

KEITH LITTLE INTERVIEW • TRENT KENDALL'S BAJA EXPERIENCE



Volume 5, Issue 2
March/April 2009

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!



AMERICAN HONDA
HOUSER RACING'S
HAROLD GOODMAN



SPECIAL FEATURE:
BRANDON
BOULAY

SURPRISE AZ
WORCS
worcsracing.com
Round 1



THE FABULOUS LIFE OF
ALEX DANCE

www.atv-insider.com \$4.00

PST STD
US POSTAGE PAID
MADEIRA, MN
PERMIT #65

ATVI SPECIAL FEATURE
TRENT KENDALL

Flying stand-by

TECATE 41st ANNIVERSARY SCORE

BAJA

1000

ENSENADA 2008

Trent Kendall's Impromptu Baja 1000 Experience

NARRATED BY TRENT KENDALL

The Baja 1000 is regarded as the most demanding, most dangerous, and most prestigious off-road endurance race on the planet. Many Baja 1000 competitors spend countless hours and weeks preparing for the annual event that leads racers on a journey across Mexico's Baja California Peninsula. This year just days before the 41st Baja 1000 was set to kick-off in Ensenada, local Arizona desert racer Trent Kendall was enjoying a normal day at work in Phoenix. For Kendall it was like any other Tuesday morning in his cubicle at ICM Document Solutions, that is until his phone rang with an interesting proposition on the other end. Should he accept, Trent would need to immediately leave work to arrive in Mexico the next morning to partake in the biggest race of his life.

On Tuesday, Nov. 18, at 10 a.m., I was sitting in my office cubicle when my girlfriend JoLea called to say that someone named Ramos left a message about a free trip to the Baja 1000, but I had to call him back soon. Joe Ramos is a well-connected guy who I ride with sometimes and I assumed he might have a pre-run trip or a trip to help pit for a team. I had no idea the actual Baja 1000 race was Friday. I wasn't all that excited to call him back because I knew I couldn't go to Baja to just hang out on such short notice. But, I called him back and he told me that a pro quad team had a rider drop out and they were looking for a replacement, but that replacement would need to leave immediately. I was completely floored by what he was telling me. I have always wanted to race in the Baja 1000, but just assumed it

would never happen due to the expensive nature of the race. I told him I could probably do it, so he proceeded by calling the team manager back to let him know I would be their replacement rider. I have never driven in Mexico and definitely never raced there, so I knew this was going to be an unforgettable experience.

Within the hour, Mike Crawford, a member of the All Fays Racing Kawasaki team called and told me they would love to have me on the team, but in order to make it happen I would need to leave that night and I would need to bring my own quad and one chase truck, so I could pre-run my section and have someone chase me during the race. When I hung up the phone I was speechless and really quite emotional. I was just given the chance to race for a pro team in the Baja 1000! I have only been riding quads for three years and racing for one less. I have never even entered a race as a pro or with a pro...I was stoked!

However, Mike's proposal did present a slight problem, since I am way poorer than usual this month and I didn't know anyone who could leave with me on such short notice. Normally my dad would be in, but he was still limping around with a broken leg and foot and besides, he hates Mexico. Mike told me to try to find someone to go with me and call him back ASAP because they had other riders who were also possibilities. At this point I left work for lunch and started calling everyone I know and posting threads on the message boards looking for help. I also had a problem with my quad since I broke a few parts on Sunday pre-running for the final race in our local desert racing series.

I called everyone I know and nobody could leave work on such short notice and those who could were out of town on trips. Finally, my dad decided he could make it and around 2:30 p.m., my

good friend Adam said his boss was letting him go too. With my "team" in place I immediately called Mike to tell him I was definitely in. Meanwhile, I was running all over town gathering parts to fix my quad. I went to Lonestar Racing to pickup a swing arm pivot bolt, and then I was onto 1st Performance so my friend Steve could weld my bumper. He jumped right on it when I arrived and left a bunch of people standing around waiting for him, (Big thanks to Steve), then I went home and grabbed the Maxxis RZR 2 tires Adam had just bought for his quad to have them mounted on my wheels. Discount Tire dismounted and mounted the new tires for free, (They rule!), and then I went to Coyote Honda to pickup the swing arm pivot nut. Before dinnertime I had all the parts on the quad.

