

TEAM REDBULL USA 2004



KTM

TEAMPROGRAM

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Photos: Herwig Peuker, Scott Cox



HARDEN TO RIDE

The Red Bull KTM USA Dakar Rally team was in its final testing phase in Tunisia, Africa in early December when Casey McCoy sustained a broken leg during one of the practice sessions. Scot Harden, the Red Bull USA Dakar Team Rally Manager has been selected to fill Casey's riding position.

Harden said, "Casey's accident was very unfortunate. The testing had gone extremely well and our factory KTM Rally bikes performed flawlessly. We had just finished the final suspension test session and were asked by the KTM Rally Dept to assist them in some fuel consumption tests on one of the test 950's. The test was conducted on what is referred to as "Le Chott", a large dry lake bed of deep, wet, sand. I had just taken a couple of high-speed laps around the 30 km course and handed the bike over to Casey. At the very end of the loop Casey caught a soft pocket of sand and lost control of the bike at over 90 miles per hour and sustained a badly broken lower leg. We transported him to a hospital in a nearby village to confirm the injury before transporting him to Europe for surgery. Losing Casey is a huge setback to the team; however we at KTM and all of his teammates wish Casey a very speedy recovery. He'll be in our thoughts."

In a decision made by KTM Racing Director Kurt Nicoll, Scot Harden will ride the factory 700cc Rally bike. According to Nicoll, "Scot was the only logical choice. Besides being one of the best off-road riders ever to come out of the U.S., he has been integrally involved with all the team testing as well as competing with the team in the recent Baja 1000. His previous Rally experience and proven track record make him the best candidate for the job."

"We really hadn't planned for this eventuality", reported Harden. "Stepping in will be a very big job. This is the toughest off road race in the world and I will give it my best shot. I had always dreamed of doing Dakar, although not under these circumstances".

Former ISDE medallist and adventure rider Joe Barker has signed on to assist Scot in the daily team coordination chores. His duties will consist of helping Harden manage the team, while providing much needed tactical support throughout the event. The team departs for the start of the 26th Telefonica Rally Dakar on Dec. 27th. The actual Rally itself begins on January 1st with the departure from the Grand Hall d'Auvergne in central France.



TEAM INTRODUCTION

THE DAKAR RALLYE: WHAT IS IT?

Mention “Dakar” to the average American, and you’re likely to be met with a blank stare. (Yeah, we know—world geography isn’t a strong point among average Americans, but that’s another matter.) In fact, Americans are probably more familiar with places like Durban or Darwin or Dublin than the capital of Senegal. Much of the rest of the world, however, is quite familiar with this seaside city in western Africa, especially when it comes to foreign fans of desert racing. Dakar is, of course, the terminus of what is the undisputed king of multi-day desert rallies: the Dakar Rallye. While not the oldest, it has become the most famous of what Europeans call “marathon raids” or “rally raids,” beginning with a few days of pageantry and racing in Europe and ending nearly three weeks later in Africa. It all began in 1977 when, after getting lost in the deserts of Libya while racing in a rallye (the French spelling of the English term “rally”) and becoming enchanted by their stark beauty, Frenchman Thierry Sabine imagined putting on an event through that type of terrain. It would begin in Paris and end in Dakar, the capital of the former French colony (which gained independence in 1960).

Cyril Neveu won the first edition in 1979. Each year since followed a different route; for example, the silver anniversary race in 2003 saw the start in Marseilles, France, and the finish in Sharm-el-Sheikh, Egypt—the course never came near Senegal. Even before the Dakar Rallye began, a few Europeans had ventured to the United States to compete in various off-road races, especially the Baja 1000, and fallen in love with the wide-open spaces. However, there simply wasn’t enough open land in Europe to do that type of racing. Africa, on the other hand, did have plenty of desert terrain available and being closer to Europe, it was far more convenient and more affordable to travel to. The fact that France and other European countries had strong ties to many of their former colonies in Africa certainly didn’t hurt.

Being an endurance type of event, it was only natural for rallies to adopt the rules for that sort of game, which in Europe was the enduro, though with modifications. Essentially, it works like this: A “prologue” at the beginning of the competition is a short race that simply determines the starting order for the real racing; competitors are flagged off at the start at timed intervals, usually one minute apart. The racing takes place in “stages.” Each day may consist of “special” stages where each racer completes an unknown course as quickly as he can and “liaison” or “transport” stages where the objective is simply to complete the distance. While there is ample time allowed to complete liaisons, there is a time penalty for completing them too slowly.



