

BEST IN THE
DESERT
RACING ASSOCIATION

DIRT VENTURE™

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF BEST IN THE DESERT RACING ASSOCIATION



**ARCIERO TAKES
BACK TO BACK OVERALL**

HOWES TOPS ON TWO WHEELS

RANUIO REPEATS FOR UTVs

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Ryan Arciero takes first overall at
Vegas to Reno two years in a row.
Photo by GETSOMEphoto

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LEAD SHOT

Skyler Howes rode his factory backed Husqvarna across the picturesque and technically challenging Nevada terrain to the Open Pro Motorcycle victory and third overall for all combined vehicle classes.

Photo by Dirt Nation

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Photo by desertracingphotos.com

Some models, trims, and features may not be available or may be subject to change. Preproduction model shown. Available late 2022. Horsepower rating based on premium fuel per SAE J1349[®] standard. Your results may vary. Professional driver on a closed course. Always consult the Raptor supplement to the owner's manual before off-road driving, know your terrain and trail difficulty, and use appropriate safety gear.

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VIEW FROM THE RIDGE

This year's Vegas to Reno attracted top level Dakar teams from South Racing and Red Bull. Two entries from Red Bull's Junior OT3 Team included Guillaume De Mevius, from Belgium, and Christina Gutierrez of Spain shown here, competing in the UTV Trophy Unlimited class.

Photo by
Bink Designs



As of late, I find myself asking, “What would my father do?” Or more importantly, “What would my father have done?” In this changing business climate of off-road racing, things are very different than they once were. Back in the day sponsor relationships were not much more than a handshake and doing our best to get brand exposure via hanging some banners. One thing is for certain, those days have come and gone.

With the advent of social media, livestream, and technological advances comes more responsibility to deliver exposure that once did not exist. Thus, it increases the workload and funding to keep up with the demands. This brings me back to the question I often ask, “What would Casey do?” If my knowledge of him and my gut are correct, and I hope they are, he would forge forward as we have and raise the game.

In the past couple of years, we have made an investment to keep up with such demands and have

virtually exploded the coverage that our events receive. Some notable expansion within Best In The Desert include the following changes that have resulted in massive increases in exposure for our racers and their sponsors, and we have elevated Best In The Desert even higher in the motorsports genre in the process.

These important changes include:

One: Secured a wide reaching three-year agreement with CBS Sports Network for Broadcast TV exposure. *(Broadcast TV – A huge win for off-road motorsports)*

Two: Forged a partnership with Jetwerx International as our full-time production team. *(Jetwerx produces Arenacross and Motocross productions in Canada and the US)*

Three: Connected with Ryde TV, an impressive streaming provider to livestream our events. *(Thanks to Jetwerx and RydeTV for the exciting V2R Time Trials Livestream!)*

Cheers to Best in the Desert.
From the best on the River.



Welcome back racers and race fans. After the thrills of the competition, kick back and relax or keep the excitement going. With entertainment, casino gaming, dining, luxurious spas, outdoor activities and more, in Laughlin, it's easy to have a good time, no matter what speed you prefer.

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Four: Brought in Jordan Cochrum of Fletcher Monroe Agency as Marketing Director. *(The backbone of Rockstar Marketing)*

Five: Expanded Fall Advertising's role to include Media Relations and Publicity. *(Major coverage of BITD races in a variety of media, plus DirtVenture Magazine)*

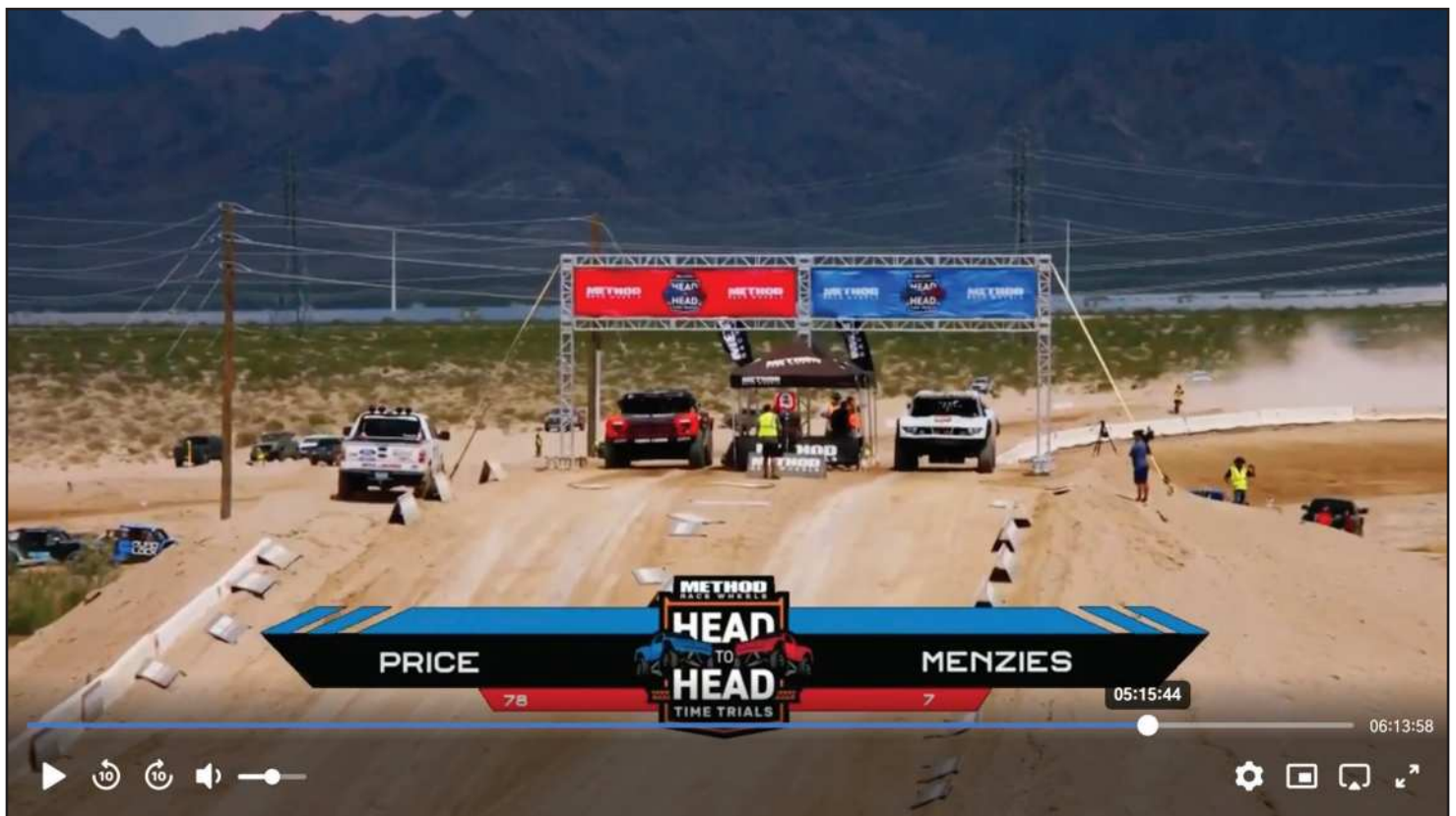
Six: Locked in Social Media Labs to head up social media management. *(FB, IG, and all social media coverage has expanded greatly)*

Seven: Added Socia Vision as our new web master. *(Fast, secure, colorful and full of BITD*

info, images and video)

We remain true to our mission to organize and promote the most exciting, impressive, toughest, and grueling motorsports experiences in off-road racing. This is the foundation and legacy that Casey left for us. We will always maintain the highest level of excellence at Best In The Desert racing.

Watch for even more exciting events and coverage as they unfold at the upcoming King Shocks Laughlin Desert Classic Duel in the Desert.



Racers lining up side by side to battle for start positions was a unique idea brought to life by Best In The Desert. Thanks to our sponsor, Method Race Wheels, and the RydeTV production team running the Livestream, the fierce competition produced over six hours of non-stop action. ***Watch the entire replay here.***

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MONSOONS OVER AND GREAT

Racing the Clock to the Green Flag

If you thought organizing an off-road race that crossed 500 miles was an easy task, think again. Thanks to a lot of help from the BLM, Angela, and absolutely no help at all from Mother Nature, setting up the Vegas to Reno course was no easy task. The Casey Folks Vegas to Reno (V2R) has always been a very challenging event and race to pull off, and even my dad, Casey, would tell you so. Five hundred miles across the state of Nevada, going through multiple BLM districts, counties, and townships always makes the event a daunting task, but this year was close to impossible to pull off. A couple of years back, Best In The Desert (BITD) had a major challenge with Covid 19, and I really thought at the time it couldn't have been more challenging, but I was wrong. The 2020 V2R was about politics and the protocols that Covid brought. This year was about Mother Nature and the weather wreaking havoc along the course. While our first course-marking crew was just getting started, the rains started, but they were of a normal type of a steady drizzle. When they reached Dayton, NV, they hadn't dealt with any real monsoons. A day or two upon their return the big monsoons started in different

areas around Nevada. This was when I started getting word from good sources around the state that

I had better brace myself for what was to be a more difficult task during our marking fill-in ride and pilot run on the motorcycles. I also received some photos from sources, and after getting this intel, I quickly recruited three others for the trip. With the destruction of landscape, we indeed were very busy adding in markings and replacing others that didn't hold up to the always powerful monsoons. After dealing with many challenges to the course, we made our way back from Dayton to Las Vegas.



Monday -Tuesday of Race Week – 3 days before Green Flag

We returned Monday night, and I was back at the office on Tuesday because of more disturbing news about new monsoons throughout the state. The BLM office in Tonopah had informed us that we had to do a re-route near Tonopah because the dry lakebed was full of water. Megan and I went to work quickly and fast and put together a re-route and sent it off. Fortunately, I knew

THE MOJAVE BASIN DESERTS



Passing monsoon at Red Rock Canyon near Las Vegas, Nevada

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the Tonopah area extremely well, so it didn't take us long. Meanwhile, and before I left to do the re-route, Bryan and Jerry, along with other staff, were fighting their battles over at the time trial course. They had to literally pump water out of the low areas, in some cases several feet deep. I threw all of the markings I had left over from the fill-in trip into my Generation 3 Ford Raptor and headed for Beatty that evening. Angela Durazo (Ang) wanted to go up with me and help, which she did throughout the whole trip, stapling the papers after I would pound the stake. Angela just happens to be the first professional female F4 championship race car driver and a three-time award-winning Hollywood actress. That said, off-road was not really in her wheelhouse and was somewhat foreign to her. I swung by her place, and we were on our way. With three miles left on marking the first re-route near Tonopah, I was advised



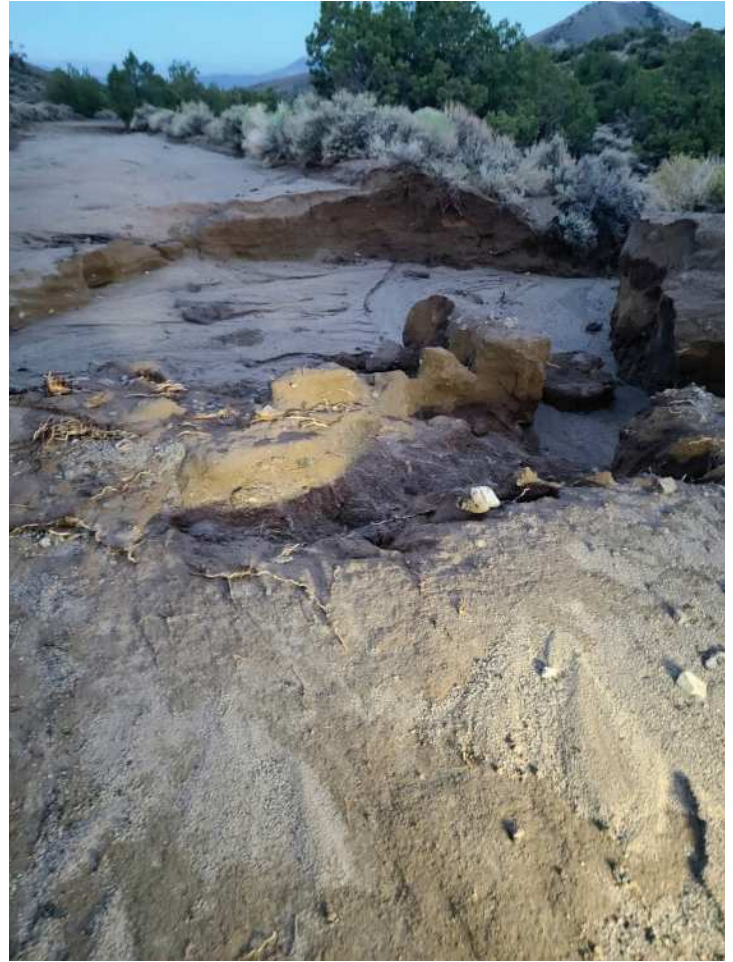
Angela Durazo

by Megan to call Glen in Hawthorne about another Monsoon that hit up at Cedar Summit just northeast of Mina. The news from Glen was not good as our course had been one big giant flash flood from yet another monsoon. He advised me that I had better get up there, have a look, and be ready to pretty much re-mark the section because most of the course markings were gone. Just as I finished the Tonopah re-route, I received another call from the BLM Sierra Front and Carson City offices that they had a monsoon hit up around Weeks and the Playa was full of water. Yes, there was going to be a third re-route, but BLM already had one that would work which meant I didn't have to do a mad scramble to come up with one. After getting this news, Ang and

I headed for Tonopah to get some sleep. We made it up to Mina the next morning, and I started into Cedar Summit. After doing a lot of new markings on the course, I found that it was becoming more torn up the higher up I went. I finally told Ang that it would be in our best interest to go look at the course. I wanted to see if it was even passable before doing anymore marking. As I had guessed, we finally came to a location in a small canyon that was impassable for the four-wheel vehicles, and this is when things went completely sideways.

