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Duncan's Banshee
Still Rules PDV, But
The Four-Strokes
Are Coming

Story and photos by
Bill "WBGO" Lanphier



From the USA, Scotland, Netherlands and Great Britain, Duncan Racing and ATV World assembles a world-class team. The two guys behind the Banshee, John Mitchell (left) and Doug Eichner took the win in 2005, as they did a year earlier.

Their competitors have whined

that Duncan Racing prevails at the 12 Hours of Pont de Vaux simply because of the shotgun approach and big bucks: enter a bunch of quads and one should do well. But if that approach works, then why didn't a French team with eight entries do better than fourth overall this year?

Yes, there's more to winning at PDV, the annual high-speed endurance raced in France, than sheer number of the quads you enter. Yes, it's a lot of luck and a large budget, but it's also years of experience at PDV, fast and meticulously prepped machines and, of course, fast but consistent riders. Once again, all those elements came together in 2005 for Duncan Racing and its big European distributor, ATV World. The team's Banshee, ridden by seven-time PDV champ Doug Eichner (USA) and John Mitchell (Scotland) crossed the finish line more than 10 minutes ahead of the nearest competitor. For PDV 2005, Duncan/ATV World also entered a Honda 450R and Yamaha YFZ.



DUNCAN RACING PDV FOUR-STOKES

They may not be as exotic as the Banshee, but the Duncan four-strokes are still premier, world-class racing machines. Particularly with a relatively new model at an endurance event, tuners walk a fine line between speed and reliability. It takes time to learn what will work and what won't.

Last year, the team felt safer keeping the Honda at stock displacement. With a year of development, they opted to bump it up 20cc with Duncan's 470 National Kit. With a bigger piston, the YFZ is pushed from 450 to 460cc. Both machines get Knife Rods piston rods, which are stronger than stock. Both quads also benefit from Duncan's DR HP4 kit (head porting, guides, springs, cam and re-cut valve seats), plus larger-capacity Fluidyne radiators. The YFZ retains the stock carb, while the Honda gets a Keihin 40mm FCR. "The Edelbrock makes more power, but the quad doesn't start as easy," says Loren Duncan, "and with three separate dead-engine starts at PDV, starting is critical."

Are the four-strokes getting much faster? Oh, yeah! Says Duncan, "We ran 16/35 gearing on the YFZ this year and the motor pulled it. That's hauling butt. Tavis [Cain] said that no one ever came close to him on the straights." The team geared up the Honda, too, and it pulled a one-tooth smaller rear sprocket, compared to last year.

While the Honda runs stock brakes, the team went with FJ1200 master cylinders on the YFZ. "Unusual setups are the last thing you want on a quad that's going to be raced for 12 hours. But I wouldn't call those master cylinders wild or unusual. We've been running that braking setup on the Banshee for several years. The stock brakes on the YFZ work great for MX, but they wouldn't last at PDV."

Though the four-strokes are getting pretty competitive in the speed department, it was little things that bit not only Duncan but several teams running them. Each year, the PDV teams learn a little more about what will hold up at there and what won't. The YFZ problem this year for Duncan was a water fitting, a relatively minor thing, but enough to keep

Duncan's YFZ off the podium.

"The big items like the brakes, tranny and clutch are sorted out on the YFZ," says Duncan, "but this year the water fitting broke right out of the cylinder head from vibration. Fortunately, the rider came in quick enough that we didn't seize the motor. But it didn't have a drop of coolant in it! For years we've chased down things like this on the Banshee. We've learned tons of stuff here and racing the desert back in the early 90s. We know what's going to happen with the Banshee. With a relatively newer model like the YFZ, we just don't know."

The same goes for the Honda. The team had only one major problem, but it kept them from a decent finish. "The swingarm pivot bolt sheared and, because it goes through the back of the center cases, it broke them out and left a hole as big as your hand. It was still running but, even with patching, wouldn't run another seven hours without destroying itself. It was just a freak thing, but we'll come back next year with a custom pivot bolt."

