

# 12 HOUR SHADOW

## Hour-By-Hour Report

Story and photos  
By Bill "WBGO" Lanphier

Going to a world-class ATV event with full press credentials is always a blast for me. And, it's nice that the winningest rider at France's 12 Hours of Pont de Vaux, Doug Eichner, is a likeable fellow American and I often spend time snooping around his Duncan Racing pit.

This year would be a little different, though. I would file an hour-by-hour report on the team, watching its every move. If the team won, I'd follow them right up to the podium and bask in the glory.

If they broke down and DNF'd on the first lap, I'd sit around with the team for the next 11 hours and watch the riders cry in their beers. Neither of those two scenarios happened, but I did get to shadow them for the entire race.

### SATURDAY MORNING

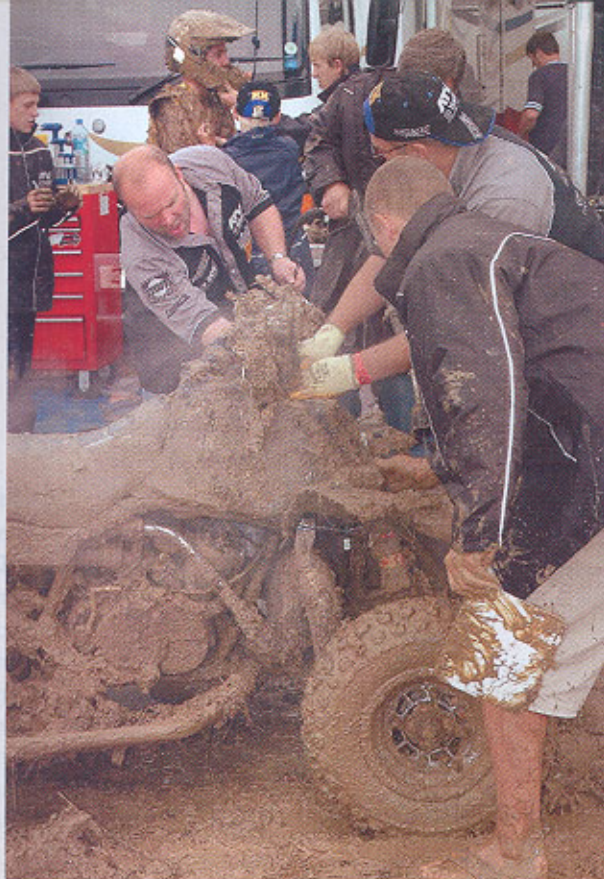
Saturday morning, things were already looking bad for Eichner and John Mitchell, his super-fast teammate and newly-crowned British MX champ. Their gold Banshee was arguably the best-looking machine in the field of 120 quads, but the track was perhaps the sloppiest that anyone could remember in the 20-year history of the event.

The muddier the course, the more of a disadvantage Eichner and Mitchell would have compared to the top competitors, all of whom were on more tractable four-strokes.



# 0 HOUR

**Eichner starts the session.** At the end of the first lap he has eaten lots of mud but holds his ground at 12th place. "I dodged mud and quickly moved up to fifth before hitting a massive puddle of water," said Eichner. "The Banshee immediately started sputtering so we pitted to change the air filter and plugs, losing several minutes. We can't afford to lose that kind of ground. And then the motor was still sputtering. We gambled that the electrics would eventually dry out on the track, and that gamble paid off."



**PIT PRESSURE:** In the first session, John Mitchell (background) pits for more coolant and to get mud pressure washed from the radiator.

# 1 HOUR ELAPSED

**At the one-hour mark, the team had started moving back up and was in 52nd place.** But, by catching up and passing many lappers, they collected plenty of mud, clogging the radiator. So, they had to refill it three times after water boiled out. Commented Duncan, "They should call this the '12 Hours of Mud.' Why couldn't they wait a little to start the race?"



**LAI-D-BACK SCOT:** Despite the trouble his team is having with mud and water, easy-going John Mitchell, originally from a small island off the mainland of Scotland, gives a thumbs up after putting in a hour in the first session.

## \$30,000 GOLD SCREAMER

For most of the 20-year history of Pont de Vaux, Banshees have ruled the high-speed endurance race in France. The machine you see here is the culmination of Duncan Racing's 17 years of experience at PDV with that screaming two-stroke.

In 1993, with Doug Eichner at the controls, the team took its first Banshee win — of seven — at PDV. Every year brings design developments, many of them pioneered by Duncan Racing and its Euro distributor, ATV World. It's only fitting that this gold-plated and gold-anodized quad, Duncan's farewell to the Banshee at PDV, is the most amazing mechanically and visually.