Wednesday of Race Week – 2 Days Before Green Flag

I use the term “sideways” because that is how serious the situation became. We had to get to cell service which was about 20 - 25 miles away so I could get in-touch with BLM for suggestions and an off-the cuff go ahead and approval to make a course re-route. Luckily, I had been up in those mountains in the past, and within a couple of minutes with my eyes on the map, I had an alternative which I felt would work. After I had BLM on the phone, four Outdoor Recreation Planners (ORP) and one assistant field manager made the decision for the re-route. They told me the only two people they could trust to pull something like this off was my dad and myself. I must admit that was a pretty proud moment for me. Ang and I were back in business, so I told her that being in a race against time, we were going to lay it out backwards. The new re-route started off decent and then a turn for the worst took place. There wasn't much daylight left and we



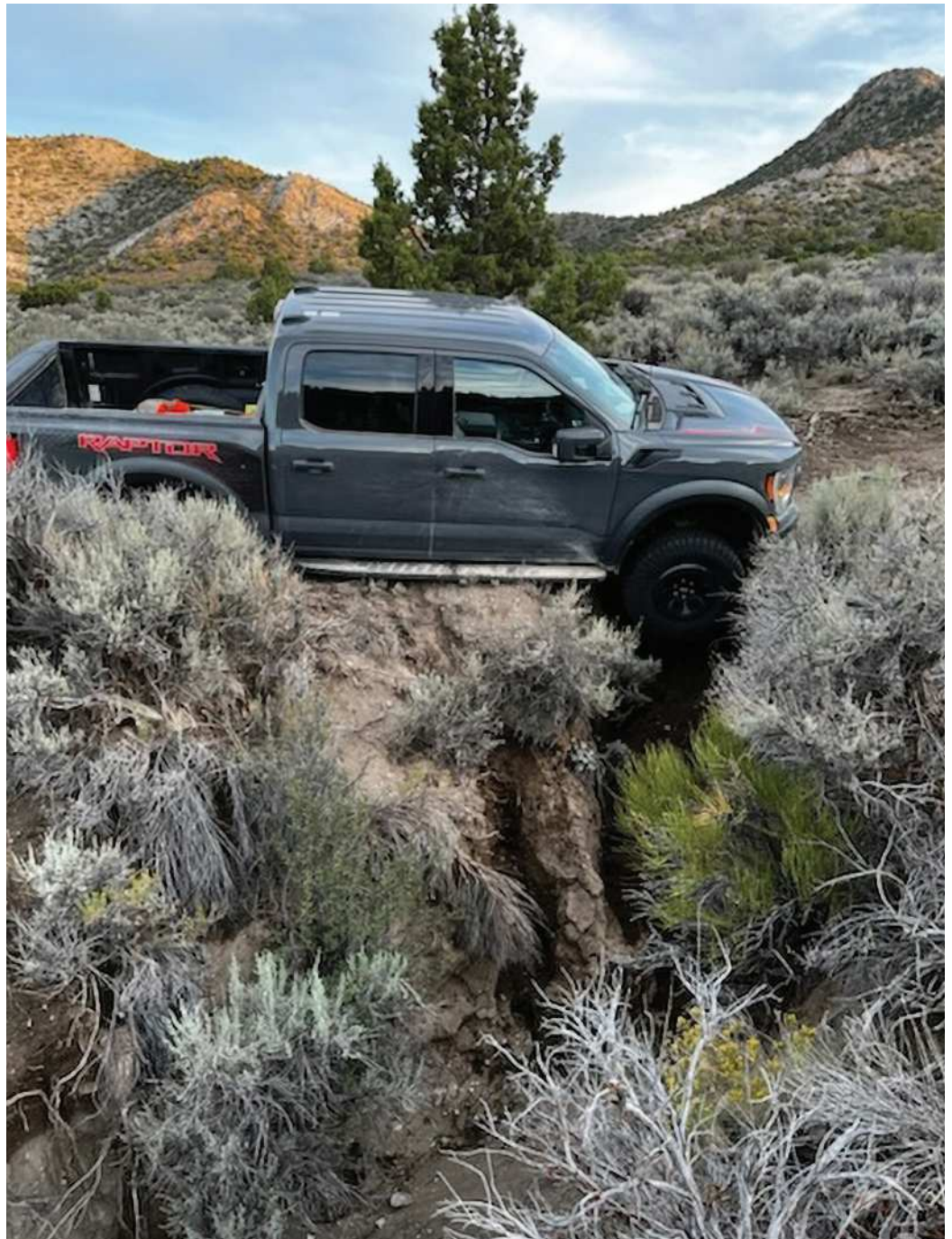
were about a third of the way when I rounded a corner. I was blinded by the sun and drove my Raptor into a monsoon-made hole with the right front. As soon as it happened, I told Ang that it was all over, and we weren't getting out of this one. Being around off-road my whole life, it was clearly evident that it was over, and the race was going to finish in Mina. I panicked, felt anxiety and stress and I completely lost it. I had been defeated by the Monsoon Gods; I knew in order for the race to finish in Dayton it was resting on our shoulders. I told Ang it was time to start walking because of limited daylight. We had about seven miles back to the pole line road. When we were picked up at some point, we

would find cell service and inform the staff that the race would finish in Mina. Ang was cool as a cucumber and spent the first five minutes or so trying to calm me down. She even told me to take deep breaths, which I felt was pointless in this situation. She needed a couple of minutes, but I said, “A couple more minutes is only going to cut into our daylight, and we will do most of the walking in the dark.” To add salt to the wounds, we were out of water and Gatorade! What I witnessed next was that the impossible became possible, and I had no doubt my dad was there in spirit. Ang said she was going to drive the Raptor up and out of the hole, the impossible, and I was willing to let her get it out of her system so we could start walking. She belted in, said a quick prayer, and then dropped it in four-wheel drive rock-crawl mode. The Generation 3 Raptor literally jumped out of the hole. I couldn't believe I just witnessed the impossible, but I was there, and I saw it with my own eyes. Honestly, I was speechless, and thank goodness Ang,

with only paved road course experience never looked at the gloom and doom of the situation because she knew no difference. We were back in business and finished the layout right at dark.

Thursday – the Night Before Green Flag

We decided the best plan would be to stay



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the night in Hawthorn and mark the section in the morning of race day. We started at about the same time the race launched and finished around 10:30 A.M. as the motorcycles were already starting at the stage 2 re-start by Millers. We hit the highway heading for the third re-route at speeds I care not to admit, but we had to stay out in front of the race. Luckily Arthur, one of our outdoor recreation planners up north, took it upon himself to pull our markings off of the Playa and spot mark the re-route. All we had to do was fill in with additional markings and take care of the dangers. When we finished with the section the lead motorcycle was within twenty minutes of us, so we completed the race course just in the nick of time.

From there we headed to the finish and left at around 7:00 P.M. A trip that was supposed to be one day turned into three and a half days. It was a challenging task in the race against the clock, with new layouts and new markings, but the big takeaway for me was never say impossible and stay positive to

achieve the possible. Ang showed me that. Best In The Desert would like to say a special thank you to Angela Durazo. Without her confidence, the race wouldn't have finished in Dayton. Also, a special thank you to all of the BLM offices involved with this event and especially Arthur from the BLM, for having the foresight to jump out in front of us. Lastly, a special thank you to our dedicated BITD staff and all of our devoted volunteers strung out five hundred muddy miles across the state of Nevada.





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BIKES BLAZE THE TRAIL



Story by Mike Ingalsbee



Photo by Dirt Nation

The background image shows a vast desert landscape. In the foreground, there is a dirt road or trail that has been partially washed away or eroded, with a cloud of dust or sand rising from it. The middle ground is filled with sparse, dry vegetation, including several iconic Joshua trees. In the distance, there are blue-toned mountains under a clear sky. The overall scene conveys a sense of a harsh, arid environment that has recently experienced a significant weather event.

The desert's terrain, and everything else that exists in it, is constantly evolving due to the weather. Wind, sun and rain conspire to destroy everything that isn't strong or resilient. At the Best In The Desert, Method Race Wheels, "Casey Folks" Vegas to Reno race, resiliency was paramount; both for racers, and Best In The Desert. The southwest had been pounded by monsoon weather all summer, and the amount of water falling, and the intensity of the storms had been incredible. In the days leading up to the race, Nevada was battered; its landscape totally altered. Any exposed ground, like roads, and trails, became riverbeds. The huge raindrops pulverized the surface; washing away the dirt and leaving the rocks exposed. Rushing water cut deep into the earth, and ended up at the lowest point where gravity would take it; on the dry lakebeds. The flooding made many parts of the race course impassible, and without many options for rerouting. Sections near Tonopah had to be avoided entirely which created a transfer section. Racers loaded up on trailers, and took the highway around the flooded lakes.

The last minute changes to the route, and those made by Mother Nature, had a huge impact on the first group of racers to hit the course; the bikes. They would have to find their way through the destruction and confusion that laid in wait for them. Those who would make the first tracks had to use an incredible amount of wherewithal and sometimes even intuition in order to stay on course. This was no fault of Best In The Desert, they were out until the last minute trying to find available re-routes, and fixing the course markings. Some sections did not even resemble a road or trail that anyone had travelled once the storm waters flowed through them.



Dalton Shirey was the early leader but slowed with brake issues and had to settle for second Open Pro.

Photo by Daniel Curiel Photographic

For number one qualifier Dalton Shirey, what was thought to be a huge advantage, starting up front with no dust, became an incredible navigational challenge. To add to the mix, it was his first time racing Vegas to Reno solo on his Husqvarna. He would have no relief from a teammate to draw upon. “I had a good lead after the transit; someone told me it was 6 minutes,” said Dalton. “The bolts holding my brake pedal on started to vibrate loose. I was dragging the rear brake for 20 miles. I finally made it to a pit, but it was one that I had decided not to stop at; so I had no crew there. I saw Craig Hunter and asked for help. He was pitting for Trevor,

and Hayden (N1). He had a bike in the back of his truck that he took some bolts from to fix my brake pedal. I saw Skyler (Howes) pull into the pits so I knew I was no longer in the lead. I had been pushing for a long time, it was mentally draining. I want to work towards doing rallies, so I need to run these long races, and ride solo. It was pretty hard to navigate out front with so many ruts and washouts. It was not friendly to the bikes. I felt if I had gone any faster I would have ended up in a ditch. I’ve ridden all over the area so I know the terrain, but some of that stuff didn’t look like anything.” Dalton finished 2nd to fellow Husqvarna rider Skyler Howes.

“If you start first you have to read the terrain,” said Skyler. “If you start further back you get the dust. Despite all the rain, it was really dusty. I was shooting for the number one spot in qualifying, and got a good start, but the track was wet, and my back tire slipped into a rut. I got thrown over the high side in seconds. It is challenging on a rally bike. They aren’t meant to be thrown around. Even without a full tank they are top heavy. I didn’t want to start last, but part of me didn’t want to be first on the road. I have an understanding with my crew. They don’t tell me the split times to other riders. I am going to ride as fast as I can regardless of anyone else. At the transfer I lost time. I could tell by the tracks that everyone ahead of me was hitting their marks. It was difficult to see the washouts in the dust. There was a wash section that was filled with rocks and bushes. Best In The Desert did the best they could, but the markings must have washed away. Dalton had done a great job breaking the trail, but in a couple spots I wasn’t sure. We were supposed to break out onto a road, but the wash seemed like the right way to go. Some went through

Skyler Howes rode his heavier rally bike to the Open Pro Motorcycle victory and 3rd overall for all vehicles.

