

84th ISDE proves tough for BMW Motorrad riders

Finland is one of the most successful teams in the recent history of the International Six Days Enduro (ISDE). This year's six-man team included three BMW factory riders – Juha Salminen, Marko Tarkalla and Simo Kirssi – who were all representing their country and the Bavarian motorcycle maker at what's generally considered to be the Olympics of Enduro motorcycling.



After six days of brutal racing around the city of Figueira da Foz in Portugal, the Finnish team ended the prestigious event in third place overall. Tarkalla and Kirssi who, after an early crash, impressively rode through the pain barrier all week, helped contribute to this podium result.

With winning performances at the final two rounds of the 2009 World Enduro Championship, BMW Motorrad Motorsport rider Juha Salminen arrived in western Portugal with high hopes of a strong result at the 84th edition of the International Six Days Enduro. Starting well with a close third-place in the E2 class on day one, Juha disappointingly suffered mechanical problems the following day, which dropped him down the E2 class results.

With all machines being worked extremely hard by the soft, power-sapping sand, Juha ran into trouble on the fourth test when his bike unexpectedly stopped. Losing several minutes, Juha was able to finish the day once restarted, and went on to win the seventh and final special test before service. The following morning Juha's event was brought to a premature end as further troubles ruled him out of the competition. This was a bitter blow to the Finnish squad, as each team is only allowed to scrap one rider from the scoreboard – and there were still four days to go.

Competing in the ISDE for the first time, BMW's second E2 class team rider Simo Kirssi put in one of the bravest performances of any rider. Crashing heavily early on the opening day, Simo broke his left little finger and injured his wrist. Riding in considerable

pain – and with a heavily strapped hand – Simo dug deep to not only finish the event but also to win his Motocross race on the final day.

Determined not to let his Trophy team mates down, Kirssi placed an impressive 12th in the E2 class on day two before he started having severe problems simply holding on to his bike. Picking up time penalties on day four, due in part to having been given incorrect information by the Finnish team, Kirssi went on to finish 41st in the E2 class – still a truly heroic effort considering his injuries.

In comparison to his Finnish Trophy and BMW team mates, Marko Tarkkala enjoyed a relatively trouble-free event in Portugal, claiming eighth in the Enduro 3 class. Consistently placing inside the top 10, Marko scored his best results on days one and six, where he finished seventh on both occasions and helped Finland finish third in the Trophy team competition.



Juha Salminen - Enduro 2 class: "I don't seem to have much luck with the six days, and this year was no different. I'm not sure exactly what the problem was but something happened to the engine, which forced me to retire. I was enjoying the event up until I had my problem. The sandy conditions were good for the Finnish team so who knows what our result could have been if I'd been able to finish the week. It's disappointing but as everyone knows anything can happen in the six days, and usually does to me!"

Simo Kirssi - Enduro 2 class: "One thing is certain, the ISDE isn't like the World Enduro Championship. It's hard and gets harder with every day – especially when you get injured. After my crash on the Enduro test on day one I struggled a lot. The whole event was so rough that I couldn't relax or take it easy anywhere. I broke my left little finger when I crashed, after that just holding on was difficult. Apart from my injury everything else went ok – my bike ran perfectly and I had a good final Motocross race."

Marko Tarkkala - Enduro 3 class: "It was a very hard race but I enjoyed it. My speed wasn't as good as I hoped it would be, but I didn't have too many problems during the

week. Because of the heat and the soft sand it was hard on the bikes, but I didn't have any problems."

The overall win at the 84th International Six Days Enduro went to France, ahead of Italy and Finland.