

**SUPER-HOT 200cc TERROR TESTS:
RADICAL XR200 & ALL-NEW KDX200!**



'86 KDX200

'86 XR200

DIRT BIKE

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MARCH 1986

**'86 HONDA
CR250:
IS IT REALLY A
WORKS BIKE
IN DISGUISE?**

**SPECIAL ATK TEST:
WE RIDE THE
4-STROKE OF
THE FUTURE!**

**'86
RACING
CALENDAR:
WHO, WHAT,
WHEN &
WHERE!**

JOHNNY
O'MARA,
TEAM
HONDA

**PROJECT
CRX250, PART 2:
WHY DIDN'T HONDA
THINK OF THIS?**

**'86 TY350: YAMAHA
TAKES YOU WHERE ONLY
MOUNTAIN GOATS HAVE GONE!**

**BARSTOW TO VEGAS:
1200 RIDERS BEG FOR MERCY IN
THE ULTIMATE LEGAL DESERT RACE!**

**'86 TRI-Z250: YAMAHA PACKS MORE
HI-PERFORMANCE INTO TRI-PERFORMANCE!**

ISSN 0364-1546



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DIRT BIKE

MARCH 1986 • VOLUME 16, NO. 3



TRI-Z250



TY350



XR200



CRX250



ATK 560



KDX200



BEACH RACING



ROCK RIDING

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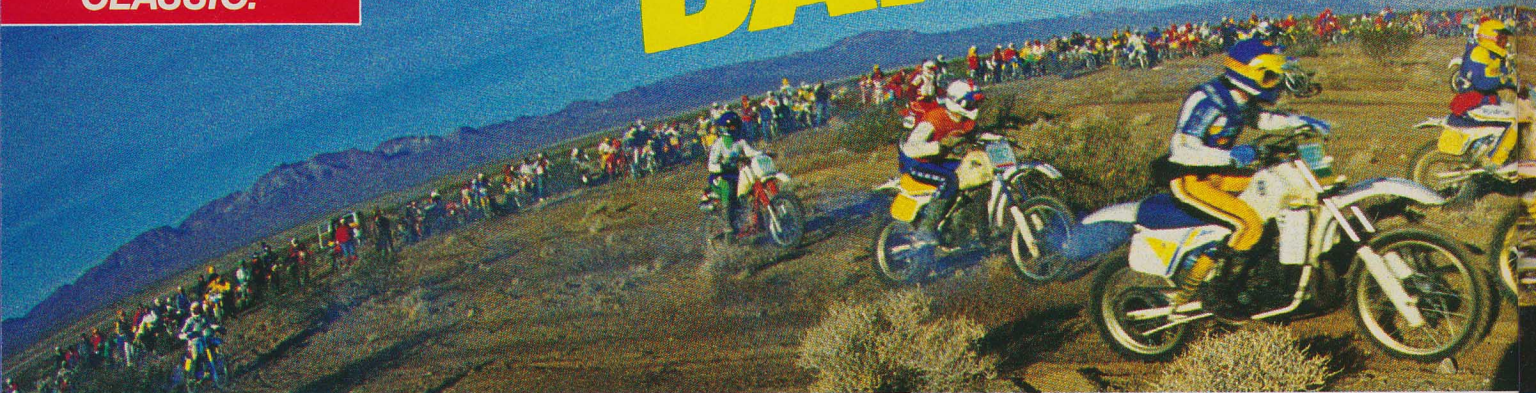
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ON THE COVER:—Captain John P. O'Mara navigates Honda's '86 CR250 through the airspace over Chatsworth, California, while Mike Webb launches the latest XR200 (upper left) and Jim Holley bushwhacks Kawasaki's stunning KDX200. Photos and ground control by Fran Kuhn; cover design by DeWest; color separations by Valley Film

WARNING: Much of the action depicted in this magazine is potentially dangerous. Virtually all of the riders seen in our photos are experienced experts or professionals. Do not attempt to duplicate any stunts that are beyond your own capabilities. Always wear the appropriate safety gear.

