GUSTO

EQUAL-OPPORTUNITY ENTHUSIASTS

As the most successful female off-road racer in the history of our sport, KTM's Maria Forsberg is no stranger to breaking new ground. Throughout her storied and successful career, Maria has earned an impressive four GNCC championships, four WORCS titles, two ISDE Gold Medals, three X Games Enduro X victories, and an AMA Enduro-Cross championship. Even after announcing her retirement from full-time competition, the 27-year-old athlete is still inspiring countless women to participate in off-road racing. And this month, Maria adds yet another first to her résumé by being the first female racer to be featured on the cover of Dirt Rider magazine since Mercedes Gonzalez did so in the mid-1980s.

For the last 10-plus years, Dirt Rider has adhered to a strict policy regarding the way that women are portrayed by our brand. We freely feature photos of female enthusiasts but never in a way that we feel objectifies or devalues them and always in a manner that positively represents this segment of our sport. Some of the other magazines in our space have chosen to feature women in a different way, and they honestly have every right to—trophy girls are a part of motorsports racing just like cheerleaders are a part of football, and many readers enjoy seeing this element included in their print and digital content. While this works for other brands (and we don't judge them for it), it's simply not our style.

Dirt Rider's positioning on the topic of women in racing is strengthened by the fact that we also have a female rider on staff. Web Producer Lindsey Lovell is an essential part of the DR editorial team, and she loves off-road riding and racing every bit as much as any of our male staffers. Lindsey is a great test rider who regularly joins us out at the track, and she loads her own bike, tightens her own chain, and gets her hands just as dirty as the rest of us. Through her strong passion for the sport, Miss Lovell exemplifies the fun that female riders can have in a sport that is no longer reserved for those with different chromosomes, and her frequent riding trips out to the desert support the fact that there are more sisters, girlfriends, and wives riding motorcycles now than ever before.

As you'll see in this issue's coverage of the Dirt Rider Torture Test, female racers are fiercely competitive when placed against their male counterparts. Along with Sarah Whitmore and Kacy Martinez, Maria put in an amazing ride at this event and was a crowd favorite throughout all of the 10 special tests. The heart, soul, and teamwork displayed by these ladies—even after losing KTM teammate Kurt Caselli the very night before the Torture Test—was an incredible thing to witness in person, and the respect shown by the all-male teams made it clear that talent in off-road riding is in no way determined by gender.

All of us at Dirt Rider would like to officially congratulate Maria on an incredible and successful career. We're bummed to see Forsberg step away from racing, but if the level of talent and commitment of the next wave of female athletes is half as strong as it currently is, we can guarantee that this won't be the last time you see a girl on the cover of Dirt Rider. Just don't hold your breath for a swimsuit photo!

“TALENT IN OFF-ROAD RIDING IS IN NO WAY DETERMINED BY GENDER.”
THE HARDCARD SYSTEMS MOTOCROSS TEST
The heart and soul of the Racetown 395 facility, the motocross track ended up being the site of the most hotly contested special event of the event. Fierce afternoon winds made the many massive jumps a challenge for all competitors, while the long layout favored those with excellent corner speed as well as the ability to hang it out on the rough, fast straights. Kawasaki’s Ryan Abbatoye hammered out an impressive 2:03.4 lap time that was good enough to bag the test win for his team; in the Open division, Blayne Thompson engaged in a vicious dogfight with Jacob Argubright for top honors, with Thompson coming out the fastest of all the Open entries at 2:05.0.

THE FASST COMPANY/FLEXX HANDLEBAR GRAND PRIX TEST
Using the surrounding desert, a GP course was constructed around Racetown that provided competitors with more than 3 miles of sandy berms, deep bumps, and fast, snaking trails. Going in, we expected Kawasaki desert legend Destry Abbott to own this test, but a strong finish from Satherlin was enough to steal the overall along with the top Pro Team honors. Thompson again threw down an impressive win in the Open class, although Fasst Company’s Jason Parsons was not far behind. The key to this test was in reading the terrain quickly without blowing any corners, rushing didn’t seem to help nearly as much as just deliberately carrying speed.

