

Racing Baja has always been a dream of mine but it didn't become a reality until a week before the 2009 Tecate Score San Felipe 250. I received a phone call asking me to ride a section of the race on a Class 22 open pro motorcycle team. I would be joining the team of Adam Thissen, Robert Underwood and Jason Lulis on the 9x bike. Being so close to the race it was unsure whether or not we could find a hotel so we packed some tents and sleeping bags and we were off to San Felipe. I made plans to be in Baja the Tuesday before race day giving us enough time to Pre-run our sections of the race course.

On the way down we met up with some friends on the sportsman bike team 252x, the team of Brock Campbell. They were unclear on where they would have their pits so we decide to team up and help each other out. We would spend the next couple of days pre-running and learning our sections of the course. On Thursday morning we made some race day plans, we decided to add Cody Wallis to the 9x bike; Cody was set to ride on the 252x bike from the start to race mile 167. I would ride the second leg from rm30 to rm68.4 and give the bike to Jason he would take it to Robert at rm109 and from there it would go to Adam at rm167.2. The sportsman bike would be taken off the line by Kevin Repan, he would hand it over to Cody who would then bring it to me. I would give the bike to Jason again and he would get it back to Robert. Robert would then ride his section and give it to Justin Guiliani and finally Justin would hand it off to Brock to get it to the finish line. We thought this sounded like a good plan at the moment; our only thoughts were don't get hurt and "hold it to the yolk!" As race day approached I was getting a little nervous, this would be only my third desert race on a motorcycle. My first was a DNF on a sportsman bike, my second was a local club where I raced in the amateur class and finished 4th, and the third time was the race I was about to be competing in as a Pro! I must have thought to myself a thousand times, "I'm out of my mind!!"

Race Day

Cody and Kevin headed to the start while the rest of us went to our pits and rider change areas. The 9x bike would be the eighth bike to leave the line. As the sun came up on the beautiful Baja peninsula the race started, soon the bikes would be roaring though race mile 30 where we were waiting on Cody. As team Honda came in for their rider changes we started to count the bikes waiting for Cody... 3x!, 2x! 5x!, 9x! what!? 9x!?! That's Cody, he had moved past 4 riders within the first 30 miles, not bad for a non-factory rider! Cody had raced the year before so he had some experience in Baja which is why we had him ride the first 30 miles. The start of any desert race is the most difficult, but there is a whole new meaning to difficult down in Baja. Imagine a course 40 yards wide covered with spectators who do not move out of your way until they absolutely have to.

Once I got on the bike I was off and soon relaxed into a groove. I got on the bike just 45 seconds behind the 5x bike of Ivan Ramirez and within 5 miles was in heavy dust and could see his head bobbing up and down. It didn't take long before I was in clear air and looking for my next line. Another couple of miles went by and I was feeling good...I got too comfortable! Next thing I knew I went down hard, doing a front flip over the bars and landing on my shoulder. I dislocated it and had to ride 30 miles to Jason with, what I found out later to be, a stage 3 AC separation. When I handed the bike over to Jason we

were in 10th place and 20 minutes behind the leader. Jason rode awesome having no trouble and picking up time before he handed the bike over to Robert. Since Robert also rode the same section the year before he was very comfortable with picking up the pace for my set back, he would move up by 7 bikes and put us back into 4th position. With reports of the rear shock having problems Adam would have to take it easy. He didn't make it more than 4 miles before the shock would break in two and send him over the bars. Luckily, he got out with no injuries but would have to turn around and ride back to the pit and change the shock. Twenty minutes and a new shock later, Adam was off for the finish. Adam rode hard for the next 70 miles and even made up some time on some our competition. We placed 5th in class 22 open pro and 10th bike overall. I would say that isn't too bad for a dislocated shock and shoulder! I would like to thank all that made this race possible and for your support in one of the most demanding sports on the planet!

Thank you,
Brad Bolton

Special thanks!

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