BARSTOW

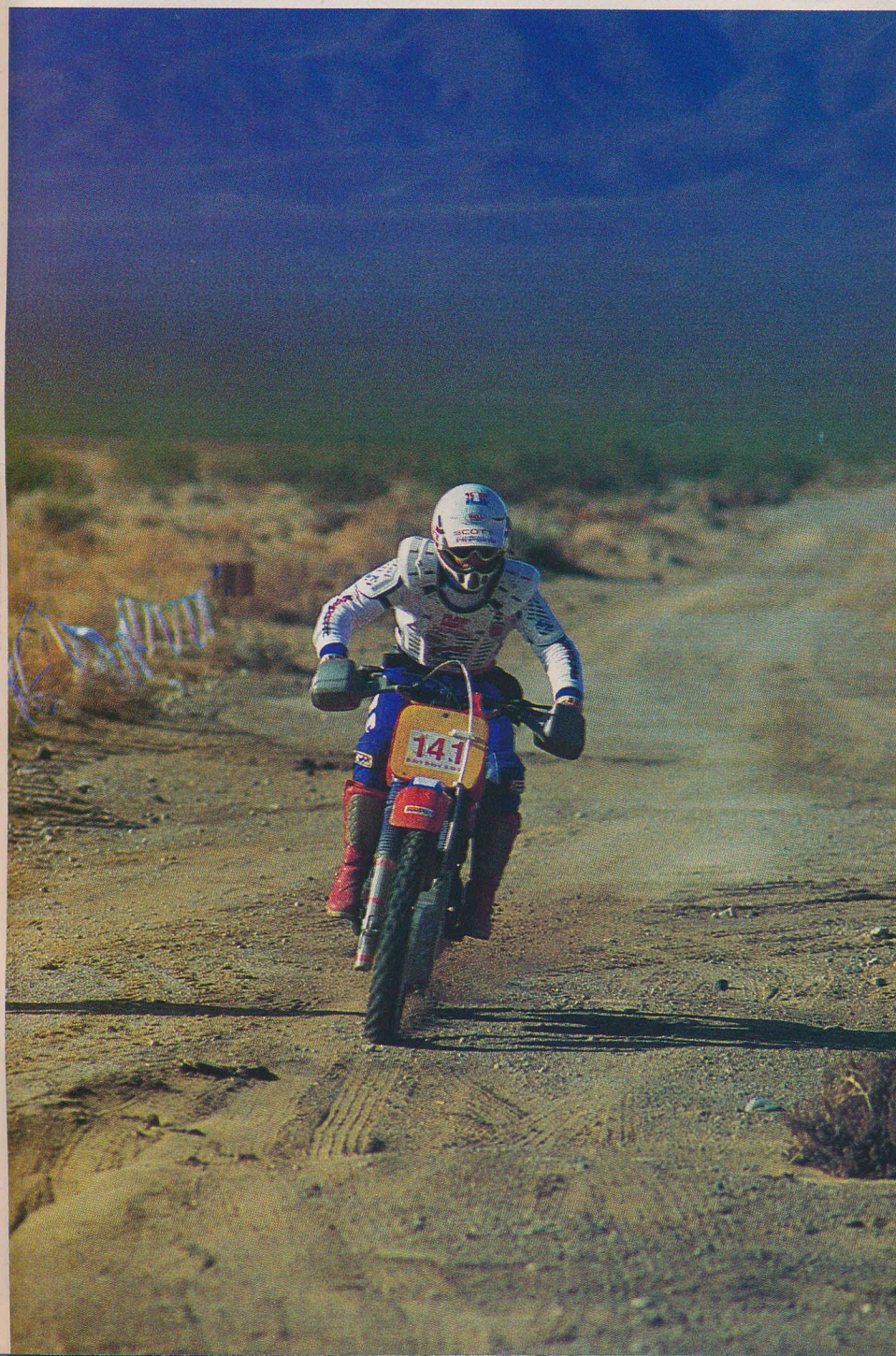
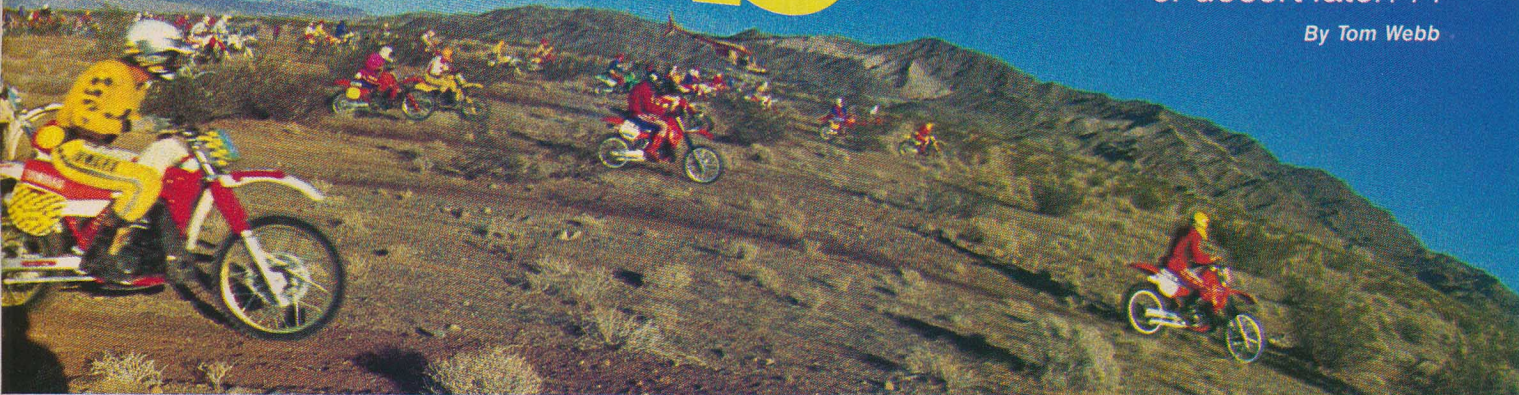
RACING THE CLASSIC!