Photo by Anthony Montoya



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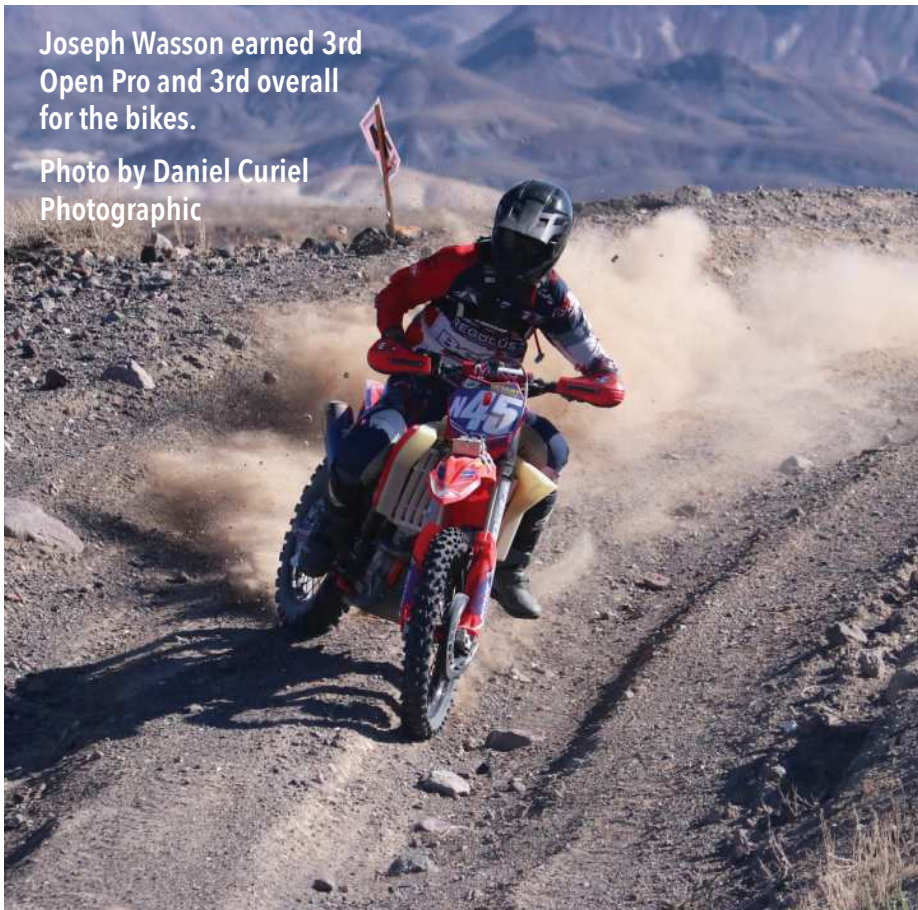


A smart and calculated race paid off for Skyler Howes.

Photo by Dirt Nation

Joseph Wasson earned 3rd Open Pro and 3rd overall for the bikes.

Photo by Daniel Curiel
Photographic



the bushes; others turned around and went back. It was quite technical; a lot of work. Later in the race I could tell the riders ahead were getting tired. You can watch their tracks and see they went wide in a turn or had to hit the brakes hard. You are not making good time there. I hit a huge mud hole in the dust. The bike got sideways at 80 miles per hour. I pinned the throttle hoping it would straighten out and it did. I was awake then. If you want to be a top rider you have to overcome it all. When you nail the line choice you might only pick up seconds, but those seconds add up to minutes in the end. I

Andy Johnston and Josh Vorhees grabbed the win for Open Expert.

Photo by Dirt Nation

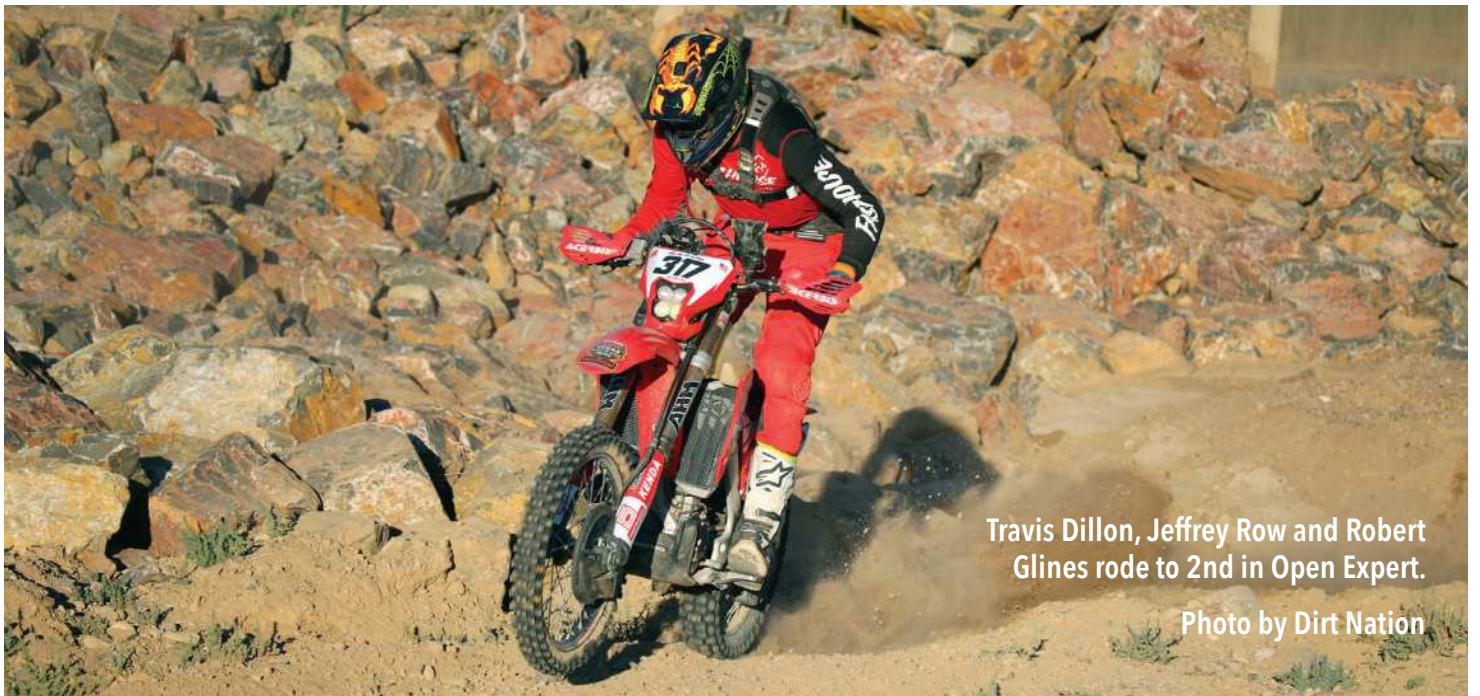


loved the course. Having some adversity and stiff competition made the win even sweeter.”

In the Open Expert class, Andy Johnston and Josh Vorhees took the win and finished 11th overall. “It was a good race, but different than what I expected,” said Andy. “Ten miles outside Mina I crashed and broke my wrist. The brake lever was bent straight down so I had to reach over to hit the brakes. My arm was getting numb but I couldn’t shake it because of my wrist. Luckily it was a fast section to Top Gun pit so I didn’t need to use much front brake. It was our third Vegas to Reno. The first year we finished after a crash. Last year we lost the bottom end at mile 429.

I bought a new bike, and spent some time getting it set up. I wanted a bike that would be best all-around so I got the KTM 500, and it really paid off.”

Second place in Open Expert went to the Honda team of Travis Dillon, Jeffrey Row, and Robert Glines. “We did pretty good, we were the first bike off the line in our class,” said Travis. “We were clicking off the miles, and had a few minutes lead at the transfer. Our second rider had a little spill but we didn’t lose our lead. I got on the bike at Mina; it was a little banged up. I had some issues but kept it on two wheels. I got passed just before the mud holes. It was pretty crazy; if you weren’t



Travis Dillon, Jeffrey Row and Robert Glines rode to 2nd in Open Expert.

Photo by Dirt Nation



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on it you could end up in a hole. It was pretty much just gas and go all day. It was fun and there was a lot of competition. It was our first Vegas to Reno as a team, and we kept the points lead.”

The Pro Quad winning team of Dylan Walraven, Daulton Keyes, and Adam McGill hail from Georgia, Indiana, and West Virginia. They typically compete on their Honda in cross country events back east. “This year it was pretty tough in the creek beds,” said Dylan. “You would be wide open, and have to slam on the brakes. The bikes would go through gaps that we were too wide to fit through. It was a lot



Jim Herrero took the Ironman Pro win and 7th overall for the bikes.

Photo by Dirt Nation

The usually Cross Country team of Dylan Walraven, Daulton Keyes and Adam McGill made the trek out from the East to take the victory in Pro Quad.

Photo by Dirt Nation





Steve Cano, Shane Esposito, Steve Garnett and Mike Baxter rode to the Over 40 Pro win and 8th overall for the bikes.

Photo by Dirt Nation

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Zachary Hayward, Ismael Hernandez and Danny Magdaleno got the Quad Expert win.

Photo by Dirt Nation



more challenging on the quad. I started to race, and handed the bike over to Adam at pit one. That first section was blinding dust. This was our fourth year at Vegas to Reno going for the win. Daulton rode from pit 5 to 7. Adam rode pit 9 to 11. It was a much different bike when I got back on it; it was treacherous. The rear tires were really worn, but we ran the whole race on the same set of tires. In one spot, I was following the dirt bike ruts when it went on a narrow side hill. I slid down sideways into a tree. We had a

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Kimberly Loppnow and Krista Conway
took the win again in Women Expert.

Photo by Dirt Nation



couple quads in the expert class that came close to us on time, but we pulled a lead and held onto it. We can't wait to come back next year!"

The Quad team finished 20th overall in the bike group, and just minutes behind them was the Women's Yamaha team of Kimberly Loppnow, and Krista Conway in 22nd overall. 23rd overall and the last team to make the finish under 8 hours was the 5th place team in MC Open Expert of Starley Stevens, Shania Stevens, and Taylor Stevens. The final finisher

after over 15 hours of racing was the crowd favorite three wheeler Honda team of Lyle Tonelli, Chris Kieffner, and Julian Hoefert. They suffered several mechanical issues during the race, but persevered through all the diversity to get to the finish line. Their same commitment was shared by everyone who never wavered, pushed through many setbacks, and made the Method Race Wheels "Casey Folks" Vegas to Reno happen.



The team of Starley Stevens, Shania Stevens and Taylor Stevens managed a 5th in Open Expert and last team to finish in under eight hours.

Photo by Dirt Nation



Long live the 3 Wheelers. Kevin Adcock, Luke Peterson and Ed Hicks survived all challenges to win the 3 Wheel Expert class.

Photo by Dirt Nation





Max Shapiro, Jack Anderson and Ryder Waterbury earned the 399 Pro class win.
Photo by Dirt Nation



The team of Gregory Pheasant, Michael Stephens and Geoffrey Buscho took home the Over 30 Expert win.

Photo by Dirt Nation



50 year old Frank Goodson rode solo to the Over 30 Pro victory and 9th overall for the bikes.

Photo by Dirt Nation



Over 50 Expert winning team of Jeff Miller, Curtis Dice, Lendon Smith and Jeff Porter.

Photo by Dirt Nation



THE PHOENIX



The ancient Greeks and Egyptians believed in a mythical bird called the Phoenix. It was a symbol of renewal and rebirth. According to the legend, the Phoenix would build a nest and set itself on fire. Then, a new Phoenix would rise from the ashes. That was the story of Ryan Arciero's Vegas to Reno race in 2021 after his truck caught fire in 2020, and burned to the ground. At this year's Best In The Desert, Method Race Wheels "Casey Folks" Vegas to Reno race, he won his second straight. This time it wasn't fire that he overcame, it was a flood. Monsoon rains pummeled the race course leading up to the event which caused everyone to make do with whatever Mother Nature had in mind.



RISES AGAIN

Story by Mike Ingalsbee

Photo by HighRev Photography



Bryce Menzies was first in qualifying, and first to the finish, but had to settle for second overall on corrected time.

Photo by HighRev Photography





Desert racing has always been about surviving the terrain. The competition just makes it that much tougher. The conditions of the course did not deter Best In The Desert, the BLM, or the racers. Everyone was determined to make the race happen. A year's worth of preparation and anticipation were at stake. The course was re-routed, and a transfer stage was added near Tonopah to bypass the lakes that had formed. Some of the fastest sections that are typically on the dry lake beds were replaced with tight technical trails and sand washes. The distance travelled would be less, but the challenge was increased. Some of the rain ruts and washouts were big enough to swallow a truck whole. They were difficult to see because despite the rains, it was still very dusty. Everyone would have to be on their game if they were to make it to the finish.

