



PHOTOS BY KIT PALMER

For the fifth straight year, 37-year-old John DeSoto captured the Mauna Kea 200 two-day enduro win on the Island of Hawaii. After 167.8 gruelling miles, he lost only seven points.

Mauna Kea 200 two-day enduro Five in a row for John DeSoto

By Kit Palmer

MAUNA KEA, HI, MAY 25-26

"Believe it or not, this is my fifth-straight overall win, and the more times I do it, the better it gets," said 37-year-old, former Inter-Am Motocross Champion and native Ha-

waiian, John DeSoto. After two days and 167.8 miles on the Island of Hawaii aboard a 1984 250WR Husqvarna, DeSoto and Kawasaki KDX200 rider Steve Zoll, from Hilo, tied at seven points each, but DeSoto won the tie-breaker check by less than a minute to capture the overall. "It really feels good to win," said DeSoto, "because the older I get, the harder I have to work." Third overall and first in the 251cc-Open class went to Husqvarna rider Charles Judd, who lost 13 points. Zoll took the 0-200cc class win, while the Outrigger Canoe Club took home the first-place trophy in the team competition. Rubber Ducky Racing Team finished second ahead of the South Shore Riders Team.

Not too many people on the mainland are familiar with the Mauna Kea 200, but in Hawaii it is one of the largest and most prestigious off-road motorcycling events of the year. The first race took place in 1978 and was called the Bicentennial 200; since then, it has become more and more popular, at times drawing over 90 riders, including off-road's jack-of-all-trades, Malcolm Smith. This year's race was slightly down in rider attendance, because, according to the Rock Island Motorcycle Club who puts on

the race, the event had to be cancelled last year when Mount Kilauea erupted, covering much of the course with lava.

Day one was the toughest of the two, starting at 7:01 in the morning at the eastern tip of the island of Hawaii (The Big Island), a place called Kapoho Cinder Cones (sea level). From there, the trail headed west and ended 113 miles later at the base of Mauna Kea volcano where riders had their bikes impounded and spent the night at Mauna Kea State Park. The next day, the first riders left the start at 9:01 a.m. and circled the volcano, a ride which lasted two hours and 22 minutes, covering 54.6 miles while reaching an altitude of 10,000 feet. The first day had eight checks (two known), and three the second (two unknown, one known).

DeSoto, who had recently been crowned Tandem Surfing Champion, left Saturday morning on minute nine and proceeded to zero the first five checks, while Zoll lost three at the second and third checks. "I was heading down Paradise Park," said Zoll, "and there were some surveyor ribbons, so we stopped to go down that trail, but the actual trail kept going straight. I lost a minute at the following check, then I got stuck behind slower riders and lost two points at the next check."

When the riders came to lunch (a one hour break for food, gas, etc.) DeSoto had a three point advantage over Charlie Dawrs. After lunch, riders headed into very dense rain forests where the hardest section of the two-day event waited. It was called the Log Trail, but it wasn't logs that made things so difficult — it was slick mud, mud holes and very narrow trails that took its toll. It was approximately four miles long with a four mph speed average, and most riders couldn't maintain that speed. Riders with early numbers really had the advantage here, because they were forming deep ruts and making the mud holes almost impassable for riders mid-pack on back. "Ooh man," groaned DeSoto, "that section was really tough, but it was okay. I thought it was a little unfair for the riders in the back, but that is just part of the ride. I had to wait for a couple of riders who were stuck in this one muddy hill; I was yelling at Charlie (Dawrs), 'Come on, Charlie, you can do it,' while he was trying to get up and out of the mud. After about five minutes I yelled to him, 'okay, Charlie, pick it up and carry it out' (laughter). After I got by, I had to ride real crazy to get back on time again. When I got out of the forest I was on time and zeroed the next check."

"Luckily I was able to pass a bunch of the slow riders right at the beginning," said Zoll. "It was just a matter of pushing yourself through the mud; you can't once you stop. I came out of there really early, because I didn't get stuck like everybody else did. Still, it took a lot out of me."

Eventually, the track master rerouted the trail around some of the impassable sections. Many riders either didn't make it through the section, or packed it in as soon as they got out.

The riders who lasted through the Log Trail were rewarded with about 10 miles of asphalt afterwards, then were routed back on to dirt trails that started climbing up Mauna Loa volcano where there was one more tough section left — the Lava Trail. It was

very rough and lasted for many miles. DeSoto lost one point here; Zoll lost two. "The Log Trail took a lot out of me, and when we hit the last trail I was tired and couldn't get around slower riders quick enough," said Zoll.

"That Lava Trail was a real hum-dinger," said DeSoto. "That slowed down a lot of people, so I caught up. Yet I got to the check a minute late."

At the end of day one, DeSoto lost three points, Zoll five, Judd eight, Husqvarna rider Walter Guild and Kawasaki rider Brant Ackerman 10, and Dawrs and Galen Miyamoto 11.

The second day had one 23 mph speed average, making it an all-out go-for-it day for most riders. DeSoto came into the first check two minutes early, and questioned the placement of the check. "All the time, my odometer was perfect and I was running a little bit behind time in the beginning, so I tried to catch up and pass a couple of riders. I was looking at my time and I was just going to slow down 10 seconds before my minute that I should arrive, and I pulled around, there it was. I thought, 'Oh man,' it got me. I just went, 'You guys in the right place?' That's the first thing ya ask, 'Hey, you guys are wrong!'" (laughter).

At the end of the second day, DeSoto lost four points, and Zoll two, equaling a tie at seven. Check eight on day one was the tie-breaker — DeSoto won it by a few seconds.

"I had a lot of close calls," said Zoll regarding day two, "but I never fell down. Overshooting turns was the problem, because there was a lot of downhills, gravelly sections that were really easy to lock up the brakes and go down over the edge — once you do that, it's all over!"

David Amorin, riding a Kawasaki KDX200 on minute one and a member of the South Shore Riders, had an encounter with a mule and crashed on the last day. Both he and the mule survived unharmed.

At the trophy presentation Sunday, DeSoto gave his first-place class trophy to his sponsor Sandy Brodie, and when accepting his overall trophy, DeSoto said, "It's too bad after two days and 167 miles there has to be one winner. Both Steve and I rode a great race and tied in points, so there are really two Mauna Kea Champions, not one." ●

Results

OVERALL: 1. John DeSoto (Hus) 7; 2. Steve Zoll (Kaw) 7; 3. Charles Judd (Hus) 13.

0-200: 1. Steve Zoll (Kaw) 7; 2. Galen Miyamoto 15; 3. Brant Ackerman (Kaw) 16.

201-250: 1. John DeSoto (Hus) 7; 2. Charlie Dawrs (Yam) 14; 3. Michael Gregory (KTM) 30.

251-OPEN: 1. Charles Judd (Hus) 13; 2. Walter Guild (Hus) 16; 3. Gerry Lopez (Hus) 23.

TEAMS: 1. Outrigger Canoe Club; 2. Rubber Ducky Racing Team; 3. South Shore Riders.