TO VEGAS

1200 riders & 187 miles
of desert later. . .

By Tom Webb



Joe and I swung off the pavement and pointed the Toyota four-by toward the hive of activity that filled the horizon. We were 20 miles outside of Barstow, California, heading toward the start of the famed Barstow to Vegas desert classic.

This was my first desert race, and I had a bad case of the panics. Riding a controlled enduro with speed averages, resets and lunch stops is a lot different from a 180-mile drag race from Barstow, California, to Las Vegas, Nevada. The thought of a dead-engine start with 1200 riders madly attacking a smoke bomb made my hair hurt.

We met Randy at sign-up, planning on getting our numbers and shooting a few practice trips to the smoke bomb. It was Friday, the day before the actual start of B to V, and the only part of the course riders are allowed to ride prior to the event is the run to the smoke bomb. I hopped out of the truck and started toward the sign-up trailer. Suddenly the sky belched out an angry desert wind that whistled from the darkening lungs of the western heavens. In minutes you couldn't see your own feet as sand and dirt howled through the pits like a hurricane.

We never did get to pre-run the smoke bomb.

* * *

Barstow to Vegas, the premier racing classic, has been hotly contested both in the desert and the courtroom. The challenges have been monumental as a barrage of hostile opponents has attempted to close the public lands to motorcyclists. In the process, B to V has become the ultimate symbol of the off-roader declaring his right to the use of public lands.

We can thank the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in California for popping the ugly boil that has plagued B to V for the last 12 years. Its decision paves the way to a strong future for B to V and also strengthens all off-roading rights. The 1985 appellate court's ruling guarantees motorcyclists access to the desert for the B to V race as long as all the conditions are met for a BLM permit. This legal judgment leaves the Sierra Club humiliated and crushed.

Once the banner drops, it's a frenzied battle all the way to the smoke bomb. This is the place where you try to make time before the course narrows. Thankfully, a rainstorm the night before the race made Barstow to Vegas dust-free.

It took the Phantom Duck of the Desert and District 37 nine years of legal battles to cut through the bureaucratic crap before they obtained an amendment to the BLM's California Desert Plan that allowed the race to be held in 1983. Finally, the future appears to be bright for the classic Barstow to Vegas event.

Randy, Joe and I battled the gusty winds, the torrential rain, and the sheets of paint-peeling hail that pounded my truck on the way to Victorville. We had our numbers, but the weather had turned so foul that survival and a warm room were critical.

There were nearly 1200 racers entered in the B to V; they were broken up into three waves for the start. I was in the first wave, with the experts. I had tried to enter in a lower class but had been immediately protested and moved up with the fast guys. Boy, was I happy. Thankfully, my XR600 bristled with fire, and I had spent weeks preparing the suspension, brakes and tires for anything.

