



Tackling the legend

A first attempt at The Cord

By Jeff Morgan

Photos by Keith Hamilton

The Corduroy Enduro is one of those races that has become legendary throughout the Ontario Enduro landscape. With a proud history of 56 years it is no wonder.

I have a bit of an attachment to the Cord that dates back to my childhood. My cottage is in the heart of Cord country and for several years the event ran right past it. Every year I would find out when it was and I would hike into the woods to see these madmen charge through on their two-wheeled chariots.

The challenges of The Cord have been well documented in Inside Motorcycles, most regularly by senior editor Warren Thaxter, and it is considered an accomplishment just to finish the race.

This reputation has been rightfully earned and the course is almost always as challenging as you would want to ride for two days. Water crossings, slippery uphill, mud bogs

and the like litter the course and to top it off the weather tends to wreak havoc on the race. This year was no exception.

The 56th running of the Cord saw copious amounts of rain fall in the weeks leading up to it, putting an end to the nice, dry August and September that Ontario had seen and making the proposed course even wetter than it already was.

All the rain leading up to the event made the idea of me attempting my first Cord a bit more daunting, but hey, that is what this is all about. And with more rain in the forecast the 56th running of The Cord could prove to be a difficult affair.

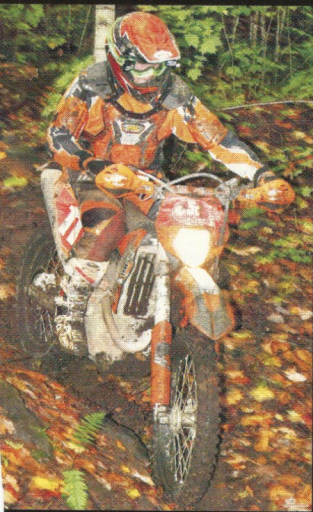
Day one welcomed the riders with cool wet weather and the promise of more rain to come throughout the day. Riders lined up and waited for their minute to roll around before starting their voyage into the wetness. The race opened with a long road section that led to the first portion of trail. It was definitely a chilly ride to start the day but things quickly heated up once the rid-

ers entered the forest sections.

As would be expected following the weeks of rain the woods were very slippery and that made for some interesting riding. It did ensure that riders would be on their toes for the day as they transferred from puddle laden double-track to slick, snotty single-track. The road transfers were a welcomed reprieve and offered a rare moment of traction and a chance to catch your breath, while allowing the goggles to clear, if you were still wearing them.

The day one moto-test was a selection of tight single-track which led into a Euro-style grass track where there happened to be a spectator point. This area offered a good vantage spot and lots of excitement for the cheering fans that were there to witness the racers slip and slide through the grass corners.

Until you have actually been through a Corduroy Enduro it is hard to understand the amount of water that is actually out on the course, and while I am sure that this





was not the worst year for water, it was bad enough for me. Fortunately the weather gods were kind enough not to completely soak us during the day.

For the first time there was an endurocross course to end the first day's racing. The endurocross was set-up as a three-person race against the clock with the times counting toward your final score. The course consisted of a deep sand whoop section, triple jump, tire obstacle, step-up and step-down jumps and a series of log crossings.

Day two started off much the same way as day one, with cool wet weather and the trails in the same condition, snotty and slippery. Unfortunately due to the poor conditions the course had to be shortened and a few of the more problematic sections had to be cut out. Despite that, Blair Sharpless, a key figure behind the Cord was pleased.

"We had lots of new trail but I will never be satisfied with the course until it is all single track," he explained. "We had a decent number of entries despite the late

date, wet weather, and date conflicts with some other major off-road events.

"The endurocross test was a great addition. Barry Ferguson and his son did an excellent job on it and it was well received. The people who came and helped with the event were just amazing. We had volunteers from all over the province. Matt Spigelmyer even came up from Pennsylvania the week before and with the help of Greg Bastedo spent a day throwing rocks in the 'Tunnel of Love' so the riders' wheels wouldn't get caught in the holes and crevices."

One of the main components to putting on an event like this is the hard work of the volunteers and Sharpless was very appreciative.

"I would like to thank all the trail section leaders for all their hard work and the HORRA and Bytown club guys for the fantastic job they did," he said. "All the feedback we got from our rider survey was positive and every rider said he or she was coming back. That tells me we are doing

more right than wrong."

For an enduro racer this is an important event and one that is difficult to leave off one's plans for the season. Patrick Beaulé is a perfect example of this.

"It gets more and more important for me because I am trying to get my name on the trophy as many times as possible," said Beaulé, who won for the second time in 2009. "Since 1953, only five riders have put their name on the trophy three times or more. I am trying to get on that elite list. The contingency program is also very interesting and it helps a lot with the racing season's expenses. On top of that, it is so cool to ride it!

"I personally think this is the race which most reflects what the word 'Enduro' means: racing, endurance, mechanical preparation and most of all, mental toughness. The only thing I can say is, finishing or winning the Corduroy Enduro will give you a feeling you never get after any other race. This is what makes me keep going there and going as fast as possible every year."

With new series' and new races entering the fray, Sharpless has plans for the future.

"Whether we plan it that way or not the Cord is always really tough so we are going to start advertising the fact and call it 'Canada's Toughest Race,'" he said. "We have plans for lots more new trail and will be getting rid of more of the old Cord trails that see heavy ATV use.

"We are back on our traditional date of Sept. 18-19 [2010]. John Penton is tentatively booked as our guest speaker for Saturday night. We may be bringing back the 'River trail.' We are planning on a bigger vintage bike display and entry.

"In 2010 the Cord will be part of the Ontario Off-Road Championship, which will consist of enduros and cross-countries and should have 14 to 16 rounds. We will be using different arrows in the transit sections so the riders who don't use a route sheet will know they have lots of time and can take it easy. We are going to be starting in Gooderham again. Next year we will have more course splits so that more Novice and Beginner class riders will be able to finish."

Anyone looking for a challenge should make the trip to Gooderham. The Cord will leave you beaten and dirty, but you should love every minute of it. **///**