24 HOURS OF RACING

“Steve are you up?” as I asked as I tapped on the side window of Steve’s Ford.

“Mike’s gonna coming in a half hour or so.” Still no movement. Well he’ll be up in a shake er two. I shuffled back over to the fire an’ watched the F-150. No movement from inside the truck. By the fire I watched patiently, then I saw small movements in the Michigan build chariot of Steve’s.

A voice came out of the inky black night, “When he’s due?” a long pause, “God it feels like I just laid down.” Steve’s dreary voice echoed from between my step side an’ his ford.

“He’s due in 25 minutes or so.” I answered.

So began the ritual of the 24-hour racing. Race, sleep, race, sleep, maybe eat then sleep an’ back in the saddle. This year we had a new team. Steve Landry had approached me sometime in July asking if I was putting a team together. Shit, I hadn’t even thought of it yet an’ now it was only a few months away.

“Yeah, you interested?”

“Yes. Last year we had a difficult time and I wanted to do it again, but better.” He answered.

“You got anybody in mind?” so we went back an’ forth figuring out a team. He had few roadies that were interested. I had a few guys in the off road arena that had spoke of wanting to do it, Charlie had express an interest, but alas the “Seattle” trips we’re gonna foil his spot. See he’s work with the black faces so sometimes he vanishes for a while only to return later with a bitchin’ tan an’ sand in his boots. Never says where he’s going just isn’t there.

Alaska Joe wanted in bad, hell, he put his cash in quick too. Mike the Corpsman wanted in, shit, last year he did it solo, 15 laps on a single speed! That left one hole open for our five man team.

“There’s guy who was on my team last year that wants in, I mean if you haven’t found anyone yet.” Steve asked me on a phone call one afternoon.

“Bring him in.” I was stoked that made our team. The newest addition was Matt Brocht, he had done well last year an’ was excited to have a go at it a’gin.

We got together one afternoon at Patrick O’ Palms to have a go at the schedule, it was kinda hap hazard but we got it all figured out after a pint or two. Mike would lead

out, since he's runner anyway, then we'd have Steve, Joe, Matt an' me doing sweep. Then conversation came out to laps, how many in a row. See Steve an' Matt were doing back to back last year an' really like it. Now I ain't sayin' it is an I ain't sayin' it ain't, but. You knew there was a but didn't you, well in all the years we raced up there we found one lap an then taking a break seemed to work well. After a few moments of thinkin' an plottin' we all agreed on it. One lap each in a rotation.

Now that was settled, we came up with what to bring, anything you want came out. Drinks? What ever you want. Okay were on a roll here, where's our campsite? I chose a nice a spot at the opposite of where we last year. Donny, an' his crew we right next to us as were Scott Rieder an' Rich Griffin. Cool, we had three campsites for Mission! This year I signed us up as A3 Designs as it's Tim Jr.'s brain child. All the race fee's were paid, Tim Jr. was set for being our volunteer.

Race day came finally an' it all came together, I picked up Mike then Joe as we did our pilgrimage to Idyllwild for another history making race. When we found our site Matt already had set up house keeping, great! This is going so good. But we were missing a table

"Hey. look over across there." Matt spoke as he pointed to a distant table. Steve's truck came to play as the table instantly became ours! Then Scott show'd up so once more a call for a table came. Once more one appeared at our site. Me an' Mike went to sign up, I met my old friend Chad Greiner, which expedited our sign up. When we returned it was a very relaxed atmosphere, lounging around, playing with fire, sipping on beverages when something didn't look right. The table was gone!

We all looked at Joe. "What?" he defended himself.

"Joe, where's the table?" we asked.

"Uh, it's right… shit! it's gone!" he answered. Sure as a naked split tail will turn every head at the beach the table was gone.

"It was right here. Shit!" Joe exclaimed prancing aboot in a quick state of hysteria. Once more a request for a table went out. Once more a table miraculously appeared. Ain't it great, being scrounges.

Then next morning was race day, everyone was getting their race faces on. We had a helmet cam this year an' Mike had it on his Specialized helmet as he prepared for the run an' his first lap on his Santa Cruz Heckler. We got really amp'd up getting him ready. The time flew by as noon approached. Then he was in Lemans group start. Err! Went the horn an' the 24 hours of adrenalin started.

Mike pulled an excellent lap, including the run, something like 1:12! Steve was ready as Mike came blazing in! Off went he went in a flurry of motion. Now it's Joe's turn to be on the bubble. On it went, one after the other.

My first lap came an' went, it was dark when I went got back, my light's good for 4 hours. Or so I thought.

"I'm going up." Called Joe in anticipation of his lap. He had one of my lights on as well as a helmet light. Then he vanished into the night. Quiet came over our camp as we waited for Steve to go by. "Get ready Joe!" came the call for the black abyss as Steve went flying by behind out camp.

"Good thing Joe's already up there, eh?" I asked Mike.

"Very cool spot. Right next to the course, only like 10 minutes from the finish too." Came my answer.

We waited. Nothing. Time seem to slow down as we waited for Steve to come back to the camp site.

Steve came flyin' back to the campsite, "Where's Joe?!" Steve asked. "Huh? He should be up there." We all answered together.

"Shit!" Steve turned an' flew in a fit of nervous rage.

"He should be up there." I spoke to no one particular.

"He's not there!" it was Steve a'gin, not Joe.

"Okay. Then, go do another lap while we figure this out." I spoke solemnly to him. No argument, he just turned an' vanished into the darkness. Bummer aboot being the captain, eh? Time once a'gin trickled by. Then Steve reappeared.

