

SCORE JOURNAL

INTERNATIONAL OFF-ROAD RACING



THE NAVIGATORS

SECRETS FROM THE RIGHT HAND SEAT

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF

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DAN SANCHEZ
EDITOR

NAVIGATORS RAISING THE BAR

BY DAN SANCHEZ

In this issue, we spoke to several navigators in various classes about the changing roles for this position in the righthand seat. What we

learned from them is that vehicle speeds have increased in many of these classes, and because of this, the accuracy and ability to call out turns and obstacles in advance require much more focus for navigators. In many cases, drivers are moving so fast along the desert that they are almost driving blind at some points on the course, relying on the skills and intuition of their navigators.

We also learned that knowledge of the vehicle, what it does in certain circumstances, and how a driver will react, is also a part of what navigators must add to their skillset in order to compete at the highest levels. We were lucky enough to speak to navigators like Oren Anderson, Kyle Craft, Jason Duncan, Mike Diorio, Emma Cornwell, and Hailey Hein, all navigators with different perspectives. One thing they all had in common was a family history in off-road racing and a love for being in the righthand seat.

A special thanks to Jack Wright at nMedia3 for his effort to create this issue's cover and get portrait shots of some of the navigators before they headed off to Ensenada, Mexico for the SCORE Baja 400. As I'm writing this, four of the six navigators we interviewed for this issue finished first in their class at the race. Our congratulations to Bryce Menzies and Oren Anderson for winning Overall for the fourth time in a row. Our SCORE Journal team of writers is currently interviewing racers and teams from the SCORE Baja 400, and we will have full coverage and exclusive stories in our next issue.



SCORE JOURNAL

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PUBLISHED BY
SCORE MARKETING LLC
465 South Meadows Parkway
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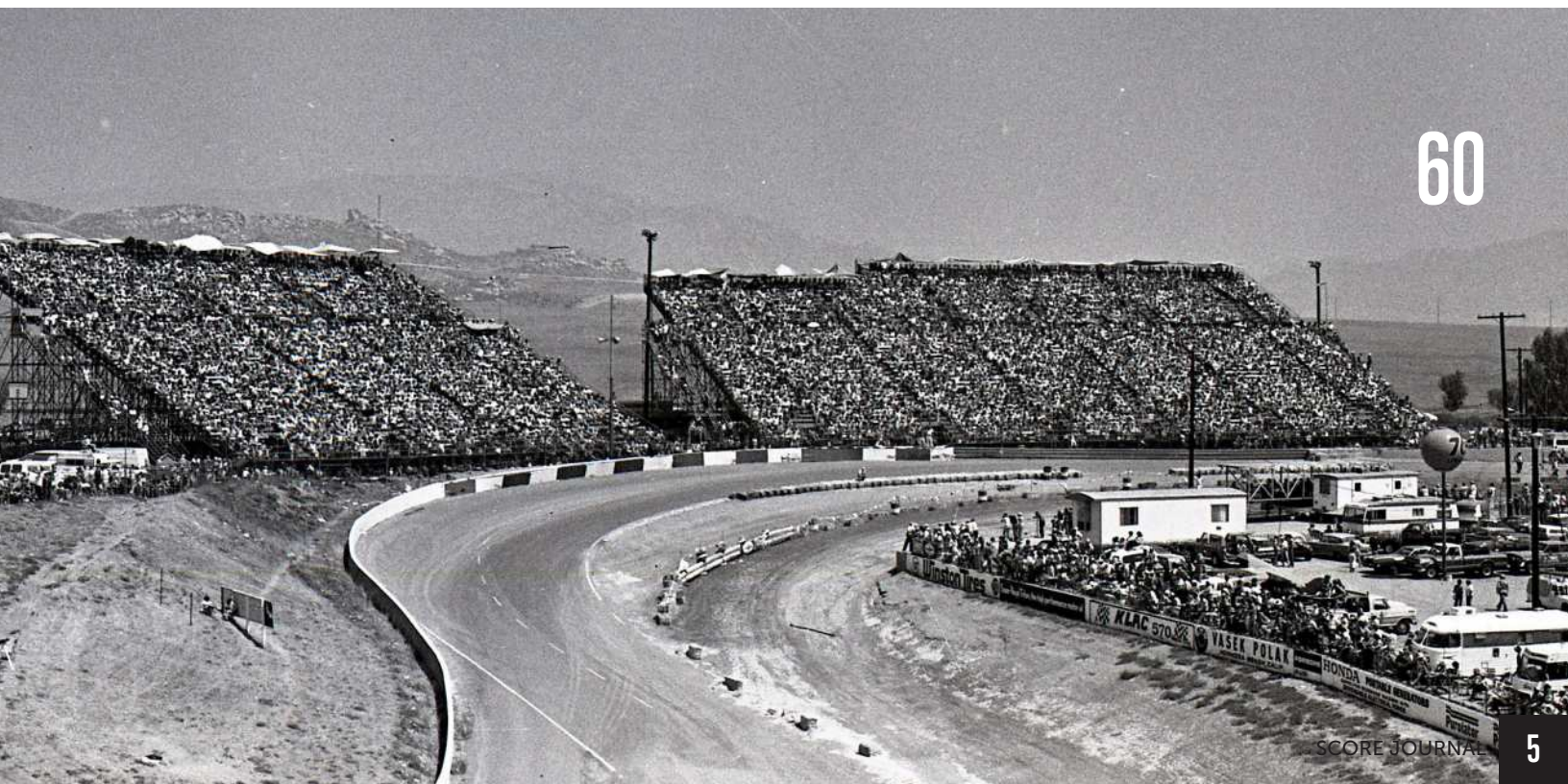
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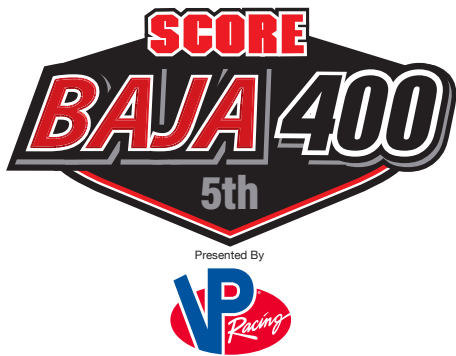


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BRYCE MENZIES WINS OVERALL AT 5TH SCORE BAJA 400

After an exciting week in Ensenada, Baja California, Bryce Menzies won the overall in the 5th SCORE Baja 400, presented by VP Racing. In the SCORE Pro Moto Unlimited class, Justin Morgan and Tyler Lynn of the Slam Life Racing team were the overall motorcycle winners.

Other exciting news from the race included Gustavo Vildósola Sr. and Ricky Johnson in the 1L SCORE TT Legend class, winning their 11th consecutive class win. In the SCORE Pro UTV Open class, Cayden MacCachren with the SCI Motorsports Factory Polaris team has won every race this season, along with last year's SCORE Baja 1000, giving him and the team its fourth class win in a row!

More racing action from the 5th SCORE Baja 400 Presented by VP Racing, including exclusive interviews, photography, video and more will be presented in the October issue of SCORE Journal Magazine.



SCORE "SURVIVING BAJA" SHOW LAUNCHES ON TUBI, APPLE TV AND ROKU

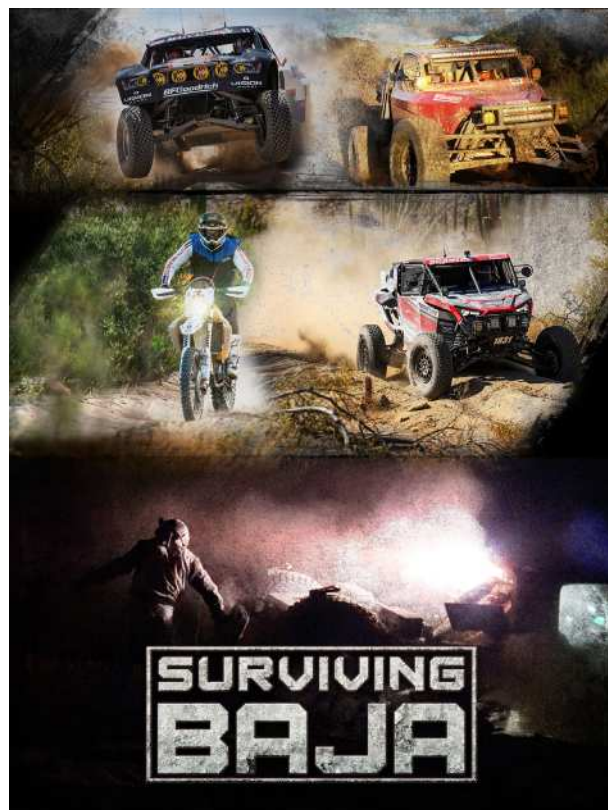
SCORE International launched the four episodes of a new docuseries called "Surviving Baja." This four episode program follows the fast-paced and high adrenaline sport of SCORE Off-Road Racing during the SCORE 50th Anniversary 2023 Season.

The series captures all of the emotions from drivers, teams, and crew from a variety of classes from their personal point of view. The show demonstrates the enormous sacrifices and demands of racing at the highest levels, and gives viewers a unique perspective of all the technical and strategic aspects necessary for competing in the world's toughest off-road racing events.

The first four episodes are now live on the TUBI channel (78M monthly viewers), Apple TV (53 million audience), and Roku (83.6 million subscribers), showcasing the first race of the SCORE Season, the SCORE San Felipe 250 in episode one. Episode two follows racers in their effort and work that goes into competing in the SCORE Baja 500. Episode three focuses on the drama and set-up during the SCORE Baja 400, all in an effort to get the best starting position for the biggest race of the season, the SCORE Baja 1000 in episode four.

TUBI is the most watched free TV and movie streaming service in the U.S. TUBI boasted 78 million active monthly viewers and streamed more than 8.5 billion hours of programming.

Watch all four episodes on TUBI here: <https://tubitv.com/series/300013115/surviving-baja>



VP RACING COLLABORATES WITH SHREDDY LYFE FOR A NEW APPAREL LINE

VP Racing Fuels, Inc., a global leader in performance fuels, lubricants, and additives, and Shreddy Lyfe, an action sports lifestyle apparel brand, announced today that they have collaborated on the VP Racing X Shreddy "Mix It!" collection of apparel.

Pacific Swell Brands, VP Racing's exclusive licensing agency, brokered this licensing partnership.

"VP Racing actively collaborates with other creative marketers, and it's an extra bonus when that marketer is also a prominent race driver like Blake Wilkey, a loyal user of our world-class fuel," said Bob Merz, Director of Brand Management and Licensing for VP Racing.

"Shreddy Lyfe and its heavily engaged social media fanbase, with millions of views of their wild videos on YouTube, make for the perfect collaboration for VP."

The collaboration is kicking off with a VP Racing X Shreddy snapback hat and a t-shirt in 2 colors. "VP Racing makes us go fast, so why not look fast? 'Shred Til You're Dead,'" says Blake Wilkey, co-founder of Shreddy Lyfe and professional racing athlete known for his fearless driving style and impressive off-road racing skills.

The VP Racing X Shreddy "Mix It" collection is sold exclusively at shreddylyfe.com/collections/mix-it. For more information about VP and its products for racers, enthusiasts, and general consumers, visit VPRacingFuels.com.



SCORE MOURNS PASSING OF AUTOMOTIVE ICON ALEX XYDIAS

Industry icon Alex Xydias passed away at age 102, and his innovative accomplishments across many areas of the automotive industry will be sadly missed. Xydias is most known for his SO-CAL Speed Shops, as well as the first person to reach 200 mph on the Bonneville Salt Flats, but Xydias also has a place in SCORE history.

He helped Mickey Thompson start the SCORE Show in 1978 and led it to a successful 20-year run. Xydias' experience in helping to start the Specialty Equipment Market Association show SEMA, led Thompson to want the off-road industry to have its own show.

The SCORE Show opened on February 1st 1978 and continued successfully until 1988, when Xydias retired at age 65. The show helped launch many off-road racing and accessory manufacturers. Without Xydias and his wife Helen running the program, Mickey Thompson didn't think the show would do well so he sold it to a publishing company.

Xydias will be remembered as one of the innovators in the automotive industry and SCORE is grateful for his help involvement. His legacy will continue to influence automotive enthusiasts for years to come.



