



Overall winner Skip Olsen shows the way.

PART I: THE MYSTIQUE

I'd heard mention of the name before. In soft, careful whispers. Half myths, half truths. Warily spoken in hushed tones in a dark corner of some out of the way and down trodden bike shop or accessories house. It was not a name to be voiced loudly or in the bright of daylight hours. The Rock Run was not a name to be taken lightly.

A shadow surrounded the run, an aura of mystery. For even old salts, veterans of many enduros, would cease their telling of tales and grow suddenly sullen when confronted with an inquiry on the legendary Rock Run. They'd merely squint their wrinkled eyes and in a low, cracked voice warn, "It's no good a messin' around up in them hills. Them's queer folk up there and

that's for sure." Some even hinted at goblins and trolls that roamed in that section of the Pennsylvania mountains.

Thus the response came as no surprise when, one night while sitting in my favorite alehouse and freely enjoying the intoxicating savorings of several Harp lagers, I let slip my intentions of journeying to the Rock Run Enduro this August.

In an instant a deadly silence fell like lead upon the previously boisterous gathering. A mug dropped from a suddenly limp hand and shattered upon the floor. Several chairs shuffled away from mine, and without looking I could feel all eyes upon me. Finally an older, less intimidated man broke the morgue-like silence and pointed a crooked, knobby finger at me, "If you was smart you wouldn't go foolin' with what

don't concern ya. Them Lehigh Valley Dirt Riders, why there's those that say they're warlocks, I tell ye, and they put on a run to make your life pass before ye."

But I was not to be undone. I was determined to crack the Rock Run mystique, and see with my own eyes what truth the legends held.

Indeed the signs were not long in coming. As I departed on my adventure towards evening on the day before the enduro, the sun, which had shone brightly all day, was slowly swallowed up by a growing darkness of clouds rising in the northeast; the direction of the Rock Run. That was not the last.

I was barely outside Philadelphia, listening to a rain delayed Phillies-Giants game, when the station suddenly began fading and was replaced by a

THE ROCK RUN NATIONAL ENDURO

Diary of a Mad Journalist

Story by Rik Paul; photos by Brian Palormo



Slick rails made for some rather intriguing crossing techniques.



John Penton puckers.



King Richard does make a mistake every once in a while.

growing eerie, satanic organ playing. This grew and built upon itself through several miles, and then, abruptly, this too vanished. Then nothing remained save dead silence and occasional bursts of lightning static.

I drove on and a powerful thunderstorm loomed ahead to impede my progress. This might have succeeded in fearfully turning me back if not for the sudden discovery that my brakes were on the verge of nonexistence, which put me beyond the point of no return.

Finally, under the smothering mountain darkness, and a hypnotic, flowing mist which almost succeeded in detaching my mind from the reality of my driving, I began entering Rock Run territory. It is a land of towns with odd and, some might say, evil names; Tamaqua, Tuscarora, Hometown. Sinister, forbidding.