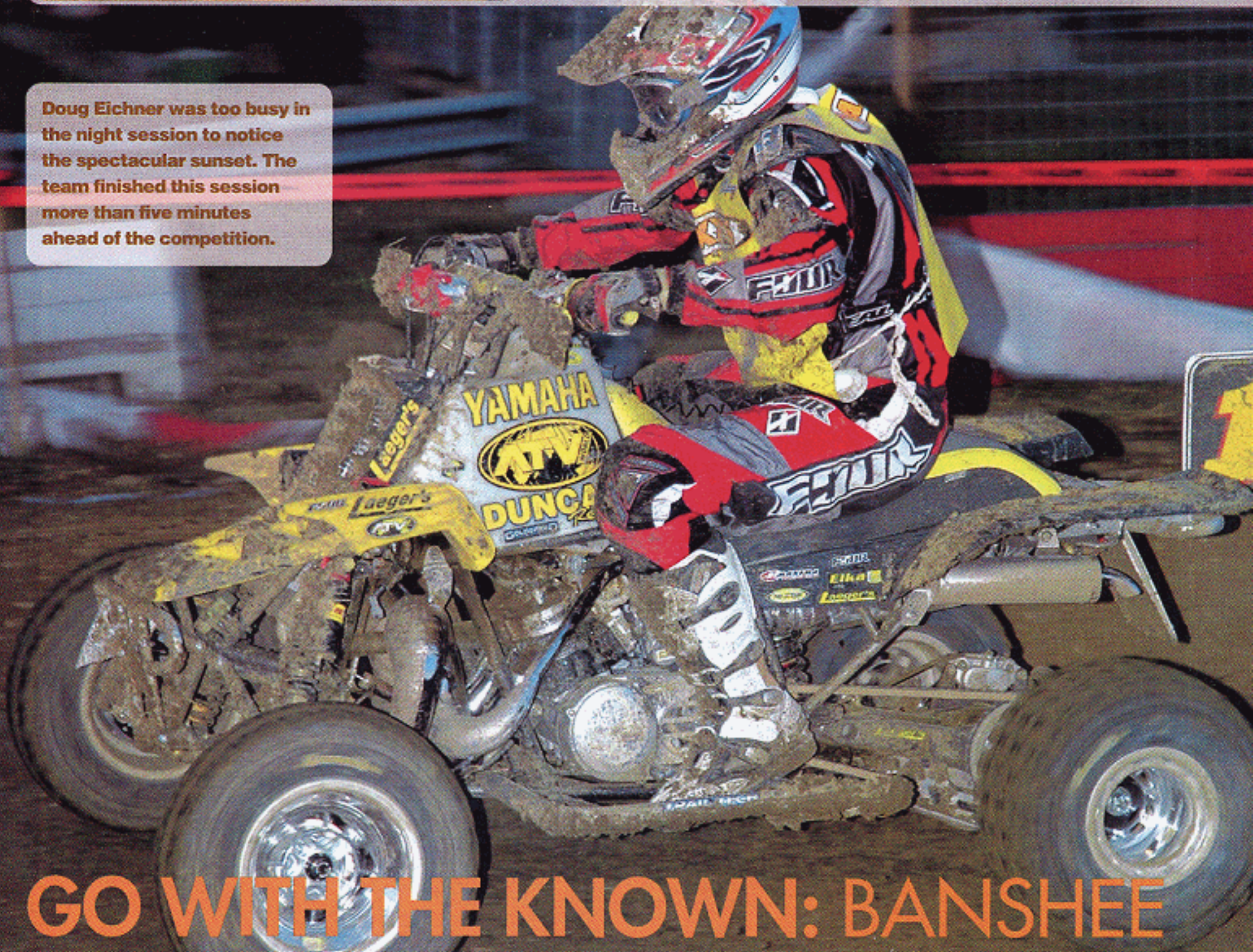
You might think that, with all of Duncan's mods for PDV, the Honda and YFZ would feel pretty similar, but the basic personality of each machine still comes through. "The Honda is now very fast," Duncan says, "but it's also easier to ride and doesn't fatigue the rider like the YFZ and Banshee can. And, if you're not a solid rider, the YFZ can bite you. It's more of a high-strung thoroughbred or Ferrari. The Honda just won't reward the stronger rider like the YFZ will. The acceleration and steering are very quick, making it easier to dart around and make a pass. You can stick it in a lot of places."