NAVIGATOR SPECIAL SECTION

INTERVIEWS • TOOLS OF THE TRADE



JACK WRIGHT NMEEDIA3

KYLE CRAFT

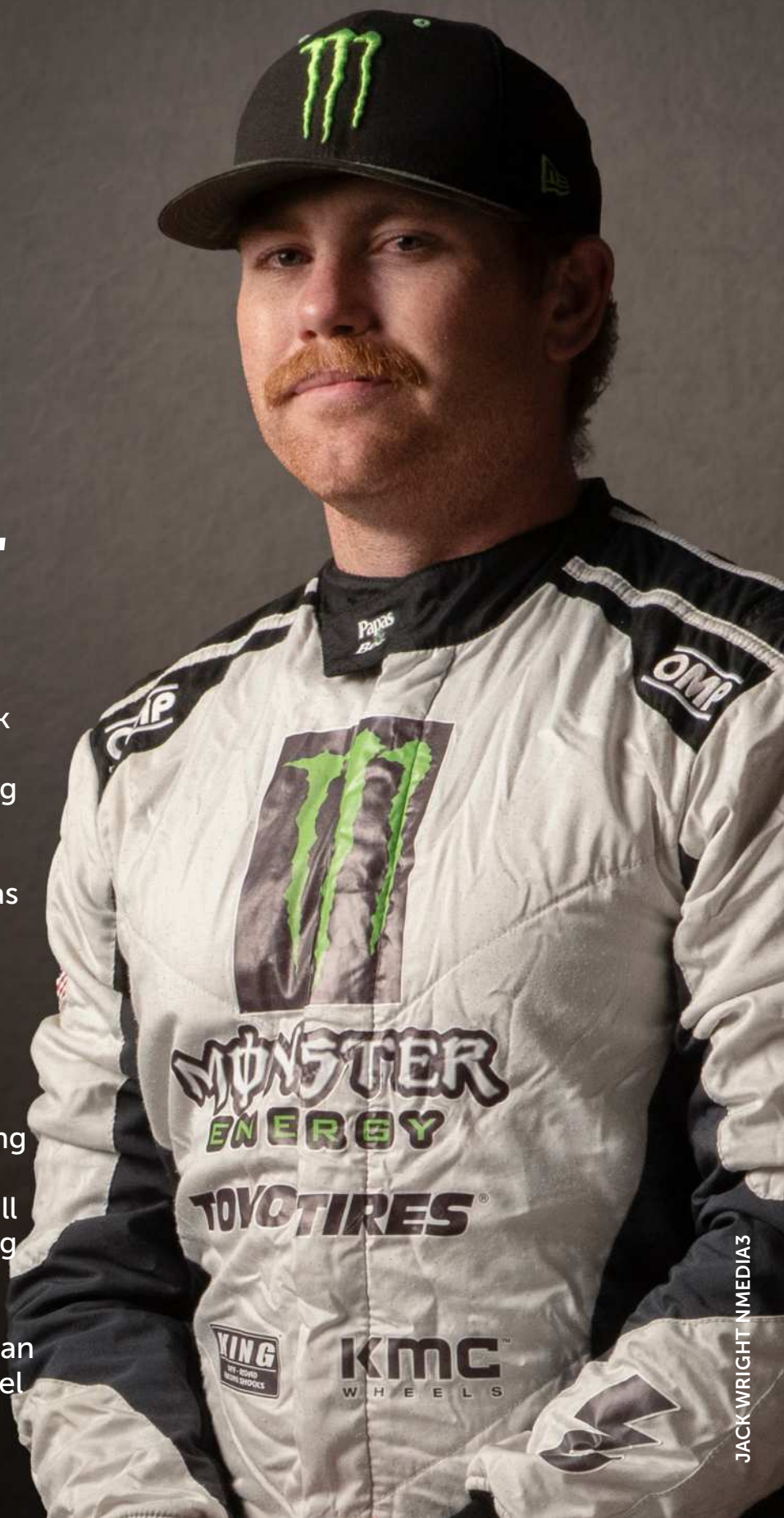
NAVIGATING AT A HIGHER LEVEL

BY DAN SANCHEZ

PHOTOS BY GET SOME PHOTO

Being a navigator for one of the top SCORE Trophy Truck teams requires more than calling out turns and plotting obstacles from a GPS. Kyle Craft, navigator for Alan Ampudia and the Ampudia Racing Team, has taken navigation to the next level with his unique philosophy.

Unlike most navigators, Craft believes being in the right-hand seat involves more than knowing how to plot obstacles and speed zones. He says it's about combining the knowledge of driving, understanding how the vehicle will react in certain situations, knowing the terrain, and how well he and the driver communicate. This all combines, in his mind, to analyze an outcome and provide a higher level of precision note-calling.



JACK WRIGHT / NMEEDIA3

“I don’t think anybody is calling out navigation notes the way I am, as far as how many and how aggressive,” says Craft. “I’ve listened to a lot of other guys who I respect, but I think my note calling is some of the most precise, but it’s also very taxing.” Focusing on the task is most important, and Craft says that during most races he doesn’t even know where he is on the course. “Most of the day I’m not looking up. The other side to it is that I study every driver. I know what the plays are. I know what the plans are, and I can give my driver the best analysis possible of what’s about to happen next, or what we need to do over the next 50 to 100 miles, based on who’s ahead or behind us.”

A GREAT FOUNDATION

According to Craft, no book or school teaches you what he has learned from years of experience and thousands of miles logged. “It started when my dad, Mike Craft was with Cameron Steele and the Desert Assassins team,” he said. “Cameron’s

**AFTER RACING WITH JAMES DEAN IN CLASS 1,
CRAFT MOVED OVER TO BJ BALDWIN’S TEAM,
BRINGING THEM GREAT SUCCESS**





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To pay homage to the Maverick community and their unique customizations, the refreshed exterior features a stylish front grille, painted rocker molding and custom 19-inch wheels. On the interior, you'll see eclectic, graffiti-inspired overprint, and "Lobo" embossing on the driver's and passenger seats.

"Maverick owners have customized their trucks in all sorts of ways," explained Josh Blundo, Ford Maverick designer. "It got us thinking: What if we did some of the heavy lifting to make it even easier for owners to take their build to the next level?"

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other driver Pat Dean (son of ORMHOF Inductee Butch Dean), and my dad were friends so that's how the connection started. Pat's son James called me out for a Class 1 race and we hit it off. It was here that I learned the basis. That was around 2018. After a decent-sized crash at the Silver State 300 in 2019, my dad decided I should have my own truck to drive. I was trained by Ricky Johnson and in time, I began to do well in the states and won several races and championships."

Afterward, Craft caught the attention of BJ Baldwin, who asked him to be on the team and navigate. "I can't say that we hit it off at first, but we had a lot of great success, earning another championship and multiple wins," said Craft. "But we did so well that I eventually ended up running his entire program from top to bottom."

It was during his time with Baldwin that Craft picked up new language skills while navigating, a result of BJ's wanting to use rally racing notations.

"When BJ hired me to be his navigator, he was already switched on to rally-style notes. I believe he was probably one of the first pioneers to implement them in off-road racing. But the level of detail hadn't been matched before. So as we were coming up on different situations, I had to learn his level of calling out notes and in detail. Over time we developed a system where he knew exactly what I was saying and didn't have to think about it."

Craft continued to hone these skills and applied them to whomever wanted him to navigate for them during a race. "I know what I want when I'm driving, so I can set very high standards for myself in that regard. I don't believe a lot of navigators can say they also have that many miles driving, but even so, not many understand what the driver is going through. So when navigating, my position is to provide the highest precision note calling as well as a thorough race analysis."

CHANGING TIRES AND MORE

The belief is that many drivers want someone well-rounded, a navigator and a mechanic when something happens on the course. For Craft, that's the wrong type of person to have in the right-hand seat. "It's a different game these days," says Craft. "Yeah, back in the early 2000s, even up to 2010, a navigator could change the transmission and still win a race like the SCORE Baja 1000. You could have five flats and still win it. But that isn't the case anymore."

Craft has seen vehicle speeds increase, fewer breakdowns, and because of this, the level of racing has become so high that teams making the least amount of

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FOR MYSELF IN
THAT REGARD**

- KYLE CRAFT

mistakes are usually winning. "Now, we're looking at seconds splitting teams apart in the top three in most of these races. So yes, there are still drivers that want mechanics in their cars, but I'm not that guy. And if you want that guy, I don't believe you're actually in contention to win," says Craft.

"Just because I know how to fix a transmission doesn't mean we can win anymore. I believe that if you're not about winning, you just want to be always finishing. At the level we're in now, if you come to a situation where you have to change transmission, you should already know that you're not going to win, right? So it doesn't matter how good of a mechanic your navigator is. That is why the level of navigating has to be much higher. This is especially true in classes where speeds and the vehicles are at the highest level of off-road racing, because it's here when your mistakes have more consequences."



CRAFT WENT TO WORK FULL-TIME FOR THE AMPUDIA TEAM IN 2023 RACING THE SCORE BAJA 400 AND 1000 THAT YEAR

RIDING WITH FLAKA FAST

In 2021, Craft was called by the Ampudia team to replace long-time navigator Steve Covey. "Alan needed someone for the SCORE Baja 400 that year because Steve had broken his wrist or something," says Craft. I came out, and we honestly did great together."

In 2023, Ampudia called Craft to join the team permanently, starting with that year's SCORE Baja 400 and Baja 1000 races. "With Alan, I think, we have taken navigation to an even higher level with his knowledge of the terrain in Mexico. He's a guy that knows every rock and every corner, but I'm still saying everything to keep them in the chase," says Craft. "So with Alan, it all developed further, and this advanced type of navigation language is something that no school is going to teach you. You can understand what 'Right Four' means all day long, but you have to learn to realize that it can mean 30 different things to 30 different drivers."

Ampudia is one of those racers who loves the spotlight and has a huge fanbase. Nicknaming himself Flaka Fast, Ampudia has crowds lining up for a photo and signing thousands of autographs at a race. He is a true showman but is also serious about being one of the top racers in the sport. All the attention, however, doesn't deter Craft from doing his job. "Coming from BJ's team, I was exposed to a huge level of fan and sponsor stardom," he says. "Alan is huge in Mexico and approachable. He genuinely wants to spend time with his fans. It's something I appreciate."

CRAFT AND AMPUDIA GOT THEIR FIRST WIN TOGETHER AT THE 2024 SCORE SAN FELIPE 250



"I can't say enough good things about the family. They treat me like I'm one of their own. All three brothers (Alan, Aaron, Rodrigo Jr.) are so well put together. It's not often you see a family that comes from what I would call a decent social status, who have thriving children that aren't pretentious or mean. These guys work their asses off, and I respect that because that's what I do. Putting in the most effort is what I have always looked for in a team, and they bring that. Any suggestions I have, they always listen."

The 2024 SCORE season began with Craft and Ampudia taking their first win together at the SCORE San Felipe 250. "Alan and I are in the infancy of a relationship, and we're already winning. We're hoping to get more podium finishes this season," says Craft.

As he continues to hone his abilities, Craft will demonstrate how navigators performing at a higher level can improve a team's performance. "My dad believed you can control the vehicle much better from the right-hand seat than the driver," said Craft. "It's like a chess game, not about moving your hands real fast and getting all the glory. It's all about putting all these pieces together and solving the problem, and that's what the navigator does." **SJ**

**I CAN'T SAY
ENOUGH GOOD
THINGS ABOUT
THE FAMILY.
THEY TREAT ME
LIKE I'M ONE
OF THEIR OWN.**

- KYLE CRAFT



JASON DUNCAN

LUKE MCMILLIN'S CO-DRIVER HAS ALL THE RIGHT MOVES

BY STUART BOURDON

PHOTOS BY GET SOME PHOTO

Jason Duncan knows off-road racing inside and out. He's one of the guys behind Suspension Development Group (SDG), so when he is not in the right-hand seat for Luke McMillin, he's out in the desert working with teams to get their suspension systems dialed in. "I'm in a truck two or three times a week with our customers," says Duncan. "We work with all the top drivers, and most of the Mason AWD trucks running today. We also work with 20 to 30 SCORE TT Spec truck teams and 15 or 20 Class 10 car teams."

Along with tuning and navigating, Duncan has driving experience as well. "In 2009, I built a 1450-style

JACK WRIGHT N MEDIA 3

Ford Ranger and won the class championship but realized racing costs a lot of money. I loved it, but I didn't enjoy breaking things or paying for it," he said. "The next year, I started navigating for Jason McNeil. I love driving but I couldn't do what the top guys can do with the consistency and precision they have with these trucks. But after all these years, I can usually tell when something's about to go wrong with a suspension setup before it goes wrong."

IT'S JUST LIKE DANCING

When it comes to navigating for Luke McMillin, Duncan spends a lot of time pre-running. "Luke and I usually do our pre-running about two weeks before most of the races," says Duncan. "For the SCORE Baja 1000, it can depend upon where it's going and how much we have already run in the past. If there's a lot of new stuff, we'll spend about a month. But we'll see everything six to seven times before race day. And that's a lot of taking and confirming notes. It's repetitive, going through the motions over and over again, but for the co-driver and driver, it's kind of like dancing."