The first chance to throw down the gauntlet happened during Method Race Wheels qualifying that was sent out live to the world. Held on the short course and surrounding sand around the Primm Valley resorts, it was hit or miss when it came to track conditions. Motorcycle racer Skyler Howes was favored to take the pole, but slid his back tire into a rut and high sided; throwing him to the ground. It dropped him to 8th. UTV racer Branden Sims was sitting on the starting line studying the track. He could see some blue-groove forming in the corners. That's a layer of rubber that builds up offering excellent traction. One of the cars in front of him rolled, and during the recovery he had to sit and watch the water truck come out and make three passes.

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Third in Trick Truck and sixth overall was Robert Johnson.

Photo by Bink Designs

Instead of blue-groove, he got baby oil. Overall winner Ryan Arciero suffered the same fate; he qualified 7th behind a bunch of all-wheel drive trucks.

“We already give up 4 seconds on the start to the all-wheel drive trucks,” said Ryan. “They have a huge advantage from a standing start over a two wheel drive. I was determined to show that a good two wheel drive truck can still beat the all-wheel drive trucks during the race, but had hoped I would start closer to the top three. I knew I would need to keep Bryce (Menziess) and Justin (Lofton) in check if we were going to win. I knew it was going

to be about running smart, not getting flats, and picking the right lines to keep momentum in the turns. Vegas to Reno is a long race. It’s a lot of high speeds, and hot temperatures. The driver needs to be patient, but at the same time you can’t let the leaders check out. Kyle Jergensen smoked me off the start in his all-wheel drive like I expected; we were in his dust to pit one. We still managed to stay on pace with the leader Bryce, so it validated the pace we were running. It’s hard not to get overly anxious and want to make passes, but you have to weigh picking up time with the cost of a flat tire. I was only worried about



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what was behind me. I could get time splits to the guys in front, and sometimes I could see them. By the time we made it to Top Gun pit we had gapped everyone behind us. Lofton had a problem, and we were close to Bryce on time, and he was running out of race course. We knew he would turn up the pace so we did too. We went all day with no flats but with 15 miles to go we started getting a low pressure alarm from the left rear tire. It was really strange because the pressure would go down, then up again. We decided to keep going as long as it had pressure. We

crossed the line with 8 pounds in the tire. My BFG tires did the job. They got us all the way to the finish. It was really great; Bryce came over after we heard we won it and congratulated us. Jason Voss was also there, and said he might have to come back next year to prevent us from getting three straight wins. (Jason has 4 total overall wins and 6 podium finishes at Vegas to Reno). We can't qualify like the all-wheel drive trucks can, but we proved that the right two wheel drive truck can still beat them on race day. I have a great truck with the Herbst build, Gibbs power, and

Arciero battled back and forth race with Dan McMillin to the finish. McMillin ended up fourth Trick Truck and ninth overall.

Photo by Daniel Schenkelberg Photography



BFG tires. We also had the FOX Live Valve suspension on the truck for the first time; it was on point.”

Bryce Menzies was first in qualifying, and first to the finish, but Ryan beat him on corrected time. Finishing third in Trick Truck class was Robert Johnson in the Chattanooga Whisky truck. “We finally got something done at this race,” said Robert. “It’s been my bug-a-boo. We stepped it up at qualifying. I come from dirt track racing so I should do well there; even though it’s very different in a Trick Truck. We were supposed to start next to Toby Price, but he had some kind of electrical problem so he couldn’t get it started. Our rear diff was reading hot so we stopped at the first

pit to top it off. We later figured out it was the sensor. Then we got a flat in a wash. There was no place to change it so we had to limp it out. We settled into a back and forth race with Dan McMillin to the finish. It was the first time racing with Kellon Walch as my co-driver. He is such a professional. He helped us to navigate on a tricky race course that was changing up to the start. Best In The Desert did a great job with all the trouble they had to deal with. It was a crazy course with last minute changes, but it worked in my favor. I had a cold, and the transfer section allowed me to get a little break, and take some more cold medicine. It’s taken a while to get my truck sorted out. About the only time I get

Jason Coleman captured the Class 6100 Spec Truck win and eighth overall.

Photo by HighRev Photography





to test is during the race since I am from Tennessee. SDG helped to set up our King Shocks to where I can drive the truck the way I like it. I'm happy to be running with the fast guys now, and with a little luck I think we can win one."

Finishing first in the 1500 Unlimited car class was the Dean Brothers; James, and Jordan. Their race was somewhat bizarre as they would gladly admit. In a moment of confusion they were directed the wrong way by a course worker. They could not

go by the GPS file, so they did their best to find their way back to the course. They approached Officials at Gabs pit when they arrived unexpectedly early. They told them what happened and asked what to do. They told them to keep racing, and they would sort things out. "After heading up a wash for 5 miles we knew something was wrong," said James Dean. "We kept moving forward and ran up against the highway. We kept trying different washes that headed back to where the course typically runs. We even drove

By mile 275 it was an all-out battle for the lead between Bryce Menzies and Justin Lofton, even coming into contact between the two at one point. Lofton ended up experiencing mechanical issues and had to settle for sixth Trick Truck.

Photo by Bink Designs





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James Dean took first in the Unlimited Class 1500 and third overall.

Photo by HighRev Photography



through a gravel pit. We felt we should get some kind of time penalty to make it fair. They gave us a 4 minute penalty and we still won. We do everything in racing to honor my grandfather Butch. He's the reason we are racing today. We would never do anything that would be considered cheating. We don't want that word ever associated with our family name. We want to be the best, and cheaters are the worst. I thought the course was great. I love Vegas to Reno because you get to see all kinds of stuff that nobody sees. There is so much cool stuff out there. We had

a great day, we all worked our tails off and did not quit. My brother and I have won our last three races, and are hoping we can pick up some sponsors. We are both working full time, and do all our work after a full day on the job. We still think a buggy can take the overall, and bring the big boom."

Second place in the Unlimited car class went to the Silver State 300 overall winner Cole Barbieri. He is showing that he is the real deal. Third place went to the underdog Nick Carolan. He is racing his 6200 car in the unlimited class against cars with much more



Cole Barbieri followed up his Silver State 300 overall victory with a second in Unlimited Class 1500 at Vegas to Reno.

Photo by RnR Photos



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Nick Carolan took his limited spec engine 6200 Car to third in the Unlimited Car ranks.

Photo by dirtfocus.com

horsepower. 6200 has an engine restriction (just like a 6100 truck compared to a Trick Truck). “Our race was uneventful, but I think we left a lot on the table,” says Nick Carolan. “We had no flats which is almost impossible with all the rocks out there. We saw day-enders everywhere. The car is perfect. We could wash it off and go again. We had a big disadvantage with all the very fast sections on the course. We were outgunned by the unlimited cars, but it was good to run up front with them. It was like racing in three different countries the way the course changed during the race. Usually there is only one guy who has a perfect race, and he wins. I was surprised at how many people there were that had a great race like us. I think it was an eye opener for some people when we crossed the finish line in third place.”

It was another impressive race for Alumicraft in class 1000; they swept the podium. Corey Goin got the win with Brian Crawford finishing second and Preston Brigman third. Brian Crawford drove with his brother Cody. They started in the rear because they chose not to qualify during time trials. “We had to deal with some dust from 6100 trucks ahead of us,” said Brian. “It allowed the guys up front to get away. We thought we could get through the other class 10 cars a little quicker, but our day was pretty good for the most part. We had no flats which helped us with track position. Both our normal co-drivers could not make the race so we had two guys that had never done it before. We ran top three all day at a conservative, but fast pace. We knew we had to be smart. Cory had a great day too. Hat’s off to him for

Corey Goin captured the Class 1000 victory.

Photo by Dirt Nation



the win. The competition in class 10 is unreal. If you aren't running an Alumicraft car you better re-think your program. They take very good care of us.”

The fastest vehicles always steal the limelight but the limited classes are racing a much harder course thanks to all the cars in front of them. The silt is looser, the ruts are deeper, and all the rocks get knocked down into the trail. Congratulations to the class 1600 winners Brian Jeffrey, DJ Jeffrey, Joe Jeffrey, and Jay K Wallick. It takes toughness and determination to reach the finish line in such a limited race car. The same goes for Ken Tichy, his son Adam, and Ian Massey,

who got their 1700 class Jeepspeed across the finish line after racing for 14 hours, 19 minutes, and 35 seconds. They can hold their heads just as high (if not higher) than those running triple digit speeds out front. Regardless which vehicle you are racing, Vegas to Reno is a considerable challenge just to complete, and a huge achievement for the winners. Those who failed to make it to the finish will have another chance next year when they attempt their own Phoenix story of rising from the ashes like Ryan Arciero did.





Brian Jeffrey took home the Class 1600 win.
Photo by Dirt Nation



67 year old Ken Tichy was the lone survivor in Jeepspeed taking the Jeepspeed Cup win.

Photo by Dirt Nation



Eric Pucelik took first in Class 3000.

Photo by Dirt Nation





Zachary Lumsden captured the TrophyLite victory.

Photo by Dirt Nation



Chris Schweers took first in the Baja Class.

Photo by RnR Photos

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Chad Hall won the Stock Midsize Class.

Photo by Dirt Nation



Conner McMullen stayed in the thick of the Class 6100 points battle with his second place finish.

Photo by RnR Photos

RANUIO ON A ROLL



Vito Makes It Two In A Row At Vegas To Reno

Story by Mike Ingalsbee

Photo by HighRev Photography



After Mitch Guthrie Jr. came so close to taking the overall race win at the Silver State 300, all eyes were on the UTV race at Vegas to Reno to see if they would threaten the overall again. Best In The Desert gave a one hour gap between the UTVs and the 4 wheeled classes that started ahead of them. Conspiracy theorists claimed it was to give them clean air to run as fast as those up front. Actually it was all done for safety reasons, the

same with the bikes starting early. Best In The Desert knew it would be dusty and didn't want the UTVs tangling with the bigger, heavier cars and trucks. Thinking the UTVs could run with the big unlimited cars and trucks with so many fast open sections on the course might have been wishful thinking. If conditions are right though, the UTVs might have a shot, and the way the factories are raising the bar, who knows what the future will bring.



Vito Ranuio got his second straight Turbo Class win and first UTV overall victory at the Best In The Desert, Method Race Wheels, “Casey Folks” Vegas to Reno race. Vito credited it to having a flawless day on the Monsoon modified and extremely challenging Vegas to Reno course. He battled with Can-Am teammate Phil Blurton all day until Phil had an unplanned stop. He also got around Can-Am teammates Dustin Jones, and Dakar winner AJ Jones of South Racing who were in the lead pack in the final section of the race. “We turned it up from the start,” said Vito. “We followed the dust ahead of us all day. When we got past someone, we started chasing the next dust cloud ahead. After seven hours of racing, Phil (Blurton) was only

seconds away from us. He was first on the road, but we had the overall lead on corrected time. When we got past him, we knew we had it.” Phil Blurton finished second place in Turbo Pro class, third place overall. Branden Sims finished third place grabbing the podium finish for Polaris.

Branden Sims had to come through the pack to earn his place on the podium. “I was sitting on the starting line at qualifying as they counted down. I was looking at the track and could see blue groove in the corners. I knew there was a ton of traction available so I was looking forward to a great time. They counted me down all the way to 8 seconds then waved me off. Another competitor crashed on the course. I had to

By backing up his Silver State 300 win with the top UTV spot at Vegas to Reno, Vito Ranuio is definitely on a roll.

Photo by Dirt Nation



Phil Blurton battled for the lead all day but had to settle for second UTV Turbo Pro and third overall.

Photo by Dirt Nation



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Branden Sims fought through the pack of fast UTVs to capture third Turbo Pro and fourth overall.

Photo by Dirt Nation



sit there and watch as the water truck came out and made 3 passes on the track while they recovered the crashed car. The track was now a slippery mess. I think I qualified 20th or so. I've always struggled at this race, but this year everything went smoothly on race day. We had a third place podium finish last year, and now we finished 3rd again. We are getting

good consistent finishes, now we need to win. Our only issue all day was a belt after pit 10. I haven't lost a belt in three years; it was a totally random thing. I'm a little rusty changing them at speed. If it wasn't for that we might have had a chance at the overall." The Turbo class had the largest turnout with 40 entries. 28 teams made it to the finish line.

Red Bull's Mitch Guthrie Jr. drove a great race taking the top spot in Trophy Unlimited and second overall.