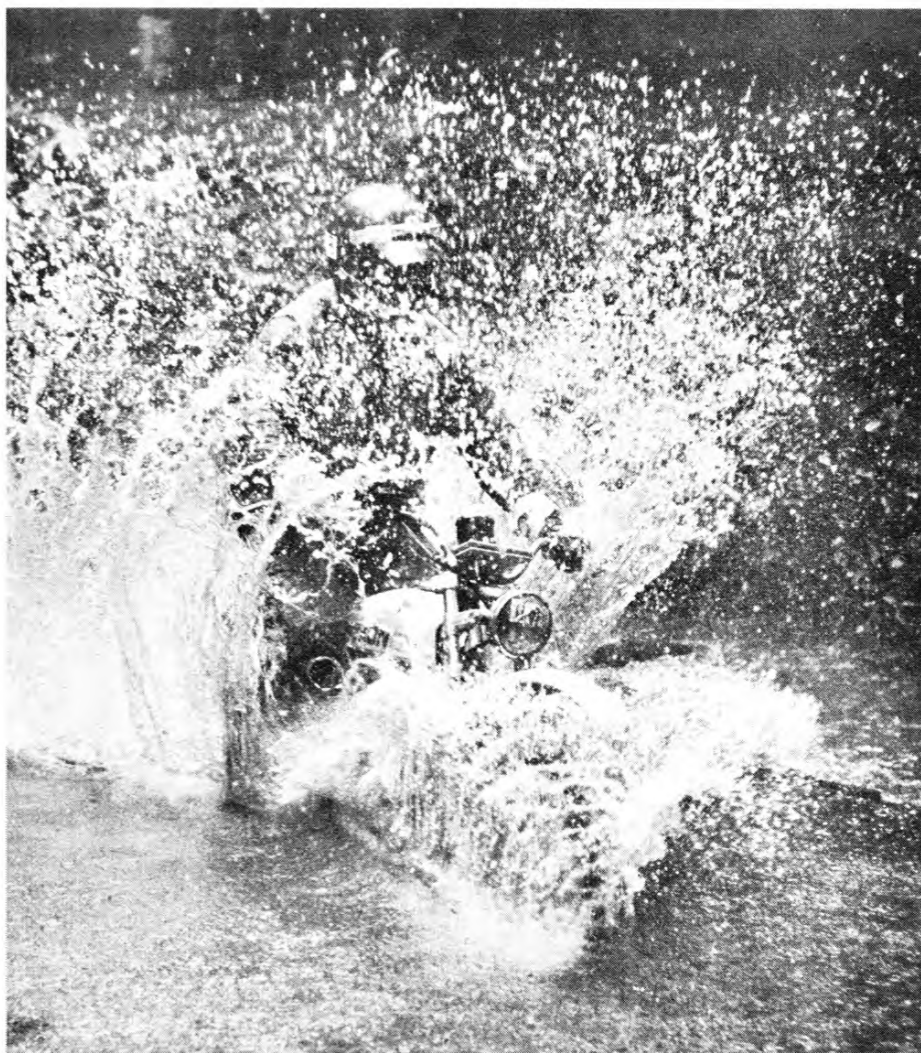
Yet, mere miles from the enduro headquarters, the road led me awry and I found myself hopelessly lost. Fortunately my bewilderment must have been apparent, as a couple locals stopped to offer me directions. Finally armed with the proper information I then sought knowledge of the Rock Run beneath the mystique.

"I hear it's quite a bike breaker," I commented, inwardly pleased with my clever subtlety. "Yes, there's been quite a few bikes broken," they grinned at each other. "And this year they're running it backwards. You gotta go up all those downhills. It's gonna be twice as hard." I don't think my cringe was noticeable.

To my surprise and somewhat suspicion all seemed pretty much peaceful and normal upon my arrival. No foul smelling bonfires, no incantations drifting through the wind. I parked my white wonder (it's a wonder that it runs) in the large camping area and started on foot toward the Lakeside Grange, which served as HQ. Into the den of sorcery itself I was going. I was braced.

But again everything seemed quite normal. The few club members present at this late hour were friendly, and once I'd explained my cover mission of photography, were helpful in pointing out good shooting sites. I plied the scoring chairman, Bob Menzer, with innocent questions of the course; the bad downhills that had given my help such sadistic glee had been routed around, and, in so doing, many freshly hacked trails had been added. And carefully touched upon the legends; "This run?" he displayed genuine surprise. "It's not real hard." Was he trying to get my guard down? "The first year was very hard, the second was easier, and this year is in between the two."

Satisfied for the moment, I retired that night with a somewhat more settled mind. Final judgment would come on Sunday.



PART II: THE EVENT

Immediately upon awakening the next morning I found myself staring into the huge, wet eyes and pink nose of a large white canine head from the passenger seat of the van parked next to me. Having recently seen *The Omen* I immediately assumed, of course, that I was locked into the commanding gaze of a mutant jackel, and was bracing myself for a horrible death when he lost interest, laid down, and went back to sleep.