THE AIROH ESCARGOT
A Dirt Rider original, the Escargot test is a continuous corner that winds inward, around a cone, and back out—which like the snail’s shell it’s named after. We’ve featured escargots at the Torture Test before, but never before have we ripped the area with a tractor first! This resulted in a difficult setup that was also extremely fun. Good technique pays off, and the riders who looked the fastest often weren’t—smoother is better in a constant corner. One of the highlights was watching Parsons and Argubright battle each other with repeated runs that were mere fractions of a second apart. At one point, Jason exclaimed in frustration, “I can’t believe I’m letting a desert guy beat me in a turning contest!” Graffunder ended up besting them both for the top Open class time, while Abbott piloted his Kawasaki to the Pro Team win.

THE AIROH ENDUROCROSS TEST
When it came time to build an EnduroCross track from scratch, the Dirt Rider crew took advantage of the many spare tractor tires, telephone poles, and miscellaneous obstacles at Racetown to construct a fairly tricky course that took anywhere from 35 seconds to eight minutes to complete. The standout rider here was Graffunder, who charged extremely hard and made zero mistakes while setting the very first time of the day, which remained the fastest for nearly three hours. Upon hearing that Jacob Argubright beat his time, Graffunder went back and notched a new top time by three full seconds. Later, Beta’s Max Gerston hung it out to bag the fastest Pro Team lap. Of the Open competitors, Nick Harmill showed an impressive amount of heart and perseverance, working hard to complete a difficult, crash-filled lap when the track was incredibly beat up.
USWE EXTREME BARREL CHALLENGE
A traditional barrel race course—as defined by the equestrian community—has competitors looping around a series of three or more barrels set up in a loose diamond pattern. The USWE Extreme Barrel Challenge featured a similar layout but set atop Racetown’s Pro-spec supercross track! This presented an awesome challenge as riders had to swerve between lanes, around jumps, and through whoop sections while finding the fastest line between barrels. Beta’s Gerson showed loads of creativity and was rewarded with the fastest Pro Team rider time of 1:03.0, while Graffunder threw down an amazing time of 1:01.5 to take both the Open victory and the top time for the test.

THE TRIALS TEST
When asked which test was harder, the trials or the EnduroCross test, Gerson did not hesitate: “The trials test, for sure. With the EX Test, you can just attack it. Here you have to tell yourself, ‘Calm down, calm down, easy does it.’ But it’s not as easy as it looks!” Featuring a host of obstacles including a teeter-totter, a tight turn inside of a raised trailer, and a wooden spoon that had to be pushed around a segment of track using the bike’s front wheel, the trials test combined both speed and precision to make one of the most deceivingly difficult tests of the event. Putting a foot down resulted in a time penalty, while going too slowly would put a rider outside of the competitive time frame. In the end, trials ace Ryan Sandoval absolutely crushed the field in his first run by showing an incredible mix of technique (not dabbing once) and speed. Graffunder, Abbatoye, and Argubright were all right there, though the final results clearly indicated that trials skills were the key to victory in this test.

THE USWE SUPERCROSS TEST
There was quite a bit of trepidation leading into the Supercross Test. Was it going to be dangerous? How would a bunch of off-road racers fare on a supercross track? Following the theme of expecting absolutely anything, this special test again threw the Torture Test competitors for a loop. The Supercross Test ended up being just that: a table in the middle of the pits with several #2 pencils and a written math test relating to supercross. The questions were crafted by a fifth grade math teacher and required a solid grasp on multiplication, long division, and general problem solving. There was also an element of trivia involved in questions like, “Subtract Kevin Windham’s national number from Nick Wey’s national number and multiply by Mike Alessi’s number.”

As expected, this test gave some of the top riders fits. But not KTM’s Maria Forsberg; she grabbed the top score—and time—to take the Pro Team win. In the Open division, Casey Casper was the only competitor to throw down an A+, and he did so nearly two minutes faster than everyone else.

THE KENDA TIRE CHANGE
The premise of the tire change test was simple: Take a 21-inch front wheel, remove the Kenda tire, touch it to a nearby tree, then replace the tire without pinching the tube. We didn’t hammer the competitors on tire pressure—the only guideline was that the tire had to be ready to ride—but we did hold them to the tire’s intended direction. Michael Novaca dropped a time of 3:41 in the open division, but it was Gary Sutherland who rocked the Pro Team class with a blistering 2:39! Think about that—a two and a half minute tire change, under pressure. That’s impressive!