Photo by HighRev Photography





Finishing 2nd overall between the first and second place turbo cars was Mitch Guthrie Jr. who took the win in his Trophy Unlimited class Red Bull Polaris RZR. In second place, and 5th overall UTV was Lonestar Racing's Dan Fisher. "We had a real good day at Vegas to Reno," said Dan. "We've been consistently finishing races so our strategy was to run a steady pace that would get us to the end. Coming into pit 6, we heard a strange knocking noise. As we left the pits, the crew came over the radio and told us to come back around. For some unexplained reason, we had a wheel coming off. It was really strange. They only noticed it wobbling as we drove away from them. I don't even know how that happened, but it was the only issue we had all day. We took care of the belt temps but still ran a steady, fast pace. It made for a very fun race. We didn't have to take any risks. Our team gets a lot of credit; my co-driver Kyle Anderson, our second driver Garrick Lastra and his co-driver Horacio Contreras Alarcon, our head mechanic Shawn Fisher, and Tanner Naz. Everyone had a part in this. We do a lot of prep for other teams at the shop so we get a lot of feedback. This new car shows what we've been learning." Trevor Leighton rounded out the Trophy Unlimited class podium in third place.



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Dan Fisher grabbed second Trophy Unlimited and fifth overall.

Photo by Dirt Nation



In the UTV N/A Pro class, five-time Baja 1000 motorcycle winner Max Eddy came out on top for his second win in a row. Max began his racing career at age four, and has raced many different types of equipment, at all types of venues. He is applying all that knowledge

and experience into his UTV program in the desert. “The rains really caused a lot of damage to the course, there were some gnarly dangers out there,” said Max. “It was a nice change to get off some of the super-fast roads and into some technical terrain in the



Max Eddy took the victory in the N/A Pro class.

Photo by Dirt Nation

Conner Maxwell drove well into the night for the Super Stock win.

Photo by Dirt Nation



new sections. Anyone can hold it wide open on the fast stuff. This was our second straight win. We had some exhaust pipe issues at the Silver State race, but got them fixed in time to take the win. For Vegas to Reno, we knew it would be hot so we ducted more air into the engine compartment and it worked like we planned. We didn't have the same heat issues as we did at the Silver State 300. It's a brand new car for us and we've had two wins in two races so far. We do everything 100 percent in house so I am really proud of that. Racing is all I've ever really known, and nothing gets me

more motivated than winning! I prefer racing for wins more than anything, and my goal is an overall win in the UTVs."

Second place in the UTV N/A Pro class went to 15 year old Ethan Groom. His accomplishments are growing as fast as he is. Another product of the youth classes, Ethan already has years of racing experience. He is holding his own against an extremely talented field of professionals including third place finisher Kaden Wells. Kaden is always a threat whenever, and wherever he decides to race.

The UTV Super Stock class is always a



battle the entire way. The Can-Am team of Conner Maxwell, and Cole Bassler took the win with an impressive time of 9 hours, 25 minutes, and 14 seconds. That would have put the pair just outside the top ten in the Trophy Unlimited class. They beat the second place Polaris RZR team of Bella Birchard, and Cruz Birchard by an hour. The Birchard's race was just as impressive though. Bella is 15 years old, Cruz is 14. The talent pool in Best In The Desert runs deep. Third place went to Can-Am racer Mitchell Alsup.

Vegas to Reno is such a huge challenge.

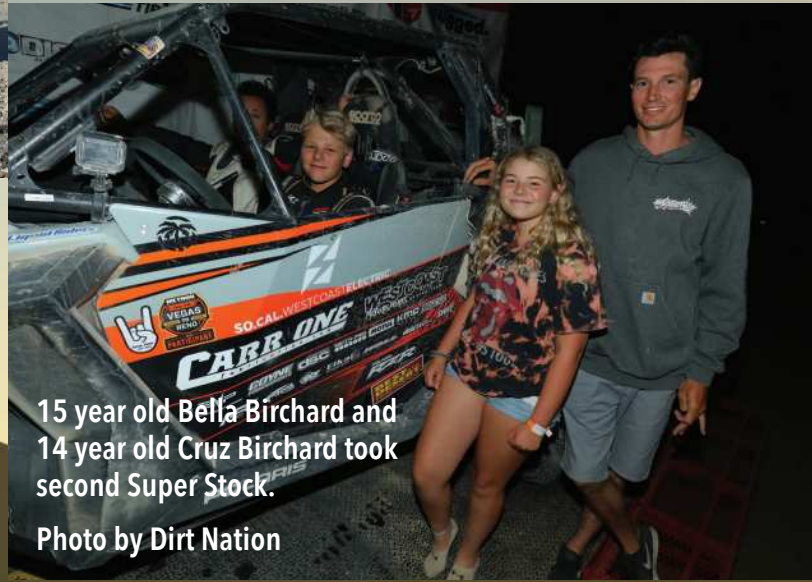
There are just so many things that can end your day out there. It's as equally tough on the racers as it is on their equipment. This year's event was thrown into chaos due to the weather, but desert racers thrive on overcoming impossible challenges. The same goes for Best In The Desert, the BLM, and Method Race Wheels. Everyone involved made it work, and had such a general optimism that it overwhelmed all the challenges they faced.

Casey would be proud.



Second N/A Pro was 15 year old Ethan Groom.

Photo by Dirt Nation



15 year old Bella Birchard and 14 year old Cruz Birchard took second Super Stock.

Photo by Dirt Nation

The 2022 Vegas to Reno was one for the history books. Everyone involved made it work, and had such a general optimism that it overwhelmed all the challenges they faced.

Background photo by HighRev Photography



Kaden Wells was third N/A Pro.
Photo by Dirt Nation



First Sportsman Rally was John Lynch.
Photo by Dirt Nation



CROSS

**SOUTH
RACING**



South Racing Brings 2022 Dakar Winning Rally Team To Vegas To Reno

By Mike Ingalsbee

Photos by South Racing

Vegas to Reno draws competitors from all types of racing, and all parts of the world, but it's still intriguing when a Dakar Rally winning team comes to compete in the UTV Turbo class. One Dakar winner would be impressive, but South Racing showed up to race their Can-Am with two. Francisco "Chaleco" López is one of the greatest Dakar racers to come from South America. He has 11 stage victories on two wheels, and in 2019 switched to side by sides. He won Dakar in 2019, and 2021, and is the 2022 Dakar champion in the Light Prototype category. Sharing the driving duties with López was no stranger to anyone on this side of the ocean; American driver AJ Jones. Jones is a race winner in North America and won the 2022 Dakar Rally in the SSV category. They are joined by their equally accomplished co-drivers; Gustavo Gugelmin for Jones, and Jaun Pablo Latrach for López. South Racing made the long trek from where the cars are kept in Portugal to experience Vegas to Reno. We sat down with Philip Henderson from South Racing to talk about the team

WVET



The South Racing team, left to right:
Juan Pablo Latrach (Co-Driver)
Francisco Chaleco Lopez (Pilot)
AJ Jones (Pilot)
Gustavo Gugelmin (Co-Driver)

Mike: How did South Racing get their start racing UTVs?

Philip: Our leader Scott Abraham was in Brazil for a rally when he met Robert Lumley from BRP. Robert is a highly motivational person. That conversation with him put Scott on the track of; let's give these side by side things a shot. If you go back to 2016, side by sides were not what they are today where you can basically buy a race car from the showroom floor. Back then they were more of a buggy, and not too many companies made them. Scott thought, you know, rally racers were able to live all these

inspirational adventures and go visit these remote places. Why not create something that would allow other people to live like they were. So that's the inception of the whole side by side category within South Racing. It's all because of that conversation in Brazil and it just took off from there.

Mike: How big is South Racing today?

Philip: Just to give you an example, at the last Dakar in January, there were 160 people working for South Racing. We service 22 cars in the side by side categories. Some of those are client cars, and some of those



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are the factory racing cars of the more competitive teams. And that's 22 different nationalities. Within the team, there are men, there are women, and there are different nationalities. It's a really cool spot to be during that race. You get to learn so much about people and hear stories about people. And everybody has a common goal when they're at the Dakar. They have the bivouacs that are makeshift villages that move from day to day, sometimes hundreds of miles. You regroup during the bivouac each night, and people play cards to pass the time. Sometimes you don't even understand the language the other person is speaking, but we always come together and everybody's there in the same spirit, for the same reasons.

That's something that's very awesome about off-road racing; the companionship and the camaraderie that's developed through off road racing. You develop those relationships and build off of them.

Mike: How do you develop your talent, and your drivers? What do you look for when you bring a driver to South Racing?

Philip: It's a multi-layer approach, right? There are individuals that are naturally born competitors; guys like Austin (AJ) Jones, who's, you know, Jesse Jones' son. It's in his bloodline to be competitive. He has the opportunity to be a racecar driver or has had the opportunity to be a racecar driver from a



South Racing going through tech.



South Racing, from the sands of Dakar to the Nevada desert and Vegas to Reno.

very young age. In his case it's a no brainer to use this category as a building category for his next adventure, whether that be Trick Trucks or whatever other category that he wants to run. We're putting together what we're calling the junior program right now. There is going to be a platform where we'll be able to harvest the next generation of younger drivers. Not necessarily guys that have the financial flexibility from parents or already have some sort of racing background and then came up in the categories. It'll give actual individuals that have racing ability, a platform to grow into. Obviously, it's going to be competitive, and the winner of these competitions that we're going to be putting together will get a seat at the Dakar Rally. The winning prize is equivalent to \$250,000 because that's pretty much what it costs to go to Dakar, just in entry fees and getting there. It's going to be a pretty cool program. Right now we're looking at a four car

program, piecing it together, and getting it off the ground. We are doing a pilot thing this year. Next year we want to grow it a bit bigger. Not only for drivers and co-drivers, but also as a development program for mechanics that want to get involved in off road mechanics and off road racing. Just brainstorming, but we can also use this program as a development program for dealerships that have mechanics that want to live an experience. Get the dealer network involved from the OEM standpoint. It could go as far as we want it to. We're not only going to harvest from North America, but also South America, Europe, and the Middle East. We're already working with individuals in different countries and different continents at maximizing the exposure in this program. Given that it is a pilot program right now with only four seats, it might grow into something much bigger. Expose it to the masses and get the best of the best out there.

Mike: Wow, that's some really good stuff on the horizon. Tell us about your initial experience with Best In The Desert and Vegas to Reno.

Philip: I applaud Bryan Folks and the team on this event. I feel that Vegas to Reno is a breath of fresh air. Not only for the Best In The Desert organization, but also for the racers and the teams that came out. There had been a bit more effort put into branding and a website and live broadcasting. You could feel that there's a bit more energy behind making desert racing a lot more consumable from an outsider point of view. Coming from my experience at BRP, racing organizations

in the U.S. are typically speaking to the same communities all the time, and they're kind of pigeonholed into this niche group that all know each other. The niche doesn't necessarily grow exponentially at the rate that the industry does. I feel that Best In The Desert, and specifically Vegas to Reno, was that kind of a turning point towards the future of what desert racing should look like. I think the challenge is to make the industry and these events a bit more accessible to the outside people. I'm just thinking out loud here, but whether that is by creating characters around race teams, documenting it in a way that gives it a kind of a mainstream approach, or even a Netflix like series. Anything that





Race and finish line podium photos by Dirt Nation

could be televised and broadcasted to tell people or show people that are interested in racing sports that off-road racing is a thing, a thing outside of the community that's already involved in it. I think making those steps to grow outside of the already established organization is definitely something that's going to be beneficial down the line.

Now, more specifically to Vegas to Reno, for the longest race in America it's definitely not something that you can go into unprepared. You can't just show up and want to race with the big guys. There are individuals and teams that have been desert racing for a long time that have a lot of experience out there. They come to win, not just participate and finish. There's

a huge appetite for winning Vegas to Reno. Everything that we do from the South Racing standpoint is first and foremost for us to learn the kind of one on one of what desert racing in the U.S. is actually like when your boots are on the ground. To see what you can tweak from a team perspective, and what you can modify from a logistical perspective. And even from a media perspective, you know. We're used to doing these 10 to 15 Day Rally events where you have a lot of opportunities to create content and create media and, have press releases go out every day; stuff like that. But a desert race like Vegas to Reno is a one and done. You take one day and the next day you're racing. If you have a bad day, you go home and that's it. In rally racing it's a bit



Francisco Chaleco Lopez and AJ Jones at the finish of their inaugural Vegas to Reno.

different. You get to fix your car if you want to, or you get to do other things. I think Vegas to Reno was a great experience for the team. We definitely learned a lot; not only from a racing perspective, but also from covering the event. Racing down the highways of Nevada to get to the next pit or the next media spot; trying to coordinate everything; all that landed us in a good spot. The team is super happy. For us it was to expand our wings into a different community. Not that we aren't already established as five times consecutive Dakar champs and four, back to back World Cups, but that's in the Middle East and Europe on the FIA and ASO platforms. Now we're coming over here to a desert series in North America. It's giving our team and our

partners an opportunity to have visibility and experience elsewhere in the world.