DUNCAN HAS HAD GREAT SUCCESS WITH LUKE MCMILLIN INCLUDING WINNING THE 2023 SCORE WDC CHAMPIONSHIP





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“You practice before you dance, and you keep practicing until the show starts. On race day, it’s all about hitting your marks, keeping your driver level-headed, and giving them the right information. But you have to adjust to each driver. I’ve ridden with a lot of different drivers, and Luke is a quiet driver. He doesn’t talk unless it gets to a point where we’re in the hunt and I’m talking back and forth on the radio with our crews too much. He can tell I’m distracted and needs me to focus.”

For GPS and note-taking, Duncan says he’s old school. I use a Lowrance and type on the Lowrance. However, Rob MacCachren likes to use a LeadNav system. I was co-driver for the last two SCORE Baja 1000s with Rob, and then Luke when he took the wheel for the last half of the race. Rob takes his own notes, and the LeadNav system talks to him. For the first half of the race, I was just sitting there while Rob listened to the system giving him basic GPS directions like Google Maps.”

SECONDS BETWEEN WINNING AND NOT

Vehicles and speeds have improved all across various classes and to win, Duncan believes it requires new tactics. “The trucks have become so fast and so competitive in the last few years that races are won or lost by a matter of seconds,” says Duncan.

DUNCAN NAVIGATED THE ENTIRE RACE FOR BOTH MCMILLIN AND ROB MACCACHREN IN THE EPIC 2022 SCORE BAJA 1000 TEAM WIN



“With the introduction of so many speed zones – we call it ‘speed zone racing’ – it’s become even more stressful for drivers and navigators.”

“We have a speed indicator in the truck, like a dial that I can set in two mph increments up or down. In the speed zones, we’re trying to stay within that 37-mph limit, as close as we can. At the last (2023) SCORE Baja 1000 one of the speed zones was 60 miles long, and that can get frustrating, but it’s not worth pushing it so far that you get a speed-zone penalty because that can cost you the race.”

Duncan rode the entire 2023 Baja 1000 race with Rob and Luke, and the win would have been Luke’s fourth SCORE Baja 1000 in a row. “We had no speed zone penalties, and we had a near-perfect race, but in the end, it came down to a difference of just 78 seconds in elapsed time. With split times that close, the driver and co-driver have to be well-connected and communicate on almost a telepathic level. There have been times when I think Luke said something to me, and he thought he said it too, but Luke never actually said it out loud.” **SJ**



OREN ANDERSON

BRYCE MENZIES' CO-DRIVER IS PART OF THE TEAM'S WINNING FORMULA

STORY BY STUART BOURDON
PHOTOGRAPHY: GET SOME PHOTO

Unless you're deeply involved in off-road racing, you probably don't know who Oren Anderson is. That's the way it is with navigators. They may stand atop the vehicle with the driver, awash in champagne when the race has been won, but often the camera and microphone are in front of the driver when it comes time to tell how they got to the finish line first.

There are some navigators, however, who stand out among the crowd. Anderson is one of those. He began prepping trucks and doing some navigating at Riviera



JACK WRIGHT/NMEDIA3

ANDERSON HAS BEEN NAVIGATING FOR BRYCE MENZIES SINCE 2018 RACKING MANY RACE VICTORIES



Racing from 2003 to 2007. He worked with Casey Currie for about 10 years and raced with Justin Smith and Tracy Graff for two seasons. Anderson was offered the co-driver seat with Bryce Menzies in 2018 and has been part of the team ever since.

"I heard he didn't have a committed navigator and was looking around," said Anderson. "The Menzies team was getting ready to pre-run the SCORE Baja 1000. Bryce asked me to come down for one of the sections to see how it goes. We clicked right away."

"From that point on, we just kept getting stronger together. Bryce is so fast. It motivated me to become faster and better at my job. I want to be able to deliver at the same level he does. I'm feeding Bryce course information and updates so that he always knows what's ahead of him, and tire changes are being done in 45 seconds. It helps keep us up front with consistently good finishes."

QUALIFYING SETS THE PACE

As a multi-race winner and the only driver to win SCORE's "Grand Slam," winning all four of SCORE's current races, (SCORE San Felipe 250, Baja 500, Baja 400, and Baja 1000), Bryce Menzies and the team have always been out front setting the pace for the SCORE Trophy Truck class. "Often it's qualifying that determines the pace for how busy your day's going to be from the right seat," says Anderson. "One of the most important responsibilities of a co-driver is delivering the information the driver needs to know at that specific point in the race – what's coming and what to expect next so they can run the pace that they want to race."

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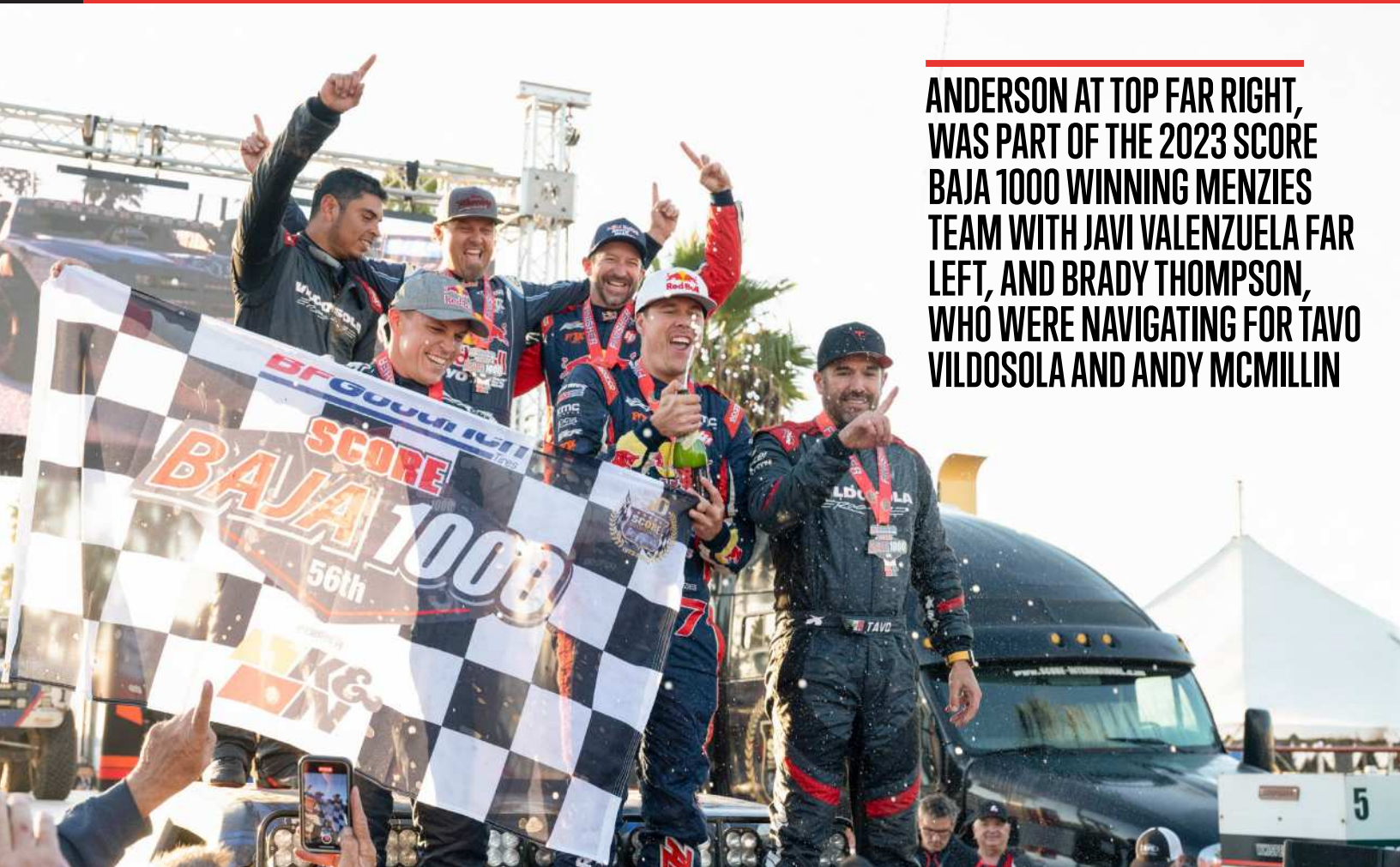
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ANDERSON AT TOP FAR RIGHT, WAS PART OF THE 2023 SCORE BAJA 1000 WINNING MENZIES TEAM WITH JAVI VALENZUELA FAR LEFT, AND BRADY THOMPSON, WHO WERE NAVIGATING FOR TAVO VILDOSOLA AND ANDY MCMILLIN

“Qualifying well and having less dust is a big help. When you are farther back, and visibility is bad, you have to keep your eyes on the GPS and try to maintain a fast pace with just your notes because you can’t see anything ahead or around you. This is when you can get surprised. Dust or no dust, Bryce is always focused on driving, so the game becomes one of relaying course information second by second to him, while at the same time providing accurate information to our crews about the truck’s performance and our position on the course.”

If spare parts are needed, Anderson is the one who lets the crews know where and when those parts are needed. There’s a lot of information juggling going on, as well as details on two completely different levels. According to Anderson, the co-driver must deliver vehicle locations, conditions, and possible needs to the crew, all while relaying racecourse information to the driver.

HIGHER SPEEDS, HIGHER RISKS

Anderson admitted that as SCORE Trophy Trucks get faster, the driver’s and co-driver’s jobs become more difficult. “The pace is so much faster now that little mistakes are happening more often because we’re going so much faster. We’re getting to spots on the course faster than we can anticipate as a navigator. If you take your eyes off the GPS for more than a few seconds in a high-pace scenario, your chances of having something bad happen grow exponentially.”



“We’ve been bitten a few times in different situations because our speeds are so high there’s no time to react. Things have changed a lot in the 20-plus years I’ve been in the right-hand seat. It used to be a reward to ride in a SCORE Trophy Truck and you might have a few hundred notes. It’s still a thrill, but now the top teams have between 3,000 and 5,000 waypoints in the GPS for every race.”

Of his ever more demanding role, Anderson was clear, “a navigator has to be able to juggle the GPS, keep one eye on the notes, and the other eye on what’s ahead. I’ve always enjoyed the team aspect of the driver/navigator partnership and am perfectly suited for the right-hand seat in one of the fastest SCORE Trophy Trucks driven by one of the fastest drivers in off-road racing.” **SJ**

MIKE DIORIO

BAJA SAVVY IN A TOP CLASS 1 BUGGY

BY LARRY SAAVEDRA

PHOTOS BY GET SOME PHOTO

Mike Diorio is no stranger to the Baja Peninsula. As the son of veteran Baja off-road racer Joe Diorio, he says the family has been racing in Mexico since 1973.

So when RPI Racing's Cody Reid in the No. 168 SCORE Class 1 AWD buggy was looking for an experienced navigator who knew "the lay of the land" Diorio was at the top of the list. "I've been Baja savvy my entire life," he said. "It's in my blood. We have a house and a bed and breakfast in Baja, and I know the terrain well."

Diorio has been the primary navigator for Reid for the past four years, and before that, he was racing



his own SCORE Class 7 truck. “Cody and I clicked immediately, and it only gets better each season. His Class 1 car is amazing.”

