

# CYCLE NEWS

WEST

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## Hawaii: Mauna Kea

**200 enduro—  
DeSoto wins it, we ride it**

**Louisville vic-  
tory to Poovey**



National MX, enduro, drag racing; endurance and World Championship GP road racing; CMC motocross in Mexico; D-37 hare scrambles; speedway; How to be a Motocross Star, by David Bailey part three; locals and lots more!

*Gasser*

**America's weekly motorcycle newspaper**

# Timekeeping in Paradise

By Kit Palmer

When I heard about the Mauna Kea 200 two-day enduro, I knew this was something I just had to do. What could be better than riding 200 miles through tropical rain forests,

over lava beds along the coastline, through sugar cane fields and up and around dormant and active volcanos? I sure can't think of anything.

My assigned number was 2B, so I'd start on the second row with two other riders on my minute, John Taylor (2A) and Tom Leighton (2C); both are native Hawaiians. We started at 7:02 a.m. Saturday at the extreme eastern tip of the island, less than a mile from the coast, in a place called Kapoho. The ground here consists of deep cinder, and is black in color with the same consistency as sand but a little coarser. All around this area are cinder cones which can best be described as miniature volcanos made out of black cinder. The first obstacle of the day was a trail that took us up to the top of the largest cinder cone then right along the edge of its crater. If you lost momentum you would dig the rear tire into the deep and soft cinder and tumble into the crater — it would take all day to get the bike out.

Heading back down the backside of the volcano, we came across a near-vertical downhill that was fairly long. I rode up to the edge, and the ground just gave away underneath my Kawasaki's wheels; I just sunk in and rode it all the way to the bottom. After about a mile of riding around the cinder cones, we were routed to an asphalt road for a couple of more miles until we reached fairly smooth dirt roads that took us to a black lava section along the coastline. There, we had to ride over a rolling, billowy type of lava called *pahoehoe* (pronounced "pa-hoy-hoy"), which provided excellent traction but was murder on knobby tires. The lava is pretty tough to ride over because there are many wide cracks and small drop offs to contend with — a trials bike would be the hot setup here. After about 15 minutes of this, I found myself working up quite a sweat trying hard to

Eventually we made our way back into the dense palm trees further inward from the coastline where we came across the first check, which I zeroed. I thought, *alright, this is going to be fun!*

Soon after that, we were back on the pahoehoe with the ocean waves crashing against the lava at our sides, but this lava section was tougher and longer than the first, and I was really getting tired quickly, losing time, once again, to the locals. Not a moment too soon, we were back on wide dirt roads winding through trees, mudholes and lava rocks which were everywhere. By this time I was back on my minute and enjoying the beautiful scenery. For the next seven miles, we motored through sugar cane fields until we came across the second check. I zeroed it and kept thinking, *this is great!* Little did I know what laid ahead, for me.

A few more miles later, and we were in the Waikii Forest Reserve on the Powerline Trail. We zig-zagged

through very dense trees and shrubbery, and the trail was only about a foot wide, so the bushes and branches hung over in front of us. John was only a few feet in front of me but I could barely see him; it was impossible to pass through here. I couldn't get enough of this section, but I almost did, because it went on, and on, and on, and . . .

Then we entered the Glenwood Forest Reserve — *the rain forest!* Aah, this is what I was waiting for! It was so beautiful in there I couldn't believe it. And I couldn't believe I was riding through it on a motorcycle — legally! The dirt was damp, dark and rich, everything was vividly green with vines and ferns hanging and growing everywhere. It was beautiful and, best of all I was on time — the ultimate. I was in paradise.

Trying to absorb all the scenery, I had a hard time concentrating on the trail and my odometer, which, by the way, had stopped working when it got wet soon after entering the rain forest. Then things really took a turn for the worse at the first emergency gas stop when I spilled gas all over my goggles, rendering them useless. I knew this would be a problem with all the branches and vines hanging over the trail, but I had no choice but to continue. Since my timekeeping devices had stopped working, I had to keep close tabs on John, who was a few yards ahead of me.

About five miles deeper into the rain forest, I had another bad encounter when a large branch caught my carburetor, pulled it out of the intake manifold and tore the fuel line off the carb. Once again, I was saturated with gas and I had to drag my KDX off the trail and fix the carb. By the time I got going again, about 10 riders had passed me and I had to get on the gas to catch up. I was pretty tired by now, and all I wanted to do was catch back up to John and his

I was zipping through the rain forest, which seemed to go on for hours. Then I came across a water hole and my bike drowned out. About 10 kicks later it fired to life and I was on my way again. I had a few close calls after that, but otherwise I had no problems. Thinking I was way behind, I came around a turn, saw a couple of guys up ahead stopped and waiting for their minute, then I saw John sitting there looking at his watch. As soon as I got to him, we took off, rounded a couple of more turns and zeroed the check — I was jazzed!

After 10 more miles of tight and twisty trails through more dense shrubbery, I finally got to lunch where I gassed up, ate some food and rested — I was beat and exhausted! But I couldn't worry about that because there was 65 more miles to go.

Back on the trail and feeling a little refreshed, John and I got on the gas and were surprised by an early checkpoint. We burned it, then we decided

PHOTOS BY KIT PALMER



Riding the Mauna Kea 200 Enduro in Hawaii is one of the ultimate off-road experiences. Watch out for the local riders, though, they are good!

to stay out in front because we knew the next section was a tough one. Here is where we entered the Log Trail; we knew it when we saw this huge log hanging about a foot off the ground, and laying across our path. We stared at it for a few seconds then John popped the clutch on his Honda XR200, almost looping it, but successfully clearing the log. I couldn't believe it, and I don't think he could either. I tried the same trick — it didn't work. The front wheel barely cleared the log and the bike was dangling in the air. I got off, picked up the back end and threw it over. By this time, John was long gone and I was now exhausted again.