Mike: South Racing qualified 8th fastest in the UTV Turbo Pro class, and finished the race in the 8th position during their first attempt at Vegas to Reno. Considering their body of knowledge, drive, and depth of talent both in the car, and behind the scenes, the U.S. teams better beware when the 2023 Vegas to Reno comes along.



A CLOSER LOOK:



Jimco is proud to announce the launch of the new “Dragon” All-Wheel drive unlimited truck platform. Chassis #001 of the “Dragon” platform is a new ground up design by Jimco, and then custom-built for LA Dodgers owner and avid off-road racer Bobby Patton. The “Dragon” moves to capitalize on the benefits of the extreme acceleration and grip that the All-Wheel drive platforms are known for. Part unlimited truck, partly rally car, the “Dragon” features a specifically engineered CAD verified front engine chassis design with a wheelbase of 125” and a track width of 93” to maximize horsepower to the ground, giving the driver unrivaled acceleration.

The “Dragon’s” drivetrain features the perfectly matched duo of the Xtrac 5-speed wide cluster sequential transmission with an integral transfer case matched to an Xtrac Spool Type CTR Torque Split front diff. Powered by a massive Dougans Custom 555 ci Big Block 8 Stack V8 Engine Package pushing out 1050 hp with 850 ft-lbs of torque. All of this is achieved while still maintaining 24 inches of travel in the front and 32 inches of travel in the rear. The distillation of over 40 years of off-road warfare, The “Dragon” defines the new pinnacle of off-road racing performance.



All-Wheel



Fastball "Dragon"



Photos: MadMedia

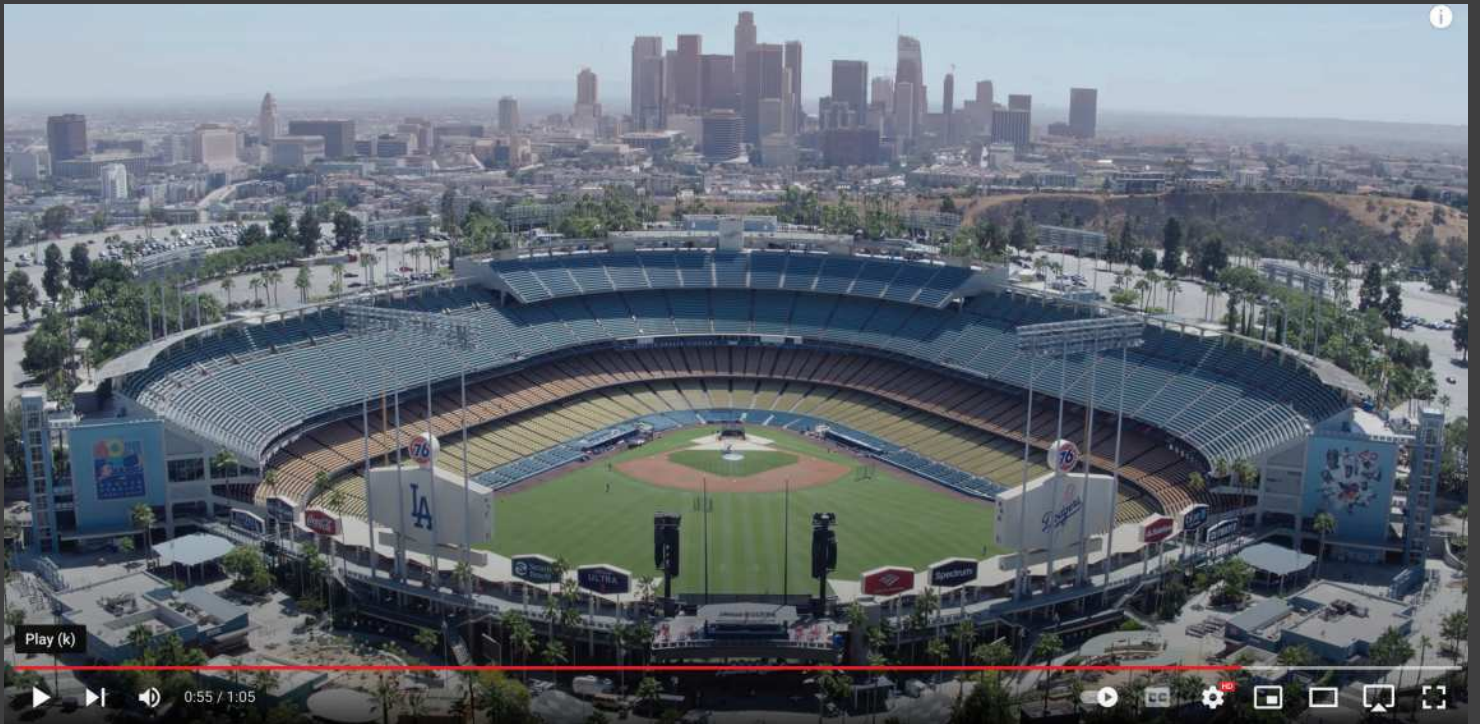
Drive Unlimited Truck



Jimco revealed this amazing build at the legendary Dodgers Stadium in Los Angeles, CA named “Blue Heaven on Earth” by baseball legend Tommy Lasorda as a nod to the owner and connection to the 7x World Series champions The LA Dodgers.

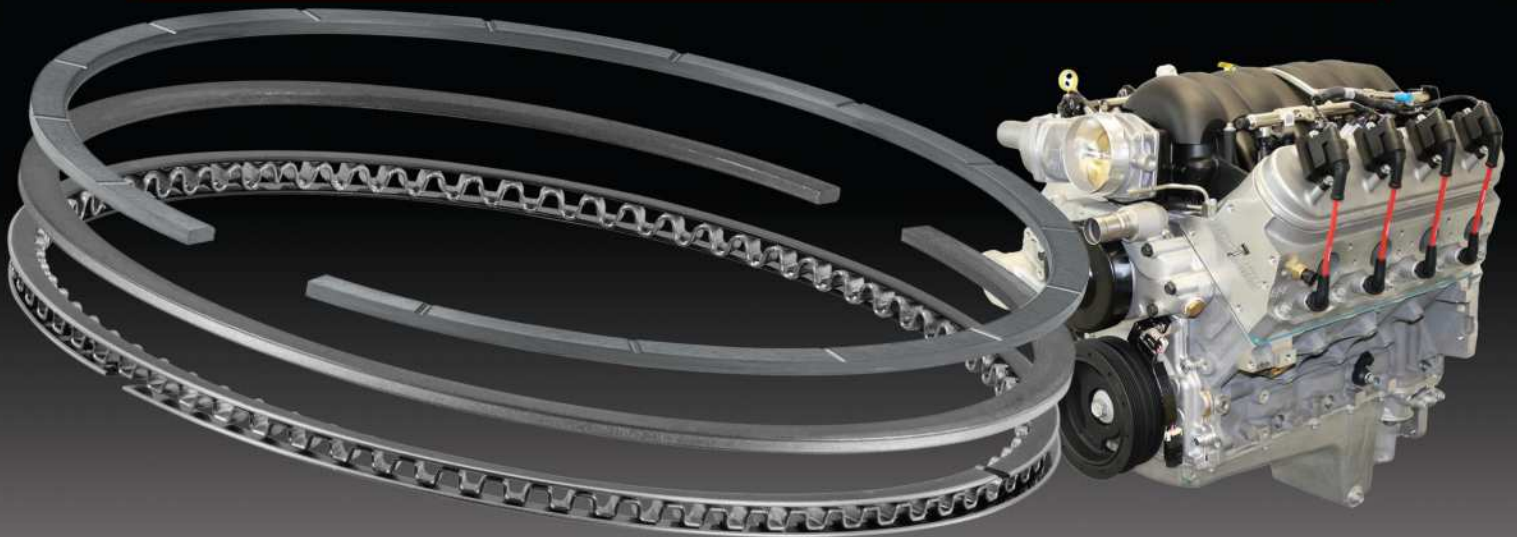
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Fastball Jimco "Dragon" All-Wheel Drive Specs:

Owner:	Bobby Patton
Builder:	Jimco Racing Inc
Lead Designer:	Barry Karakas
Date completed:	8/1/2022
Chassis #:	J0030
Wheelbase:	125"
Track Width:	94"
Weight:	7000 lb
PWR:	6 x 1 - 0.157 hp/lb
Engine:	Dougans Custom 555ci Big Block 8 Stack V8 Engine Package
Horsepower:	1100 hp
Torque:	875 ft lbs
ECU:	MoTeC M190 ECU engine management system
Wiring+Prog:	James Lin
Transmission:	XTrac 5 Speed Sequential w/converter
Front Diff:	Xtrac
Rear Diff:	Gearworks
Rear Housing:	ID Designs
Portal Hubs:	ID Designs
Front Suspension:	(A-Arm) FOX 3.0 Coil / FOX 4.0 ByPass /24" Travel
Rear Suspension:	(4-LINK) FOX 3.0 Coil / FOX 4.4ByPass / 32" Travel
Steering:	PowerSteering Solutions
Tires:	40" Tall BFGoodrich KR3 Tires
Wheels:	18" Trail Ready Beadlock Race Wheels
Brakes:	6 Piston Brembo Race Braking System
Cooling:	C+R Racing / PWR
Exhaust:	Header King/Borla
Plumbing:	Custom Jimco
Driveline:	JE Reel
Fuel Cell:	105 gal Carbon Fiber Pyroprotect
Body:	2022 Ford Raptor Custom Fiberwerx Fiberglass
Seats:	Impact Carbon Fiber HS1
Nets & Belts:	MasterCraft Safety Nets + Impact Camlock Restraints
Paint/Graphics:	Sign Pros and Long Live Design Labs
Jack System:	AGM/Howe Performance Jack System
Paneling:	Custom Jimco Racing
Lights:	Baja Designs
Navigation:	Lowrance 9"&7"GPS
Communication:	Palomar Communication
Extras:	Kustom Komponenten - driver & navigator helmet AC, Fluid Logic hydration system




UNDER THE HELMET

A Conversation with Vito Ranuio

By Mike Ingalsbee





Vito Ranuio got his mechanical experience growing up in the trucking business. Working on big rigs is tough; everything is super-sized. Working on UTVs must be like playing with toys, but anyone who has faced off against Vito on a race

course knows, he's not playing around. In a very short time, he has catapulted to the top of UTV racing in Best In The Desert. In his first season in 2020, he ran three races and finished in the top 25 in points. In 2021 he ran the full season and finished 4th place in the points. He started the 2022 season with a second place in Parker. At the Silver State 300, he took his second win, and just backed that up with another victory at Vegas to Reno. He currently holds the points lead in the UTV Turbo Pro class.



Photos by Dirt Nation



Mike: how old were you when you started working on semi trucks?

Vito: Probably around eight years old, or maybe younger. My dad was pretty diligent about taking us to work with him. Then I would go work for the shop foreman. I started my own business in 2005.

Mike: What kind of trucking do you do?

Vito: We do both liquids and solids; big tankers. We haul wine, alcohol spirits. We do a lot of spring water; drinking water. We do the forestry side of things; all the byproducts you see coming out of the forest; we do agricultural. I've got trucks hauling Basil out of our area, and we've got trucks full of tomatoes in Hollister. We're in the Napa

Sonoma area running grapes. All that plus our year round stuff. We run our tankers and self-unloading trailers, and we broker freight.

Mike: That must help your logistics during a race. You must be used to a lot of moving pieces.

Vito: Yeah. I feel like all our racing logistics are pretty easy. At Vegas to Reno, my crew and I were joking around about it. Some of these guys like having meetings, and they put these books together telling everyone what to do. We didn't plan our pit strategy until the night before the race. We have one full chase truck that has everything pretty much to build a car and we put three people in that truck. Then we had another truck that just had some parts. One guy with minimal experience, one

Vito taking the outside lane at the Vegas to Reno Side-By-Side Time Trials.



guy with no experience, and all they do is tow the chase trailer. That's it. We didn't have support at every pit. My guys know what to do.

Mike: Everything's supersized isn't it? It must be a pretty good workout to be working on big heavy trucks all the time.

Vito: I like fabricating, but I'm not saying I'm a fabricator. I get by and get stuff done on my car, but I really like to do the service side and maintenance side.

Mike: Were you one of those kids who liked to take things apart to see how they work?

Vito: Yeah. There was quite a bit that I took apart and unsuccessfully put back together.