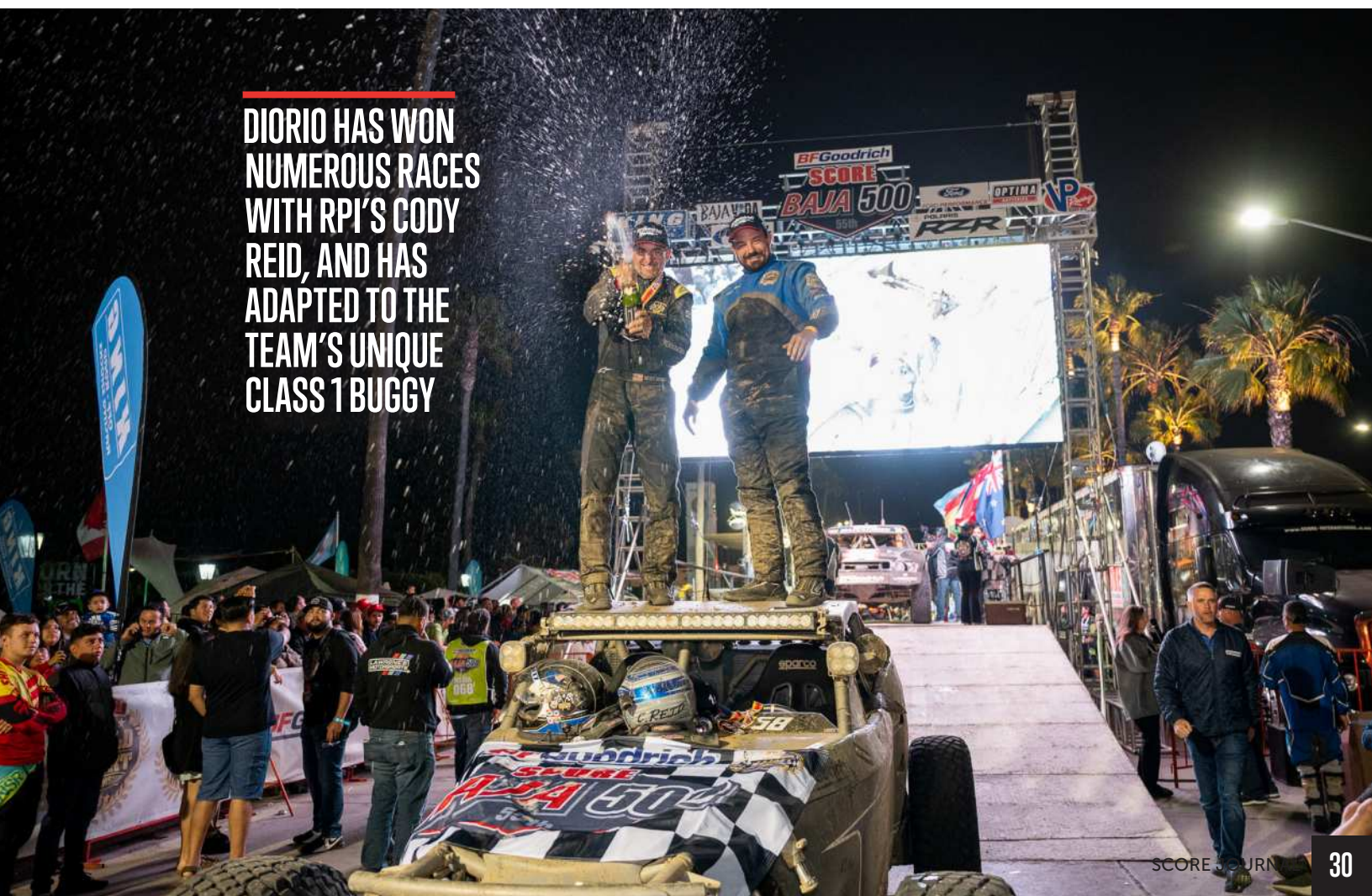
Diorio’s ability to understand the mechanics of race cars is paramount to developing a professional team. “I was an airplane mechanic for 20 years,” he said. “I’ve prepped other Class 1 cars. I was a crew chief for Danny Ebberts’ off-road team, and I worked with racing legend Brian Deegan on his short course trucks.”

Diorio admits it took a while for him to adjust to riding shotgun and not driving. “I’ve advanced to a point where I’m equal to anyone else in the navigator’s seat,” he said. “I learned from the Ebberts and with Reid. I call every corner for him and every obstacle. If there’s an issue I’ll be the first one to exit the buggy and take care of the problem. If it’s something major he also gets out and helps with repairs.”

Diorio recalled the 2023 SCORE Baja 400 when the RPI Racing buggy rolled on a narrow ninety-degree turn. “I’ll never forget that one because we flipped it back on its wheels unassisted,” he said. Somehow Reid and Diorio managed to place second in that race. One of the things he’s proudest of is never missing a VCP with Reid. “Haven’t missed one yet,” he said.

Diorio says inside the car he handles all the radio calls so that Reid can focus on driving. Reid hears the radio, but only Diorio responds. “The less people talk on the radio the better because I have to call out every note to Cody and there’s no time for much else,” he added.

**DIORIO HAS WON
NUMEROUS RACES
WITH RPI’S CODY
REID, AND HAS
ADAPTED TO THE
TEAM’S UNIQUE
CLASS 1 BUGGY**



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In the SCORE Baja 1000, because of the distance, there is sometimes enough downtime on straightaways and speed zones for a navigator to relax, according to Diorio. “Mostly in the shorter races I have a lot going on,” he said. “I’m also monitoring the tire pressures, at night I’m adjusting lights, and trying to keep our visors clean. The Baja dust is worse. You have to get the timing right for the driver, and when there’s traffic it makes matters more challenging.”

Diorio feels that his experience as a driver is a major asset to the RPI team. He thinks it helps to understand how this big-block buggy on 40-inch tires might react to sudden navigation calls on the course. Especially on the high-speed terrain when obstacles are flying by. “Cody is a great driver and I trust him.” **SJ**

THE RPI BUGGY HAS ONE OF THE BIGGEST ENGINES AND TIRES IN CLASS 1, AND ADAPTING TO THE DRIVER AND THE VEHICLE TOOK SOME TIME



HAILEY HEIN

THE BEST SEAT IN THE HOUSE

BY LARRY SAAVEDRA
PHOTOS BY GET SOME PHOTO

It's been a wild ride for Hailey Hein as the navigator for the #1821 Factory Polaris SCI Motorsports Polaris RZR driven by Cayden MacCachren. Being in the navigator seat full-time for MacCachren for the past two seasons, Hein has had the best seat in the house to multiple SCORE UTV Championships and a string of class wins over the years.

But early in her career, there was a time when Hein was simply a race shop assistant for her dad Craig. "I grew up working with my dad in his race shop," she said. "He was racing Polaris when the first 800cc race cars were introduced in 2008. I did whatever was needed, but eventually, my sister and I started racing UTVs, too. I had to learn to navigate as well. That led to co-driving and navigating for Jagged X Off-Road's program in multiple SCORE events. That's when I met Cayden."

Hein was surprised to get an offer to navigate during the '21 SCORE Baja 1000 for MacCachren, and she was hooked. "I kind of got thrown in the deep end during that race and navigated for 600 miles with him," she said. "But I trusted him so much that it made my job easier."

Through the years Hein has sharpened her skills by pre-running in the navigator seat for both Cayden and his dad Rob MacCachren. "I got lucky because they both knew what they wanted to hear from the navigator and learning from the best has its rewards," said Hein.

HEIN (AT BOTTOM RIGHT) WAS PART OF THE 2023 SCORE BAJA 1000 WIN FOR CAYDEN MACCACHREN, TEAMING UP WITH RHYS MILLEN AND HIS NAVIGATOR, FORMER SCORE PRO MOTO UNLIMITED CHAMPION JUSTIN MORGAN



But even with the best-laid plans things can and do go wrong, so she's always prepared. "We're all human and mistakes happen in the heat of a race," Hein said. "As a navigator you learn from it. Where I was a year ago until today is huge."

At speed, the navigator has a lot to do, and Hein says it all can get a little challenging. "It starts with reading the pre-running notes to the driver," she said. "Next to the GPS, you are monitoring all the engine sensors and belt temps while keeping track of your position. Then you're looking out front beyond the driver to avoid anything you didn't see during pre-running."

In most teams, a navigator also has to be ready to jump out of the race car to change a flat, and in her case, she's constantly thinking of ways to do any mechanical fixes as fast as possible without creating downtime that hurts everybody.

If there's some emergency on the course Hein said she is prepared to call the chase trucks with a detailed list of the problem that she's discussed with her driver. "With Cayden, we're pretty calm from start to finish," Hein said. "You have to stay as calm as possible because you are racing to beat your competition. What's crazy are the speeds of the Polaris. You can't tell from the seat but it is fast. It's a testament to the prep and professionalism of everyone on the team." **SJ**

HEIN IS COMFORTABLE IN THE #1821 SCI MOTORSPORTS FACTORY POLARIS, AND HAS SHOWN HER NAVIGATION SKILLS ARE PART OF THIS WINNING TEAM



EMMA CORNWELL

CAN-AM NAVIGATOR SAYS OFF-ROAD RACING IS IN HER DNA

BY LARRY SAAVEDRA
PHOTOS BY GET SOME PHOTO

As the SCORE UTV Pro Stock navigator for the #1895 Can-Am Maverick driven by Kayden Wells, 28-year-old Emma Cornwell says Baja racing is in her DNA. It makes sense when you realize she's the daughter of longtime SCORE Tech Director Dan Cornwell, a winning buggy racer in his own right.

So after years of embracing adrenaline-filled events alongside her dad during her early teens, Emma eventually decided to follow in his footsteps, but instead of driving, she became a winning navigator for Kayden Wells.

This year life came full circle for Cornwell when Wells proposed to her on the podium after they took the class win at the 2024 SCORE



San Felipe 250. “My dad won the first SCORE San Felipe 250 back in ‘82 and he later introduced me to Kayden shortly after I started navigating,” she said. “He told me Kayden was one of the fastest racers in Baja, and that I should get to know him. Eventually, Kayden and I started dating.”



LEARNING CURVES

She says as a navigator there’s lots of responsibility because you aren’t in physical control of the race car. “Kayden drives and I navigate, and it’s fairly comfortable in the RaceQuip sponsored seats most of the time,” she adds. “That means I’m constantly communicating with him using headsets during a race. It’s a fun seat to be in. You just have to make sure your driver is okay with your GPS notes mile-by-mile. That’s the challenge.”

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Not all navigators grow up in off-road racing like Cornwell, so schools like Waypoint Navigation founded by Erica Sacks are often recommended as refresher courses, or to learn the fundamentals.

"There's a big learning curve with the modern GPS systems," she said. "Unless you can do thousands and thousands of miles pre-running most potential navigators need to get schooled. I've heard wonderful things about Waypoint."

Cornwell says that it's been her experience that what matters most during a race is how her driver interprets a course. "Kayden and I do a lot of pre-running to determine how he feels about certain corners and obstacles," she said. "There are waypoints in a race that are vital, and that includes how a navigator calls the race line for the driver. There might be four race lines on a course and you have to be able to give the driver the best option to win."



Cornwell says she uses a digital tablet to mark and record all the VCPs in a SCORE race. "We can take those digital notes and transfer them to the GPS, or we can use the tablet on a mount in the race car," she adds."

Cornwell recalled a funny story that happened during a particularly dusty event when the road got bumpy while wiping the tablet clean. "We use microfiber cloth to wipe off the dust on the GPS screens," she said. "But on some rough courses this year, there were times when I accidentally hit the power button and the whole system shut down. It's embarrassing, but Kayden handles it well and waits until it reboots."

As far as tire changes and mechanical fixes on the course, Cornwell says they both usually get out of the race car to determine what needs to be done. "He's a great mechanic," she said.

In the areas of safety Cornwell says they triple-check their Simpson-sponsored racing gear as a team before leaving the grid and after any exit on the race course.

Cornwell stressed that fatigue is a real thing too, and so to focus on the course they listen to music from start to finish to enjoy the ride as much as possible. "It gets us in sync and charged up at times too." **SJ**





RACE-READY NAVIGATION

THE LATEST OFF-ROAD TECH FROM GARMIN, LOWRANCE, LEADNAV, AND RUGGED ROUTES BY MICAH ANDERSON

In the high-stakes world of professional off-road desert racing, precision and timing are everything. Your choice of navigational tools, and how to use them, can be the difference between a faster route that can shave seconds, or using a slower leg that adds minutes to your overall time. With the right accessories and available maps added into your navigation tools, it can also help find faster routes or prevent you from getting bunched up in a traffic jam bottleneck.

Accurate, reliable, and durable navigation systems are always being updated, and staying on top of new GPS units and map overlays is critical for anyone racing in the treacherous and remote areas of the Baja California Peninsula. Several navigation manufacturers such as Garmin, Lowrance, LeadNav, and Rugged Routes, have provided some insight on their latest specialized off-road navigational tools racers can use to stay ahead of the competition.

GARMIN TREAD XL – BAJA RACE

[Garmin's Tread XL – Baja Race](#) is a purpose-built off-road racing navigation device designed to meet the demands and criteria of desert racing. This unit is tailored for those who need a durable, high-performance navigator with special built-in features.

WHY IT'S A HOT ITEM:

The Tread XL – Baja Race isn't just about getting from point A to point B; it's about doing so with precision, reliability, and more. This navigator is a critical component for serious racers who need the best tools to stay on track and ahead of the competition.

GARMIN TREAD XL – BAJA RACE KEY FEATURES:

- **10-Inch Ultra-Bright Touchscreen:** The large, high-resolution display ensures visibility in any light condition, including the intense sunlight typical of desert environments.
- **Baja-Specific Maps:** Preloaded with topographic and satellite maps of the Baja Peninsula, this unit is designed for the unique challenges of the Baja 1000 and similar races.
- **InReach Technology Integration:** Stay connected with built-in satellite communication for two-way messaging and emergency SOS, crucial for off-the-grid racing.
- **Multi-GNSS Support:** With GPS, GLONASS, and Galileo support, the Tread XL – Baja Race provides robust positioning capabilities, ensuring accurate navigation even in the most remote locations.
- **Rugged Design:** Built to handle dust, water, and extreme temperatures, this unit is ready for the toughest racing conditions.

"The Baja Race Edition navigator is purpose-built for high-speed race vehicles. It features a 10" glove-friendly touch screen, with a team tracking feature that uses inReach technology to allow race vehicles and chase trucks to message and track each other with live position updates and global satellite coverage. It also allows drivers to add pace notes, see the race course, and see terrain during pre-running to help them prepare for race day. It's an amazing device for the sport."