At 5 p.m., I left my house to drive 25 miles to Mesa for a softball game. Normally I would skip the game, but it was my first night with a new team so I had to go. On the way there my friend Jeremy called and said that even though he was busy with work that he would be crazy to skip this opportunity so he was also in for the trip. We won both our games and I went 7 for 9 so I was feeling good. From Mesa I drove 15 miles to Gilbert to pick up Jeremy. From Jeremy's house I went 20 miles to Mike's place in Phoenix so he could dump several years of Baja knowledge on me over the course of an hour while we picked up his GPS so I would know where I was riding during my pre-run on Wednesday.

I had heard of All Fays Racing prior to this, but I had never worked with them before and never officially met anyone from their team aside from their main rider Buddy Ray Fay. I met Mike Crawford for the first time that night at 10 p.m. He had prepared a Baja book for me with maps, notes, hand written directions to Kiki's Hotel in San Felipe and

more. It was awesome. We talked for an hour and solidified our pre-running plans. He gave us our chase truck stickers and other stickers to hand out to kids and cops while down there. Apparently the people down there love stickers and simply presenting some stickers can get you out of a jam. We left Mike's just before midnight, and while on the way home I realized that I hadn't eaten since lunch and I forgot to get Mike's GPS. After back tracking and eating we headed to Wal-Mart to pick up supplies. Around 2 a.m., I was finally heading home to start packing for the biggest race of my life.

My dad pulled in around 3 a.m., while we were busy mounting the GPS on the quad, and finished packing our truck to the brim before we headed out of Avondale at 4 a.m. Five hours later we crossed the border at Mexicali and drove through Mexican rush hour until we hit the Mexican Freeway. An hour later we arrived at the starting spot for my section of the race, which was Race Mile (RM) 220. Situated in the middle of a dry lakebed, this leg of the race would extend from RM220 to RM353, which is in San Felipe. My plan for the day was to pre-run as much of this section as possible and then meet some of the other team members in San Felipe at Kiki's Hotel.

Running on pure adrenaline, since I only managed to get about three hours of sleep during the drive down, I geared up and left my crew at 10 a.m. to begin my official first pre-run. It was more than a little intimidating to be leaving the friendly confines of the truck on a quad into the middle of a flat lakebed that was so desolate that you could see the curvature of the earth. I immediately realized I should've changed the gearing on my quad since I was pinned in fifth for quite a while on the open lakebed.

Before noon, I arrived at RM279 where my team was waiting for me so I



could gas up and continue on. I didn't encounter any other riders while pre-running that section, however I did pass a VW bus in the middle of a wash in the middle of nowhere.

The 60-mile section I just traveled covered all sorts of terrain. The first few miles were a dry lakebed, then sand just like at Glamis, then a wash of all small shardy rocks, then really rough mountain sections with hill climbs and giant rocks. The last 10 miles of this section were extremely brutal and nothing but whoops.

Along the next section I saw a marker for RM405, which really freaked me out since my section was from 220 to 353. I looked at the GPS and it said I was in the right spot. Apparently the course loops back onto itself in this area, so I kept going and made my way out to about RM290, which runs along a giant lakebed that had some water in it.

At 12:55 p.m. I was at RM310 waiting for my team to catch up so I could fuel up. While waiting I was swarmed by bees so I kept moving up and down the road trying to find a bee-free zone. A guy

on a KTM motorcycle stopped with me since he was waiting for his team to arrive too. Turns out he owns a KTM dealership in El Centro and he offered to give me a great deal on a KTM quad, I will be sure to take him up on that as soon as my money tree blooms. My team arrived and gassed me up and repaired my skid plate since I had hit some giant rocks and bent it into my rear brake rotor. I have been desert racing for two years and never bent a skid plate up so badly.

