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TORCHMATE RACING STRIVES FORTH IN ROCKS & DIRT

The last two action packed weeks have been an exciting challenge for the Torchmate Racing team with events across the country. Kunz and Haines ignited the We-Rock eastern finals in Tennessee while the Lovell brothers put the hammer down at the XRRR finals in Colorado. The following weekend, Roger Lovell and Bill Kunz tried their luck at the Lands End hill climb for a chance to race King of the Hammers in 2010.

Dayton, Tennessee – With the western We-Rock series completed, both Jesse Haines and Bill Kunz decided they needed a bit more of the rocks so they headed east to a phenomenal natural rock crawl under stadium lights. While both started strong, Kunz slipped off a cliff and suffered a devastating roll. The #28 Torchmate Jeep was battered but functioning, much the same as Kunz. Both were able to continue competition before Kunz visited a local hospital and was released with a mild concussion. Day #2 went much better and Kunz was able to make it into the shootout for a 6th place finish. Haines finished the weekend in 4th after what has been described elsewhere as “The most exciting run ever in rockcrawling”. The epic run can be seen on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fX59okjinw4U>

Cortez, Colorado – Brad and Roger Lovell visited the silty rock track of Cortez for the final two rounds of the XRRR western series. The brutal course devastated machinery all weekend long and Brad was only able to finish 8th after a crash broke his steering and nearly ripped a front wheel off. Roger fared much better and pulled off an amazing save after nearly rolling in a turn. Six solid runs elevated Roger to a 2nd place finish, his best for the season.

After making repairs and fine tuning the trucks for Sunday’s race, the brothers hit the course again. Determined not to make the same mistakes, Brad took off in a battle for the lead with Shannon Campbell. Roger continued his strong performance and by noon, two of the top three spots were held by Lovells. After facing muddy rocks from a watered course followed by a dug out climb, Roger’s time deteriorated and he fell to 7th. Brad raced forward and sparred with Campbell into the shootout. The two brutal runs were an even heat between the rivals but Campbell’s faster times during regular competition gave him the edge. Brad was able to hand the team another 2nd. While each brother missed a race, Brad placed 4th in the 2009 series and Roger was right on his heels in 5th.

Grand Junction, Colorado – King of the Hammers is not an easy race to complete, let alone enter. One of few ways to qualify is finishing in the top five at the Lands End Hill Climb. This brought 20 rock racers together from as far away as Canada for a 75 turn, 5.5 mile race that gains over 1400 feet in elevation. After tuning in a nearby OHV area, Roger Lovell piloted the #232 AMSOIL / Torchmate Ranger in practice rounds while Bill Kunz took the seat of his bruised and ill running #28 Torchmate Diablo. The competition was intense and the road required rally precision with dire consequences for any errors. At the end of practice neither driver was in a position to qualify, something which greatly concerned the team. With only two attempts during the official race, the team strategized, pre-ran the hill again, and fine tuned the trucks.

On race day, both vehicles continued to shave time from practice rounds. Regrettably, so did the competition. After the first run, both Roger and Bill were close, but still outside the top five. Pressure took hold and the long wait for the final run began. The Torchmate team changed strategy to an all or nothing assault. Roger was first to leave the line and did so with intensity and focus. The Ranger roared, slid, and fought to stay cool. The BFG short course tires provided unbelievable grip to time and again save the truck from plunging into oblivion. The combination of man and machine was faster than previous efforts and cut the time to within 11 seconds of the leader and an average speed of 58.2 mph. While Roger awaited word of scoring at the finish line, Kunz finished his blistering run. Unable to complete his first practice run due to problems in the engine control system, Kunz worked with a disadvantage to memorize each turn. Pacing Lovell, Kunz reached the top having clearly used up every bit of the steaming vehicle. Each of 20 drivers huddled around a crackling radio as times were relayed. Amazingly, Roger cut enough time to climb to 5th and earn a spot in the epic King of Hammers race. Kunz suffered a worse fate and while he made huge gains over his previous times, was a mere 2.58 seconds short and in 8th place. The race was a mixed result but a fantastic challenge and hair-raising adventure. Video of Roger's run: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-dnFXahfCBA>

The pace of the 2009 campaign has yet to slow as the team will leave in a matter of days for the upcoming 1000-mile Vegas to Reno desert race on Aug 20th. The #7231 desert truck will square off against 18 other unlimited mini trucks for victory in the longest point to point race in the United States. News from the race, including live tracking and updates to follow.

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