- Don Schmidt, Garmin Lead Product Manager

Product: 10" Off-Road Race Navigator

Part Number: 010-02510-00

Price: \$2,499.99



GARMIN TREAD XL – BAJA CHASE

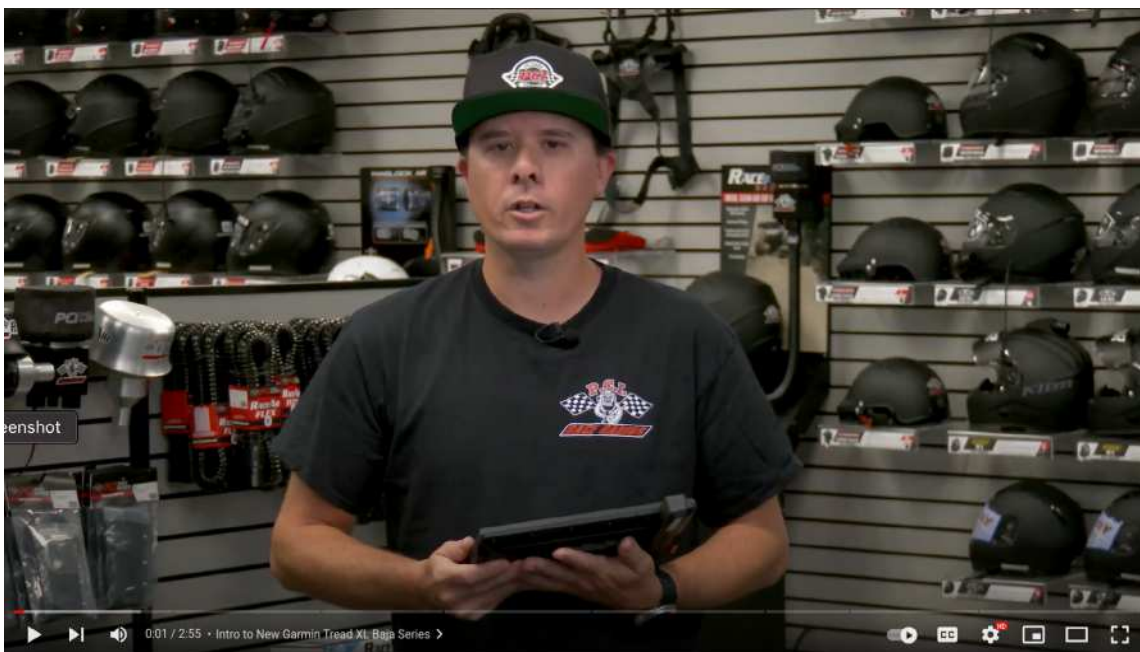
[The Tread XL – Baja Chase](#) is Garmin's answer to the needs of off-road chase teams. This navigator is designed for those who follow the racers, ensuring they can provide support and assistance whenever and wherever it's needed. With a focus on connectivity and real-time information, the Tread XL – Baja Chase is an essential tool for any chase team looking to keep up with the race and provide timely aid.

WHY IT'S A HOT ITEM:

For chase teams, staying connected and informed is crucial. The Tread XL – Baja Chase, when combined with a Tread XL – Baja Race unit, offers the tools necessary to track racers in real-time, manage logistics, and ensure that the team is always in the right place at the right time.

GARMIN TREAD XL – BAJA CHASE KEY FEATURES:

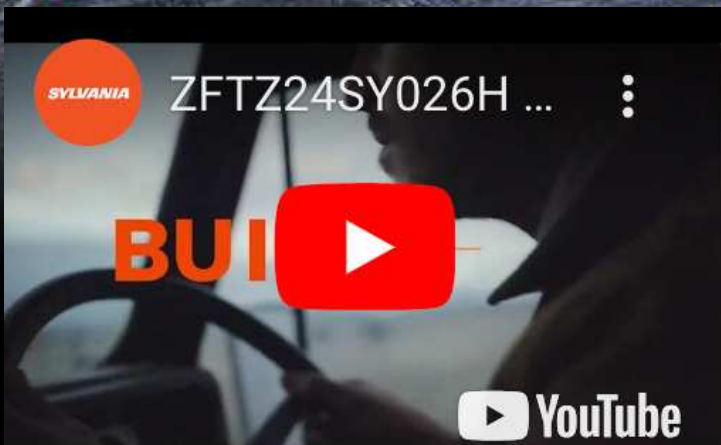
- **10-Inch High-Resolution Display:** Similar to the Baja Race version, the display is bright and easy to read, providing essential data at a glance, even in challenging light conditions.
- **Live Tracking Capabilities:** Keep tabs on racers with real-time tracking, ensuring you know their location and can respond quickly if needed.
- **Preloaded Topographic and Satellite Maps:** The same detailed Baja-specific maps are available, ensuring chase teams have the same level of navigational support as the racers.
- **Group Ride Radio:** Allows for communication between up to 20 Tread users without needing cellular coverage, ensuring the chase team stays in sync.
- **InReach Satellite Technology:** Just like the Baja Race version, this unit includes two-way satellite messaging and SOS, offering peace of mind when out of range of traditional communication methods.



**VIDEO: PCI RACE
RADIO SHOWCASES
THE FEATURES OF
GARMIN TREAD XL
BAJA EDITIONS**

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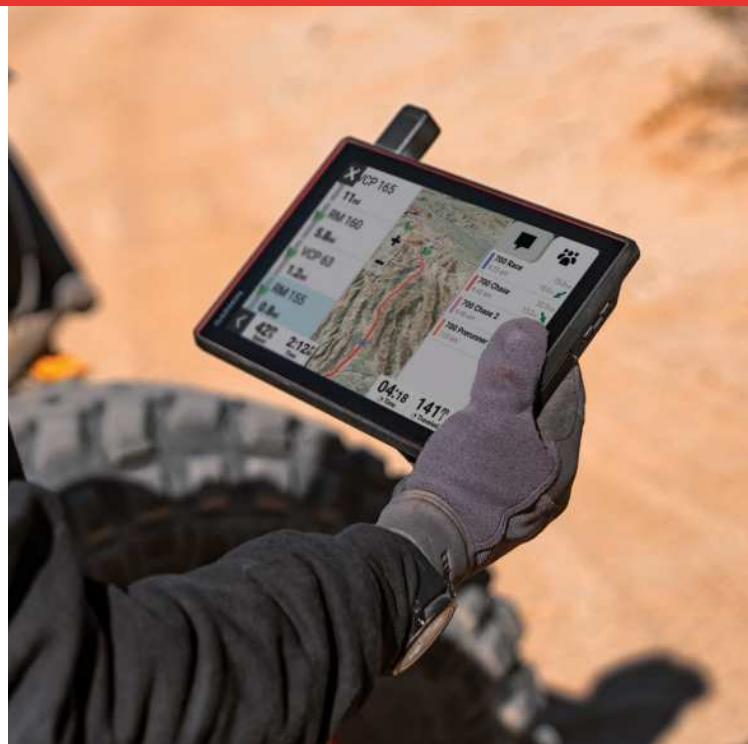
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“The Baja Chase Edition is the companion for the Baja Race Edition and includes most of the same features, but is designed for chase vehicles and team members in the pit. The team tracking allows the entire team to track and communicate with the race vehicle and provide insights from outside the driver’s seat. The portable device comes with a heavy-duty suction cup mount, vehicle power cable, and robust mounting hardware so you can easily move it from one support truck to another.” - Don Schmidt, Garmin Lead Product Manager

Product: 10" Off-Road Chase Navigator

Part Number: 010-02833-00

Price: \$1,799.99



LEADNAV GPS CORE APPLICATION

[LeadNav’s GPS Core Application](#) stands out in the off-road world for its adaptability and functionality. Unlike traditional GPS units, LeadNav offers a flexible platform that allows racers to customize and control their navigation experience, which is crucial for the ever-changing conditions of desert racing.

WHY IT’S A HOT ITEM:

This isn’t your average GPS app. LeadNav is built for those who need more than just turn-by-turn directions—it’s for racers who require a tool that can adapt to their strategy on the fly.



LEADNAV GPS APPLICATION KEY FEATURES:

- **Custom Map Overlays:** Allows users to create custom map overlays, helping to visualize key areas, obstacles, and waypoints tailored to specific races.
- **Waypoint Management:** Manage waypoints with precision, making it easier to track progress and adjust routes as needed.
- **Offline Access:** Provides offline map access, so you’re not dependent on cellular service—ideal for remote race locations where signal is unreliable.
- **Device Compatibility:** Works seamlessly with multiple devices, including iPads and iPhones, making it versatile for various setups.

Product: LeadNav GPS Core Application

Price: \$19.99 (In-App Purchases Available)



**VIDEO: LEADNAV
GENERAL OVERVIEW**

LOWRANCE HDS PRO 12-INCH NAVIGATOR

Lowrance has long been a trusted name in marine and off-road navigation, and its [HDS Pro 12-inch](#) unit is a testament to the company's commitment to quality. Paired with the [Point-1 Baja GPS antenna](#), this setup provides racers with an accurate and reliable navigation system that is built to endure the rigors of desert racing.

WHY IT'S A HOT ITEM:

The Lowrance HDS Pro is an expandable ecosystem that provides precision navigation assistance with no-subscription high-resolution satellite imagery at the touch of the screen.

LOWRANCE HDS PRO 12-INCH NAVIGATOR KEY FEATURES:

- **12-Inch SolarMAX Display:** The HDS Pro features a high-definition display that remains clear even in bright sunlight, essential for racing in desert conditions.
- **Integrated Mapping:** Comes with detailed maps and the ability to integrate additional maps, providing extensive coverage of off-road trails.
- **Point-1 Baja Receiver:** The GPS/Glonass receiver offers rapid and precise positioning, critical for maintaining course accuracy during high-speed races.
- **Rugged and Weatherproof:** Built to withstand dust, dirt, and water, ensuring the unit performs reliably in harsh environments.

Product: HDS Pro 12-inch:
Part Number: 000-16002-001
Price: \$4,449.99

Product: Point-1 Baja Off-road
 GPS antenna
Part Number: 000-11045-002
Price: \$349.99



RUGGED ROUTES HIGH-RESOLUTION OFFLINE MAP DATA OF BAJA PENINSULA & KEYPAD FOR GPS RACE NOTES PROGRAMMING

Rugged Routes offers high-resolution offline map data specifically designed for the [Baja Peninsula](#), a key region for off-road desert racing. These maps, available on an SD card, provide detailed topographic and trail information that can be accessed without a cellular signal, ensuring racers and support teams have reliable navigation tools even in the most remote areas.

WHY IT'S A HOT ITEM:

A plug-and-play memory card for Lowrance GPS systems, this comprehensive GPS map combines road and trail data with up-to-date 15-meter satellite imagery and includes Landsat Imagery for the entire peninsula. All Satellite data included was acquired by satellites in early 2023 which is combined with the latest OSM highway, road, and trail data.





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RUGGED ROUTES MAP DATA KEY FEATURES:

- **High-Resolution Topographic Maps:** Provides detailed terrain information, including elevation contours, to help racers navigate challenging landscapes.
- **Offline Accessibility:** Maps are stored on an SD card, allowing for seamless use in areas without cellular coverage, ensuring reliability in the most remote locations.
- **Baja Peninsula Focus:** Specifically designed for Baja off-road racing, offering targeted information and accuracy in this demanding environment.
- **Customizable Waypoints:** Allows users to mark and customize waypoints, making it easier to plan and follow routes specific to their needs.

Product: High-Resolution Baja Map Data

Part Number: RR-M0201

Price: \$149.99

RUGGED ROUTES TRAILMARK KEYPAD FOR GPS RACE NOTES PROGRAMMING

The Rugged Routes [TrailMark Keypad](#) is an innovative tool designed for racers who need to program GPS waypoints and notes quickly and efficiently. This keypad integrates seamlessly with Lowrance off-road GPS units, allowing for on-the-fly adjustments and precise navigation during races. It's a valuable tool for those who want to stay organized and make quick decisions while out on the course.

WHY IT'S A HOT ITEM:

In the fast-paced world of off-road racing, having the ability to quickly input and adjust GPS data is essential. The Rugged Routes Keypad makes this process more efficient, reducing the time spent on navigation adjustments and allowing racers to focus on performance.



RUGGED ROUTES MAP DATA KEY FEATURES:

- **Seamless Integration with Lowrance GPS Units:** Designed specifically for use with Lowrance off-road GPS systems, ensuring compatibility and ease of use.
- **Quick Access to Key Functions:** The keypad provides quick access to essential GPS functions, allowing racers to input waypoints, notes, and other data without slowing down.
- **Durable Construction:** Built to withstand the rigors of off-road racing, this keypad is designed to handle tough conditions, including dust, moisture, and vibration.
- **Customizable Buttons:** Users can program the keypad's buttons to suit their specific needs, making it a highly flexible tool for navigation.