The night prior to the start, I slept a total of 11 minutes. Gut-ripping nightmares about the mass of lunatics heading for the bomb like escaped Pope murderers, and ramming people as though it were a Mad

Max bumper car track kept my eyelids in the full-throttle position. When we finally did get to the start at 6:30 Saturday morning, I was hoping I'd catch a rare disease that would last only six or seven hours. Unfortunately, I felt fine and couldn't come up with an excuse for not riding.

B to V draws more than just the top desert racers in the country; it lures the heads of the major manufacturing firms, motocrossers, enduro riders, trail riders, and even this year's Superbikers champ and former world 500 roadrace king, Eddie Lawson. The magic comes partly from the heritage of the race and what it means to motorcycle riders, and partly from the plain and simple fact that it's nearly 200 miles of rough and brutal desert.

This year the 1200 available entries filled up almost immediately. There was a waiting list of nearly 500 riders who wanted to race, and the start was immense, with a number of helicopters armed with photographers floating close above the desert floor. Exciting? Don't ask!

I sat on the line trying to see an end to the ocean of riders. Most of the top guns were starting on the far left. . . I was firmly planted on the far, far right. An easy escape is important, just in case things get really ugly.

The dead-engine start had me concerned. From what I understood, they'd drop a giant banner located about half a mile from the line. Somewhere around 7:30 a.m. the desert

BARSTOW TO VEGAS

would suddenly shriek with the sounds of motorcycles, and all hell would break loose.

I practiced my start routine and couldn't get the big XR to fire on the first kick. Or the second, third, fourth or fifth. For 20 minutes I tried to figure out a pattern to the random starting procedure. Finally it started, and my bike sat there idling quietly as I gulped for oxygen. . . and the banner fell.

Immediately the panic disappeared, and the hard-core racer in me took over. For about half a mile. Then hysterical fear swallowed all the manly traits I held in reserve and took control.

Husky's Dan Smith, riding a shiny new XC500, and Chuck Miller, who was mounted on a one-off 660cc handmade Honda four-stroke, battled for the lead on a dust-free, traction-packed course. The overnight rain made for a brutally crisp morning with perfect visibility. After ten miles, Smith took charge, followed by the potent Miller Honda, and the two started a seesawing conflict for supremacy.

Back a ways was Larry Roeseler, who was mounted on a Husky four-stroke. His start



Larry Roeseler started slowly but finished like a freight train. He piloted his Hooska thumper to a third overall.

◀ John and Cosmo McCown attack the moist desert with a vengeance. Cosmo (the dog) complained constantly that there wasn't enough rebound damping on the rear end.



Husky's Dan Smith peels off a fire road as he heads into the pits. Flagmen and banners marked pit row and attempted to keep the speeds down to a sane level.

After the race, Scott Harden's son gave a brief lecture on tactics. He told his dad a fourth overall wasn't bad, but next time he'd like to see a first. ►

BARSTOW TO VEGAS

hadn't been great, and at the first gas stop he had to stop to fix a leaking crankcase breather tube. Scot Harden, a teammate of Larry's, was running in the top five; this was his fifth B to V race (Scot ran in the 1972, '73, '74 and '84 events).

* * *

Randy was the idiot who told me the first 100 miles of B to V would be a cruise. I somehow managed to weave my way through a maniacal start, missed riders vaulting by without a machine under them, and dealt with the frenzy of wild-eyed speed freaks funneling down to a skinny trail who were traveling twice the legal speed limit and entering from a weird angle—enough to scare any sane person into joining the priesthood.

But desert racers are a strange breed. This I quickly found out. The so-called "cruiser" first 100 miles turned out to be mile after mile of deep, wet, sandy whoops. Although the first gas pit at Razor Road was only 35 miles into the race, I was dead and quite positive that my XR had six flats, a blown shock, and fork springs that came off a garage door. I was hating life.

My wife gassed me and yelled, "You're in the top 80; start riding like a man!" I tried to tell her the bike had blown every rubber part it comes with, but she just pointed toward Las Vegas.

