

"Gentle" Art of Scrambling

By KEITH DAWSON



Just exactly what is a scramble? It is a very fast form of cross country racing, usually consisting of a course picked out in rugged country, and being from one mile to a mile and a half around the complete course.

The course mostly consists of steep hills, both up and down, sand pits and gullies, beds of treacherous mud, trails through the bush, fast grassy straights and several jumps caused by sharply rising ground ending with a level top, and, when the machine is put at these jumps at speed, it flies up and becomes airborne (both wheels off the ground which gives the scrambler a terrific sensation and the spectator a big thrill).

My main reason for writing this is that I would like to share the thrill of this fine form of racing with many of my fellow riders who have not yet participated and who are on the verge of trying. You don't need a highly tuned racing machine as a normal sports or road machine will do fine. Here are a few tips which in my opinion will make a road machine a scrambler in a quick and inexpensive way.

1. Fit scrambles tires front and rear.
2. Fit an engine sprocket two or three teeth fewer than the road sprocket.
3. Waterproof your ignition system.
4. Remove front headlight and battery.

Those with more cash can go to greater lengths and maybe even to a genuine scrambler.

This year scrambling has come on well and at the last race at Peterborough, it was heartwarming to see all the riders and spectators enjoy a great day's sport, with lots of entries and some really fast and spectacular racing. Next time a scramble is held, plan to be there riding or supporting. I have ridden in most of the recognized forms of motorcycle racing and I will always esteem this to be my great favourite, as it combines all the forms of the sport in one.

The Corduroy Enduro as Seen by a Tenderfoot

The sun was on its way to bed when we arrived at Gold Rock Lodge to start one of the best weekends I can remember. We were greeted by the Lodge's proprietor, Les North, who has in past years competed in and won several Canadian Championship Endurance Runs. Les showed us around the Lodge and after stowing our gear in the cabin allotted us we sat in on the inevitable bull session that you find wherever riders get together. The quiet atmosphere was broken up with the arrival of Bill "I'm from Texas" Hastings whose head was adorned by a ten-gallon Stetson inscribed with the names of Texas towns he had visited. Tex announced to everyone within a ten mile radius (he brought his own loud-speaker system) that he had a carload of cheer that was in danger of freezing if someone didn't stow it away. The midnight hour was boisterously ushered in and a troupe of brave souls ventured forth to the steam baths.

The changing room was the scene of much activity as the boys stripped (pardon the expression) to enter the steam room. A bench was mounted on the wall three feet below the low ceiling with basins of water on the footrests. The reason for these soon became apparent. A small stove protruded through the wall from the other room, the top of which was covered with six inch stones. A dipper of water tossed on these white-hot stones produced a stifling damp heat which gave one the impression that he was melting. And so we were. Sponging our heads with cold (?) water from the basins, we endured some twenty minutes of perspiring torture followed by a quick run through the bracing air to the lake. Plunging into the ice-cold water everyone soon beat a hasty retreat to the wharf. Surprisingly the water felt wonderful! As we ran back to the changing room an ambitious shutter-bug let go with several flash bulbs. An anxious mother was explaining to her curious offspring that all the Doukabours were supposed to be in B.C. as we shut the door on the quips of a sniggering audience. Dressed, we gathered for a riders meeting. Route sheets were explained and distributed, and so to bed.

We awakened next morning to the fragrant smell of bacon and eggs and the sounds of industrious early-birds dismantling bikes and warming up reluctant motors. Breakfast over, and last minute tinkering finished the first man moved off at 8:00 through the early morning mist. At one minute intervals the rest of the line was leaving and finally we were given the nod. Out to the highway, through Norland and on for seven miles. To give the other boys a break, I decided to take a tour of the north country before starting into the rough

stuff. Returning to the route we were approaching the turn-off road when a five-ton truck turned into it. Another hapless tourist joined me in admiring the rear end of the truck as we ground our way at ten miles an hour over several miles of lumber trail.

