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## **TORCHMATE RACING DOMINATES 2009 WE-ROCK PODIUM**

When the idea was hatched only a few short months ago to create a comprehensive off-road racing team, some in and around the effort scratched their heads at the complexity of the effort and its reasoning. After thousands of miles of dirt and thousands of tons of rock, the results are starting to trickle in. The idea is working and the team has had resounding success. For the 2009 We-Rock Western Series - Brad Lovell 1<sup>st</sup> Pro-Mod; Jessie Haines 2<sup>nd</sup> Unlimited; and Bill Kunz 3<sup>rd</sup> Pro-Mod.

The team's domination played out under the stifling hot sun of Oroville, CA at the last We-Rock Western event before the Grand Nationals in Farmington, NM. The "man-enhanced" course proved brutal on both man and machine. The sharp edges mangled axles and nearly sent spotter Mike Shaffer to the hospital with a cut wrist.

While things started out smoothly for #232 Lovell and #199 Haines, Kunz suffered transmission problems on his second course. Late in the day, Haines (facing and unclimbed course) took out all the stops and assaulted the massive vertical wall. The buggy flew into the sky well above the landing pad before some excess torque caused it to shift. The result was a brutal roll back down the slope and another broken transmission. The tally for day #1 was Lovell in 1<sup>st</sup> place, Kunz with no reverse, and Haines headed to town to find a way to weld his transmission.

Lucky for the team, Mark Levrett (from Torchmate's desert effort) drove all the needed transmission parts in from Reno, NV and worked with others late into the night to put Kunz back in running order. All 3 vehicles were 100% headed into day #2. "We had a great draw that put us right behind Kunz," commented Brad Lovell, "We followed his lead and he and Mike Shaffer did a great job getting through the rocks." Running together, the pro-mod contingent of the team managed to reach the finals with Lovell in 1<sup>st</sup> place and Kunz in 6<sup>th</sup>. Haines, on the opposite courses, managed to enter the final round in 3<sup>rd</sup> place. Everything was on the line with only the final course left to go.

Haines had his chance first and worked hard to put the pressure on the leaders. After snaking through the first gates he entered a nearly impossible bonus line that engulfed the whole front end. Haines and Howard struggled to bypass the hole but were unable to free the vehicle. They finished the day in a disappointing 4<sup>th</sup> but remarkably still managed 2<sup>nd</sup> for the 2009 series. #28 was the first Pro-Mod to line up against the daunting shootout course. With calmness and precision, Kunz and Shaffer navigated the Torchmate buggy through the entire course turning a near disastrous nose stand into a great score. The effort put them in 5<sup>th</sup> place which, in turn, was good enough for 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the series. What a finish!

Meanwhile, the pressure was still on the Lovells. In close battle for only first or second, the AMSOIL / Torchmate Ranger needed a perfect run or nothing at all. Near the start of the course, Brad pushed hard to avoid a back up penalty but regrettably, pushed too hard. The truck clung to the ground in a precarious position before flopping on the side thus ending the team's attempt. The upsetting defeat was quickly overshadowed by a larger victory, however, as the brothers earned their 6<sup>th</sup> consecutive rockcrawling championship.

"I speak on behalf of the team when I thank everyone who has helped us reach this point," said team manager Brad Lovell, "A few minutes time on the course is the result of vast yearlong effort. There are a lot of people that should be proud." With one series is complete, the Torchmate effort rolls on through 2009. Next up is #32 Roger Lovell and #232 Brad Lovell in back to back XRRR races August 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> in Cortez, CO.

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