Product: Rugged Routes TrailMark Keypad

Part Number: RR-G0401

Price: \$199.99

"Our Rugged Routes map data is an essential no-subscription map that greatly assists in Baja, especially when chasing. Additionally, our Trail Mark keypad is the absolute pinnacle of pre-running tools and is highly configurable for the racer and navigator's needs. It saves valuable time by marking accurate notes at the push of a button. This allows you to cover more pre-running miles in less time and greatly reduces the need to edit notes prior to race day.."

- Steven Lutz, owner of Rugged Routes

ELEVATE YOUR NAVIGATION PROGRAM TO BE THE MOST COMPETITIVE

In off-road desert racing, where every second counts and precision is key, the right navigational tools are essential. Garmin, LeadNav, Lowrance, and Rugged Routes offer products that don't just guide you through the course—they give you the tools to strategize, adapt, and excel. By equipping yourself with these advanced systems, you're not just racing; you're setting yourself up to win. **SJ**

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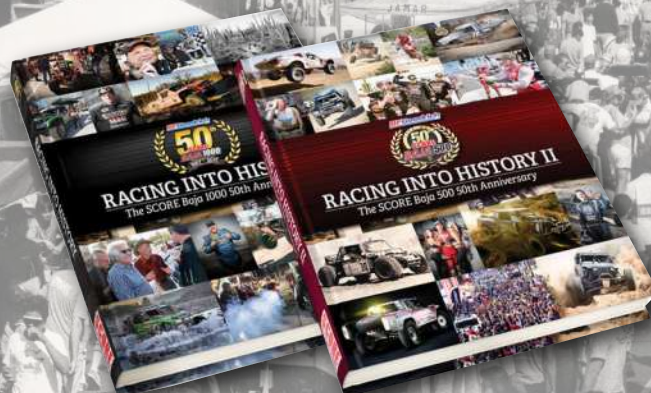
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PREPPED TO WIN

A LOOK AT ADVANCED LEVEL MOTO PREP WORK FOR BAJA RACING

BY DAN SANCHEZ

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY GIOVANNI SPINALI

The level of motorcycle riding talent within the SCORE Pro Moto Unlimited class is so high that more than a half-dozen current competitors this season can win a race. SCORE Baja races in this class are won by making the fewest mistakes and not missing any virtual checkpoints along the racecourse.

However, top-level teams know that getting the motorcycle to the finish requires more than talented riders. Most teams will tell you that bike prep is the



most important factor to winning, and there can be many modifications made to a bike in preparation for competition at such a high level.

One of the riders who knows this the best, is multi-time Champion Giovanni Spinali, co-owner and leader of the 11x H.E.R.O. team. Along with the team's winning riders, Arturo Salas Jr., Carter Klein, and Ciaran Naran, they are entering the second half of the SCORE World Desert Championship season with a new bike build.

THE SLR HONDA PROVED TO BE A GREAT PLATFORM BUT THE TEAM DECIDED TO BUILD THEIR OWN HONDA FOR THE NEXT TWO RACES OF THE 2024 SEASON

PHOTO BY GET SOME PHOTO



“The first half of the season we raced a SLR Honda bike, which comes already fully prepped,” said Spinali. “The bike was great, and we won the first two races this season. In between the SCORE Baja 500 and the SCORE Baja 400, we decided to take the bike upgrades into our own hands.”

The H.E.R.O. team purchased a used Honda CRF 450X. However, because Spinali always raced Yamaha motorcycles, the team was unfamiliar with prepping a Honda, so they asked former champion Colton Udal at Champion Adventures to work with them. “Colton has the experience, knowledge, and skills to prep a motorcycle for Baja racing. Combined with his riding skills, we believe Champion Adventure’s motorcycle prepping is at the highest levels of the sport,” says Spinali.

All prep begins with major upgrades and then moves into smaller, detailed modifications. But each one, large or small, makes the motorcycle fast and comfortable. Spinali walked through some of the items changed on this Honda in preparation for the SCORE Baja 400.

MORE POWER PLEASE

With this 450X, one of the first things Udall modifies is the engine's cylinder head and swap-out the factory camshaft with an R-model, used in motocross bikes. "This gives the motorcycle a much bigger hit," says Spinali. "It adds more power than the factory camshaft and changes the power curve to be more linear. We require a smooth power band, and the bike can top out at a higher speed with the right gearing. In our test of the bike after the build, we reached a top speed of 114mph."

WORKS CHASSIS LABS ENGINE HANGERS IMPROVE SOFTNESS IN THE CHASSIS. A 14-TOOTH COUNTERSHAFT SPROCKET BROADENS SHIFTING. IMS CORE ENDURO "SHARP TEETH" FOOTPEGS WITH THE CHAMP ADV 5MM DOWN AND BACK FOOTPEG EXTENSION.

CHAMPION ADVANTAGE REINFORCED CHAIN GUIDE HANGER WITH A TMD DESIGNS CHAIN GUIDE, AND 51-TOOTH SPROCKET MAKE A SOLID PART OF THE DRIVETRAIN





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Other engine/drivetrain modifications include a Hinson Clutch, FMF Exhaust, an IMS oversized fuel tank, and a Taco Moto ECU. Udall remaps the fuel and ignition curves to optimize all the components added to the engine set-up. "Colton also installed Dirt Trix sprockets which enables us to get correct gearing with these engine mods," adds Spinali. "You can build a super-fast bike, but if the gearing is off, you can have trouble in slower technical areas of a course like Mike's Sky Ranch. It's a fine line to tune it all properly."

RIDE CAPABILITY AND COMFORT

In Long-distance Baja races, moto racers know it's important for the bike to be dependable but most importantly, comfortable. "A motorcycle needs a good suspension to be fast and safe," says Spinali. "It's not like the old days where we had to ride to save the bike to get to the finish. Modern motorcycles are very dependable, especially the engines. The main thing is that comfort builds confidence for the rider. If you're going across whoops sections and the bike is not swapping out on the sides, it works right and builds confidence."

AHM FACTORY KIT SUSPENSION IMPROVES RIDER CONFIDENCE, LIMITING FATIGUE AND ABSORBS BIG BUMPS.



To add both comfort and safety, there are several changes Udall makes to the bike. Nitro Mousse foam inner tubes are added inside the Dunlop tires to prevent flats. Moving the footpegs back 5mm adds more leg room for the riders, so a set of IMS Core Enduro “sharp teeth” pegs are added.

The factory handlebars and grips were replaced with ODI units designed for a more comfortable riding position. “Plastic grips are too hard and can give you blisters on a long ride,” says Spinali. “If they are too soft, you get an arm pump, so just the right compound is needed.”



GALFER USA STEEL BRAIDED BRAKE LINE IS USED, ALONG WITH CHAMP ADV CUSTOM STELLA MOUNT, SCOTT'S STEERING STABILIZER, WORKS CONNECTION 123 CLUTCH PERCH SYSTEM, ACERBIS HAND GAURDS, AND A TRAIL TECH COMPUTER

Riding over tough terrain for long distances is difficult, so the bike was outfitted with a Thrill Seekers seat cover with ribs on the top, to prevent riders from sliding back and forth. A Scott steering stabilizer helps smooth things out, especially when riding over whoops sections.

When it comes to the shocks, Spinali and the team opted for AHM Factory Suspension components. A great benefit of this is that AHM includes free testing and bike set-up before each race with their competition kits. “The AHM factory linkage provides improved handling but also makes for a plush ride with added wheel travel,” says Spinali. “It absorbs small choppy bumps while providing a planted rear-end that you can trust in flat corners. This suspension also limits fatigue and absorbs Trophy Truck-sized bumps.”

SMALL DETAILS

Aside from upgrading the engine, and suspension, small details can make a big difference in Baja racing. Champion Adventures has a chain guide hangar and mount which keeps the chain in position under any circumstances. A Baja Designs XL80 LED light is mounted to the front handlebars. Another trick is to paint the front fender flat black. "This reduces glare at night which can otherwise add to rider fatigue," says Spinali. "These Hondas are pretty good right from the factory, but all these changes, small and large, are important when racing at this level. With this newly prepped bike and three great riders, it is all a part of our goal to win as many races as we can and a championship."

THE RADIATOR IS CHANGED TO AN R-PLATFORM WITH A CHAMP ADV COOLANT OUTLET KIT. COOLANT LINES ARE WRAPPED WITH GOLD HEAT TAPE NEAR THE FMF EXHAUST.

TM DESIGNS HDPE PLASTIC SKID PLATES PROVIDE LINKAGE PROTECTION WHEN RUNNING PREMIUM AHM FACTORY LINKAGE. RADIATOR LOUVERS ARE COVERED WITH A WIRE MESH AND PAINTED BLACK TO PROTECT FROM BRUSH OR DEBRIS AT HIGH SPEEDS



“We also don’t forget to give back to Baja, and we do this at every race. We visit orphanages and donate items they need as well as our time. It also improves our team dynamics, which is great. Honestly, it’s hard not to get along when you’re winning.”

The H.E.R.O. 11x team also recently received new sponsorship from Optima Batteries, which they are excited about. With this new bike build and the proven abilities of Salas Jr., Klein, and Naran, the team is ready to take on the SCORE Baja 400 and will start the race first in class. With two race wins under their belt, they have a good chance of winning a class championship, especially if they can win this race and do well at the SCORE Baja 1000. **SJ**

ARTURO SALAS JR., GIOVANNI SPINALI, AND CARTER KLEIN, AND CIARAN NARAN (NOT PICTURED), WON THE FIRST TWO RACES OF THE SEASON AND ARE GOING FOR A SCORE PRO MOTO UNLIMITED CHAMPIONSHIP TITLE



SCORE HERITAGE



1973-1988 SCORE RACES AT RIVERSIDE



TRACKSIDE PHOTO

SCORE OFF-ROAD WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS AT RIVERSIDE RACEWAY 1973-1988

BY DAN SANCHEZ
PHOTOS BY TRACKSIDE PHOTO

There was a time when 30 or more off-road race vehicles were lined up side-by-side at the starting line before they accelerated and dove into the first turn on a dirt course filled with jumps, banked curves, moguls, and more. These spectacular scenes of off-road chaos and excitement played in front of thousands of fans as a part of SCORE's Off-Road World Championship races held at Riverside Raceway in Southern California.

Held over a 15-year period, the SCORE races at Riverside are an iconic part of SCORE-International's history, one that also helped launch the careers of legendary racers and introduced huge numbers of racing fans into the world of off-road and Baja racing.



FRITZ KROYER LEADING THE PACK OF BUGGIES AFTER THE GREEN FLAG AT RIVERSIDE RACEWAY

The idea behind the SCORE races at Riverside had its origins in the desert. After experiencing and participating in the Mexican 1000 race in 1969, Mickey Thompson wanted to bring the excitement of Baja racing to the United States. In 1973, when the Mexican government asked Thompson to take over the Mexican 1000 race for the following year, it presented the opportunity Thompson needed to start his off-road racing organization which he called SCORE.

Thompson knew people would come to see this exciting Baja style of racing if it was recreated on a closed course. "Mickey had always said only the snakes and jackrabbits see the Baja races," said SCORE Former Owner Sal Fish. "Before I started with SCORE, Mickey had talked to people he knew at Riverside International Raceway, and that same year (October of 1973) he had organized a closed course off-road event, the AC Delco RV Spectacular. It was the race he invited me to witness first-hand, and it was a huge spectacle to witness. That, combined with SCORE taking over the Baja races, was enough to convince me to leave my magazine publishing career and take his offer for me to be president of the company."

A WILD RACECOURSE

The first Riverside event had one of the wealthiest purses at the time, a total of \$200K. The track was seven miles in length and was built by famous motocross champion Rolf Tibblin. Later races were built by various contractors including Walker Evans, but were shortened to an average 3.5 miles in length.

The excitement of each SCORE race in Riverside began with the start. Fish called it the Oklahoma Land Rush. "We lined up the vehicles, sometimes 33 cars wide at the start. They would all rush to make it to what was Riverside Raceway's turn-six, and then it was narrow enough for about six vehicles to get through at a time."



**SCORE MOTO
CHAMPION SCOT
HARDEN FLYING OVER
MOGUL SECTIONS**

The courses also had plenty of obstacles, including jumps, whoops, mud, S-sections, sand pits, and the famous Thompson Ridge, designed by Evans. "Thompson Ridge was a turn that was off-camber like in Daytona," said Fish. "I remember you had to be traveling at least 50 mph to make it through this turn and most of the buggies and trucks were going through this much faster."

SCORE racing legend Roger Mears had the most wins in the SCORE races at Riverside (20 overall) and recalls what the courses were like. "Mickey was good at making the tracks spectacular and he had a lot of fun with them," said Mears. "The track was famous for the Thompson Ridge which was a slope that had an off-camber bank. It was wild to drive over. It was the best combination of good, hard, off-road racing and putting on a show at the same time."

