



Ahhh, the joy of tight woods! Bash bars on the handlebars are a common sight in the South Jersey woods.



There's no such thing as a better line through the trees: just hit them until you can't stand it any longer, then hit 'em some more!



Larry Roeseler made the long trip from the California desert to finish 6th in the AA class.

## AMA NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP, ROUND THREE

# FORKED RIVER MOUNTAIN NATIONAL ENDURO

## Racing in the New Eastern Desert

By Paul Clipper

**F**orked River Mountains. The very name paints a picture of desolation; rugged, lifeless peaks looming over the mighty Forked River—deep and wide and treacherous in current; the last heart-breaking obstacle between tired immigrants and the restive peace of the Jersey Shore. Road signs in the area do little to restore confidence, as town names such as Double Trouble and Mount Misery drift by in the cold grey of a morning fog. Even the most modern maps show the area to be riddled with the ruins of forgotten towns long ago abandoned by their disillusioned occupants.

Jeez. And there's going to be an enduro in this place? Much less a National enduro? Pictures of *Deliverance*-style encounters in a wild, backwoods country march across the brain. It starts feeling like a good idea to forget all about this one, and just go on to Tennessee the next weekend. After all, it's a lot easier on the next of kin if they don't get these *I'm sorry* phone calls right in the middle of Masterpiece Theater on Sunday night. That is, assuming they find the body...

Of course, the absolute worst thing you can do is voice these fears to a longtime New Jersey resident, as he laughs up his sleeve and agrees with everything you say. You see, you've gotten things just a little out of proportion here, a little exaggerated. The Forked River Mountains (Forked; the accent is on the -ed) rise to a vertical elevation of 184 feet above sea level—you could stumble right over them in a search for the peak, all the while with your eyes glued to the horizon, wondering where the foothills were. As far as the mighty Forked River goes... well, look sharp and you may not walk into it during your search. Muddy feet may be the only sign of it you'll find.

But that's not to say the area isn't without its desolation. The Pine Barrens of South Jersey could just as easily be known as Mojave East—millions of acres of sandlands extending from the South Central part of the state all the way to the coast, riddled

with fire-stunted pine trees and wild undergrowth. Terrain so tight that broken fingers and bent levers are as common as fouled plugs; a trip off the marked trail can clean you right off the bike and leave you a good hour's work untangling your body and machine from the bushes. If you're unfortunate enough to get stuck in a Jersey swamp, believe me, it's a memory that'll stay with you for a long time.

Not very many of the top national riders enjoy riding New Jersey enduros. Tight trees, miles of waist-deep whoopies, and bottomless sand all dampen the enthusiasm long before the final check comes into view. Chances are, anyone who claims he enjoyed himself will be carrying home a trophy that night. If you can win, it's great; for the rest of us, it's just another day of punishment for being so vain to think that we know how to ride enduros.

The Forked River Mountain National was a typical New Jersey enduro—with a twist. As a result of what is turning into a two-year drought on the East Coast, there was no excess of water on the trail. Many of the swamps were dried up, and a few of the smaller streams were now nothing but dry gullies. There were a few spots where we had to cross stray mud holes, but gone were the water traps of the good old days.

This was the first New Jersey National in a couple of years. It was a combined effort of two of the local clubs, so there were plenty of workers involved in the awesome job of setting up a National. Beth Cooper, president of the Ocean County Competition Riders, and Bill Spindler, of the South Jersey Enduro Riders, worked their buns off for months before the event. Their efforts paid off well; throughout the run, the only organizational complaints we heard were that the 30-minute layovers between loops were too long. This is a very minor gripe for a run of this stature. Truthfully, most of us wouldn't have minded if they were a little longer—like maybe two or three hours!



# FORKED RIVER



Five-hundred riders, relatives, friends and dogs turned out to transform Bamber Lake, New Jersey, into a metropolis for a day.



Dick Burleson wheelied to a good finish, but not good enough to beat KTM's Darryl Kuenzer.

Nearly all the hired guns were out in force; all were looking for the overall win. Dick Burleson had his race face on, after walking home with the California National win a month ago and spending the last weekend eating teammate Mike Melton's dust at Stone Mountain.

Of course, after his recent victory, Mike had *his* eye on the Big Trophy, too. Third Husky teamster, Terry Cunningham, has been top-tenning it for quite some time and was just about due for a win also. So the sparks were flying in the Husqvarna pits. Unconfirmed rumors had it that a few spectators were nearly electrocuted just walking by the yellow and blue van, but they're probably not true.

Team KTM was running on 220 also, with Rod Bush still reeling from an unprecedented tie with Burleson in the 125 class at the Oklahoma Two-Day just a week before. Rod brought out his 125 flame thrower and was all set to smoke the Jersey woods. Darryl Kuenzer would be a big threat to the field, as the tighter the woods, the faster he

seems to ride. In preparation, Kevin LaVoie and Bill Berroth had been eating raw meat for a week.