Check out some of those PDV Banshee advancements over the years, many still in use today. When rear axle breakage was a problem during the 12 hours of pounding over high-speed jumps, the team switched to axles and carriers designed for Suzuki's big LT500R. When chain slippage and breakage was a problem, the team hit on the idea of running burly 530-size chains, normally used on street bikes. Chief mechanic Martin Fletcher made custom 530 sprockets to match.

The CDI was moved to a safer location under the seat. A bolt through the rubber portion of the upper exhaust hangers kept the pipes secure. The radiator overflow hose was routed to a spot near the handlebars where the rider would notice instantly — sometimes painfully — that the motor was starting to overheat.

Because brake fade was a problem, Martin fabricated a setup to accommodate two calipers for each front wheel. Because night vision is crucial at PDV and the rules require working taillights, multiple lights on separate circuits were used front and rear. The switch to a Laeger's Pro-Trax chassis for the Banshee, including better suspension, reduced the need for some of the exotic items above like the LT500 axle. But, as Duncan says, "Why mess with success?!"

Even after all the years of development, the team still manages to find room for improvement. This year the team switched to a larger-capacity radiator and, to accommodate a slightly different front-end setup, Yamaha YFZ front brakes. For even stronger lighting, the team went with four, instead of two, Trail Tech halogens. Duncan wasn't happy

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# 2

## HOURS ELAPSED

Just passed the two-hour mark, the team has moved to 35th. Eichner reflects, "Those first two hours were like a single-lane crap shoot. We're still overheating from the mud, but the motor's running good and we now have a fighting chance. The track's not quite as bad and, from all the pressure washing, the muddiest place now is pit row. But I still feel the weight of the mud on the quad. It's bottoming out more and it's harder to muscle in the turns."



**EUROPEAN STAR:** Often, the European media is more interested in American Eichner, the winningest rider in PDV history, than they are with their own riders. Here in the first session, Eichner is interviewed outside one of ATV World's race vans.

# 4

## HOURS ELAPSED

At the 4:30 mark it's dark and Eichner, considered the fastest night-pilot at PDV, gets on. Soon, he gets quite a surprise: "At a two-lane section of the track a guy crossed over in front of me and hit another guy. A third guy hit me and ended up lying on my nerf bar. I yelled, 'no hitchhikers' and pushed him off. It was a fast section and it was lucky for us all that it was muddy and we slid instead of tumbled."

# 3

## HOURS ELAPSED

Despite several unscheduled pit stops, the Duncan team has moved up 26 places and finishes the first session in 30th. Assessing the Banshee, Eichner remarks, "I'll bet there's 100 pounds of mud on that thing!"

The second session begins at sundown. Mitchell moves to third for that session. The overall ranking is the total number of laps completed for all three sessions. "We've moved up to second for this session and we might even be in the top 10 overall. We just gotta keep pushing."



**SETTING SUN:** As night falls, Mitchell powers the Banshee around a turn, hoping the track will continue to dry and offer more hook up for the high-revving two-stroke.



**NEVER SAY DIE:** Eichner and Mitchell continued their push to the front during Session 2. By the time the second session was over, they still trailed by one lap, but were in striking distance of the leaders.



# 5 HOURS ELAPSED

At 5:30 hours, Mitchell hops on and Eichner (Ike) walks back to the race van to relax a little. Despite the pounding of 120 quads, the track is still far from dry. "We're still getting lots of wheel-spin out there," says Eichner, wiping the slop from his face with a clean, damp towel.



**PERSONAL ASSISTANT:** Around 5:30 hours, Loren Duncan is very attentive to Eichner, who has just put in over an hour of furious night laps.

# 6 HOURS ELAPSED

At 6:45 hours, and now past the half-way point in the race, Mitchell is off and Ike is back on. The team continues its furious pace, but Mitchell echoes Ike's thoughts on track conditions, "There's only a single-line groove out there and we get traction only in that groove."



**DANGEROUS CHASE:** With slower riders, tappers and a single-lane groove, Eichner and Mitchell (above) had their hands full in attempting their comeback.

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with the higher-output Banshee after-market stators now made in China, so they used the stock stator to power two of the lights and a grab-bar mounted battery to power the other two.

**Shortly after the dust, err ... mud, settled at PDV this year, we spoke with Loren Duncan.**

> **ATV Sport:** First, let's talk about pre-race. In planning for PDV, what kind of things set your team apart? How does a team win that event so many times?

> **Loren Duncan:** Each year we keep detailed records about the bikes. What works, what doesn't. By the end of each race, I end up with a file an inch thick. You'd think with the resources some of the factory teams have in Europe, they'd do better than us. But generally we have better luck. Whatever we put our energy into, we do well.

> We've heard you've never DNF'd a team Banshee at PDV. How do you keep a motor together for that long at those speeds?