As the camping area was springing to life about an hour before key time, I forced this close call out of my mind and made ready to continue my mission.

After consulting Boyd Reynold's topographical map of the course area (which is always time well spent when, like me, you're too cheap to buy your own), my first stop was to be check one, where there was also a small steam crossing.

I drove out to where I thought the right trail was and parked alongside a blue van, which, I was to discover, belonged to Pat Rossiter, who was down from New York running gas for her husband and a friend. Between the two of us we managed to decipher the sign that said 45.3 miles and mutually decided that wasn't the spot we wanted.

"Mike will never make it this far," she said. "I think this might be beyond the first check," said I.

Her boys had been out scouting and had discovered a fireroad not far away with more arrows, and after I convinced her that Pennsylvania is made of firmer stuff than New Jersey (where she got helplessly stuck on such a road and Mike went without gas), she invited me to tag along. I accepted, of course. Better her van than my wonder.

The fireroad was thirty miles out, which was good for her, and all right with me, since by then I'd given up on the first check. I followed the arrows into the woods, after promising to get a shot of Mike (5c) for her.

The woods were heavily laden with moisture, creating a good impersonation of an African rain forest, and coupled with a thick mist that hung over the mountains, it was indeed a sobering, if intriguingly beautiful atmosphere. The course didn't take long to get slippery with mud. No matter how dry the trail began, the first couple dozen knobs would squeeze out the sub-surface water and begin a transformation that would give the latter numbers daymares.

After the riders had reached into the thirties with no sign of 5c, I began

(Continued on page 61)

ROCK RUN

(Continued from page 49)

dodging bikes back along the trail toward the fireroad. Then in a sudden silence I heard muffled cursing coming from in front of me. I rounded a bend and ahead was a rider alongside the trail fiddling with his plug. I squinted at the number. Could it be?

Yup. 5c! I got the picture.

After we'd gotten him back to his van, a mere 200 feet away (I refuse to believe that Pat hadn't had divine guidance to that spot), I pumped him for the usual questions about the course while he frantically tore apart his carb. He maintained that it was a good challenging run, not overly difficult, and that he'd damn well better get this bike running again or nobody'd have peace all the way back to New York.

This report, from a B rider no less, brought more doubts into my mind as to the authenticity of the mystique. Then another rider pulled up, "How's the fastest way back to the camp?" he demanded, "I can't move my right leg." Ah-ha, thought I, the curse is beginning to take hold. "No, the course is fine. Some ass ran into me broadside." And it wasn't a goblin. I asked.

Mike packed it in and they dropped me back off at the white one (thanks, Pat) and my next stop was a place called Brenner's Glen, described to me by discoverer Jim Brenner as a photographer's paradise. And, indeed, I was not about to argue the point. What with a couple steep and slippery downhills, one beautifully situated by a rolling stream, a railroad crossing deceptively troublesome, and a scenic stream crossing at the bottom of it all.

I had just completed my grand tour of the area and was stumbling back down the mountainside, when I again happened upon a muttering-under-the-breath rider fooling with a dead bike. "I would have beat that guy," he greeted me with, "Burlson. I would have beat him." My immediate skepticism subsided when I realized it was Roy Cook, a speedy Jersey rider who ran the entire Two-Day series, qualified for the team, but couldn't ride because he's seventeen. FIM, remember?

Roy's kickstarter had a throw of about one inch, which wouldn't have been too bad since one rider was still going with no kickstarter at all, but when he stalled on the downhill, the rider behind him found excellent traction off his ankle.

I plugged away at Roy for his opinions while he pushed his Penton the rest of the way down the hill, across a rocky stream, up a slope to the railroad tracks, and then down the tracks away. He, too, had nothing but praise



for the run, and nothing like praise for the guy who ran over his ankle. During one rest stop he made the comment, "Whenever they bring you down some steep hills there's always mud or water at the bottom," but I couldn't discern whether that was a criticism or a compliment.