THE DIRT RIDER DASH
This is where things got ugly. The Dirt Rider Dash put the “Torture” in “Torture Test.” So difficult was this obstacle course that only 10 teams even attempted it. The test started with a “warm-up” of push-ups, jumping jacks, and other calisthenics. From there, teams had to push their bikes across an elevated, snaking board platform, with three-person teams having to remove the rear wheel for good measure. After the platform was a wooden spoon to cross, followed by a mud pit covered in 2 feet of water. Starting the motor was strictly prohibited, so teams then had to push their machines up an energy-sucking hill before winding back down and crossing a log over the same water feature.
SKILLS & THRILLS

As if that weren’t tough enough, each team was given a raw egg at the start to carry to the finish and was told that a 10-minute penalty would be assessed if the egg was broken at any point.

The father and son team of Joe and Dominic Bianchi took the Open class (and the overall test) win in a time of 7:40, largely because they were piloting a lightweight Kawasaki KX65 around the course. The Pro Team division was hilarious; the Beta duo of Burson/Gerston belly-flopped in the water, the KTM girls dragged their bike up the hill like a sack of potatoes, the Sandoval/Sutherlin squad titoed their way across the log, and the Kawasaki team received more calisthenics before the start than anyone else, primarily because they were acting a little too confident. This special test was a spectator’s dream, but it also took a ton of heart, persistence, and creativity to complete. Those who made it around the course were physically exhausted but mentally rewarded for their efforts.

THE HARD CARD SYSTEMS MYSTERY TEST

Described by staffer Kris Keefer as, “The hardest thing I’ve ever done on a motorcycle,” the Mystery Test required teamwork and skill. Here’s the setup: two riders, one bike. The rider in front has a completely blacked-out goggle lens. The rider sitting behind has to “navigate” for the team by instructing the blind rider around Racetown’s stadium-cross track. After one lap, the riders switch places and complete another lap. As expected, the speeds were slow, the crashes were safe but numerous, and the most effective communicators did the best. The solo effort of Graffunder enlisted the help of Kris Keefer for this test and completed two laps around the short circuit in just over five and a half minutes. One minute behind them was Sutherlin and Sandoval, who were the fastest team pros to complete the course due to their trust in one another. Every competitor was smiling after this event, though most admitted how difficult it is to ride blind, even with a “coach” on the back!

THE WINNERS

When all was said and done, the first-ever open-to-the-public Torture Test was a complete success. The turnout was solid, the tests were diverse, and the level of riding was absolutely amazing when you take into account how fiercely competitive most of the riders were. What is it that makes a great Torture Test competitor? From what we saw at Racetown, the best riders were those who are well rounded and possess an even mix of bike skills, brains, and raw speed. From the physically demanding Dirt Rider Dash to the mentally taxing Mystery and Supercross Tests, the event revealed many strengths and weaknesses while providing for plenty of fun. Big thanks go out to the helpers and sponsors who made this event possible, along with congratulations to the competitors who endured the punishment and kept coming back for more!

RESULTS

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<tr>
<th>TOP OPEN TEAM</th>
<th>TOP OPEN INDIVIDUAL</th>
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<tr>
<td>JACOB ARGUBRIGHT/JASON PARSONS/COLE TOWNSEND (KAW)</td>
<td>CORY GRAFFUNDER (HUSQ)</td>
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<th>OPEN</th>
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<td>MOTO CROSS</td>
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<td>GP TEST</td>
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<td>ESCARGOT</td>
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<td>SUPERCROSS</td>
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<td>DR DASH</td>
<td>JOE BIANCHI</td>
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<tr>
<td>MYSTERY TEST</td>
<td>CORY GRAFFUNDER</td>
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ATTENTION ALL TEAMS

Thank you for participating in the 2013 Dirt Rider Torture Test.

You will be going thru a technical inspection during this event.

Sound testing is part of the racing rule book including AMA, FIM and CMRC for Motocross, Enduro and Endurocross.

Sound regulations are part of this event and sound levels will be enforced. Technical inspection will be performed by Chris Real, the president of DPS Technical, Inc.

Please be advised that a second trackside sound inspection may take place.

In the event you have an exhaust system that is not in compliance with the regulations and is producing excessive sound levels, you should know that excessive noise is hurting the sport of motocrossing and off road motorized recreation.

It is our hope that you would help us save our existing riding areas and help us get new tracks to race on by managing the sound level of your motorcycle.

In the event you have difficulty in passing technical inspection or are looking for guidance on how to properly maintain your motorcycle's exhaust, we urge you to consult your local dealer or call the customer service department of the manufacturer of your exhaust system.

Good Luck to all teams!