2004 US Dakar Rally Team with mechanics



Hans Trunkenpolz



Team USA



Tunisia sunset



TEAM INTRODUCTION

In the Dakar Rallye, competitors face daunting mileage; a day may have only two stages, but they can total 700 miles, 200 of which is transport. It's not unusual for the day to begin at 5:00 or even 4:30 A.M., and while the leaders will finish late in the afternoon, slower competitors will sometimes roll into the finish just as the leaders are starting the next day! Obviously, they'll get no rest, and their machines will receive minimal maintenance. Sleep deprivation is a very real challenge during the three weeks of the race.

Unlike American off-road racing, rally competitors must navigate the proscribed course without arrows, ribbons, paint, lime or other special markings. They must follow "road books" and GPS receivers. The road books contain mileage at landmarks, and the organizer provides GPS coordinates of points along the course, including checkpoints and refueling stops (which may be a couple hundred miles apart, hence the need for fuel tanks capable of holding a dozen gallons or so).

Due to the remoteness and vastness of the land, each machine must carry emergency drinking water and an emergency locator beacon. Should use of the beacon become necessary to signal for help—generally due to serious injury—that entrant may not continue. Mechanical breakdowns will find competitors seeking assistance from those trailing them, as that sort of help is permitted.

Those with factory support and those who have contracted with support services have mechanics who perform maintenance at night while the riders sleep. Huge trucks (imagine something like a six-wheel-drive box van with flotation tires about four feet tall) carry spare parts and travel along the race route; in fact, the organizers even have a class for them. Those without support get by as best they can with minimal maintenance and sleep.

Giant cargo planes help transport the organizers, much equipment, journalists and other personnel. The air strips where they land are often barely improved but become the center of activity, drawing curious locals to view the traveling circus. Medics have both helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft at their disposal.

Finishing something like the Dakar Rallye is a tremendous accomplishment and something dreamed of by many. It takes a huge commitment of time and money just to enter, not to mention preparing and maintaining the machine plus taking care of all the other essentials. But taking part in it is often a life-changing experience, according to those who've experienced it once—and wish to again.



Heinz Kinigadner, KTM Rallye Team Manager



TEAM INTRODUCTION

WHY A KTM USA-BACKED TRIO?

Most motorcycle manufacturers have relatively small, strict budgetary guidelines when it comes to funding their racing efforts. Therefore, to promote sales in the U.S. market, they choose the most visible U.S.-based racing series as the logical arenas in which to spend their limited dollars. Rarely do you find manufacturers doling out funds to back American efforts that aren't even contested in the 50 states. As a company steeped in competition, however, KTM sees things a bit differently. This is why it's agreed to back a trio of Americans.

The decision actually comes from the very upper echelons of management. "A number of things kind of all came together at once," begins Scot Harden, Vice President, Media Relations of KTM Sportmotorcycle USA. "One, the interest from the promoter to see a top American team entered in the event. The desire by KTM to do more to add to the event and to truly show that it is a global company in every sense of the word. And the third thing is the introduction of the introduction of the KTM 950 Adventure. There's a marketing reason for us to do this: We have an all-new motorcycle that's being introduced to America. We're really doing everything we can to push the adventure-riding, adventure-touring concept along, and this is a great way to do all of that.

"When Mr. [Stefan] Pierer [the Managing Director of KTM Sportmotorcycle A.G. in Austria] asked if we could put together a team, it seemed like the timing was just right for everything. Mr. Pierer approached me in a meeting last January. First, he asked about the Baja 1000 and what we thought about racing in Baja. I said, Well, it would be good if we were doing it to promote something, to promote a new model, then I could see some value for it with the 950 twin.

"That conversation led to the Dakar Rallye, and I was contacted by Heinz [Kinigadner, the former two-time 250cc world motocross champion who has raced Dakar and now works for KTM] shortly thereafter, and Heinz has really been the impetus to see this thing put together. He and I have been working and talking back and forth as far as the way we can structure it, what goals we hoped to achieve. He was working with [Dakar promoter and former racer Hubert] Auriol to push the des Nations-type concept forward. I think they're just trying to do everything they can to increase interest in the Rallye. KTM can get a tremendous amount of coverage and we have the opportunity with the American team here to create some real strong interest in the United States."



Dakar enthusiast



LR and Trunkenpolz



The boys enjoy some mint tea at Cafe Laporte



Casey McCoy, prior to his accident



SCOTHARDEN



SCOT HARDEN: COME PLAY IN OUR SANDBOX!

VITAL STATISTICS

DATE OF BIRTH: 16 June 1956

HEIGHT/WEIGHT: 5' 10"/190 lb.

FAMILY: Wife, Kristi; sons Brent (age 19) and Brock (age 16)

RESIDENCE: Menifee, California

PROFESSION: Vice President, Media Relations, KTM North America, Inc.

