



Suzuki 24 Hours of Moab: The Galactic Championships

Tostado, Kirkland claim galactic titles

Moab, Utah--**Josh Tostado** and **Jari Kirkland**, both Coloradans, became the inaugural galactic champions of 24 Hour Mountain Biking, at the 14th annual **Suzuki 24 Hours of Moab**, held from 12 noon on October 11th until 12 noon on October 12th, on a blustery weekend in central Utah.



The racing was marked by outstanding performances, mighty winds early on, and a determination to have fun, come what may. In the tent city that surrounds the pits and timing tent, more than 2500 racers and support crew endured high winds and blowing sand for the first half of the event, hanging tough and hardy, but everyone's spirits rose when the wind died down on Sunday, in time for the event to end on a high note.



Firmly at the top of the list of outstanding rides was **Tostado**, of Breckenridge, Colorado. "If you want to be the best, you've got to beat the best," he said at the pre-race press conference, October 10. Pushed all the way to the finish line by two-time Olympian and 2003 Moab champion, **Tinker Juarez**, of Downey, Calif., Tostado overcame one of the greatest names in the sport. But another of the sport's greatest names, **Chris Eatough**, of Ellicott City, Maryland, withdrew suffering from hypothermia after only eight laps.

Juarez took second place completing 16 laps in 23:48, comfortably ahead of South African pro **Roan Exelby**, who also completed 16 laps, in 25:00.

The reigning AMA Supersport motorcycling champion, **Ben Bostrom**, finished fourth, with 16 laps in 25:37.

Despite winds of 30+ miles per hour during the first four hours of the race, **Tostado's** time was the best at this venue, save one, so far this millennium. 17 laps of the 15-mile course, 255 off-road miles in 24:41, put him ahead even of **Rishi Grewal** in 2001, and second only to **Anthony Colby**, of Durango, Colorado, who in 2005 completed 18 laps in 25:10

Tostado was pleased with his day's work, and delighted with his result, which put his name above those of **Juarez** and **Eatough** on the results list. "They are the top 24 hour racers in the world," he said.

Eatough returned to the course the next day and congratulated **Tostado** after his win, **Tostado** recalled **Eatough** as saying, "Because you went out really hard, it just destroyed me."

With 1,100 feet of elevation gain each lap, and winds so strong that riders were sand-blasted and constantly blown off their lines, it was tough going all the way. And **Tinker Juarez** never let **Tostado** feel comfortable in his lead. "He can really just turn it on at the end," **Tostado** said, explaining why he'd needed to start a 17thlap at 10:54 a.m. on Sunday. **Juarez** stopped at 16 laps, just before noon, unable to close the gap.



The Solo Women's class gave 2007 champion, **Jari Kirkland**, of Crested Butte, her second consecutive, and third career win at Moab. **Kirkland** had hoped to go up against Hawaiian sensation, **Pua Sawicki** (Ellsworth/Infinit Nutrition), but **Sawicki** came down with a respiratory ailment the day before the race and was forced to scratch. It was a bitter disappointment for the rising star of ultra-endurance mountain biking, who had been staying in Moab for six weeks in preparation, and whose family flew in from Hawaii to watch her compete.



Kirkland still had some competition, but she was able to wrap it up on her 13th lap, ending her 24 Hour race in 23 hours, 7 minutes. **Kris Cannon** climbed off her bike at 11:34 a.m. on Sunday, far enough ahead of third place finisher **Kerry White** to ensure the second spot without needing another lap.

Rob Lichtenwalner, the Suzuki 24 Hour National Point Series leader in the Men's Solo category, turned in 12 laps to claim his second consecutive series win. "Besides the sand castle I could build with the dust in my lungs, I'm feeling fine," he joked after the race. **Liz Baumgardt-Kays** (Ellsworth) finished fifth at Moab, earning sufficient points to give her the win over **Namrita O'Dea**.

While the solo categories are all about endurance, the pro teams post fast times on relatively fresh legs. **Team Monavie/Cannondale Pro** dominated the Men's Pro category, as well as the race, taking the category and the overall title with 21 laps. One of those was the fastest lap of the race, a blistering 1:01 turned in by **Bart Gillespie**.

Right behind **Monavie/Cannondale** in the overall standings--and ahead of the next fastest Men's Pro team--was the Pro Cycling team in the Coed Pro-Am class. The Coed Pro-Am class teams must have at least one female racer, and that was no handicap for Pro Cycling, with 2004 Women's Solo Cycling champion, **Kelli Emmett** on the roster.



Emmett posted the fastest lap for any woman in the race at 1:12. Pro Cycling took the top spot in their class. **Emmett** was still waiting for the after effects following the race. "I don't feel too bad yet," she joked, "but give me about an hour, a meal, and a beer..."

While all the pro racers took home checks for their efforts, the action wasn't all in the moneyed classes. In the Men's Expert, **Pedal Power/Street Swell** turned in 19 laps--nearly half an hour before the **Monavie/Cannondale Pro 2** team. That would have put the experts on the third podium spot in the pro class.

There was also room in the Women's Pro class, where **Utah Girls** took first with 16 laps, and **SoBeBella** earned the second spot, also with 16 laps, but about 23 minutes more. The expert women's **Jan's** team turned in 16 laps in 25 hours, 10 minutes for a first place finish.

Jari Kirkland expressed her interest in seeing more junior development for female racers, so she was likely impressed with the **Justice League**, the only entry in the Women's Junior category. Even racing against no one but themselves, the young women turned in 14 laps, and they raced a full 24 Hours. Under any conditions that's an impressive feat, for all of the 1,308 racers, but this year's race was especially challenging.



The weather, which dropped **Chris Eatough's** body temperature to 91 degrees on Saturday evening, could have been a lot worse. By Saturday night calm had descended over the small tent city, the strong winds were fading into memory where they would become part of the unique flavor of this challenging event.

Thankfully the forecast hail and rain was incorrect. Even without it, promoter **Laird Knight** said 2009 was a landmark year. During the 14 years of 24 Hour racing at Moab, generally the weather has been clement. "Two years ago we had to shut this event down because of flash flooding. That year became known as the Rain Year. Certainly 2008 will be known as the Wind Year," said **Knight**.

About Granny Gear Productions

Granny Gear Productions, a sports marketing and event production company, has earned a reputation as mountain biking's most innovative and successful event organizer. With more than 26 years as a mountain bike race promoter, Granny Gear Productions and CEO, Laird Knight, created the 24-hour racing format in 1991. In 2001, Knight became Laird Virginia Tourism's Person-of-the-Year and in 2002, Knight was inducted into The Mountain Bike Hall of Fame.

In 2000, GGP created its unprecedented and unrivaled RealTime™ Scoring System, that tracks every rider and every lap, posting results for every team in real-time on the web. www.grannygear.com

About Suzuki

The Brea, Calif.,-based Operations of American Suzuki Motor Corporation (ASMC) was founded in 1963 by parent company Suzuki Motor Corporation (SMC) and currently markets its vehicles in the United States through a network of approximately 500 automotive dealerships and numerous other motorcycle, ATV and marine distributors in 49 states. With global headquarters in Hamamatsu, Japan, SMC is a diversified worldwide automobile, motorcycle, and outboard motor manufacturer. In 2007, SMC sold more than two million new cars and trucks and more than three million motorcycles and ATVs. Founded in 1909 and incorporated in 1920, SMC has operations in 193 countries and regions. For more information, visit www.media.suzuki.com.

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