Now deep in the rain forest, the trail started getting muddier and slicker as my knobbies got packed with mud, turning into slicks, making forward progress very difficult. Then came . . . *the hill!* It was hard enough to move on level ground let alone climb a hill! By this time I had just caught up to John at the base of the hill; he went first and barely made it to the top. I got about halfway up and lost momentum while my rear tire sat there spinning. I hopped off the bike to push it up, but the rear sprocket hit a rock and derailed the chain. Bummer! I pulled the bike off to the side of the trail and tried to get the chain back on, but the rear wheel was packed with mud, making things very difficult.

Riders soon began gathering at the bottom of the hill, waiting for their turn. One by one, they tried to get to the top — some made it, some didn't. Since there wasn't much air circulating at the bottom of the rain forest, my eyes began stinging and my lungs

started hurting from all the exhaust fumes the bikes were creating. As each rider made his attempt, I was getting roasted severely, and I stopped having fun a long time ago.

Finally, I got the chain back on the rear sprocket and muscled my way to the top. I was so exhausted I had to stop and rest, take a drink of water and a few deep breaths of fresh air. From all the riders that had passed me, a one-line foot-deep groove formed in the muddy, very slick trail, and I had to paddle with my legs to keep from falling over for the next four miles. After the race, one rider said to me, "I would've given *anything* to keep both my feet on the footpegs for 30 seconds!" I agreed.

Along the trail, there were mudholes that swallowed bikes, but I managed to keep pushing forward at a snail's pace. I understood now why this section had a 4.0 mph speed average for an hour. I had to stop and rest along the way a couple of times, thinking, *this has to end soon!* But it kept going, and going. *This is only an island, I prayed, no trail can last this long!* But it did.

I could hear bikes up ahead with their engines revved out like chain saws, stuck in more mudholes, and all I knew was that I would have to go through them, too. My upper lip curled. Then I came to a mudhole that had claimed one rider's bike; he was too exhausted to pull his bike out, and I was too exhausted to help him. He crawled off to the side of the mudhole to rest, while I tried scraping mud out of my rear wheel — it was packed solid with mud.

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**Gasser**



Riding over the black lava requires a lot of strength and finesse. Much of the Mauna Kea 200 enduro is over terrain similar to this.

## Hawaii

(Continued from page 11)

By now, I was hating life and wondered why I was doing this. I thought for sure I was going to die, so I just rested. Then, like a gift from heaven, Dickie the trailmaster appeared on foot around the corner up ahead, so I knew the trail ended shortly. Dickie pulled the other guy out and then I made it through without getting stuck. Sure enough, two killer mud-holes later, I was on an asphalt road with clear sailing ahead. I thought, *oh man, that was a blast! I can't wait until next year.*

For the next 10 or so miles, it was mostly pavement, which gave me a chance to rest and catch my breath—I was 45 minutes late to the next check, but I didn't really care. I just wanted to finish.

Next we came to a dirt road section that took us through some more beautiful terrain at the bottom of Mauna Loa. We followed the trail through a cattle ranch called Keahou Ranch. The area was covered by green grass with trees scattered all around; this was where they had the final gas check. I filled up and grabbed my Gortex jacket out of my back pack, since we were about to start our climb up Mauna Loa where it gets very cold.

The last section of the day was another narrow trail called Puu-o-o Trail that was used to move cattle from Mauna Kea to Kau in the late 1800s. This trail required lots of standing on the pegs, but my legs were so worn out I couldn't. The trail took us over rocks, lava, drop-offs, ledges, logs, steep downhills, uphill, and more lava—it was tough! I was so tired, I couldn't even lift the front wheel over some of the crevices, and one time, I paid for it. I was cresting this one ledge and was about to ride down the other side when, sure enough, I was greeted by a wheel-length-size hole at the bottom. The next thing I knew, I was going a perfect headstand on my front fender while using all the strength I had left

in my arms to keep me from doing a complete sommersault. I eventually fell off to the side of the bike while it remained balanced in the hole looking like an unexploded bomb stuck in the ground after being dropped from an airplane. I was embarrassed; luckily nobody was around. I got my KDX back on two wheels again, tried to regain my composure and continued on my journey. The trail took us to the new lava flow from the 1984 eruption of Mount Kilauea which we had to ride around. I finally came to the second-to-last checkpoint located about halfway up the volcano; the area looked barren and desolate, with miles and miles of black lava flows in every direction. After mostly easy dirt and paved roads (27 miles of it) I was back at camp. About 20 riders finished ahead of me and all were already prepping their bikes for day two; I, however, passed out on the grass. Those local riders are tough and know how to ride the trails. Only 25 riders finished that day; I was thrilled to be one of them.

Day two was only 54 miles long and took about two hours to complete. It was mostly wide dirt roads, similar to fireroads in southern California. In some sections, the trail was tough to ride because there were so many loose lava rocks and sandy-type areas that really tossed the bikes around. The trail completely circled Mauna Kea as it reached the 10,000 foot level. It was tough on the lungs.

The Mauna Kea 200 was by far the most exciting time I've ever spent on a motorcycle. The trails were challenging, forever changing to different terrain, incredibly scenic and best of all, the people running the Mauna Kea 200 are some of the friendliest you'll ever want to meet. The enduro isn't laid out as a pleasure cruise; it's tough and physically demanding. It also cost a lot of dough for someone from the mainland to ride the event with plane tickets, bike shipping costs, entry fee and other tidbits in mind, but it is worth every penny and more to do it at least once.

I'll be there next year for sure, you can count on it!

**Gasser** •