HOBBIES: Listening to music, reading, adventure-touring

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

2003 Tecate Score Baja 1000 Third overall in class

Two-time SCORE International Motorcycle Champion

Four-time Best in the Desert Silver State Series class champion

Three-time Baja 1000 overall winner

Three-time Baja 500 overall winner

Three-time ISDE medalist (member U.S. Trophy team that finished second in Czechoslovakia in 1982, the highest-placing American Trophy team to date)

One-time Djerba Rallye winner (other rally finishes include runner-up in the Atlas Rallye, Third overall in Incas Rally)

Pikes Peak Hillclimb Rookie of the Year

AMA Hazel Kolb Brighter Image Award winner



A CONVERSATION WITH SCOT HARDEN

How did you happen to choose Paul and Larry as the first two of the team riders?

Well, Paul was a no-brainer. He'd been literally calling me once a week for the last four years about doing Dakar, ever since the last time he did it [in 1998]. He went over there, and had some bike problems. He wasn't 100 percent. Paul is really a hard-core racer and off-roader, and he's just been so persistent that if I would've gone without Paul, he would've been camped out at my house. Paul's been very vocal about being part of the team and wants to do it. He's certainly at a stage in his career with his experience and his age and everything where he's perfectly suited for it.

Larry Roeseler and I go back over 30 years, and over the years we've kept in touch, even when he was riding for Kawasaki. LR and I have been talking, and I kind of planted the seed of the idea for the dealership and everything with him. Besides the KTM dealership opportunity, he had mentioned to me in passing a while back that [racing Dakar] is something he'd like to do someday. Of all his accomplishments, that's something that he's always felt he missed. It was just a casual conversation; I just never forgot it. When it looked like this thing was going to happen, I wanted to get the best off-road riders that we could to represent our country, and LR is the best, in my mind. It was just a question to me if LR was serious about the casual comment that he had made. So I approached him about that, and he said, "No, I'm anxious to do this. I need to do this. I have to do this."

How hard was it to nominate yourself as the third rider? After all, you've got quite a bit of rally experience.

(Laughs) Heinz and I sat down and talked, and I thought it would be a perfect opportunity to fulfill my dream of riding Dakar as well because it was the only top rally that I didn't do in my career, and that was something I was always shooting for. It was very hard for me to not to say, No, I'd like to at least go and do it and ride it and finish it.

But as Heinz said, being a rookie team over there, essentially, my experience would be better put to use to help the entire team. He said, It sounds like a great idea now, but just don't forget how tough the event is. Heinz was the one who convinced me; he said, Trust me—it'll be a much better experience for you, and you can help the team a lot more by [being the third rider]. It was a tough decision, but I think I'm where I'm supposed to be.

I told Larry and Paul, We're going to go through something here together as a team that few people ever get to do. It's going to be something really tough and challenging and something we'll always look back on in our lives. My commitment to them is to do the most that I can to help them be successful. That's the way I'm approaching it.

There's so much to do with the logistics: coordination between here and the factory, getting us over there, finding out what's going on. If I were trying to race as well, I'd run into the same problems that I do now where you're there representing the company and also trying to race—you're just stretched too thin in too many different directions, and I've learned over the last 10 years that that's not a good situation to be in. So I'm going to approach it from this standpoint and go over there and help those guys get on top of that podi



PAULKRAUSE



PAUL KRAUSE: VETERAN OF FOREIGN WARS

VITAL STATISTICS

DATE OF BIRTH: 20 September 1964

HEIGHT/WEIGHT: 5' 11"/185 lb.

FAMILY: Wife, Jennifer; daughter, Breanne (age 7); son, Brandon (age 6)

RESIDENCE: Irvine, California

PROFESSION: Sales Manager of Air Cleaning Technology

HOBBIES: Spending time with family, riding mountain bikes

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

2003 Tecate Score Baja 1000 Third overall in class

Three-time SCORE International Motorcycle Champion

Two-time Best in the Desert Silver State Series Four-stroke Pro Champion

Five-time ISDE silver medalist

14th overall, 1998 Paris-Dakar Rallye (first effort)

Two-time AMA National Hare & Hound Series class champion

Three-time Baja 1000 overall winners

Five-time Baja 500 overall winner

Four-time 24-hour Off-road World Endurance Championship winner

Two world records set, 24-hour Off-road World Endurance Championship

17 AMA District 37 championships

2001 AMA District 37 Sportsman of the Year



A CONVERSATION WITH PAUL KRAUSE

What strikes you as most memorable from your first Dakar Rallye experience in 1998?