I actually do the same thing with my kids. I have two children, and my son started going to work with me last summer. Same thing my dad did for me. He was seven years old last year, and then he did this summer too. We set goals you know, my dad did the same thing. We set a goal for what we were looking to achieve. One of the things that I liked as a kid was go karting; and the same with my son. That's how I started racing; my dad or my family never raced. They enjoyed watching racing, but they didn't race themselves, and I wanted to get a go kart. One summer I started working towards racing. My dad saw that I was interested and got me going in the right direction. I started racing at maybe 10 or 11. My son actually started racing at five. When he turned six he started racing 170s. He's been running that for the last two years.

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Maybe three months ago we started running sprint cars. So my son races sprint cars and 170s. They're so equal, you know, it's comes down to the kids. If they make a little mistake, they lose their momentum.

Mike: Isn't off-road racing all about momentum?

Vito: It's about maintaining momentum throughout an eight hour race, but you can overshoot a corner, right? I mean, our races aren't won by tenths of a second, right? They're won by minutes. If you can be consistent, your success rate is so much higher. There's a lot of guys out there that

go out there to race and push their car at 150 percent. Why don't you just run the car at like 90 percent? Why push past your ability, then you're gonna make a mistake, or you're gonna push the car past what you should be doing. I don't think we're the fastest. We're never gonna go out there and be the fastest person, but we're going to be consistently fast throughout the entire race. I've learned from all the different racing I've done and I've learned a lot just by teaching my son on different techniques of driving. I've also educated myself. When you keep your momentum the entire race, it's easier. It's easier on the car. It's easier on us, but it's hard to gauge that. That's the hardest thing

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Vito Ranuio showing his competitive spirit at Vegas to Reno Time Trials.



about off-roading. You don't get to see the people you're racing against all the time. It's hard to really gauge where you're at, so you have to run your own pace. Our crew tries to do a good job communicating split times, but that's tough to do especially at Vegas to Reno. We had zero communication with our pit most of the time. So we were driving by what we could see. I know that I had Phil right in front of me; I've got his dust right there. I've got to be doing pretty good. We were pushing a pretty good pace. We were watching our mile per hour average and doing our best job, but it's always nice to get some intel too.

Mike: As an observer, it seems like you have to drive at a pace where you're fast, but you're not tearing up the car. Is that what wins races?

Vito: It is. When I first got into it, I didn't really understand how to pace myself. These guys are fast and are pushing. They might tell you different, but they're pushing to their limit. Maybe they're backing off a few percent or whatever, but they're running at that pace the entire time. At Silver State for example, we were running good, pushing pretty hard. It's hard to pass out there; there's not a



lot of opportunity for passing. Some cars pulled out in front of us in the pits, getting between us and Phil. We were all running a very similar pace with each other. He pulled away because we were working on passing guys. He was pushing, and then he had the crash. You never know what's going to happen. Once we were in the lead, the other guys started pushing harder, picking up time. The other guys were closing the gap behind us, but they had to push way harder. It's a

balancing act. Joe Terrana was closing on us, but he had to physically pass us. As long as he was behind us, we had him covered. You have to play the game.

Mike: Do you have a personal favorite as far as the races go? Do you like the short intense ones like Laughlin or the longer ones like Vegas to Reno?

Vito: I like Parker; Parker is a fun one for me.

Keeping the pace up at
Vegas to Reno.



It's pretty fun. I like running fast in the washes. That's a fun course. I do like the longer ones. The sprint races like Laughlin? They're not my favorite. They feel like track racing. I raced go karts for a long time; until I was 17. Then I quit racing for a while. I started racing late models; NASCAR style stuff on quarter and half mile tracks. Then I got into off-road racing. The short races feel like track racing again. I just don't feel like track racing anymore. I like the desert. I like getting out there and going for

long races.

Mike: Why do you race; is it the challenge, the competition or what else?

Vito: I'm an extremely competitive person. I enjoy the camaraderie of racing, but I love competing against people that share that same passion to compete. I don't just want to beat someone; I want to beat someone that was really good at what they do. Not that you

Vito splashing his way to
this year's Silver State 300
UTV Turbo Pro win.



put somebody down or anything, but it's just fun to compete. I enjoy that. I like winning. I like losing too, because that's part of learning. If you told me, hey, we guarantee you're gonna win that race because the competition is not that strong. Or, you can race over there with ten other guys who are tough competitors; I'm going to choose the tougher race; even if I lose. I would rather race where I have less chance of winning because I want to race against the best.

Mike: How much of winning is based on the car?

Vito: There are people who say that the races are won in the shop. I agree to that to some point. But you know, the quality of your car, the quality of your driving, and your crew; it's everything. Not one single thing wins the race.

Mike: What about your son? When does he become part of your racing program? Is he going to go off-road racing in the future? Or is he just going to develop his own path?

Vito: I think at his age right now, you know, kids like being like their dads. He loves off-road, but whatever direction he chooses to go, I'm going to support his direction. He doesn't have to have the same passion that I do. I just want him to be passionate about what he does, and I'll support that. It's fun to watch the kids race. I mean, don't get me wrong. I love driving. People always ask why aren't you driving a sprint car; you would murder it in a sprint car? Because then it's about me. When I take him racing, I want it to just be about him. When I go desert racing

it's about me, right? It's seven times a year, maybe eight times a year. The other 25 races are about him.

Mike: That's cool. I like that. Congratulations.

Vito: When I was running the NASCAR stuff, nobody would help you. It's just very competitive both on and off the track. Off-road is different. I feel like off-road racing is won on the course. Most people don't want to win it in in the pits, right? They will help you in the pits because they want to beat you on the course. I'll pull into my pit sometimes and there'll be other guys from other teams holding the fire extinguisher or holding the fuel hose. People just lend a hand. Hopefully our sport keeps growing. I think the UTVs are going to grow the sport. The factories are so involved. I'm not sponsored by Can-Am but there is so much they are doing for the sport. It's so funny. I have a couple of my customers that are all about having fun on UTVs. Then they come to find out that I'm in this type of racing. The next thing I know, they're like my best buddies, right? They're higher-ups in big companies and they are calling me all the time. We should go buy a car, or you need some help on your team or, you know, it's hilarious. UTVs are everywhere.

This will only be Vito's second full season in the Best in the Desert series. He went from 25th in points after three races to 4th in the points last year, and currently leads the points this year. He knows what it takes to win, and is showing it. Get used to seeing his name at the top of the standings.





Story and photos provided by
Method Race Wheels



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Heritage Series #7

Big Mac-Millin

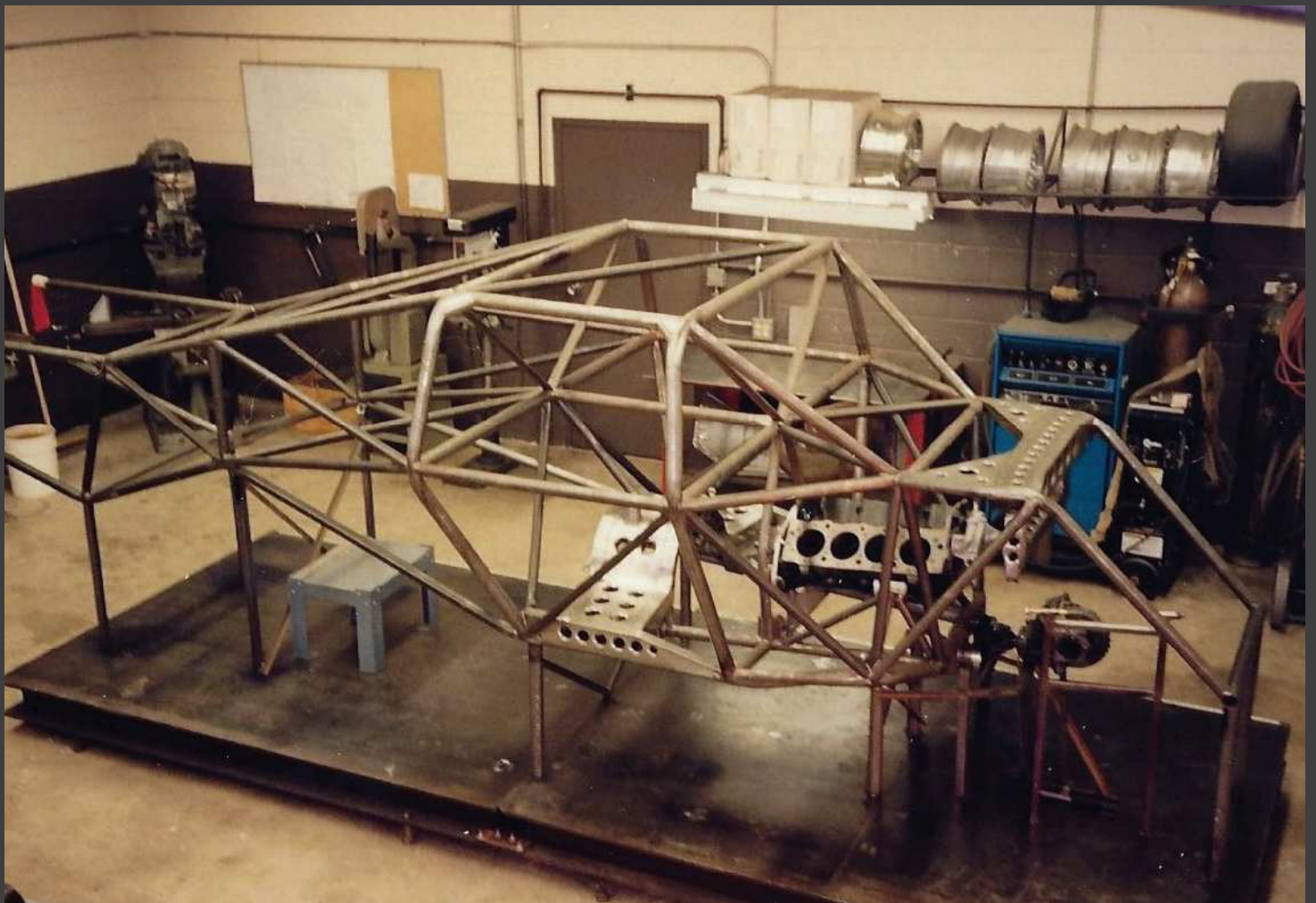
23 years ago Larry Roeseler wheeled the 4 wheel drive Team MacPherson Chevrolet to the Overall win at the 1999 Best in the Desert Vegas to Reno event. Big Mac, as the Trick Truck was affectionately named,

had shown flashes of greatness over the 2 years since the truck was introduced at the Laughlin Desert Challenge in 1996, but had never really displayed the dominance that they had hoped for.



Joe MacPherson started his infatuation with off-road racing at the 1968 Baja 1000 sponsoring a friend in a buggy. It didn't take long for the racing bug to bite and next thing you know ol' Joe was all in. Over the years Joe and longtime friend, employee, team manager, racer, fabricator Jerry McDonald would build Team MacPherson into one of the most dominate teams in off-road racing. With the help from people like Jeff Lewis, Barry Beacham and designer Bryan Kudela, Team MacPherson would rack up championships in multiple classes, mostly in the mini pickup and full-size truck classes.

Of course, 4 wheel drive isn't new to desert racing, it's actually what pretty much started off-roading. When it comes to competition the 4X4 has been very successful, and in off-road racing, highly successful in the production classes. When it comes to the highly modified classes like Unlimited Car or TT, most people stayed away from the 4X4 platform as trying to get the parts to live for 1000 miles or more seemed to be quite the chore and VERY expensive. A few teams gave it a go like Nissan in the early 90's with Frank "Scoop" Vessels but they too had many issues before Corporate pulled



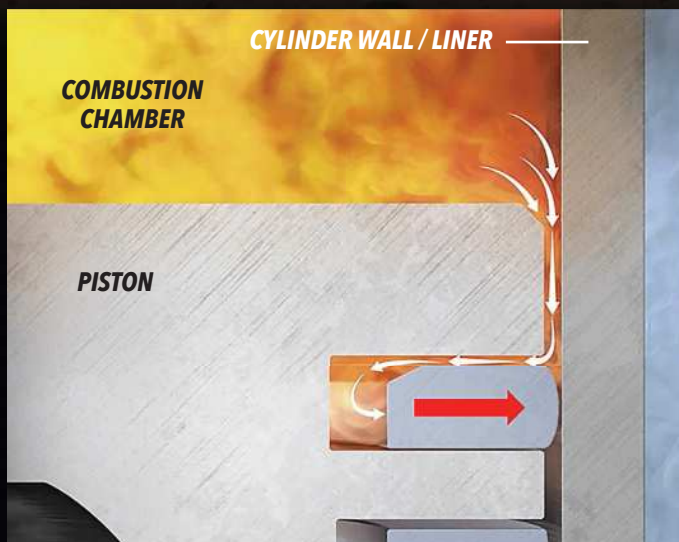


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funding on the project.