By the time we reached where the w.w. was parked Roy's ankle was giving sharp pains, and fortunately Wes McKinny, alias clean-up crew, happened by and hustled up a ride back to the cap for him. You're welcome, Roy.

Wes was a prime supplier of goings-on from the club's viewpoint, and didn't seem at all like a warlock. He was also bound and determined to organize a tire changing contest during the results wait, which I eagerly urged him on with, sadist that I am, despite my opinion that the riders would be too tired.

Wes also let me in on the inside scoop of why the 7th check had been pulled. It seems the clockstand fell down the hill.

But his pride of the day lay in the fact that he had been pushed up a slippery hill by Dick Burlson after Dick's DNF, which occurred in the muddy section after Brenner's Glen. "The worst part of the course. It was either go seven miles ahead or two miles back through all that mud. So we went back." And when they reached an insurmountable rise, Dick gave Wes the dead Husky, and took Wes' Penton, and . . . Well, Wes will be glad to tell you about it anytime you ask.

As for Dick's DNF, you may be wondering, "My throttle was sticking.

It would rev too high and spin the motoplat." That'll do it. And what of the run itself? "Pretty good, of what I rode of it. Good!"

Making my way back to the grange, it seemed to me that there were possibly more riders accompanying me on the road than I'd seen on the latter part of the course. And so it was in the final results that, at least among B riders, there was a fairly healthy DNF rate.

The rain was again pouring as the beautiful silver goblets, plates, and bowls, which served as trophies, were handed out. For the Low Point Finisher was a turkey.

Tom Penton, who received the highest AML class award, and fell three points short of Skip Olson's Grand Champion score, mentioned that he rode the entire day with a broken speedometer, but experienced no other problems, and, like everyone else present, spoke very highly of the run. And how about brother Jack, did he have any problems? "Jack has a list about like this," he laughed, holding his hands about two feet apart.

And with that, in addition to all else I'd seen and heard during the day, the decision as to the authenticity of the legends seemed quite clear cut. Hogwash. "Hogwash!" I defiantly shouted out my window as I pulled away from the enduro site. "HOG-WASH!" Just then, just as I left the actual enduro grounds, the thick clouds on the horizon separated and the rays of the sun came streaming through for the first time since leaving for the event. It's not wise to ignore signs. Well, maybe not quite hogwash.



Photo by Rik Paul.

RESULTS

Grand Champion
Skip Olson—982

A HEAVY

1. B. Kenny 980
2. W. Geier 977
3. J. Kessler 972

A SENIOR

1. J. Penton 948
2. J. Smith 897
3. R. Stichler 779

B HEAVY

1. G. Stauffer 966
2. D. Rockwell 955
3. D. Ellerman 938

A MEDIUM

1. Jack Penton 978
2. C. Wyman 978
3. T. Worrell 975

B Senior

1. R. Old 948
2. M. Stinson 727
3. H. Leppelmeier 11th ch.

B MEDIUM

1. R. Wichershan 943
2. S. Decker 942
3. N. Schulakam 942

Hi-Point A

H. Johnson—981

B BANTAM

1. H. Ohaus 728
2. B. Timinski .. 10th ch.
3. L. Rehatchek .. 9th ch.

A MEDIUM LIGHT

1. T. Penton 979
2. A. Smith 974
3. B. Brooks 967

POWDER PUFF

1. B. May 10th ch.
2. B. Cooper 10th ch.
3. B. Baldwin 7th ch.

Hi-Point B

E. Utter, Jr.—975

B MEDIUM LIGHT

1. J. Newcomer 929
2. L. Futchilo 922
3. D. Oswald, Sr. 913

A LIGHT

1. T. Krehbiel 961
2. R. Dunfee, Jr. 958
3. R. Street 948

B LIGHT

1. G. Oakes 930
2. K. Cambell 910
3. J. Edmondson 887

LOW POINT FINISHER

J. Haas—694