Wow, that's a pretty good question. I guess the organization of the whole thing is what blew me away the most. I literally went there with no concept of what I was going to see or do or know or experience; I just had no idea. For day after day, to see all the helicopters and airplanes and people show up in the bivouac setup and the food for everybody...I thought the creature comforts were going to be a lot more difficult. Granted, shower and bathroom facilities were minimal or non-existent. But we slept well every night, we ate really well. I didn't even lose any weight in the whole race. I made sure I kept my body as full as I could all the time. There's no bad food. From that side of things, it was pretty good. It wasn't the hell that I expected a little bit.

On the riding side, I think the surprise was the sheer mileage. By the end of the [first] week, you [look at the next day's road book] and go, "Cool! Today's a short day—only 300 miles!" To look at it the day before and go, "Man, they're expecting us to ride 700 miles tomorrow!" That's long; that's a long, long ways. On the riding side, I think the surprise was the sheer mileage. By the end of the [first] week, you [look at the next day's road book] and go, "Cool! Today's a short day—only 300 miles!" To look at it the day before and go, "Man, they're expecting us to ride 700 miles tomorrow!" That's long; that's a long, long ways.

You probably wouldn't even do that in training!

No, where would you go? To La Paz? If you think about that, 700 miles is the Baja 1000—the short ones. It's nowhere near as tight or physical as [Baja], but still, it'd be like riding from [my home in Southern California] to Salt Lake City. San Francisco only gets you 400 miles! Most people don't want to drive [700 miles] in a day. That was a pretty big shock. Even weirder, in the end it wasn't that big a deal. When you finish a stage and then you have a 200-mile liaison at the end of the thing, like one of our first days in Morocco, [you go], "All right, I'm done!" You're done [with the stage], but the finish line's 200 miles away! That day we actually hopped on to an asphalt road and just blasted across the middle of nowhere. It was kind of up on these plateaus; you could see forever. There's nothing [out there]. I'm like, "I wonder what these roads are for?"

Lots of people consider Baja to be a rugged and fairly remote place, but those who've been to Africa would consider it about as remote as downtown Los Angeles. How remote is it in Africa?

There's almost nowhere on the [Baja] peninsula that you can go that you couldn't walk yourself to a village. At the widest point, how wide's the peninsula, a hundred miles or something like that? In Africa, there were no roads, there were no trails—there's nothing. You were just on open land just going. The nomads would stack rocks up, and they call them "cairns;" that's what they use for line-of-sight to get across the desert with their camel trains. You'd be on their path from one village to the next—and it's 400 miles between those villages—and you'd just be following these piles of rocks. It's sand so when the camel train goes through there, within 24 hours there's not a mark left. I think it was [Italian racer] Davide Trolli who described to me before I went there, he said, "Basically, you will ride 'til you get to the horizon, and when you finally get to the first horizon, you've got three more to go then you'll be done for the day." It's kind of like that; it just goes forever.



I think the really weird part is it doesn't seem like forever when you're doing it. When you think about, "I'm going to spend 10 hours on the motorcycle today," that's a long time, but you get through it all pretty quick. It's not like a National enduro where all of a sudden you'll be in a canyon, and it takes you an hour to go a mile, although you can get stuck in the sand dunes and be like that.

You must be going at a pretty fast clip then. What's it like to ride that fast for that long?

It's kind of weird because there are no markings because there's no [marked] course. You've got to stay on your toes. You just don't blast across a dry lake bed out here; there could be a hole or a mound or something so you've got to be watching that all the time. I know our first real day in the desert [in 1998], I'll bet I did the first 200 miles in about two hours, 15 minutes, maybe two-and-a-half hours. It was so fast. You're just to the stop. There was a fuel stop [in the stage], and I remember [asking], "Can we ride that fast all day every day?" I mean, we're only six days into this thing, and I'm thinking, There's no way that bike's going to make it if I hold it wide open the whole way. I asked a bunch of people, and there were differing opinions. Guys like [two-time Dakar winner Fabrizio] Meoni were like, "If you want to win, you have to go that fast all day every day." Other guys were like, "If you want to finish, you'd better slow down!"

What was it about your first Dakar experience that made you want to do it again?

Well, I think I wanted to go back before I ever started! It's such a great deal and doing it, was that much better. Just experiencing it, riding every day, being involved with the people over there and the press, the way the whole thing was put together—it was like, for a 20- or 30-day period of time, being in this traveling circus. It was really, really fun. In the beginning in Europe, everyone's got their own hotel rooms and everyone's living in their own little thing. Everyone's scurrying to get all their stuff together. Pretty much by the end of the first week when you're out in the desert, you've got all your stuff together; there's nothing else to mess with. Everyone's sleeping in basically the same areas, and you become this little family. And obviously you've got your favorite brothers and sisters that you go to hang out with, but it's a real tight group.