For next year, Duncan/ATV World will run the same basic setups on the YFZ, Honda and Banshee. "The changes will be small," he says. "We're already there with the Banshee and we've made big strides since 2004 on the four-strokes. We're not too far from having them on the podium at PDV."



1. It's certainly not the best for motocross, but the Banshee has become the machine of choice for Pont de Vaux. Duncan Racing Banshees have won there more than a half-dozen times and this 2005 version is the latest champion.
2. Look close and you'll see all kinds of interesting but super-reliable stuff on the Banshee. The brakes are from a FJ1200 motorcycle, the axle is for an LT500R, the oversize chain is a 530 and the Williams brakelights are very high tech. The downturned silencer tip meets very strict PDV sound restrictions.

Doug Eichner was too busy in the night session to notice the spectacular sunset. The team finished this session more than five minutes ahead of the competition.



GO WITH THE KNOWN: BANSHEE

Duncan's Banshee, a known and proven quantity at PDV was pretty much unchanged from the previous year. The 350cc engine, with a DR/PTR National kit, is plenty fast enough. Plus, it's proven very reliable. Like on the Honda and YFZ, the Banshee runs a Vortex ignition. As in the past, Duncan grinds mass off the outside of the Banshee flywheel for quicker throttle response and smoother running. To meet stricter noise restrictions at PDV, the Fatboy 2 Quiet silencers have more downturned ends.

The Laeger's Pro Trax chassis is actually closer to a Honda 250R than a Banshee and handles infinitely better. Nobody deserves the punishment of riding a stock Banshee for 12 hours on a track as fast and rough as PDV. New chain sliders on the Laeger's swingarm greatly improve chain life and a 520 chain would work fine on the Banshee, as it does on the Honda and YFZ, he tells us. But the team opted to continue using the

530-size chains they'd been using on the Banshee for several years. "We don't want to go fooling with success," Duncan says. Another known quantity for Duncan from past PDV racing is a burly, Suzuki LT500R-style axle. In the past, Pont de Vaux's big jump and hours of pounding on the rough track spelled doom for many axles.

Because the track was even faster this year, the Banshee and the other two quads were geared up a bit. Even with the same engine mods as last year, the Banshee had no trouble pulling the slightly higher 17/38 gearing (compared to 17/39 last year). In front, Honda 250R brakes provide much better stopping power than does the stock Banshee system. In back, a modified Yamaha FJ1200 street bike caliper slows things down.

This year, all three quads were outfitted with Trail Tech lights.



LEFT: Unlike the other two Duncan quads, the YFZ runs Roll Design A-arms and swingarm.

RIGHT: You think you're seeing a Banshee, but from this view only the plastic is from that ATV. The rest is Laeger's, Elka, Duncan Racing, Trail Tech, Honda, AC Racing, Goldspeed and Maxxis.

"They're awesome," says Duncan. "As bright as automobile lighting." The Banshee runs a Safari 125-watt stator while, for greater reliability on the newer machines, the Honda and YFZ run stock stators. This year, one of the Banshee lights got knocked off and, for the 2006 race, the team plans to make sturdier and faster quick-change light mounts for that machine and the Honda.

Other components that may seem like they should be fixed, were intentionally left alone. "The Banshee tires were almost bald in the last two sessions," Duncan says, "but when it's misting at night and the track is tacky, having more rubber on the ground makes the Banshee handle and hook up better. Eichner and Mitchell really know how to roll on the throttle and find traction. We did start to worry about punctures, however, and if we thought we needed to win the last session to win the race, we would have taken the time to pit for new tires. When the track's really wet, though, nothing works. The organization drenched the track before the second session. Tavis Cain, on the YFZ, was trying to pass on a fast straight and he got almost fully sideways-wide open."

Though four-strokes now greatly outnumber the two-strokes at Pont de Vaux (and at just about everything other track in the world) Duncan plans to stick with the Banshee. "We'll run it at PDV until it gets beat. When traction is good, it's faster. Of course, when traction isn't good, throttle

control is really important, even on our Banshee, which is pretty tractable."

