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Photos by Kurtis Brosu

CORNER GRASS 2007

BUILD IT, AND THEY WILL COME

By Jim Jervis

The population of the village of Compeer, AB is just 11 people but with the blessing of the local RCMP and the Second Gear Motorcycle Club they staged Corner Grass 2007. This radical off road race launched Round 1 of the CMA Alberta Hare Scrambles series on June 23-24. Corner Grass 2007 was held at a location that is in the geographic center of the Canadian prairies. When a rider is in the back corner, he actually runs along the Alberta border and throws roost into Saskatchewan.

"The whole concept started a year ago with Jay's motocross track. It was in a dry pond bed that flooded over, leaving nowhere to ride," said event co-organizer Nick Riewe. "I just dropped the deck of my 15-foot mower one day and drove around in the calf holding pasture until I had two kilometres to ride on. That was the beginning of it all."

Add in a bit of new generation off road passion and a sprinkle of the new-wave of endurocross obstacles, and the promoters staged an event catering to all disciplines of off roading. The course ended up being 10 km of grass track with over 50 turns and a 'baker's dozen' of manmade obstacles.

"Guys were getting bored of riding the same

old-same old. The 'double or nothing' obstacle was the first of many manmade obstacles we built, then another, and another. It just kept rolling and we just kept building," said event organizer Jay McGregor. "We were having a blast, and we were creating something really cool."

McGregor and Riewe set out to do something different where people could enjoy themselves in a setting that had a wide variety of obstacles; it had everything from wide open straights to first-gear dabbling. The 'double or nothing' for the trials rider; some jumps for the motocrossers; grass track for the ISDE types; and the infamous 'snail' — borrowed from Todd and Joe from the Frog Lake Ice races — for the rest.

"We tried to put in a little bit that everyone could excel at to help level the field," McGregor said.

Corner Grass 2007 featured a two moto format. Each moto ran one-hour, plus one lap, and was scored with a new electronic bar coding system donated by Monti Brown of Mitchell Rock Systems.

"The electronic scoring will definitely raise the bar for Calgary off road events," said Riewe. "It's so quick, easy, and accurate."

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CORNER GRASS 2007

DOHLMAN HEADS ALL-STAR CAST

Over 150 riders showed up for Corner Grass ranging from Schoolboys, Women, Super Vets, Utility ATVs, and Pro Off Road riders mostly from the Alberta area. Others ventured in from BC, Colorado, and Ontario.

Robin Dohlman of Cochrane, AB showed up to his MX background to work, ready to battle top KTM Canadian off road racers Shane Cuthbertson and Jaimie Skinner, extreme enduro specialist Marty Halmazna, Yamaha snowcrosser Aaron Christensen, and AMA ISDE gold medallist and enduro champ Fritz Kadlec from Colorado.

The start format consisted of running the bike's engine in neutral, clutch hand on your head, and front wheel against a fallen roost pole which served to distance a bit right off the start. The first moto had local resident Christensen (Yamaha) take top honours with Dohlman (Kawasaki) just a minute back; Dohlman was followed by Jason Schrage (KTM) and David Halawell (KTM). Early crashes and bike handling kept Cuthbertson from challenging; he finished two minutes back in fifth, followed by Halmazna (KTM).

In the second moto, Dohlman jumped out to an early lead to build a 15-second gap. Despite the fastest track lap time of 12:09 for the day by Cuthbertson, he could not close the gap and MX veteran Dohlman pulled away, taking the overall win by 26 seconds with a 2-1 finish on the day.

"This was definitely an awesome race," said Cuthbertson. "It was the inaugural Corner Grass event and it proved to be a huge success! It had a great track, super friendly hosts, unique race format, electronic scoring, 'Rockstar' girls, prizes, and a \$2,000 pro purse. This race had it all and it is one event that I hope will return for another year."

Everybody gave Corner Grass 2007 a thumbs up. It was something different and made a hare scrambling event much more spectator friendly by including manmade obstacles to seat 200 spectators — to view the action. The residents of Compeer, who all showed up to partake in the

action, were happy to help pull on the event and are excited to have it return again.

"The local people pitched in, cooking, and pulling bikes from the obstacles. They were awesome. We're really glad that everyone had fun. All the races were great and the pros really put on show," Riewe said "We've heard nothing but on positive and the pros really put on show, and the pros really put on show to next year and making improvements to make it an even bigger, better, and more appealing event to more riders and spectators."



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