With one Dakar successfully under your belt, will you follow a more aggressive plan and try to race this one or will you again plan more on simply getting to the finish and enjoying the experience?

My first time, my only goal was to finish. "Jen" and I talked about it before I went; kind of the theme for the deal was, no matter what happens, keep going. Don't be upset, don't be frustrated, don't be mad—just go forward. Fix the problem, go forward; fix the problem, go forward. That worked great.

I don't know enough about it to go there and try to win, but I know enough to go there and try to keep good speed and stay in the lead group and try to learn enough to see if there's a chance to be...I'd love to finish on the podium. That would be a fantastic thing. But I definitely am going there this time with an eye much more toward results than just getting to the finish. That being said, of course, you can't be in the results if you don't finish. You can't go overboard. I think the only difference is going to be on days where I'm kind of feeling like, "Well, I don't feel like pushing that hard," I've got to push hard. I don't want to give away that five minutes or 10 minutes I'd lose by relaxing that day—and you've still got to take just as good care of the motorcycle. And I know much more in advance this time so, theoretically, I will have taken much better care of the body.



How is it possible to train to ride 700 miles a day?

I don't think I need to prepare as far as learning how to read terrain or understand the desert, that sort of thing. I've upped my personal training a lot from what I do just for my normal desert racing, just so my body itself is in better physical shape. The greatest thing that we've got going is we're getting test bikes, and we'll be able to do 700-mile practice days. Whether we actually get up to that kind of number or not, Larry and I have talked about it, and we figure we can blow out on an afternoon and ride out from Hesperia, [California, where Roeseler lives] out to, say, Las Vegas or Laughlin, spend the night, then first thing the next morning ride back so we can probably get ourselves somewhere between six and eight hundred miles in two days. And we'll get to spend a lot of time on the big bikes with the big fuel tank and fill 'em up. We'll be a lot more ready to ride the motorcycles—know what they can do, how they're going to act, know a lot more about how to work on them. I had never seen [a KTM 660 rally racer] before I got there the first time. If you have a little problem, if you know where to look on the bike, it'll be a way better thing. Try to take the fuel tank off to look at the motor. That's a huge deal if you don't know [what needs to be removed]. How much do I have to take off to get to that spark plug? And it's a V-twin so how many spark plugs do I get? Which one's bad? Can I run on one cylinder?

You were one of the fortunate ones and had a mechanic assigned to you at your first Dakar. What sort of things would he have to do?

I didn't talk to my guy a lot about what he did at night. I just had little problems with my motorcycle that just needed to be fixed, not major things. Every night we'd come in, and I'd sit down with my mechanic and I'd tell him, This is what's going on. This is what's happening and how the bike's working. I would reprogram my GPS and redo my road book at night and put all that back on the bike, then have dinner and go to bed. Well, about dinner-time was when the mechanic would go to work on the bike, and I never paid much attention. Most mornings when I was going to breakfast, he was going to bed! So I think they just took everything off—seat, tank, all the plastic—chased the frame for cracks, make sure everything looked good, changed oil, changed tires. I don't know what they did about sprockets and chains—maybe every other day, every three days, something like that. Checked all the water lines, make sure nothing's rubbing or pinching on anything, and then put it all together. You think about it, and just to do the oil and oil filters every night—you've got oil, oil filters, air filter and tires—that's a lot of work. I had the opportunity to do [Dakar] last year without a mechanic. I'm like, "There's no way!" I couldn't imagine if you had something serious you had to do, if you had to stay up all night working on you bike then try to ride the next day? You'd never make it.



What does it mean, personally, to you to be competing at Dakar again?

It's a huge honor to be asked to do it. The first time, I was just super-lucky to kind of weasel my way into it. Now, it's kind of, Hey, we're going to do this thing for real, we're going to do it with an American team, and we want you to be part of the team. That's a really, really big honor. It's kind of weird, too, because now all of a sudden, there's a lot more involved with it than just Paul riding Dakar. The first time, it was my deal. Do the experience thing. Now it's like, Hey, we're going to go do this. We're going to go work on the thing, we're going to put our heads together. It's exactly how I'd like it to be, but it's just more serious. There's people spending a bunch of money to make it happen and a lot of people investing a lot of time to do it so you've definitely got to keep your head down and do it right. You can't be messing up.

And how about the des Nations race within a race situation?

I think that's going to be pretty cool. It'll add a whole different flavor to the race, and it'll be interesting to see how it all turns out—if the teams really work together to get a good result. Obviously, everyone's going for their individual result, but there'll always be the thought [now] of making sure everybody else [on the team] is getting through and doing well. It'll be good. And there's something cool about saying, "I'm competing on an American team." It just makes it that much more special.