For Duncan and chief mechanic Martin Fletcher, it would be tough to step away from a machine that's been so long in development. "I hope we can win with the Banshee next year. We build the best bike we possibly can. During this year's race, Martin and I wrote three pages of notes on things we can improve on to keep the competition at bay. In planning for each year, I look at notes dating back several years. If the Banshee is still winning in five years, we'll still run it."

All this begs the question, if the Banshee is faster, why is everyone on four-strokes? "Many riders today don't have experience on the Banshee," Duncan says. "They know only four-strokes. The Banshee requires such a different style of riding and there just aren't that many riders who can be competitive on it. Even though it's faster, I'd guess that, for the majority of riders at PDV, if they rode Doug and John's Banshee, they wouldn't like it. Of course, there are some guys who can ride a Banshee, but have sponsorships to ride the Honda, YFZ or other bikes."

Price and availability are other factors. Anyone can buy a YFZ or 450R and, for a modest investment, go racing. But to buy and then build up a Banshee like Duncan's would cost three times as much, according to Duncan. "No doubt, four strokes are taking over," he says, "but the Banshee's still the king at PDV and to retire it now would be stupid." **ATVS**

CHANCEUX SEPT

Lucky Seven

America Rules Pont De Vaux
Story and photos by Bill "WBGO" Lanphier

It's a simple but amazing story: An American racer goes to France and beats the French seven times. Yes, we're talking about bicycle racer Lance Armstrong, but we're also talking about quad racer Doug Eichner.

Riders like Eichner were no doubt too busy to notice the spectacular sunset on Saturday. And they may have been wondering what the ensuing four hours of racing through the darkness would bring.



QUADVILLE

It's only fitting that a world-class event like Pont de Vaux should have plenty of fanfare surrounding it. From Friday until Sunday, activities in the little village and nearby track go on non-stop from morning until well into the night. Pont de Vaux is like no other ATV event in the world.

This year, the winningest rider in the history of Pont de Vaux, the annual 12-hour quad race in France, tied Lance Armstrong's record of seven victories in France. Granted, Eichner raced around for only two days instead of three weeks, but the ride was way more brutal — blinding dust, huge ruts and high-speed crashes on 300-pound-plus machines, for example.

Going into the event, Eichner and Scottish teammate John Mitchell, were strong favorites. The Duncan Racing/ATV World duo won the event in 2004 and again would ride a custom Laeger's Banshee purpose-built for Pont de Vaux. The course is extremely fast — speeds are close to 90 MPH — and when a blue groove develops and traction is good, the Banshee is unstoppable. But outside the blue groove it's all marbles and when it rains, the blue groove is like glare ice. In that case, the 114 riders on four-strokes have a distinct advantage over the six two-strokes, including Eichner's Banshee. Yes, Pont de Vaux is a gamble for the race teams. And for teams based outside of Europe, it's a very expensive gamble.

Day One

Pont de Vaux is unusual in that practice and qualifying happen at the same time, group style. So speeds are very fast from the get go. In a high-speed sweeper, the top-finishing Bombardier DS650 from 2004 touched wheels with another quad and cartwheeled down the track, barely missing its cartwheeling pilot. The crash sucked for him, particularly considering the 12 hours hadn't even started.

Mechanical problems plague some teams early on, too. Possibly because of a clogged fuel tank vent hose, the CT Racing Banshee ridden by USA pilots Harold Goodman and Josh Fredericks, plus Northern Ireland's Justin Reid, seized early in qualifying. The team rushed to install a



All three sessions begin with a LeMans-style start and the spectators love it. Maxxis is the primary sponsor of the event, which this year drew 450 riders, including those in the amateur "Quad Contest" class.

spare engine but didn't have enough time to put in a good qualifying lap. Eichner and a second CT quad piloted by Nic Granlund also failed to get in a good lap. But a CT sponsored team with Frenchman Romain Couprie and upcoming American pro Pat Brown riding a Yamaha France YFZ posted the fastest qualifying lap. Couprie's team finished third last year at PDV.

Two hours after the dust settled from qualifying, the first of three sessions began and the roar of 120 quads filled the French

countryside. The Walsh/KTM 525 ridden by young but very fast Americans Josh Creamer, Jeremy Lawson (second last year at PDV) and Cody Grant jumped into the lead. Following in second was the Honda piloted by Brit Paul Winrow, who took his first of three wins at PDV way back in 1992. Brown's YFZ followed in third.

