel fails to score entirely in Tanzania while Virani takes a maximum 35-point haul (the rally win plus the five Power Stage bonus points). In short: Patel simply needs to cross the finish line to secure the 2026 crown.

If—and realistically, when—he seals it, this won’t just be another trophy for the cabinet. It will be a legacy-defining moment.

A third continental title would lift Patel into the stratosphere of modern rallying, pulling him level with countryman Manvir Baryan, who dominated the African terrain with a historic hat-trick of titles between 2017 and 2019. It puts him clear of single-title giants like Carl “Flash” Tundo, Conrad Rautenbach, and Jaspreet Singh.

While Zambia’s legendary Satwant Singh remains the undisputed king of the ARC history books with eight titles, Patel is firmly establishing himself as the definitive African driver of his generation.

African rallying has enjoyed a fascinating competitive parity of late. Just last year, Yasin Nasser made history by becoming the first Ugandan to lift the ARC title since the late, great Charles Muhangi in 1999, coincidentally, a crown Muhangi secured right here in Kigali.

But 2026 belongs to Karan Patel. He has repeatedly shown that he knows exactly how to tame the continent’s brutal roads, and come October, he looks poised to drive straight into immortality.

RMGR Official Classification – African Rally Championship Round Three

1. **Karan Patel (KEN) / Tauseef Khan (KEN)** – RC2 – Škoda Fabia R5 – **2:13:18.6**
2. **Ahmed Huwel (TZA) / Roheet Solanki (TZA)** – RC2 – Toyota GR Yaris – **2:20:48.5** (+7:29.9)
3. **Aakif Virani (KEN) / Zahir Shah (KEN)** – RC2 – Škoda Fabia R5 – **2:25:52.4** (+12:33.8)
4. **Naveen Puligilla (IND) / Musa Sherif (IND)** – RC3 – Ford Fiesta Rally3 – **2:27:28.5** (+14:09.9)
5. **Jasmeet Chana (KEN) / Ravi Chana (KEN)** – RC2 – Ford Fiesta – **2:28:47.0** (+15:28.4)

ARC Standings After Rwanda (Round Three)

1. **Karan Patel (KEN)** – 118 pts
2. **Aakif Virani (KEN)** – 85 pts
3. **Jasmeet Chana (KEN)** – 67 pts
4. **Samman Vohra (KEN)** – 66 pts
5. **Nikhil Sachania (KEN)** – 56 pts