Mears and his brother Rick drove everything from Chenoweth, Hi-Jumpers, Parnelli Jones' Chevy Blazer, Jeep Honchos, and Nissan pickups. "There were times when my brother and I would run several different classes during the entire weekend of those SCORE Riverside races," he said. "We would run one class in a buggy, then change the engine to a larger size and run another class. That's how I collected so many wins."

1974, SAL FISH WITH BOBBY FERRO (CENTER), ROGER MEARS (FAR LEFT) AND RICK MEARS



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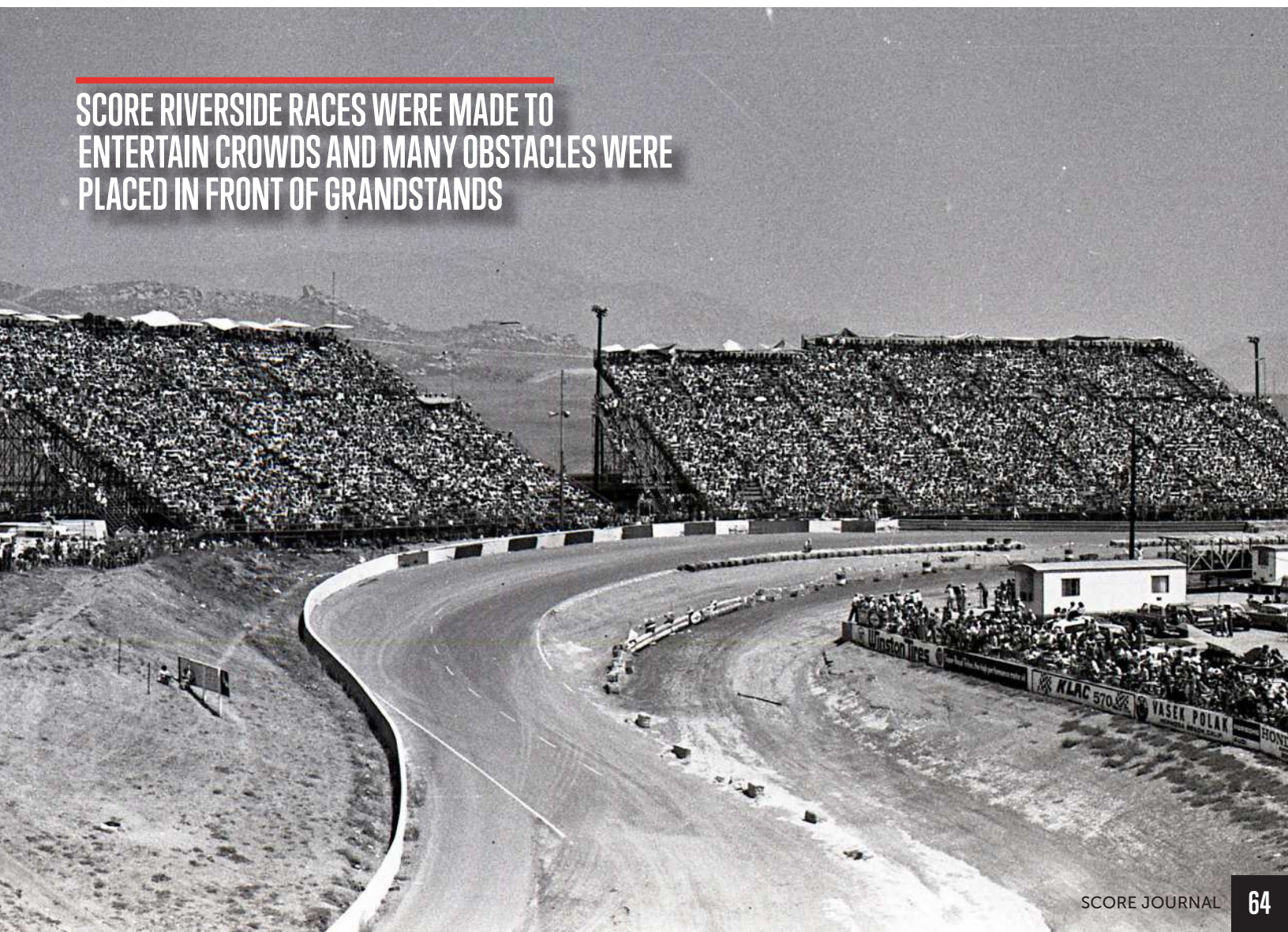


Running in various heats throughout the weekend, SCORE Riverside races had classes for a wide range of off-road vehicles of the time. These included 4WD stock production and modified, 2WD vehicles, mini-pickups, production 2WD Utility, and motorcycle classes from under 250cc, to 1000cc. In 1975 the SCORE Off-Road World Championships in Riverside introduced Class 11 VW Bugs. "The idea was to allow all racers from pros to sportsmen the ability to participate," said Fish. "It worked well and SCORE has had a Class 11 ever since." Along with VW Bugs, many of the types of vehicles changed throughout the years and included everything from Jeeps, dune buggies, full-size and mini-pickups, Chenoweth, Funco buggies, and more.

KEEPING SPECTATORS ENTERTAINED

Despite SCORE's Riverside events being popular with racers, the SCORE events at Riverside were all about keeping fans entertained. From the beginning Thompson allowed spectators to bring their RVs and camp through the weekend on top of Thompson Ridge, overlooking the course. Most of the obstacles were purposely placed in front of the grandstands. This allowed spectators to clearly see racers in their vehicles, and witness some spectacular battles for position, as well as crashes.

SCORE RIVERSIDE RACES WERE MADE TO ENTERTAIN CROWDS AND MANY OBSTACLES WERE PLACED IN FRONT OF GRANDSTANDS



The events also had special low-speed obstacle courses for RVs allowing owners to test their handling and maneuvering skills. To keep spectators further entertained, the events hosted dances, bands, and had a fireworks show in the evenings. "It was truly a time when people still liked the ideas of Woodstock and big gatherings," said Fish. "Even the fuel crisis of the time didn't deter spectators and racers from enjoying the entire weekend in Riverside Raceway."

Celebrity race events also took place with sponsors like American Motors who supplied Jeeps for a wide range of celebrities to race in. "We would get television show actors like Eric Estrada, Grizzly Adams, Patrick Duffy, and numerous others. We also had singers like Vikki Carr and Tanya Tucker, and even sports celebrities like professional boxer Ken Norton. People would line up days before the race to get tickets and be a part of this amazing event and show."

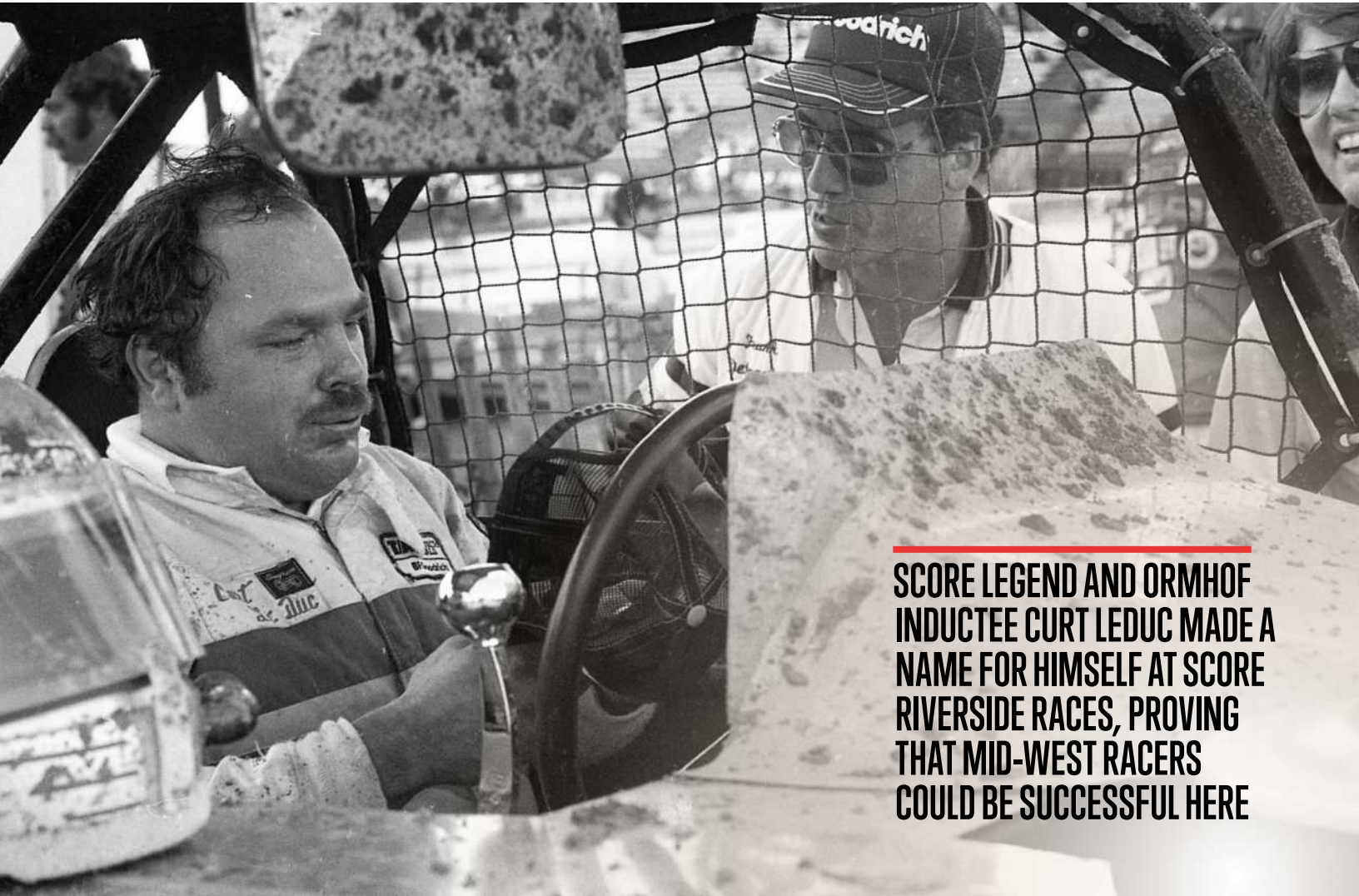
**CELEBRITIES LIKE ACTOR
PATRICK DUFFY AND
SINGER VIKKI CARR
CAME TO RACE,
PICTURED HERE WITH
WALKER EVANS**



MEMORABLE MOMENTS

From the first race in 1973 to the last one held there in 1988, there were numerous memorable moments for both racers and spectators. The one that the race track is famous for is the crash that had legendary racer and ORMHOF Inductee, Bobby Ferro land on the I-60 Freeway.

During the 1973 AC Delco RV Spectacular, Ferro in his SS1 Funco Sandmaster took a hard kit and was knocked unconscious. "My helmet hit against the roll cage and it knocked me out," said Ferro. "The next thing I recall is waking up with a California Highway Patrol officer looking down on me, and I could see my car being towed away. What I didn't know at the time was that the throttle on the engine had stuck wide open and the car proceeded to plow through the fence and landed on the Pigeon Pass off-ramp for the I-60-Freeway."



SCORE LEGEND AND ORMHOF INDUCTEE CURT LEDUC MADE A NAME FOR HIMSELF AT SCORE RIVERSIDE RACES, PROVING THAT MID-WEST RACERS COULD BE SUCCESSFUL HERE

Another ORMHOF Inductee and legendary SCORE racer who had fond memories of SCORE Riverside races is Curt LeDuc. In 1983 he made his first trip out to California, traveling more than two thousand miles to compete in a 4WD straight axle race car with a Ford Ranger body.

From his racing achievements, he made great business relationships at Riverside and eventually moved to California in 1985. He also has many memories but recalls watching the new Stadium Trucks, another Mickey Thompson idea, compete there around the mid to late 1980s. "The stadium trucks were a big thing and they also had a class at SCORE Riverside races," says LeDuc. "I saw Mickey's son Danny come around turn six in one, and approach the moguls section at full speed. He hit the

first one at wide-open-throttle and launched the truck high and fast enough, that it skipped across the tops of each mogul. I watched in awe at what he had just done. The second time he came around, he hit one of the moguls and cartwheeled the truck, end over end in a spectacular crash."

When it comes to memorable moments, ORMHOF Inductee Roger Mears has many from winning the most races at these events. One of Mears' most memorable, however, was when he lost a race to his brother Rick while driving Parnelli Jones' Chevy Blazer. "The first time I was able to beat Parnelli was huge for me," said Mears, "We later became friends and at one race, I was driving his Chevy Blazer for him and it was faster than hell! I caught my brother who was leading, and I passed him. The checkered flag was about 50 feet ahead and the car suddenly quit. The carburetor had problems and it just fell apart. My brother passed me and won the race. He never let me forget it."



