



TORC SHORT COURSE ROOKIE

“So you still want to give short course a shot huh?” asks AMSOIL race manager Jeremy Meyer last January. I didn’t even think about the answer, my mind was already set. All I needed was a nudge, an inkling of encouragement, and the support of few companies entrenched in off-road racing.” I think I am ready,” I reply. Fast forward through six months of research, stress, hard work, and hard lessons. I knew it would be hard, but I now have a newfound respect for those racing in this, the hardest hitting form of off-road racing.

I didn’t have much to say about Crandon (the first stop in the TORC series) because it was the hard lesson I knew I had to face. It made a rookie of an accomplished rock racer and exposed weaknesses in a green race truck. I knew Bark River would be better and we used what time we had to be better prepared. I got what I felt was a great qualifying run but saw that I would start in 8th position. How fast do I seriously have to drive this thing?

Right off the green flag I was in traffic battling with several other trucks for position. Watching other drivers establish lines was a great help and I pushed the truck hard. The group of trucks hit stomach churning turns and time and again jumped 100+ ft while rubbing fenders. I have never been in such an intense driving experience. When the checkers flew, I was in 7th which may not sound great but felt pretty darn good.

After a long night prepping the truck for Sunday’s race, I again placed myself bumper to bumper with the angriest drivers on the planet. Immediately I was blinded by dust and mashed the throttle – anyone or anything better get the heck out of the way! Determined to push harder I stayed in the throttle and crashed into jumps, gaps, and burns. My spotter told me not to lift and I didn’t. I floated off the ground in sweeping turns and hit jumps so hard that they should have toppled me. At one point I knocked the wind out of myself and the pain in my neck is a reminder of the double jump I almost made. I drove with no regard for my truck or myself. Things were looking good and my confidence was growing until something deep within the bowels of the power train let go. All forward motion was lost and I was forced to sit in the infield and watch my competitors race on.

After two stops of the TORC Series, I have done more than race; I’ve tasted the wildness that it takes to be competitive in such a sport. Short course isn’t about making the truck last for 250 miles or slowing down for the rocks. It takes a finely tuned truck, lots of seat time, abandonment of all good sense, and enough luck to keep the truck together for 9 laps. It’s humbling to go from the top of one sport to the bottom of another but six months has not waived my commitment. The worst of the learning curve is behind us. I can see the challenge and the violence that is needed to reach the top. Our team is strong and we won’t rest until we get there.

Our next races are rounds #5 & 6 of the Traxxas TORC Series in Oshkosh, WI July 24th & 25.