For some reason my project XR600 felt like someone had welded a rather large tug-boat onto the existing chassis. The whoops



One of the most stunning machines (and rides) was the works Honda that Chuck Miller slammed into a second overall position. It featured a 660cc motor, a single side-mounted shock, and a rear disc. As Larry Roeseler put it, "He went by me like I was towing a Mac truck."



were endless, and signs along the trail that read "Whoops, Next 65 Miles" sapped all my aggression. I wanted to quit.

It was about five miles after the first gas pit that I came alive. My body loosened up, and the fatigue vanished. Suddenly the ponderous XR became nimble and fun to ride. The high-speed sand washes, muddy lake beds and two-track roads were gobbled up. I felt great.

I saw the second gas pit several minutes before I actually arrived. A thousand people suddenly appearing in the middle of nowhere tends to catch your eye. The pits at B to V were plain berserk. My eyes saw the Prospectors, the Barbenders, the Dirt Diggers, Invaders, Training Wheels, Desert MC, Shamrocks and Checkers. As you enter pit row, everything and everybody looks identical: people waving, screaming and flagging down their riders. It's nuts.

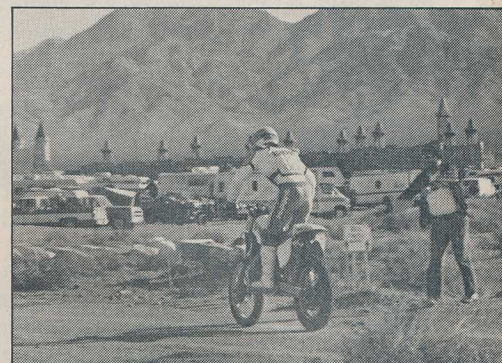
Carefully I eased the big XR down to a respectable speed and poked slowly through the mile-long pit looking for Kevin. Girls, kids, men, women, dogs and children all fused together with club flags, pit boards and banners. By the time I reached the end of pit row and still hadn't seen Kevin, I was positive this pit was one of the *alternate* gas stops.

So I clutched the beast into the wide open, while Kevin chased behind me, screaming. He couldn't figure out why I had bypassed his pit when I was running 16th overall.

Thank God I didn't know my overall posi-



Low-flying helicopters kept the riders on their toes. The beat of the copters was a little scary, especially if they followed you into a narrow canyon.



Dan Ashcraft flies into the pits at Whisky Pete's on the Nevada border. A mechanical gremlin kept him out of the running.

tion when I ran out of gas 15 miles later.

Dan Smith continued his methodical front-running pace, holding about a 50 mph average across the California desert with Chuck Miller blazing a strong second. Just before pit three at Stateline (the California/Nevada border), Smith's Husky shed an axle nut, and Miller's megabuck XR660 smoked by.

Less than ten miles later, Smith stopped to check on Miller, who had gotten off big-time! Miller had no trouble with flat tires since he was running trick Michelin rubber that had no valve stems and featured a foam liner that replaced the normal inner tube. His dilemma came in the form of front-brake gremlins. Aside from that, he had only compliments for the four-stroke Honda.

Roeseler had to work through the traffic on his Husky thumper, and he passed teammate Scot Harden between the fourth pit (an alternate gas) and the finish. Harden was the final member of the top-running stars who spends his weekdays working as Husky's district sales manager. Scot said afterwards that the race was tough but got really gnarly during the last 60 miles. Honda's Randy Morales put in an inspired ride moving up to third, only to spring a leak in his cooling system. He dropped back to sixth.

* * *

I thought my Honda had been sabotaged. For no apparent reason it hiccupped, sneezed and croaked to a stop. I was stuck with a dead bike, miles from any breathing



Eddie Lawson put in an outstanding ride, finishing 21st overall. Eddie has become a regular fixture at the Barstow to Vegas classic.



Yes, there were a few rocky sections that made life interesting. You had to use the "hunt and poke" method of riding, and then hope you wouldn't get a flat.

Bill Berroth, an Eastern transplant and Husky employee, took his 250WR to a top 20 finish. Bill said the speeds bordered on lunacy, but he had a gas. ▶

◀ Riders hit the finish and gave it the "boy was this easy" wheelie as they crossed the checkered flag. Shortly afterward, they had to be helped off their machines and fed intravenously. It was tough.



humans, and had no idea why it had died. Once I'd spun off the gas cap and focused on the empty cavern of a gas tank, I fully absorbed the catastrophe. I was doomed.