Along the next section towards San Felipe I caught up to a few motorcycles and got passed by a nice pre-runner rail. Other than that it was uneventful. I arrived in San Felipe at RM353 literally in the middle of a trash dump and we loaded up and left for the hotel.

San Felipe is really small and quiet. The hotel we stayed at was right on the beach and it was tiny. It consisted of a few rooms, which were really quite nice and a bunch of RV spots. Each RV spot had a tree house type deck/balcony thing. It was unlike anything I had ever seen. All of the RV parks down there have them. I was finally able to shower and sleep a few hours before dinner.

Later that evening we all gathered at Fat Boy's Pizza, which is an Americanized restaurant where you could eat and not worry about getting a killer case of diarrhea. It was good to finally meet other members of the team as we sat in the restaurant watching a few rails, trucks, buggies and ATVs going right down the main street. After eating I went straight to bed while the

others stayed up and tinkered with my quad.

Thursday morning at 8 a.m. we were back at RM353 so DJ, a team rider, could start running his section again. I decided to back track and run the final 15 miles of my section over again as well. The last part of that section was pretty flat and open and I knew it would be covered in locals during the race and I would need to know that section in case anyone decided to change the course markings. I found some really good lines while pre-running it again, so I was excited to run that section of the race on Friday.

An hour later we loaded up and headed for RM425 to meet DJ and his crew. This would be my first experience with a military checkpoint. My dad, Adam, and Jeremy had encountered them the previous day. You pull up, roll down all the windows, and the AR-15 armed guards say a bunch of stuff to you in Spanish and most of the time you get out and they search the vehicle. After the first checkpoint we had to turn left onto Highway 3 where there is another checkpoint literally 300 yards from the first checkpoint. The guard at the second checkpoint asked us if we had any "steekers" so I gave him some stickers and he let us go without a search. Mike Crawford was right; these stickers do come in handy.

With our final pre-running out of the way before lunchtime, we loaded up for Ensenada. Driving into Ensenada for the first time was a barrage on the senses. The people drive quite a bit differently there, crazy comes to mind, and there are junkyards everywhere, farms, ghettos, Wal-Marts and Home Depots. It was very strange for someone who had never been there and we were enjoying every minute of it.

The beach house we were heading to was located southwest of Ensenada on a small peninsula called La Bufadora. Along the way we saw some sweet horse drag racing in a field, and stopped at a taco stand and had some really good burritos. I think all seven of us ate for \$30. Along the way there was an

abandoned resort with a huge extravagant driveway, tennis courts, villas, etc., all totally worn down, overgrown and abandoned. Right next door there were some really awesome houses along the beach then there was a security guard at the entrance to our subdivision of beach houses, most of which were completely empty or occupied by fellow racers.

Finally at 2:15 p.m., I met the rest of the race team. They all thanked me for coming down and racing for them. I couldn't believe they were thanking me for coming down to race the Baja 1000, so I returned their thanks with more thanks of my own for giving me the chance to race. The entire All Fays Racing team was extremely nice and they made us feel welcomed right away. We unloaded the trucks and headed for contingency and tech in downtown Ensenada. We arrived at 4 p.m., one hour before closing time and there were still probably 100,000 people there. I didn't get to experience much of the festivities because I was busy registering. After passing tech, we got our Iritrack system registered and headed back to the house.

On the way back to the house we noticed the whole peninsula was dark, this included our house so we stopped at the taco stand again for dinner since they had candles for light and gas for cooking. We still had a lot of race prep to do so the power outage really screwed us up. Luckily the team had an awesome huge trailer with a generator and plenty of lights so we finished our race planning and quad prep under the lights. I was getting tired and I think I went to bed around midnight, but everyone else was up much later doing work.

RACE DAY

The race starts at 6:30 a.m. for the pro bikes and the pro quads start right after that. I left the beach house at 5:30 a.m. to head down to RM220 where DJ would be passing the quad over to me at approximately 11:30. We left that early just in case there was an accident on one of the highways, which would close the highway down. We got to RM220



Kendall (left) gets a little encouragement from his teammate. ■



The All Fays Racing Kawasaki KFX450R sits nicely prepped before action. ■



with two hours to spare and started the long waiting process. We pitted right next to the Desert Assassin guys who were really cool.