Since you'll be representing the USA, will you wear a "skunk" helmet?

I plan to [right now]. I don't know what our clothing requirements are at this point. We've been told that we're in charge of our bodies and [KTM is] in charge of the bike. We might be in charge of the body, but the body's going to say "KTM" in some place and "Red Bull" in some place. If I can, when I did it before I wore the skunk [stripes] on top and then added orange-and-black KTM around the bottom. I would like to maintain the skunk helmet if I can somehow (but that, of course, depends on final sponsorship arrangements).



LARRY ROESELER



LARRY ROESELER: THE JACK OF ALL TRADES IS ABOUT TO GET HIS CROWN JEWEL

VITAL STATISTICS

DATE OF BIRTH: 25 February 1957

HEIGHT/WEIGHT: 5' 9"/160 lb

FAMILY: Wife, Liz; no children (but two dogs, Max and Woody)

RESIDENCE: Hesperia, California

PROFESSION: KTM motorcycle dealership owner (LR's MotoZone)

HOBBIES: Horseback riding (he and Liz have two), golf, mountain bikes, camping, relaxing in the sun, dual-sport rides, racing off-road trucks, playing with our dogs

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

2003 Tecate Score Baja 1000 Third overall in class

10-time Baja 1000 overall winner

12-time Baja 500 overall winner (last two times in a car)

10-time ISDE gold medalist (in addition to two silvers and one bronze in 13 attempts)

Four-time SCORE International Motorcycle Champion

One-time AMA National Hare & Hound Series Champion

Multi-time winner, AMA National hare & hounds

Multi-time winner, AMA National enduros

Multi-time winner, Adelanto grand prix

Multi-time winner, Tecate Enduro

Six-time overall winner, Virginia City grand prix

Inducted into AMA Hall of Fame, 1999



A CONVERSATION WITH LARRY ROESELER

You've raced all over the world in your career, but is this be the first time you've raced a rally in Africa?

Yes it is. Even in the early '80s when I rode for Yamaha, I did have an opportunity to go. That's right when Dakar was in its infancy. Yamaha USA...couldn't justify me being gone and doing that whole deal and because it was a new race. That was the only opportunity I ever had to go. I've followed the race as it's grown in its popularity and by far, this is the climax to my whole racing career. What we do off-road and what we do for a test of man and machine—of course the Baja 1000's tough and Vegas to Reno's tough, and we have a lot of hare scrambles and enduros that are always tough—but to me, this is the Super Bowl. This is the Olympics. This is definitely the biggest race in my mind. I wish I was maybe a few years younger (he laughs), but mentally and physically I'll be fine. Totally, mentally, I'm already very much training; every day, that's what's on my mind. I'm very excited.

What makes it so important?

I pride myself in the past of being somewhat of a MacGyver and being in control of the situation at hand. In the Baja 1000, there's been a lot of things that happened—partners have crashed, one year I broke a chain and had to fix it in the middle of the night, and you're pacing yourself, your discipline in pre-running and that whole cat-and-mouse game of your competitors. I've thrived off that, and I've felt like I've done good at that. To me, [Dakar] is that times 10, all in one event. It's just the ultimate challenge of man and machine. And, of course, there's a lot of organizing and team strategy, and there's things I'm learning about the Dakar, like start positions—the top guys can pick their position. There's some strategy that goes along with it. Being around experienced people—which I've been blessed with in the past; in this case I'll be with the KTM guys who have done it so the support will be awesome. Of course, it's the ultimate keep-the-bike-together, don't crash, don't make mistakes, navigation—which is something I haven't had to deal with because I've always been able to pre-run so this'll be a new challenge. That's good; I'm totally looking forward to that.

What are you doing now to prepare and what will you be doing as the race draws closer?

Right now, I'm just starting to ride more [plus] some gym work, some bicycling. I want to work through the summer and just get in better overall physical shape. More importantly, we're going to have a bike here—a used race bike, I guess you could call it, a test bike—that Paul and I are going to be able to practice our GPS navigational skills and actually spend a lot of time on the bike. The biggest thing will be preparing, mentally and physically, just being able to ride three or four hundred miles a day. Between now and then, that's going to be a big part of it—just a lot of seat time. It goes without saying that your hands, your butt, your neck, those are the things that [can take a beating]. And it's not like it's real rough to where you're moving your joints; you're just sitting there [most of the time] and you get achy [sitting] in a cramped position. I think it's important, definitely, to spend as much time on the bike [beforehand] as possible.

Won't this also be a different format compared to other races you've done?