Kawasaki made the long drive down from Lorain, Ohio, and the Green Group had Jack Penton, Vic Ely and Mark Hyde signed up for the AA light-weights. Randy Martin, Jeff Fredette and Mike Rosso came out for Team Suzuki, and Larry Roeseler and John Fero did the cross-country trip, all the way from California, for the Yamaha effort. John's now working with the Competition Support Department at Yamaha International, and just happened to be doing some testing in the East before the run.

Key time was set for 8:00 a.m., and Team *Dirt Bike* (which consisted of Tom Webb and myself) spent the hour before that looking over the turn mileage sheet, trying to get an idea of what the course would look like. The first loop of the course looked like a breeze on paper. "Right turn sand road, left turn sand road, straight sand road"—by the looks of the sheet, there was hardly any trail on the first loop. What

a cake walk! Our battle plan would be to take it easy, stay loose, and try not to burn any checks for the first 50 miles.

It wasn't 10 miles into the course when our best-laid plans went astray. Those "sand roads" they were talking about on the mileage sheet may have been sand roads back in the late 1800s, but it had been a long time since they'd seen anything wider than a deer. There were also two short, knuckle-buster sections that left nearly everyone down at least one or two points at the second and fourth checks.

Umm, that is, everyone with any chance at winning. Team *DB*, like the rest of the mortals, dropped quite a bit more than one or two.

And so the story went. The clubs went easy on us for the finish of the first loop. After a half hour at the pits, we were off for more of the same—we'd get late knocking the handlebars on the trees and then go like crazy down the sand roads to make up time. The basic enduro formula everywhere.

Now and then, the clubs would give us a reset for a short break on the trail, but then they'd come back with both barrels and pick up several more points. They couldn't have done a better job setting up the checks; every tight section had a check on the way in and one as soon as you came out. Anyone trying to ride hot got burned badly for their gambling.

The third loop was a grind. The unseasonal heat and dust was taking its toll of riders, and no way was the OCCR/SJER crew going to let us cruise into the finish. They did have the foresight to cut off 5 miles of dusty dirt road on the last part of the course, but rough, tight sections before the 12th and 13th checks took 5 and 6 points off even the best rider's scores. A reset after number 13 made the 14th zeroable, but after that was a banzai charge through another tight section to the 15th and final check.

The last check looked like a gathering of the faithful, as the riders stood around and compared scores. The two lowest scores at the check (three points) were posted by Burleson and Kuenzer, but they weren't talking about the rest of their points. Not yet. One of the unwritten rules of the enduro world is "*Never talk about your score until it becomes a matter of record.*" In other words, when the club finds out, so will everyone else.



As it turned out, Dick put together an amazing ride, with only 17 points lost, but Darryl did him 2 points better and went back to South Carolina with the overall and first AA, and another feather in the cap for KTM America. The AA200 class win went to Jack Penton and the Kawasaki National Enduro Team, with Jack dropping a total of 20 points over the 148-mile course.

How did Team DB do? Well, it still hurts to talk about it, but the scores went something like this: 2 broken fingers, multiple contusions and abrasions, a 9th in the AA class, and a 9th in the B200 class; which is not too shabby for a couple of tree-starved California crazies. We couldn't have done it without the help of Team Husqvarna, Team Kawasaki, and the generous invitation from OCCR and SJER. Many thanks to all concerned, and watch out for us next year. We're not going to settle for anything less than 8th! □

# **FORKED RIVER MOUNTAIN 150-MILE NATIONAL ENDURO March 29, 1981**

Grand Champion:  
DARRYL KUENZER (AA Open)  
15 points  
High Point A:  
FRANK VANAMAN (A250)  
19 points  
High Point B:  
RICHARD LEE (B Open)  
35 points  
High Point C:  
GEORGE LUSTIA (C200)  
13 points

## **TOP 20 RIDERS OVERALL:**

1. Darryl Kuenzer KTM	15
2. Dick Burleson HUS	17
3. Terry Cunningham HUS	18
4. Frank Vanaman HUS	19
5. Kevin LaVoie KTM	20
6. Larry Roeseler YAM	20
7. Jeff Fredette SUZ	20
8. Jack Penton KAW	20
9. Mike Melton HUS	20
10. Vic Ely KAW	21
11. Rod Bush KTM	21
12. Barry Avery HUS	23
13. Bruce Kenny KAW	23
14. Randy Martin SUZ	24
15. Bill Glenn KAW	25
16. Roy Cook KTM	25
17. Mark Hyde KAW	26
18. Bill Knox KTM	26
19. Ron Ribolzi KAW	26
20. Ken Pacitto HUS	26

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The ARAI RMX is available, complete, in red, white, yellow or blue, for a suggested retail price of \$134.95.

The red ARAI RMX shown here, like all ARAI helmets, is available in S, M, L, and XL. Order by mail directly from ARAI Helmet, Ltd., Dept. DB, P.O. Box 421, Tenafly, NJ 07670. A full color brochure illustrating the full line of ARAI helmets is available by sending 50¢ in coin or stamps.