> Attention to detail and a high level of workmanship. Look at how many parts I build for that motor. And we spend a year in R&D before marketing them. With the mud buildup and overheating this year at PDV, we pumped every drop of coolant out of the motor three times. I doubt that many other quads would still be running after that.

> Your pit stops always seem well organized. What are some of the things that go on behind the scenes?

> Fuel mileage is tracked throughout the race and pit stops are planned as much as an hour in advance. Everyone in the pits has a specific task. As crew chief, I make all the calls, right or wrong and it's important that one person do that. When the pressure is on, it's imperative that someone with a cool head has things under control.

> Let's talk about this year's Banshee. How much would it cost someone outside the team to have something like that built? What happens to it after the race?

> The new Banshee, plus all the mods and labor, would go for \$30,000. Often, we sell them to another team after the race, but this one will be raffled off at the Le Touquet Beach Race in France. Anyone can enter [see the Duncan Web site] and it will be shipped to where ever the winner wants.

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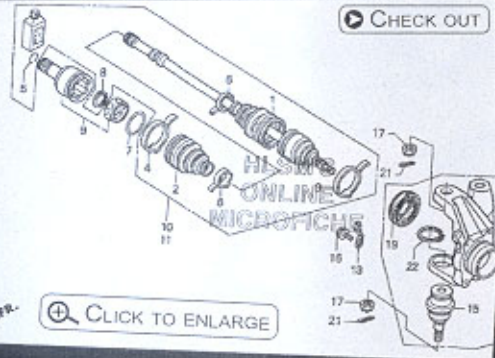
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CHECK OUT



CLICK TO ENLARGE

# 7 HOURS ELAPSED

A little after midnight, and with only 30 minutes to go in the night session, the team pits, making sure the quad is in good shape for the beginning of the final session on Sunday. Barring more rain, the track groove will have widened and the screaming two-stroke will have more room to stretch its legs.



**EXCESSIVE FREEPLAY:** At every pit stop, Martin (left) checks the quad over quickly, including a tug at all four wheels to check for excessive freeplay. This night stop came at 10:40 p.m., about five-and-a-half hours into the race.



ONE MORE SESSION TO GO

# 8 HOURS ELAPSED

When the checkers fell on the night session at 1 a.m., Ike and Mitchell had won that session by two laps. That translates into a very impressive six-minute lead. But in the overall standings (the combined first two sessions) they were down one lap. A little after the final session began, Mitchell passed the baton to Eichner with the team still in second overall and gaining.



**GAINING GROUND:** After the grueling night session, which saw Eichner and Mitchell push to second overall, things started to look up for the team as the track dried and the weather improved.

# 9 HOURS ELAPSED

Now things really started popping for the team. At 9:30 hours they took the lead for the third session. At 9:55 hours Mitchell took over the controls. Back in the pits, Eichner explained one of the difficulties in moving up through the field: "I had a few close calls with lappers. They're getting tired, slowing down, and don't know which way to go to get out of the way. A lot of times we come up on them so fast they don't even know we're there. I've been doing a lot of yelling."



**BANSHEE TIME:** By the final session, the track had dried, the Banshee was in its element, and the team eventually moved into first overall.

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# 10

HOURS  
ELAPSED

Toward the end of the 10th hour, Ike and Mitchell miraculously move into the overall lead. The Belgium team in second explains that the Duncan team will have to make an extra pit stop for fuel and that will probably move them back to second.



**SOARING:** The Duncan Racing/ATV World Team was soaring high after 10 hours as it took the overall lead.

# 12

HOURS  
ELAPSED

When the combined standings were in, the Duncan team had finished fifth overall. Said chief mechanic Martin Fletcher (from Duncan's Euro distributor ATV World), "It's frustrating to finally lead after 11 hours and then have problems. Here it takes more than just being the fastest. I feel sorry for Eichner and Mitchell, who worked so hard and rode so well. That's PDV."

Said Duncan, "It just wasn't our day. But we've had plenty of good days here in France. Most people didn't give us a chance in hell after the first session here this year. Even with all the problems, we still finished in the top five."



**DEFEATED:** Smiles of victory? No. At 4:50 p.m. (11 hours and 50 minutes) Duncan (left) and Martin have accepted and now take in stride that their team won't even podium at the 2006 PDV. "We've had plenty of good race days here in France," reflected Duncan.

# 11

HOUR  
ELAPSED

The Duncan team had to make another pit stop, but it wasn't routine at all. In fact, the quad had to be pushed back to the pits. Frantically trying everything, including a new CDI, the team finally determined that the fly-wheel key had sheared, a freak failure for a brand-new OEM part. The No. 1 gold Banshee wasn't going to win PDV 2006. "Close, but no cigar," said Mitchell. They say everything happens in the final hour at PDV and this was again the case in 2006.