Yes it is. I've driven some rallies. Six Days (the ISDE) has stages, but obviously they're short stages (the special tests). It's all going to be new to me—the terrain's going to be new—and I'm going to just absorb it all as fast as I can. Ask a lot of questions. I'll have key people I can rely on, even a guy like Paul Krause who's been there [once I can question]. I've even talked a little bit with Johnny Campbell, and I'll talk to him more before the event just to try to get as much knowledge out of everybody that I can. It is a different format that I'm not used to, but I don't think it's going to be that much different in the big picture.



What do you feel will be the most difficult part to get used to? The sheer number of hours in the saddle, the navigation or the format?

As far as putting the time on the bike, I don't think I'll have any disadvantage to anybody there. I think some of the disadvantages may be the navigation part, getting used to reading the route book and trying to keep your speed up at the same time. There's a fine line there; you've got to slow down and not make a mistake or not hit a rock or not hit a ditch, and at the same time you're trying to decide where you're at on your route book. I think the mental and physical part of it, that leans a lot towards what I'm already used to—obviously not quite that many miles, of course. The actual format of starting each day, restarting [the next], some are race stages, some are transfer sections—I think I can adjust to all that; that sounds like a lot of fun to me. I'm looking forward to that. How the race unfolds and the strategy [that] comes into play, that's going to be a little bit different for me, and that's where I'm going to have to rely on key people to help me make decision.

You're known as a jack of all trades, having raced nearly every sort of motorcycle in nearly every form of racing. Is that background good preparation for something like this?

Absolutely! Most of my career and most of my riding has been off-road-related and endurance-related. There've been some five-, six-, seven-hour races that were extremely tough, and it's not like you were pacing yourself. There've been some events in Mexico where I raced 11 hours straight before at a very brisk pace. Having the versatility, of course, is important, but the core of my background has pretty much been endurance-related so I think that leans towards exactly what this race is all about. And it goes back to the very first thing I said: In my mind it's just the ultimate test of man and machine. How exciting—18 days, traveling all these miles and what unfolds strategy-wise; in my mind it's just the ultimate test.

Compared to other races, Dakar isn't that familiar to most Americans. This three-man effort should give it greater exposure.

I think this is definitely going to give it a boost. What we can do with [training] with the test bike and magazine [stories] and just the exposure of me and Paul going—on top of the last couple years the television coverage has been better—so part of our job is to help share this event with people and really explain to them what it's all about. I think it's gained a lot of momentum in the last few years.

What does it mean to you personally to be involved with this effort?

It's pretty simple, actually, because it's the ultimate honor. To me, wow, what an honor; this is great. I can also look back and say, Gosh, I've always wanted to do this but didn't have the right people behind me. It's all about timing. Now I'm a KTM dealer, and the company has just skyrocketed. What a great opportunity for all of us. The fact that he still thought I had it in me, it makes me feel good. Definitely, my goal is to put in a very solid top finish, for sure. I'm not going there just to say I did Dakar; I'm going there with pretty high expectations. I'll do my homework. I'll do all this testing we're talking about doing and just absorb all the information I can get between now and then—and just days prior to the event! This is not a vacation for me. I want to go and do really, really well.





GAVIN SKILTON

Mechanic for Paul Krause

DATE OF BIRTH: 3 June 1970

HEIGHT/WEIGHT: 5' 10"/185 lb.

FAMILY: Single

RESIDENCE: Orange, California

PROFESSION: Race team mechanic

HOBBIES: Riding observed trials, surfing, snow skiing

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

Co-driver or mechanic in several buggy or truck class-winning Baja 500 and Baja 1000 teams

Assistant crew chief and truck navigator in 2000 Dakar Rallye (which went from Paris and finished in Cairo, Egypt)

Team member in Baja Portugal, Baja Spain, Baja Italy and Atlas rallies

Born in England, Gavin Skilton has been involved in racing and other outdoor sports for much of his life, it seems. Of those on the team, he has the most experience when it comes to rallies, plus he speaks French—a big plus. He also has fairly recent Dakar experience, having been the assistant crew chief for his brother's car effort in the 2000 Dakar Rallye that went from Paris to Cairo, Egypt.

I can read a full road book in French; I speak pretty good French. Darren's French is prettier than mine, but mine's actually a little more functional at times. I'm not very grammatically correct, but I've got a pretty good vocabulary. It takes me a while to get into it, but I can handle a lot in French. That's going to help out a lot with the team when we first arrive in [Paris]. I used to speak a little German, too, so I'm going to work on that when I'm over there as well so we'll communicate with the [Austrian-based factory] team a little better.

That and your previous Dakar experience should definitely be beneficial to the team.

