

BMW riders out in force at Sandblast Rally

For the past 13 years in South Carolina, USA, rally racing fans have travelled to the Sand Hills State Forest for the Sandblast Rally, which takes place on closed roads throughout the forest. High horsepower all-wheel drive vehicles and motorcycles blast through the woods at speed, with driver and rider skill coming to the forefront as they tackle the sandy roads.



The rally cars and motorcycles that compete at the Sandblast Rally have to be fully street legal, registered and insured, and this is one of the reasons why it is attracting a growing contingent of BMW riders. Many of these riders travel quite some distance to get to the rally, which forms part of the Atlantic RallyMoto Cup series, with events in New Hampshire, South Carolina, Tennessee, West Virginia and New York.

Some of the long-distance travellers included TEAM MAX BMW's Max Stratton, who arrived after a mere 15-hour drive through the night, and Ed McCormack, who was entering his first RallyMoto event on his R 1200 GS Adventure. Rather than trailer his bike to the Sandblast Rally, Ed elected to climb on his big Adventure at his home near Albany and ride the 950 miles (1500 km) to Cheraw – true BMW spirit.

Other TEAM MAX BMW HP2 Enduro riders included Doug Morrison, who was second overall in the 2008 Atlantic RallyMoto Cup series on his HP2 Enduro; Joe Warner, who has been quietly moving up the results sheet at each event; Jimmy Doustou, who put his enduro experience to work in his third rally; and Max Stratton.

TEAM MAX BMW also had a strong presence in the medium weight division, with four competitors riding the new G 450 X. Andrew Phillips, who ran an HP2 at Sandblast last year, opted for the G 450 X, as did Peter Canning. Furthermore, both Ben Stratton and TJ Jarrett swapped their HP2 Enduros in favour of the G 450 X for this year's Sandblast.

The customary shakedown stage on the Friday afternoon drew a strong crowd of riders, including Jason Adams, who arrived in South Carolina with his R 100 GS PD. His sand riding skills were expected to be greatly improved as he was one of the lucky members of the inaugural International GS Trophy winning USA team that spent a week out in Tunisia last October.



On the morning of the rally, 41 bikes lined up across from 18 rally cars and as usual, the blue and white cloud of BMWs argued with a sea of orange KTMs for dominance. However, this year the battlefield was also punctuated with six Suzukis, three Hondas, a Yamaha, an Aprilia and one Husqvarna.

There was plenty of 'bar to bar' action as the riders sorted themselves on the early stages. G 450 X rider Peter Canning hardly let off the throttle through the corners of Stage two, finding his groove for the day and finishing in second place on the stage. Stages three and four offered spectacular action, with long fast straights that led into sharp 90 or 180 degree turns, which always caught a few riders off guard. Whereas in past years, tentative riders would grab the brakes, stall the engine and then fall over in the sand to the cheers of the crowd, most riders now opted to use their throttle instead and use the power to carry them through the turns, with sand flying everywhere.

After a quick service for fuel, the riders were off to hit some of the fastest speeds of the day. The long downhill straight on Stage five could accommodate as much throttle as a rider dared to offer. The surface was packed hard, with about a centimetre of fine sand on top, leaving trailing clouds of dust to be whisked off into the pines by a warm wind.

By the time the rally was over, a look at the results sheet revealed a solid effort by all the TEAM MAX BMW riders, much to the delight of Max Stratton.

"This year's Sandblast Rally was a big success and for the first time in a RallyMoto event, the inevitable mechanical, physical or mental breakdowns that characterize

motorsport competition were avoided, as all of the TEAM MAX BMW riders who started finished the rally,” he said. “All along the stages, BMW riders who had been looking for an excuse to take a trip to South Carolina parked their airheads, K-bikes, GSs and RTs in the sand and stood to witness the hardest-charging RallyMoto action that the sport has seen to date. Thanks to everyone who came to support us!”



Results

Peter Canning, 2nd Place, Motorcycle Modified Lite (5th Overall)

Doug Morrison, 2nd Place, Motorcycle Heavy (6th Overall)

Joe Warner, 3rd Place, Motorcycle Heavy (9th Overall)

Max Stratton, 4th Place, Motorcycle Heavy (13th Overall)

Andrew Phillips, 6th Place, Motorcycle Medium Stock (14th Overall)

Jim Doustou, 5th Place, Motorcycle Heavy (16th Overall)

Ben Stratton, 4th Place, Motorcycle Medium Modified (20th Overall)

TJ Jarret, 13th Place, Motorcycle Medium Stock (27th Overall)

Jason Adams, 7th Place, Motorcycle Heavy (28th Overall)