The truck behind me, a twenty mile road race got me to the first check one hour and fifteen minutes late. An auspicious start, what? The secondary road soon petered out to two tracks through the woods which twisted and turned like something tormented over hill and dale. Catching up with some of the riders check #2 was entered 55 minutes behind schedule. Back on the trail of the little red arrows more riders were overtaken, the track came to an end at a solid wall of bush a trail of boulder strewn mud and leaf mould led into a lumber trail through some of the roughest country to be found anywhere. The Beezer's 9 to 1 piston started making queer noises in the engine room; a stop was in order to get my bearings and assuage that hungry feeling in my stomach. Progress became slower. The sumachs on a distant hill made the countryside look as if it were on fire. Wham. That piece of jayriding landed me in a nest of brambles that an eel would have had a tough time escaping. Back on the track, a rider was encountered pulling an Ariel out of a clump of trees. The front wheel of the bike was twisted parallel with the handlebars. Much prying made the machine rideable and the plucky lad carried on with a decided list to port. Check #3 passed and first gas was taken on at a small northland village. One hundred miles covered, with 183 to go. More lumber trails, sandy and twisty, leading through more rough sections. The checks seemed to be getting farther apart as fatigue set in.

Shortly after noon my right-of-way was contested by a porcupine; by virtue of his superior armament he was treated with respect. While lobbing rocks scooped from the trail at him, the bike blazed a new trail end over end into a creek amid a small avalanche of bridge planks, gravel, and tree branches, accompanied by one slightly shaken rider. My spiny friend decided from my baleful looks that he was rather unpopular and departed, leaving me to ride my battered mount down the trail in triumph? Another check passed in sixth place now, and the mutter of Bill Strachan's straight through was audible through the trees ahead. The tenth check found Bill and Ron Jackson taping blistered hands, a stop to oil chains and controls and we're off again munching our last sandwich. Past fences lined with farmers' kids, into a single track where man power was the only way to keep forging ahead. Over corduroy roads made of twenty foot logs through a particularly rough, hilly section. The trail was quite clear where Gerald Robarts and John Clare were

taking turns leading Jack Hoover, Bill Strachan, Basil Jackson and I through checks #12 and #13.

Dusk was falling as the four of us left #13. Wending our way in single file the faithful old Beezer gave up the ghost. The point mechanism had come adrift taking the locking shoulder with it. Temporary repairs were made in the failing light and lacking lights I soon had a cheerful brush fire going in the middle of the trail to bolster my flagging spirits and ward off the chill of the night. As I was contemplating whether to cook my boots or eat them raw a hardy rider loomed out of the darkness. Mounted again, but still without lights, we rode the next ten miles at a snail's pace, coming upon a gravel road and by paved road into Kinmount, ten miles from our destination. While we were debating what to do next, Ken Aston arrived on his Black Shadow (complete with lights, windscreen and all) leading another lightless bike. Thence to the Lodge to gorge our empty stomachs with tremendous amounts of delicious turkey dinner and gallons of hot coffee. A rehash of the day's events was interspersed with movies, singing and dancing till the wee hours. The day's results were given to the 13th check as no one finished to the 15th and we trudged wearily off to bed.

Due to a death in the family I was unable to finish the run the next day. Next year? I wouldn't miss it for the world.

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(Continued from page 4)

On paper this may not sound awfully hard, but just ask anyone who rode it and you'll get an earful. Out of 33 starters only 6 finished. The winner was Dave Daniels who lost 194 points. It was a hard win. Second was Gerald Robarts with 287 points lost. Third, Al Brash, with 356 points. Fourth place was taken by Bob Jones, 384 points. Don Charters, fifth 434 points. Jim Duncan was sixth, with 560 points lost. No team finished and there were no riders in the 750 cc. and over class.

Thanks go to Ed Steuart, who put a great deal of time and labour into the run, and his helpers, Jim Duncan and Ted Knott. Also to Keith Chandler and the girls?? who ran the canteen for some very welcome coffee, hot dogs and pop.