We started getting text updates from our friends at home saying we were in first or second place. Then we got an update that Buddy had run out of gas because the Baja pits people shorted him on fuel at one stop. Luckily we had spare gas on the front bumper of the quad so it only cost us a few minutes. At RM115 DJ got on and starting making up ground. According to IRC we were still high up in the rankings, but the IRC was only showing four quads even though there were nine in our class. I guess the other tracking units malfunctioned or were turned off. I was all excited and suited up to race for quite a while. I was not nearly as nervous as I thought I would be. I was just ready to get on the quad and do my best. We were expecting DJ around 11:30 a.m., and that time had come and gone. Then four of the pro quads came flying by so we knew something was wrong. Finally we got a message that he had engine troubles at RM 215 only five miles from us.

I hopped onto the practice quad and headed out to tow him in. He said that when the quad died he was right on the tail of Wayne Matlock's Honda team. Once we got back to the pits it was clear that the engine was not repairable so we decided to swap out an engine from the practice quad. SCORE rules state that you cannot change the engine case or the frame and they mark each of them so you can't get around the rules. We were down there to finish the race so we decided to swap the engine over from the practice quad. We knew we would probably still receive a DNF or a DQ but we didn't care, we wanted to finish. Everyone had worked too hard and invested too much to give up so early. Mike and his crew drove down to us and we started going to work on the quads.

Around 3 p.m. the top trophy trucks came flying by, and that was pretty wild to see. A few of them had chase helicopters and they would come flying down the lakebed and then bank hard right, it was cool to watch. Around this time Mike pulled me aside and told me I would be racing in the middle of the trophy trucks, Class 1 buggies and other insane machines. He said if I didn't feel comfortable he wouldn't blame me and I didn't have to race. I also found out I would be racing in the dark since it gets dark there at 4 p.m., that was definitely not planned. But I told him I was still in, so I started suiting up.

Once we broke down and we were basically out of the race I mentally switched from race mode to safety mode. I knew I would be racing with trophy trucks and then racing in the dark so I just wanted to get the quad safely to the next rider, regardless of how long it took. I believe it was 3:30 p.m. when I got on the quad and headed off into the great unknown.

I took off across the dry lakebed and started getting accustomed to the machine since I had never ridden it before. The steering was much, much stiffer than what I am used to so that kept me in the middle part of fifth gear across the lakebed because it was very silty and it would pull the tires hard to the right or left and I was having trouble correcting it smoothly. The backup engine had plenty of power, but still every 30 seconds or so, I would look back to see if someone was coming because I knew on this section I was doing about 75 mph and other vehicles could be doing about 140 mph. Finally I saw my first trophy truck bearing down on me in the distance like Godzilla crawling out of the ocean. So I pulled over to the side and waited for him to pass. After they pass you have to wait longer for the dust to settle. They don't just kick up dust, they kick up the earth!

After the dry lakebed in the dune-like sand section, I got a little lost following one of the motorcycle single-track hot lines. I spent a few minutes wondering around and thankfully I found the course again. I was able to spot and pull over for a few more trucks but eventually one of them caught me off guard. I was flying through the whoops when I heard a siren and I jumped off the course like a scalded cat.

Eventually it got dark, so I turned on one of the lights. The quad had two giant HID's on it, one was a pencil beam the other a flood. The charging system allowed us to run one of the giant HID's only, the last thing they told me when I left the pits was "ONLY RUN ONE LIGHT!" I went with the single flood for a long time and it worked great. I passed a motorcycle and a quad. I made it up the rutted hill climbs and there was always a group of people at the top cheering me on and flashing pictures, it was really cool. Then I got to RM274 where Mike would be waiting for me with gas. Coming out of the wash up onto the hill was just like a scene from Dust to Glory. There had to be several thousand people there right along the course and they would jump out of the way at the last second like parting the sea. It was wild! I stopped for gas and had the team check over the bike, one of the heel guards had broken and that is why I was feeling something hit the tire in the big whoops. They told me to take it easy in the whoops and I took off.

