

TOUGH ENOUGH

The Dodge 150 Is, But So Are the Riders

BY CHARLES KELLY

Pre-race publicity compared it with France's famous Paris-Roubaix road classic, and in some respects the Dodge 150 measured up. As the race slogan said, "It's back, and it's brutal." Certainly it was long enough at 140 miles, but instead of cobblestones it offered the challenge of two mountain ranges and two national forests. After hours of dirt roads, trails and 15,000 feet of climbing, 53 of 73 starters made it through an urban minefield to the finish.

Logistical problems seemed unavoidable considering the ambition of the undertaking: a mountain bike race from Palm Springs in the California desert to Dana Point on the Pacific coast, across one of America's major urban centers. For most regulars on the race circuit, it was probably too tough. In spite of intense publicity, an excellent cash prize list and no competition from other events, few big names entered.

The race started in darkness at 5 a.m., May 13, in the hills above Palm Springs. It finished in a party atmosphere near the beach in front of the plush Dana Point Inn. Unseasonably cool weather, accompanied by a little rain, was made to order. A week later, temperatures in Palm Springs topped 100 degrees.

The last 30 miles were on city streets and bike paths. This effectively neutralized the race because riders had to obey traffic laws. For anyone who thought of bending them to his advantage, a few

minutes in traffic cured that attitude. Not even the boldest anarchist bike messenger would have chanced crossing a six-lane Southern California thoroughfare against the signal. As riders waited out the traffic lights, they were often joined by competitors they'd left behind in the hills. The bike paths on the route were hardly suited for racing, and some riders complained that pedestrians and casual cyclists were more of a hazard than tricky descents and traffic.

Several standard NORBA rules were bent for the race. Riders were permitted wheel changes at designated locations, and most switched to slick tires pumped to 80 psi for the paved sections. Eight to 12 hours on the bike meant that riders had to be fed, so a support crew and vehicle were necessary for every competitor. These crews leapfrogged from checkpoint to checkpoint in a sort of relay race as they tried to keep up with the riders,

who took more direct routes over the mountains.

Decisive Break

Early in the race, a three-man group consisting of David "Tinker" Juarez (General), former Canadian national road team member Bruce Spicer (Bicycle Group/Kona), and Tom Rogers (KHS) rode away from the field. Juarez lost contact with the other two when a wheel change took a few seconds extra, and the pair made him work hard for miles to rejoin. Later, it was Rogers who fell behind, leaving Tinker and Spicer to contest the win.

The finish came down to a two-man, uphill sprint for \$1,000, and former BMX champ Juarez, with his family cheering wildly, found a little energy that Spicer could not. Although the official margin of victory was 38 seconds, it was closer until Spicer acknowledged defeat and sat up on the last short climb, resigned to coast in with a time of 8:34:58. It was Juarez's second victory in as many runnings of the race. Third and fourth place were decided by another sprint 20 minutes later as Rogers beat John Hard (Team Ape) by one second.

Tragedy nearly marred the event when racer Billy Broadfoot (Bike Beat/Black Bottom/Brave) hit a truck head-on while rounding a curve on a dirt road. He suffered serious injuries, including a broken femur, and



On the murky outskirts of L.A., Juarez (in yellow) and Spicer power toward their 1-2 finish.

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the first riders to arrive on the scene were certain he'd been killed. Iditabike veteran and RAAM rider Bobby Forney (Denver Mountain Bike Specialists) recalls, "I forgot about the race instantly, and just went tearing down the mountain to call for an ambulance." In the heat of the moment, Forney got off the course, but found a telephone and notified local authorities. After dealing with this, Forney had to find his way back to the course and continue another hundred miles to the coast, where he arrived hours after the winner.

Tandem Tricks

Because about 60 miles of the race were in two sections of flat, paved road, two tandem teams entered, hoping to use their higher speed on the flats to make up for time they were certain to lose on the climbs and singletrack descents. Both stokers were champion women racers, Sara Ballantyne and Cindy Whitehead; their captains were Gary Fisher and Mark Langton.

Fisher/Ballantyne suffered a flat and several falls, losing 10 minutes to the other tandem on the initial long climb, but then they got their act together and stormed past Langton/Whitehead on a flat stretch. Although organizers had

predicted problems for the tandems on the multiple switchbacks during five miles of singletrack, the always-inventive Fisher came up with a solution: He rode solo while Ballantyne ran down the hill. At the sharp turns he had little trouble pivoting the bike without a stoker.

Except for Ballantyne and Whitehead, few women competed. Since last year's winner, Martha Kennedy (Salsa), was concentrating on national championship races, Canadian Cindy Devine (Rocky Mountain Bicycle/Syncros/Bugaboo) cruised to victory in just over 10 hours, 50 minutes ahead of the only other woman to finish, Maureen Burford.

If anyone captured the spirit of the race, it was three-time Iditabike rider and veteran's category winner Carl Tobin, who finished fifth overall. Several years ago, Tobin broke both legs in an avalanche and still must contend with limited mobility in his knees. Despite this, the 36-year-old Ph.D. candidate beat last year's veteran national champion, Jim Harlow (Santana), and another supervet, Terry Hughes (Pacific Coast Cycles), as well as most of the rest of the field. (See "Live to Ride, Ride to Die, Mountain Bikes From Hell!" on page 34 for more of Tobin's adventures.)

But that's not all. With more than 30 miles still to go, Tobin crashed hard in a streambed and broke his handlebar. Because he was using an aerodynamic model that forms a full loop, the broken side didn't fall off, it just dangled and still permitted steering and braking—more or less. The fall also gashed his arm and battered his damaged knee to the point where he could barely walk after he finished. The race is tough, and so are the riders.

Results

Men

1. Tinker Juarez (General) 8:34:20; 2. Bruce Spicer (Bicycle Group/Kona) 8:34:58; 3. Tom Rogers (KHS) 8:53:25; 4. John Hard (Team Ape) 8:53:26; 5. Carl Tobin (KHS) 9:06:26, first veteran; 6. Terry Hughes (Pacific Coast Cycle) 9:16:30, second veteran.

Women

1. Cindy Devine (Rocky Mountain Bicycle/Syncros/Bugaboo) 10:16:30; 2. Maureen Burford (unattached) 11:06:39.

Tandem

1. Gary Fisher/Sara Ballantyne (Fisher MountainBikes) 10:05:06; 2. Mark Langton/Cindy Whitehead (Mountain Biking) 10:46:21. ■