In 1994, the TT class was created and at the time Joe was content with sticking to class 7, 7-4x4 and class 8. Bryan Kudela remembers sitting around the race truck after the Baja 500 and trying to bend Joe's ear about building the ultimate TT but using 4 wheel drive instead of what everyone else was doing with 2 wheel drive vehicles. With the success over the years with their 4X4 race vehicles and the funding from GM it seemed like the next logical move. The conversation must have worked because next thing you know GM gave the green light to design and build the first 4 wheel drive for the TT class.

Bryan Kudela and Jerry McDonald would be in charge of designing the truck and were given creative freedom except GM wanted a front engine truck utilizing Bilstein shocks. The truck was designed with the 80-gallon fuel cell mounted behind the driver and co-rider to help with weight distribution. Since the fuel cell was located mid ship, the rear of the truck needed as much weight to the rear as possible so batteries, spare tires,

oil sump tank and other misc. items were mounted as far back on the truck as possible to help the truck from "kicking". Big Mac would also be one of the first trucks to run a 512 cubic inch big block engine with 800 plus horsepower. Suspension would have a whopping 25" of front wheel travel (with 50 degrees of CV angle) and 30" of rear wheel travel with its highly sophisticated cantilever suspension. The truck was enormous at 130" wheelbase and just over 20' long. It would take approximately 18 months from design on paper to the last tube welded to the chassis before the truck rolled out to its first event at Laughlin in 1996. Jeff Lewis was promoted from the class 7 4x4 Chevy S10 (Little Mac) and named the driver of the #72 Team MacPherson TT.

Things were looking good for the new truck as it won the "Laughlin Leap" jump contest the night before the race with a distance of 107', beating the next truck by 4 feet. The new truck blues would plague Big Mac for the next 2 seasons with transmission, steering and CV issues. They showed they



could run with the big boys when everything was working but something would always spoil a good run and it was back to the drawing board.

With the class 7 and class 8 still performing well out of the Team MacPherson camp, the TT was still trying to get over that hump and in 1999 it seemed like they finally got everything figured out after much input from Jeff and Jerry McDonald. Jeff was doing well in Big Mac but Joe decided to give multi-motorcycle champion Larry Roeseler a chance behind the wheel after winning a couple championships in “Little Mac”. So they switched seats.

Larry would have a great season in the TT,

winning the Primm 300 and then the highly competitive BITD Vegas to Reno event 1st Overall! Larry would also rack up a couple 2nd place finishes at the Fireworks 250 and the season ending Baja 1000.

1999 was to be the last year of the GM contract for Big Mac but Bryan Kudela wrote a strong letter to the brass at GM to give them one more year. After some thought, GM said okay and the 2000 season would be the swan song year for Big Mac. Larry Roeseler was courted over to the PPI Toyota camp to race with Ivan Stewart for the highly anticipated BITD Nevada 2000 and the Baja 2000.

Doug Fortin would step into the driver’s seat for Team MacPherson in the TT with a



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nice 2nd place finish at the season opening Laughlin Desert Challenge with little to no test time. He would have some problems at the next couple races and then the season was cut short with an accident in Barstow while testing.

Big Mac was parked in the back of the race shop for years until Carl Renezeder purchased the truck as a prerunner. A few years later it was sold to Rob Reinertson (ProTruck fame) who rebuilt the truck and raced it at a few events and now is in the process of restoring it back to its original glory.

TTs have come a long way in a short period of time. 2 wheel drive trucks were the dominate force up until about 3-4 years ago,

now it seems you almost have to have a 4 wheel drive to have a shot at winning..... ALMOST. Team MacPherson was ahead of its time with Big Mac, after overcoming the first batch of CVs that plagued the truck, they overcame those issues and showed they could run with anyone. Who's to say if they would have had a few more years of R&D to perfect the 4 wheel drive in the TT class, maybe more guys would have built 4 wheel drive trucks a lot earlier.

Funny how fast changes happen in off-road racing. If you would have told me 5 years ago that 4 wheel drive TTs would be dominating the TT class I would have asked you to lay off of the Devil's Lettuce for a while. Mason Motorsports has really done their



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homework and figured out the weakness in the 4WD system. Personally, I think one of the major advances that Mason figured out was the front portal hubs and the drivetrain.

Dan McMillin was the first in his family to go to the Mason 4 wheel drive platform and he says it was a game changer right away. The truck was purchased from Jesse Jones after a stellar performance by Nasser Al-Attayah/Toby Price finishing 2nd at the 2019 Baja 1000. Testing started almost immediately at the “McMillin loop” in Plaster City and results showed he was making up 30 to 60 seconds (if not more) going from his old truck to the new 4WD. “They’re deceiving how fast they are, and the quicker exit speed adds up for all the corners, plus the 0-60 is MUCH faster obviously”. Dan is a true believer in the Mason platform, and I guess you could say the rest of the McMillin family including brother Luke and cousin Andy think the

same way. Dan was finally able to put to rest his string of 4th place finishes and ALL the memes that came along with it at the 2020 Baja 500. He beat a stacked field of TTs in his “new-to-him” 4WD Mason in convincing fashion on his way to his first TT win.

It will be interesting to see Dan behind the wheel at the Best In The Desert Vegas to Reno event, wheeling that familiar livery of one of the very best off road teams to ever complete, Team MacPherson and the Big Mac colors. 23 years ago, Larry Roeseler won Vegas to Reno in Big Mac, is it a coincidence that the #23 Dan McMillin Mason truck is running the Big Mac colors for Vegas to Reno? Ask me on August 14th.

Editor’s note: Dan McMillin finish 4th in the Trick Truck class. Only seventeen minutes behind the overall winner.

SPECS

Chassis: Mason Motorsports AWD

Wheels: Development version of 18" 207 Forged Bead Grip Wheel

Tires: BFGoodrich 40" KR3

Engine: Big Block Chevy, 555ci, built by Kroyer Racing Engines. 1100HP, 850 TQ

Gear Box: X Trac, 5 Speed Sequential, paddle shifted

Front Diff / Transfer Case: Mason Motorsports

Suspension: Fox Shocks, tuned and serviced by SDG Suspension.

24" travel up front and 30" in rear.

Steering: Steering Box by Power Steering Solutions.

Cooling: Radiator, Oil coolers and heat exchanger by CBR Products

Brakes: 6 piston caliper, Brembo Brakes

Body: Walker Industries Carbon

Paint: Lil Michael's Customs



Check out Big Mac-Millin in action here.



SAFETY FIRST

WHY WE NEED TO CONTINUE TO EVOLVE

By David Nehrbass



This month our Safety First article is a little different than most, as we focus on a very rough last week in off-road racing. While injuries and death are not uncommon in our sport, the loss of life in single vehicle accidents is rare. Yet for various reasons, four racers lost their lives in three separate accidents, with three separate off-road series, in three separate classes of vehicles, in three different areas of the world.

We won't be focusing on their injuries, causes of death or accident specifics in this quarter's issue, but will

be reviewing all of that later as it is always important to learn whatever we can in every situation to continue to make improvements. All three of these incidents are still open investigations by the agencies they happened in as well as the racing series that sanction them. It is crucial that the information is reviewed methodically to not only eliminate knee jerk reactions, but to ensure vital pieces of the puzzle are reviewed.

Instead today, we will just give a brief focus on the racers we lost.



**CJ Glover,
Bonneville Off-
Road Racing,
Knolls Utah**

CJ Glover was in his first off road-

race ever and was co-driver to Carson Pyle at the Bonneville Off-Road Racing (BORR) event in Knolls Utah on August 27th, 2022. Just 15 minutes into the start of the race, CJ and Carson were in a single vehicle rollover. Carson walked away uninjured while CJ's life was lost. Both were wearing the proper safety gear including ratchet 5-point belts, helmets with Head and Neck Restraints, and fire suits in Sparco Containment seats, in a constantly inspected vehicle that showed minimal damage from the impact.

CJ's passing at just 33 years old leaves behind a beautiful family including his wife Janessa, his son Charlie, and daughter Stevie along with countless other extended family. By all standards, CJ lived an incredible life learning numerous skills and pursuing passions. From formal ballet training to accomplished professional pilot, CJ lived a full life. He spent time in numerous sports and was known to succeed at anything he put his mind to.



**Zandy Willems,
Ultra 4 USA,
Crandon Raceway**

Races at
"The Big House"
known as Crandon

Raceway have a long-storied history within the sport of off-road racing. Zandy was starting alongside numerous other vehicles in a land rush start under the lights on Saturday, September 3rd. Zandy was involved in a rollover on lap 1 as the vehicles all jockeyed for position just ½ mile off the start. While all the competitors that started alongside were able to avoid hitting Zandy as he tumbled, he still suffered critical injuries and passed away as a result of those injuries. Zandy was in a well-built 4400 Rock Racer vehicle and was equipped with the typical required safety equipment including Helmets, Neck Restraint, Belts and Fire Suit.

Zandy was well known in the Ultra 4 world and will be greatly missed. He leaves behind his wife, son and daughter as well as was soon to be a grandfather.

LAUGHLIN, NV WEEKEND WORTHY

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Gerry Hoekstra

**Gerry Hoekstra
and Ede Taric,
Motosports
Australia, Rainbow
Desert Enduro**

Halfway around the world in Australia, Racers Gerry Hoekstra and Ede Taric strapped into their Can-Am X3 to compete in the Rainbow Desert Enduro on Sunday, September 4th. 46 year old Gerry was the driver with 50



Ede Taric

year old Ede by his side navigating when their vehicle veered off the road and struck a tree. The vehicle burst into flames and both men were lost. Both were very experienced in numerous forms of motorsports and were wearing all required safety gear at the time they crashed.

There were a few common threads in all these incidents this last week:

- They all were single vehicle accidents.
- They all were wearing the required safety gear that everyone else wears each and

every race no matter where they race.

- All the race vehicles were built to rigid Tech Specification for the series they raced in.
- They all will be greatly missed.

As a team that focuses on safety for racing organizations, we strive to understand what could have been different. We are trying to learn more about each situation so that we can re-evaluate the race series and teams that we support and know if improvements need to be made. While Injuries and death are part of the risk of motorsports in general, the unusual nature in which four lives were lost in three accidents is a big anomaly in our sport.

In the coming months as investigations are concluded and more information becomes available, we will talk about these incidents in greater detail. We owe it to the families, the race teams and the promoters to learn from these accidents. We owe it to CJ, Zandy, Gerry and Ede to ensure we are continuing to evolve our sport and improve our race programs.



New EIBACH 2021-2022 Ford Bronco 4DR Coilovers



Now Available for the 2021+ Ford Bronco, Eibach's new PRO-TRUCK-LIFT (Stage 2) coilovers provide up to 4" of lift and the perfect balance of off-road performance and control. With consideration to the Bronco's capable chassis, it was our priority to maximize performance, ride quality and lift on all trim levels. Height adjustable threaded bodies allow you to easily dial in ride heights to fit larger tires and increase ground clearance.



Eibach's in-house development and manufacturing gives us the ability to fine-tune the combination of spring and shock performance. Using progressive coil spring design, our solution delivers optimal suspension travel. In addition to as much as 4" inches of lift*, each shock features extended monotube design and variable force valving to deliver control during on-road transit and compliance for maximum traction on the trails. All made by Eibach in the USA.

- Pre-assembled for direct bolt-on installation
- Utilizes our ERO Championship proven Off-Road racing springs
- Designed to work with factory control arms for an increase in height without accelerated wear to ball joints and bushings
- Developed specifically to provide a balanced ride quality on and off-road
- Made by Eibach in the USA

* heights vary per trim level, see application listing for measurements.

Click for more Information:

[Eibach.com](https://www.eibach.com)

LTA Introduces New Matte Black Truck Cap Paint Options



Two new striking Matte Black truck cap paint options are now available from LTA Manufacturing, the forward-thinking company offering a comprehensive line of trucks caps and tonneau covers. The Smooth or Textured Matte Black finishes add a distinctive touch to any cap. The Matte Black paint option is available on truck cap models from Ranch, ATC and Jason.

- Available in Smooth or Textured Finish
- Great for that Rugged Look
- Matches Any Color Truck

LTA Manufacturing is a dominant force in the light truck accessory category. LTA provides leading designs and innovative features, expanded manufacturing capabilities, with premium quality. Choose from quality truck caps, tonneau covers, cargo management systems, heavy duty commercial caps and more. LTA brands include Ranch Fiberglass, Jason Caps, ATC Truck Covers, Mountain Top and LoadMaster.

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PARTING SHOT

After taking the top spot in Time Trails, Bryce Menzies was first off the line on race day and was running a perfect race until multiple flats slowed his pace. He still manage to take second overall for all vehicles finishing eight minutes behind race winner Ryan Arciero.

Photo by Bink Designs

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