**WALKER EVANS HELPED
BUILD THE TRACKS,
RACED AT RIVERSIDE,
AND LAUNCHED MANY
INDIVIDUAL RACING
CAREERS**

Glenn Harris, who raced his Class 9 car at Riverside, who raced with Roger Mears, worked with Walker Evans, and eventually operated the Mazda Truck team to win a Championship, began experiencing the Riverside races as a spectator. "Watching the Riverside races was like the ultimate circus," said Harris. "When I raced there as a teenager, I lined up side-by-side with the other racers for the Class 9 start, waiting for the previous class to finish their heat. I had installed a set of small Radio Shack speakers in my helmet to listen to music while I waited."

I remember the 1978 race when I was ahead of Roger Mears and I led the whole race. Roger was following me when a yellow flag came out, but the checkered flag was just ahead. I slowed down but Roger jumped the start before the finish and won the race. I finished second, but it caught the attention of Roger and the Mears team."

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"Afterwards, Roger asked me to drive with him that September at the Parker 400 race that same year, and I drove the California side. It was like being in a movie with Roger next to me. We won the race and that's when I was introduced to my future wife. If I hadn't lost that Riverside race to Roger, I would have never met her."

SOCIETY CHANGING

The property Riverside Raceway had become more valuable, and it was scheduled to be sold to developers. The last SCORE Off-Road World Championships were held in 1988 and crowds were down from previous years. "Next to NASCAR, the SCORE Races had the longest run in the race track's 31-year history," said Fish. "By the time it ended in 1988, the times and society had changed. People weren't spending three days in one place like they did at Woodstock and other events. Furthermore, at this time there were so many other events and attractions competing for people's time and money. So we thought once the track closes, we were ending the SCORE World Championship races."

During the last several races held at Riverside, however, Robby Gordon, the son of ORMHOF Inductee and SCORE Champion Bob Gordon, had made a name for himself winning in Baja. The 19-year-old Gordon consistently won several Riverside races in both Heavy Metal (Class 8) and Dune Buggy classes, lapping the competition at one race to the amazement of fans and race teams. During the last SCORE Riverside race, Gordon won in these same two classes, catapulting him and the sport to new levels.

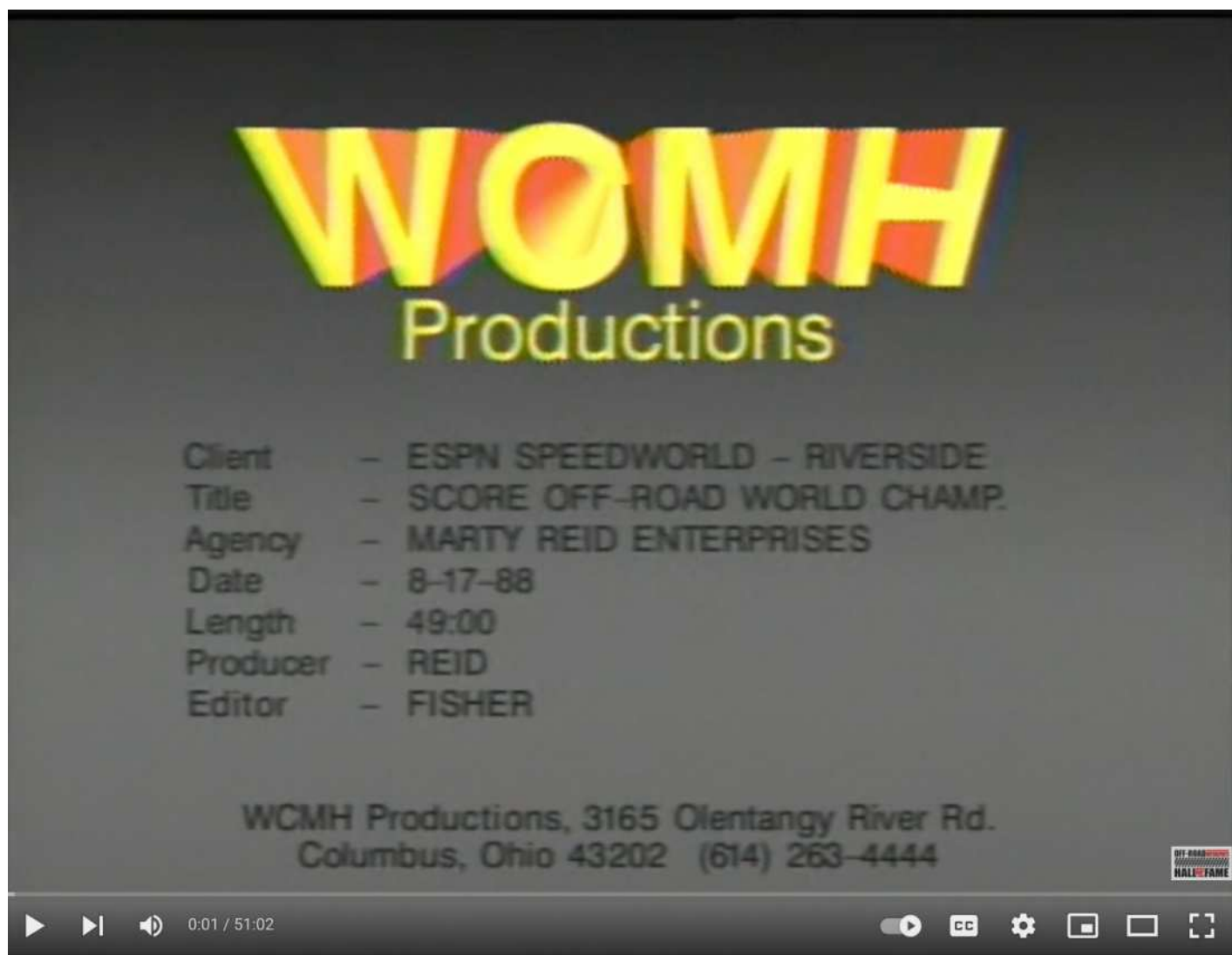


DURING THE LAST FEW RACES AT RIVERSIDE A YOUNG ROBBY GORDON DEMONSTRATED HIS SKILLS WINNING BOTH IN THE BUGGY AND DOMINATING THE CLASS 8 CATEGORIES

SIDENOTE

A cry for reviving the SCORE Off-Road Championships by racers had Fish negotiating with Phoenix International Raceway, in 1990. “The racers convinced me that we had to put another stadium race like this and from the beginning, it was not a good deal overall. The track didn’t have enough room and the only openings they had on their schedule put the race right when the Phoenix Suns basketball team had made it to the Western Conference Finals.”

The race had an attendance of 5K fans, but Robby Gordon again won Class 8 and the Dune Buggy Class. “It wasn’t the right time anymore for these kinds of races,” added Fish. “Mickey also had his Stadium Series going on as well. I can say, however, that the Riverside races did a lot for SCORE and it gave us and our racers a solid foundation for them to compete in Baja, which was my original intent, and it worked out well.” **SJ**



VIDEO: 1988 SCORE OFF-ROAD WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP FINAL RACE IN RIVERSIDE

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Wes Miller and DRT Motorsport have partnered to release the WM70 Signature Helmet Shield Visor by RT. It's designed to help block low angle sunlight at sunrise and sunset, stadium lights, and mud and debris. Created by multi time Baja Champion and Huevos ATV video filmmaker, Wes Miller in conjunction with DRT Motorsports, this moto inspired visor adheres to most visor less helmets onto the shield with 3M VHB adhesive.

In addition, the visor can be used to protect against roost, mud and rocks when following closely or in a first turn race scenario. It works with most tear-off systems with minor trimming when installed properly. Made out of injection molded nylon, the visor is both flexible and durable. It was also built to be universal and fit the majority of visor-less helmets on the market. Visit <https://wesmiller70.com/> or <https://drtmotorsports.com/>.



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(Coordinator)
MEDEVAC AIR RESCUE SUPPORT: Helivacservicios
SCORE RELAY: Scott Steinberg, Ranger Steinberg,
Alejandro Rodriguez
RACER REGISTRATION: Shannon Lund (Director),
Eduardo Kawanishi, Cynthia Gonzalez, Maricruz Hernandez, Marissol
Hernandez, Kathia Rendon, Jeanette Jordan, Osiris Ibanez,
Betsy Anderson, Karen Rendon, Fernanda Hernandez, Silvia Ozawa
FINISH LINE: Eduardo Kawanishi (Coordinator), Cynthia Gonzalez,
Maricruz Hernandez, Marissol Hernandez, Jeanette Jordan,
Kathia Rendon, Karen Rendon, Osiris Ibanez, Jadde Martinez,
Angelica Hernandez, Betsy Anderson
INTERNET & AUDIO: Ramon Bernal, Alexis Lara, Adrian Perez,
Victor Olague, Daniel Covarrubias
LOGISTICS: Franky Quintero, (Director)
TECHNICAL INSPECTION: Dan Cornwell (Tech
Director), Inspectors: Erik Cornwell, Cointa Cornwell, Federico
Montes Orozco, Marilyn Montes, Adan Olachea, Michael Crichton,
Blanca Sarmiento, Juan Campos, America Goycochea, David
Huber, Mike Higbee, Robin Huber, Oscar Gutierrez, Jesus Nuñez,
Lizzethe Salgado, Alejandra Villavicencio, Alba Cruz, Martin Flores
TIMING: MyLap
START/FINISH SET UP: Marco Alba, Ricardo Molina, David Pedraza,
Javier Guzman, Vinicio Alba, Juan Valdivia, Neftali Rodriguez,
Roberto Arizmendez, Alberto Zapien, Oscar Vazquez, Gilberto
Trejo, Francisco Lucas
PRODUCTION CREW: Frankie Quintero (Director), Ernesto
Diaz, Juan Diaz, Jared Dueñas, Kevin Dueñas, Juan Flores (driver),
Salvador Garcia, Azalia Heras, Javier Osuna, Hector Osuna, Kevin
Ramirez, Miguel Hernandez
ASSISTANT CONTENCY MX: Rodolfo Rocha Sanchez
START FINISH SECURITY: Raul Patron (Supervisor)
SECURITY: Tony Gomez, Esteban Jordan
ATTORNEY: Miguel Arregui

PROMOTE MEXICO LLC

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NATIONAL SALES MANAGER: Kurt Miller
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SCORE MEDIA OPERATIONS: Gabriel Garcia (Director),
Guilherme Torres, Cindy Clark, Paul Hanson, Isaac Flores,
Ariana Medrano
SCORE HISTORIAN: Dominic Clark
SCORE JOURNAL EDITOR: Dan Sanchez
SCORE CREATIVE DIRECTOR: Tony Lozano
WEBSITE & APP COORDINATOR: Todd Horne
GRAPHIC DESIGNER/PRODUCTION MANAGER: Ashley Horne
MARKETING SPECIALIST: Jack Wright, NMedia3
SCORE SOCIAL MEDIA: DS Media LLC
SCORE SOCIAL MEDIA CORRESPONDENTS : Podio Media MX
SCORING: Christine Wait
RACER COMMUNICATIONS: Lawton Shank
SCORE LIVE ANNOUNCERS: Rat Sult (Host), Brian Eaton (Studio),
Ana Hernandez (Ramp)
SCORE LIVE PRODUCTION TEAM: Alberto Luna (coordinator),
Terry Morton, Brian Eaton, Rafael Ayala, Rafael Castillo, Antonio
Rodriguez, Dale Mills, Daniel Morales, Jose Vega, Juan Flores (driver)
SPECIAL ADVISOR DIGITAL MEDIA: Edward Muncey
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Logan Gallagher, Elizabeth Leal
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CORPORATE ADMINISTRATORS: Quiana Smith, Sherry Wagner
ATTORNEY: John Alessio
TECNOVISION: Raul Rodriguez





SCORE WORLD DESERT CHAMPIONSHIP 2024

MARCH 20-24, 2024

37TH ANNUAL SCORE SAN FELIPE 250

SAN FELIPE, BAJA CALIFORNIA, MEXICO

SEPT. 11 - 15, 2024

5TH ANNUAL SCORE BAJA 400

ENSENADA, BAJA CALIFORNIA, MEXICO

MAY 29 - JUNE 2, 2024

56TH ANNUAL SCORE BAJA 500

ENSENADA, BAJA CALIFORNIA, MEXICO

NOV. 12 - 17, 2024

57TH ANNUAL SCORE BAJA 1000

ENSENADA, BAJA CALIFORNIA, MEXICO



• THE FOUR-RACE SERIES FOR CARS, TRUCKS, UTVS, MOTORCYCLES, QUADS WILL BE FEATURED IN ALL SCORE BAJA RACES.

**BFGOODRICH TIRES
56TH SCORE BAJA 500
WINNERS**

**TOBY PRICE
(DRIVER OF RECORD)
& CO-DRIVER PAUL WEEL**