Two hours later it was Creamer, Eichner, Brown and Winrow. Soon after, though, Winrow's team rolled to a stop after a prototype steering stem snapped on its



With just 15 minutes to go in the 2005 PDV, Doug Eichner (black cap) watches intently for teammate John Mitchell to come around for the final few laps.

Honda 450. Creamer's team was not without steering problems of its own. Said Fredericks, "We spun out and got hit hard, bending the steering stem and screwing up the alignment." After a frantic debate in the pits over which tierod end had reverse threads, the team wrenched on the quad, eyeballed the alignment, called it good and headed back out — with valuable time lost.

Said Eichner of Creamer's team, "They're fast. Those four-strokes hook up hard in the corners. We're faster than most teams on the straights, but Brown's team ran side by side with us a few times." When the three-hour session was done, Eichner had the lead, followed by Brown, who posted the fastest lap of the session, and in third a team of Spain's top racers.

The five-hour second session starts just before dusk and ends at 1 a.m. After one hour, Creamer's team held down the lead in that session, followed by Winrow and the same DS650 that took the big spill in qualifying. After three hours, the YFZ of three-time PDV winner Gregory Lassaigne moved into the lead and on the same lap were Eichner and Creamer. Then an intermittent electrical problem reared its ugly head on Creamer's quad. By the time they solved the problem they had dropped to 50th place in the session and an overall victory was out of reach. Next, Lassaigne grenaded an engine and his team was out of the running, too.

When the night session ended and the tally for both sessions was in, Eichner and Mitchell were ahead by six minutes. Sobrado's Spanish team was in second, followed by Winrow and the Arsene Racing team including Frenchman Cyril Lamet. Lamet posted the fastest lap of the night session and was on the PDV-winning team in 2002.

Day Two

The beginning of the third session proved that, with a race as long as PDV, even the winning team can get away with crashing a few times. Eichner explains, "Brown's quad came over into me and I went over the barrier. I hadn't seen the bottom of the quad yet and wanted to check it out." Not too long after that, Eichner came up too fast on lappers and bailed off the quad again. "The quad didn't go upside-down that time, but my landing hurt more," said Eichner.

Brown's quad wasn't upside down, but it was in way worse shape than Eichner's. Already festooned with duct tape, zip ties, bungee chords, tie downs and safety wire, the quad pitted in the third session to cinch down the subframe, which was hanging on by a thread. When seconds

INSIDE PONT DE VAUX

- Annual, quad-only race started in 1987 and held near the village of Pont de Vaux (pon-duh-voh) in east-central France.
- A field of 120 two- or three rider-teams compete on machines between 250 and 1,000cc.
- Countries represented this year: France, USA, Canada, Netherlands, Belgium, Great Britain, Denmark, Morocco, Scotland, Canada, Poland, Ireland, North Ireland, Czech Republic, Spain, Germany.
- High-speed but rough, 2.3-mile TT-style grass circuit with four jumps. Longest straight is 1/3 mile. Maximum track width is 15 feet.
- The race is held over two days and divided into three sessions, one of them a night session with lights on the quads. Grid position for all sessions is determined by mass qualifying. Each session begins with a LeMans-style start: riders sprint across the track and start the machines. Computer scoring.
- Between each race session quads are locked into an impound area. Repairs can be made only during the race sessions.
- The winning team has completed the most number of laps at the end of 12 hours.
- Related activities: carnival rides, freestyle quad show, disco, ATV manufacturer displays, ATV rides, and a rider presentation and parade in town, plus vendors for food, alcohol, ATV accessories and apparel.
- For more information about the 2006 PDV, which will be held in August, check out PDV Racing at www.pdvracing.com, info@pdvracing.com.

Early in qualifying, the top-finishing DS650 from last year's PDV went tumbling. The rider was pretty sore but uninjured and the team went on to qualify in the top 10. Though speeds are very high at PDV, serious injuries are not as common as might be expected.



count, there's no time to get out a welder, so you make do the best you can. Pont de Vaux is brutal on machines and the psyche of the teams trying to keep them together.