That was one of my points with Scot when I was applying for the job, was the fact that I've been on a Dakar, and I know what's demanded of everybody. You're not going to hear any whining out of me: "My God, I didn't know it was going to be this hard!" Any time you're spending doing something other than [what] needs to be done, you're really wasting time. You're either eating, sleeping, working, cleaning or driving, basically, the whole time. If you're not, you're probably standing around waiting for somebody else. I'm looking forward to it. I had a pretty tough Dakar before so I just don't think any of them are easy. I'm not looking forward to an easy Dakar! Every one of them, I think, is always pretty tough.



THOMAS MCDONALD

Mechanic for Scot Harden

DATE OF BIRTH: 15 October 1954

HEIGHT/WEIGHT: 5' 8"/160 lb.

FAMILY: Single

RESIDENCE: Park City, Utah

PROFESSION: Engineering consultant

HOBBIES: Riding in the desert, snow skiing, skateboarding, traveling

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

Race team mechanic for Holmes Racing for past several years; race vehicles included classes 5/1600, 7S and 9 in SCORE and 3100 in Best in the Desert

Thomas McDonald has ridden dirt bikes for years and raced in the desert himself a few times, though he admits, "I never even tried to win!" But, he points out, "I'm just a lifetime motorcyclist who's owned a lot of junky bikes and had to fix 'em. I'm just a guy who rides as many days a week that I can, as much as I can, and I just love the burning of any type of fossil fuel!" McDonald has a degree in human physiology from the University of Utah; his first job out of college was biomechanical research which led to other work as an engineer. When asked why he wanted to be a mechanic for the Red Bull/KTM U.S. Dakar team he had this to say:

To go the Dakar in any fashion is my biggest dream, and when I heard that they were forming a team, I thought I had to be part of that in any way that I could. It was like Willie Wonka advertising the golden ticket. I would love to do it myself someday—or try to—in a car or a truck. To be a member of a team doing it as a mechanic is just as big a dream. I love being part of a team, and when they started putting together this team with Larry Roeseler and Paul Krause heading it up and the third member still undetermined, to me they were assembling the all-stars. Any chance to work and be surrounded with and for those guys is just a dream come true.

Besides your experience, especially as a race team mechanic for Holmes Racing, what other skills do you bring to the Dakar effort?

I have extensive experience traveling to other countries for extended periods of times and in places where I don't speak the language, and have done that on non-guided tours, so to speak. Just winging it and figuring it out as it goes. Everything from Asia to New Zealand to Europe. I also lived in Austria for one of their winters and taught skiing over there, so I'm quite familiar with the Austrian culture and speak a little bit of German. As one of my off-shoots of desert riding throughout Utah, I'm a real big GPS user. As a hobby, I've mapped thousands and thousands of miles of trails throughout Utah on a GPS and have those loaded onto a computer system so I think I bring a real strong technical background from my education and my work as well as through my GPS navigation skills.



BRET LEEF

Mechanic for: Larry Roeseler

DATE OF BIRTH: 8 November 1953

HEIGHT/WEIGHT: 6' 0"/185 lb.

FAMILY: Single

RESIDENCE: Lake Elsinore, California

PROFESSION: Freelance motorcycle mechanic

HOBBIES: Trail riding (he owns a KTM 525), off-road/desert racing, sea kayaking, tennis

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

Suspension specialist for the last 10 years

Fill-in technician on Honda and Kawasaki race teams (Larry Brooks, Mike Fisher, Mike Healey, Ryan Hughes and Mike Kiedrowski among the motocrossers worked with; Eddie Lawson and works KR500 his sole road race combination)

What motivated you to apply for a job where you'll spend what'll amount to nearly three months overseas (in between building the race bike at the factory in Austria, testing in Tunisia and the race itself)?

It's hard to say. I just had an interest in the race; I followed it on television and everywhere I could a lot in the last few years. I have some knowledge of it from that. At this time, I'm kind of a mechanic for hire; I'm wanting to put myself in a position where I'm available to do temporary work, part-time, odd jobs, special projects, all kinds of things like that that come up and would be more interesting [than a nine-to-five job], and this sounded interesting.

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SCHEDULE



December 30-31 2003: Registration and technical inspection at the Grande Halle d'Auvergne (near Clermont Ferrand)

January 1, 2004: Race begins with Prologue, first stage is in France

January 2, 2004: France, Spain

January 3, 2004: Spain, Morocco

January 4-18 2004: Morocco, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina-Faso, Senegal (January 12 in Bobodiolasso, Burkina-Faso, will be a rest day)

January 18 2004: Race finishes in Dakar, awards ceremony

More Dakar information

www.dakar.com/2004/presentationus/index.html

www.ktmpress.com