"Joe's gone. He got a spare baton an' left. Crap. What happened?" he asked confused. We all went through the events an' what should have happened. Matt was up next so he got ready for his lap. In 50 minutes we heard Joe called out from the black night "Mission Cyclery!"

Matt was mounted his Santa Cruz Super light an' was gone. Finally Joe came in.

Steve Landry looked at him nervously. "what happened?"

“I was up there early, so I went to the fire pit an watched the movie, I’d checked in so it was just sit an’ wait. Before I knew it had been too long, when I went over the table to see where you were, the girl said you’d already came in, they gave me an extra baton since you checked in and I was there so I left.”

“you’re no longer Alaska Joe. You’re to be called Fire Pit Joe.” Someone called out. It stuck. Fire Pit Joe.

“I pulled a good lap though.” He defended himself.

“yeah, if you don’t add the 20 minutes of Steve lookin’ for you.”

My time was coming up soon, an I was ready. Warm closes on, actually too many warm clothes. I waited until Matt went by then headed up the transition tent. He came in an I left.

Me an’ my Truth we’re doing good, I was climbing strong up the first hill. But the light looked odd. It flickered a bit then went back on to being a brilliant white that only an HID can provide. On top of the hill off came my vest an’ jacket. Then the fun started. The downhill to the meadow! What a kick in the ass that is! I caught two riders going through there, smoking the first G out an’ ripping it up! Got the second just before the second one. Gawddamn that’s a fast section. Then meadow came. Not fast. Not even close. I got past by the two riders I had wasted earlier.

Sadness came over me for a moment. “I’ll catch ‘em on the downhill.” I spoke to the black hoo doo’s of the meadow. Then came the hill climb. “Waugh!” but I made it up in a fair amount of time. In the far away darkness hid the first downhill. Yep, I can make up sometime there. Finally the right turn next to the oak tree came into view, I noticed a light coming behind me, ”if you’re fast, you can have it.” I said politely. “you’re from Mission Cyclery aren’t you? You’re Hoser. Nah you go, I want to watch.” Well now ain’t that something I thought. Off we went. In a few seconds there was no light behind me. Way cool. Then the light flickered a’gin. Uh oh. Back on to HID. Cool, but it got me worried. See these lights go strong then in a few seconds they go dim, then they go out. Not good. Not good at all.

The downhill was over an’ I was going into the hairpin to the left when the unimaginable happened. Dim, then out. “Shit! I’ll just latch on to someone an’ faller ‘em out. Yep that’s what I’ll do.” It worked for a second, but they were going to fast for me to keep up. Trying to faller ‘em walkin’ up hill just wasn’t workin’, then I was alone. Blackness swaller’d me like a bluegill wolfing down a minnow.

“I know this trail. I can ride this by memory.” I called to the hoo doo in the blackness around me. So me an’ the Truth got going. I was doing good when I heard a familiar voice.

”Got to pass Hose!” it was Jimbo!

“can I latch on?” I almost pleaded.

“if you can keep up!” then he was gone.

“Crap!”

The old hike-a-bike was just ahead of me now when a new light came by, it was Adam from Ellsworth!

“hey Hoser! Light gone out eh?”

“yeah, you mind if I hook up with you?

“no sweat.” He answered. Very cool. So up we went, well until the downhill. He left.

“damn I’m in a tight spot! Lets see if this here light will work for just a few more shakes. I flipped her on, blink, blink then beautiful white light. Not wanting to waste it I hit that hill as fast as I could. My light had just blinked out just before the bottom, so I used what little moonlight there was until the next rider caught me, it was a solo guy.

“mind if I hook on?”

“if you can keep up.”

So off we went, I stayed with him until I got the corner where our team was.
“thanks!” I called out into the darkness as he vanished.

“hey! I need a light!” I called to my team. They were ready for me. Seems Jimbo had tolt them of my predicament. They was a runnin’ around like a two year old in a candy store getting a light ready.

“just throw me Joe’s Truth!” I yelled, over the fence it came, it’s medium but I can still ride it.

In ten minutes I finished my lap, 1:14, not bad for havin’ no lights for half of it. Mike was gone in heartbeat an Young Tim was doing his stint as a volunteer.

“gawddamn it. This sucks!” he slurred. I notice an ample amount of Smirnoff Ice bottles stacked behind him.

They had him as a crossing guard. He was ripped, an pissed. I went back an' brought him the last three we had at the camp, he wouldn't get off until midnight an by then he's be totally trashed.

The night drug on as our team went lap after lap, Joe's boo boo was forgotten as laps time hovered around the 55-60 minutes. We held down 15th for a while an' dropped to 16th by daylight. The last lap came to Joe, he exonerated himself by pulling a low 50 minute lap. We had some killer footage too, me an Alf had some night footage that was so cool you'd think it was done by stunt riders, Mike's lap good and he even had a guy crashing right in front of him.

Then it over. We wander'd up to see the final results, 16th is our finish position, Darby an Jimbo's team did well, getting a second, Donny's team got a 10th, Scott an Rich gat a 12th. Everyone had fun, even with Rich breaking his wrist at midnight an' finishing the race with a broken wrist. The blank stares from the solo's an' the 2 man team were evident as we meandered back for the slow ritual of packin'. Sadness an' pride whelmed from all of us. Darby an Jimbo, Donny's team, Rich an Scott, an us five held up the banner of Mission Cyclery 24 hour racing team. We had no idea it would be team Mission Cyclery's last official race.

We kicked ass, every one of us did the best we could, crashes, no lights, missing the start, volunteering in the middle of the night. Its all aboot friends an racing.

There you go folks, now you'll hear this an' that aboot his race but that's how it happened.

'til next time, Hoserr