Other quads, like Sobrado's Honda from Spain, were blessed with smooth sailing. Said a team member, "No problems for us. Not even little ones." The quad, with a huge gas tank, made its final pit stop with an hour and a half left to go in the event.

With one hour to go, Eichner's team made its final pit stop and John Mitchell hopped aboard to ride out the remainder of the race. Although the team didn't plan ahead who would finish out the race, Eichner joked, "We're letting John finish it out and take the checkered flag. He needs the glory."

When the checkers fell, Creamer's quad had posted the fastest lap and completed the most number of laps for the final session. But the overall win for PDV 2005 went to Eichner and Mitchell. The Spanish team was jubilant to finish second overall. Said a team member, "Spain's best finish here before today was fifth, back in 2003. It's a very big deal now for us to finish right behind the #1 Duncan/ATV World team."

Lamet's team, in third, was also ecstatic. Said teammate Sylvain Arseneault, "We're very happy. In 2004, I was on the podium at La Tuques [Quebec] and that was great. But it's not Pont de Vaux. It's wild to be on the podium here."

Eichner reflected on his seven wins like someone who's at the top of his game and about ready to move on, "I've gotta give some thought to whether I'll come back next year. I don't want to break Lance's record."

Aw come on, Doug. You know you do. **ATVS**



RESULTS: 2005 12 HOURS OF PONT DE VAUX

RIDERS	COUNTRIES	QUALIFYING TIME *	SESSION FINISHES	MILES COMPLETED
1. Eichner / Mitchell	USA / Scotland	2:50.78	1 / 1 / 2	538
2. Sobrado / Sanchez / Sanchez	Spain	2:50.68	3 / 2 / 4	528
3. Lamet / Arseneault / Tusset	France / Canada / France	2:55.90	13 / 4 / 6	542
4. Couprie / Brown / Dutrie	France / USA / France	2:46.88	2 / 5 / 10	514
5. Vanpevenaeyge / Hieff / Hieff	Belgium	2:55.18	18 / 8 / 7	510
6. Meertens / Piron / Piron	Belgium	2:54.13	37 / 14 / 5	503
7. Creamer / Lawson / Grant	USA	2:48.58	4 / 59 / 1	500
8. Pinchon / Lesur	France	2:50.01	21 / 15 / 9	496
9. Rochereau / Magnetti / Melich	France / Italy / Spain	2:55.39	17 / 21 / 8	496
10. Villemur / Sousa Borges	France	3:00.43	29 / 7 / 28	496

Other Americans competing were: Andy Ladzjins, Tavis Cain, Chad Lohr, Nic Granlund, Harold Goodman, Josh Fredericks, Ian Buckingham, Lenny Duncan, Cale Downen and Chad Wiener.

* Mass qualification



1. It's not often that everyone on the podium is happy with their finish, but that was the case this year at PDV. Countries represented on the podium were Spain, Scotland, USA, France and Canada.

2. This team of French women relax prior to the Friday parade from the village to the track. In the final women's standings, they took second behind another French team. We applaud anyone, male or female, who can hang onto a quad for 12 hours on a track that's as rough and fast as PDV.

3. Were it not for a intermittent electrical problem, the super-fast young Americans on this Walsh/KTM certainly would have made the podium — maybe taken the win.

QUAD	MAIN SPONSORS
Yamaha Banshee	ATV World, Duncan Racing, Yamaha, Laeger's, Elka
Honda TRX450	Ducros Vahiné, Honda Espana, Custom Axis, Laeger's, Maxxis
Honda TRX450	Honda Europe, Goldspeed, Douglas, PXP, RMF
Yamaha YFZ	Yamaha, Ipone, Goldspeed, Afaro, Bud Racing
Yamaha YFZ	Tibermont, Yamaha Belgique, AXP, AMPI, Durablue
Yamaha YFZ	Team Piron, Scott, Arai, Moto Performance
Walsh Briel KTM 525	Quad Briel, Walsh Race Craft, ITP, Motul, Elka
Yamaha YFZ	Team Quadyland Racing Team
Polaris Predator	Ipone, Kenny, Goldspeed, Beringer, CRD
Honda TRX450	Shop Moto, Bemis Transport, Maths Racing, Honda HRC, Öhlins