**LEAD SHORT-LIVED:** At 4:10 p.m., less than an hour before the finish, the team's chances of maintaining the overall lead it had worked so hard for vaporized. Disappointment is written on their faces.



## 2006 Duncan PDV Banshee

### RIDERS/SPONSORS

Riders/countries: Doug Eichner/USA, John Mitchell/Scotland

Main sponsors: ATV World, Duncan Racing, Yamaha

Team co-sponsors: Douglas Wheel, Laeger's, Elka Suspension, Team, Paul Turner Racing Engines, Goldspeed, Vortex

Contributing Sponsors: Spider, Zip, Works Connection, Pro-Tech UK, Four, Blur, Motion Pro, G-UK, Vitargo, Zip, IMS, Pro Design, Hinson, Dunlop, Maxima, Trail Tech

Chief mechanic/prep: Martin Fletcher (ATV World)

Crew Chief: Loren Duncan

### MACHINE

Quad: 2006 Yamaha Banshee

Quad weight: 370 lbs.

Frame: Laeger's Pro Trax

Wheelbase: Stock Banshee + 1"

Overall width: 49"

### ENGINE

Type: Banshee w/DR/PTR National kit

Additional cooling: Fluidyne radiator

Displacement: Stock

Bore x stroke (mm): 66 x 54

Porting/head work: PTR National PDV Special

Head: PTR/DR Powerhead

Piston: ProX/DR

Ignition: Vortex w/D.R. adjustable timing

plate and flywheel mods

Carburetors: (2) 34mm PJ w/DR Superflow mods, Masterflow intake manifold

Reed valves: PTR Pyramid

Airbox/liner: ProTech UK ATV Alloy w/Pro Design Pro Flow kit/K&N

Exhaust: PTR w/Fatboy 2 Quiets silencers

### DRIVE SYSTEM

Clutch: Hinson/DR

Transmission: DEM: 1-4, RD350LC: 5-6

Chain: DID 530 X Ring

Sprockets: ATV World custom 530 case hardened

Gearing: 16/37

### FRONT

A-arms: Laeger's Pro Trax

Spindles: Laeger's T Pin

Shocks/wheel travel, in.: Elka ZPS, 12

Steering stem/steering stabilizer:

Laeger's/ATV World

### REAR

Swingarm: Laeger's 18.7"

Rear axle/axle carrier: Team 2 + 2 LT500R

style/Team taper roller bearings

Shock/wheel travel, in.: Elka/10.5

### TIRES/WHEELS/HUBS

Tires: Goldspeed/Maxxis MX

Tire sizes f/r: 20 x 6-10/18 x 10-8

Wheels: Douglas Ultimate Billet

Hubs f/r: DR billet/Team billet

### BRAKES

Brake callipers f/r: YFZ450/Yamaha

FJ1200 street bike custom modified

Pads: Dunlop sport compound

Rotors: Braking custom 220 front, 216 rear

Brake lines: DR Crown Series

### HANDLEBARS/CONTROLS

Handlebars: Rental QuadRacer bend

Throttle: Motion Pro Vortex twist

Clutch lever: Works Connection

Cables: Motion Pro Terminator

Grips: Spider

Tether kill switch: Pro Design

### DETAILS

Nerfs/front bumper/grab bar: Pro

Peg/DR/DR

Skid plates: DMF

Fuel tank: IMS 5.6 gal., dry break

Lights: Trail Tech

Seat cover: Zip high foam, custom cover

Body: Stock custom, trimmed

Footpegs: Pro Pegs, 2" back, 1" down

Powder coat: Frame black w/gold metal flake

Gold anodized: Stator cover, water pump

cover, quick-change clutch cover,

silencers, Powerhead, grill, caliper, rear

chain guards, nerfs, bead lock rings

Gold plated: PTR pipes, bumper, A-arms,

steering stem, grab bar

Contact: Duncan Racing International,

(619) 258-6306, www.duncanracing.com

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> What's the future of the Banshee in general?

> With Yamaha discontinuing it, there will obviously be fewer and fewer around. But it will have a cult following. We have one at the shop we'll never part with and I still do a lot of Banshee engines. It's still a good bike for the dunes and Supermoto. I understand Pikes Peak is changing the rules and that will keep them alive there, too.

> Last year you said you'll run the Banshee at PDV until it gets beat. So, no more?

> This was the 20th anniversary of both the Banshee and PDV and it's time to move on. We'll get more support from Yamaha if we race a YFZ, but there are other factors. When the track is dry and tacky, the Banshee shines. But with the rain and mud this year, it doesn't have the traction in the corners and it makes Eichner and Mitchell look slower. Overall, they'll be faster on a four-stroke. Even with the fifth overall this year, they gained fans and respect by moving from way back to the front. ■