The next section was covered in people for about three miles. Then it got dark and lonely and I thought I was lost again since I was on the section of the course that crosses over itself and the mile markers get all whacky. You would think I would've learned my lesson from



While Kendall races in some of the bigger events on the West Coast, he calls the Whiplash Off-Road Racing Series his home where he won the Open Expert title in 2008. ■



Here the entire All Fays Racing family poses for a group photo after the race. ■

pre-running the day before, but I still got really nervous when I saw that RM405 sign. I finally made it to checkpoint 2 at RM 286 and made the left turn toward the other lakebed. I was really moving across that hilly dirt road. The GPS showed 83 mph in this section. Luckily no trucks caught me here. At the end of the road you hang a left and go through a gigantic silt section where two buggies passed me and I couldn't see a thing for a few minutes.

Finally I made it to RM311 for fuel, but when gassing up the quad stalled. Adam and Jeremy were able to push start me and I headed up the road. After a mile the light started flickering and when I switched the fan on, the quad

would sputter and die. Then the quad started sputtering and finally it just died and the lights went out. I was going about 60 mph at the time so it really sucked, it was pitch black and I had to get off the course because I knew a buggy was behind me. I turned to the right and hit the berm and jumped off the quad and pushed as hard as I could to safety. I was broke down at RM 315, four miles from my last pit stop. It was very dark and lonely out there.

I checked all the fuses and they were fine. The battery was just shot. I got on the sat phone and Buddy walked me through a few things to get it started, but nothing worked. While I was waiting, a few of the Class 1&2 VW-powered rails

came by. These things are the loudest, shriekiest vehicles I have ever heard. When they go by they assault your senses like a flash bang going off. After 20 minutes I finally got it running, but it died again before I could suit up and leave. Finally, my chase truck arrived and we towed it back to the RM311 Borego pits where DJ and his team had driven up to meet me. We swapped in a new battery and he put on his helmet lights and eventually he was on his way. We had lost another 2.5 hours or so here.

He made it almost all the way to RM425 where he was going to hand it over to Mike, but the battery died on him again. At one point he woke up some guy in a tent who helped push start it and later some other guy push started him in a truck. He arrived at around 3 a.m. and we swapped batteries again and checked everything over. Mike had two sets of helmet lights and we strapped a few Mag-lites to the quad also. He rode through the night to RM550 where Buddy got back on and rode to RM595 where he handed it back to Mike for the final section to the finish line. My team crashed in the truck for a few hours to get some sleep, but after Buddy came past us at RM593 we hauled up to Ensenada to try to witness the finish.

We arrived at about 10 a.m. when Mike arrived safe and sound. It was great to see him finish the race. Race promoter Sal Fish handed Buddy our finishing pins but Buddy handed them back to him and told him we could not accept them because we had to change engines. We finished the race in 26

hours 10 minutes and 44 seconds. The winning quad team consisted of Wayne Matlock, Harold Goodman, Marc Spaeth and Wes Miller with a time of 14:47:25.

I had no idea what to expect when joining up with a pro team, and over the course of those few days we worked closely with the All Fays Racing team, they were awesome. I think they are the nicest group of people I have ever met. When we woke up on race day our truck was equipped with a few bags of food and supplies that we didn't pack. We still don't know how they unlocked the truck to put those goodies in there for us. Each member of the team was so generous and willing to help with anything it was truly great and each member of the team is great at what they do. The amount of time, effort and money put into the All Fays Racing program is phenomenal. I can't thank them enough for the opportunity to race the Baja 1000 and to race it with a top-level team of people.

(I can't thank Adam, Jeremy and my dad enough. Especially my dad! He did all of the driving when we were down there, I have no idea how he did it on such little sleep. Also, thanks again to the entire All Fays Racing team and to Joe Ramos for thinking of me when this came up.) **ATVI**

The 2008 Baja 1000
Miles Driven: 1490
Total hours running the truck: 38
Hours in Mexico: 96
Hours Slept: 15



THE CHOICE OF CHAMPIONS



661.872.4343

www.sparksracing.com