The two-mile walk did me some good. I paralleled the course and remembered the cluster of jeeps I'd seen. Surely, someone would have some spare gas.

"I'll give you a two-year subscription to *Dirt Bike*, three jerseys, a set of leathers and a torque wrench in trade for your gas."

"You got the stuff on you?"

"Three years, four jerseys, the leathers, torque wrench and . . . a pair of violet Scott sunglasses."

The 20-to-1 pre-mix didn't seem to affect the XR's performance. By the time I hit the Stateline gas check, my pit crew had given up hope. This time I trials rode through the pits, maintaining a speed average of less than six mph.

Cindy's throw was perfect. A six-ounce can of Kal-Gard chain lube nailed me directly on the bridge of my nose. She was a little crazed.

"Where've you been? All the top guys have been through for over 50 minutes! Your snail's pace is embarrassing! Get that sucker out of second gear and floor it! I'll see you at the finish. . . ."

Just outside of Stateline is a foul piece of territory that's about as much fun to ride as catching darts with your face. It's rolling terrain riddled with lip-twisting G-outs, ruts, rocks and back-compressing ditches. Most

of the time you're working third and fourth gears and can't rest, relax or get a rhythm going. Dan Smith crashed in this section. So did I.

I heard an explosion as soon as the Honda touched down. Although the entire course was perfectly marked, this one ditch didn't have a danger marker near it. I was in the air, traveling about 45 mph when I realized I was doomed. The rear tire blew on impact, the bike shot sideways and my face hit the rock-infested turf like a road grader.

Riding the final 67 miles of the race on hideous bike-chewing trails with a rear flat on a 296-pound four-stroke didn't work out too well. After five flips and two swaps that lasted at least a minute each, my fear-induced screams finally forced me to pack it in. I made it to the final alternate gas stop; there was only 40 miles left to go in the race, but I'd had it.

Later I learned that the last 40-mile stretch was a real killer.

* * *

Dan Smith took his Husky XC500 and won the 1985 Barstow to Vegas Desert Classic in under four hours! Chuck "the Monger" Miller finished several minutes later and tallied a second aboard his radical 660 Honda four-stroker. Roeseler pushed to a third overall, and Scot Harden once again slipped into the top four with a controlled, smooth run. Honda's Randy Morales limped in with a fifth after a nasty header in the Stateline ditch eater.

By the time I reached the finish in Sloan, Nevada, the rear tire on my bike looked like a cancerous piece of beef jerky wrapped around a six-point silver star. I limped in on the road from the fourth gas at Jean and only had three near head-on collisions and a handful of pavement slides that would make Gary Nixon proud. Just getting to the finish made me feel good.

I'd like to thank Dana Bell (who won the Women's Expert division) for her support, effort and determination. She single-handedly hounded me into entering Barstow to Vegas, and for that I'll be forever grateful. This is one classic I'll never miss, whether I finish or not. It's great! □

**FULL-COURSE: EXPERT, INTERMEDIATE AND NOVICE
(900 starters/572 finishers)**

1. Dan Smith (Hus) Open Expert
2. Chuck Miller (Hon) Open Expert
3. Larry Roeseler (Hus) Open Expert
4. Scot Harden (Hus) Open Expert
5. Neil Christman (Hon) 250 Expert
6. Randy Morales (Hon) Open Expert
7. Randy Rodriguez (ATK) Open Expert
8. Phil Gorgone (KTM) 250 Expert
9. Mark Zoller (KTM) Open Expert
10. Sean Bradley (Hon) 250 Expert

**SHORT-COURSE: BEGINNER, ATV
(270 starters/226 finishers)**

1. Bill Hisey (Hon) Vet Open Beginner
2. Brian Strong (Hon) Open Beginner
3. Chris Reyes (Yam) Open Beginner
4. Stan Ballard (Suz) Open Beginner
5. John Brickner (Hon) Open Beginner
6. Guy Bundy (KTM) Open Beginner
7. Jay Betker (Yam) Open Beginner
8. Russ Boyd (Yam) Vet Open Beginner
9. Mike Sheppard (Yam) Open Beginner
10. Ed Butler (KTM) Senior Beginner
11. Lance Schoonmaker (Hon) ATV/Expert