

WORLD-CLASS RACING



Each race begins with a hair-raising LeMans-style start. This year, three of them were a bit sloppy and wild, but the throngs of spectators loved every minute of it.



French Race Has Grown Into ATV Festival

By Bill "WBGO" Lanphier

It is a huge event even *without* the race. The presentation and parade of 100 race quads in the small French village, a midway at the track with displays by Yamaha, Bombardier and the aftermarket. Live bands, fireworks, grass track snowmobile racing, BMX bicycle craziness, food, a bar, apparel and gift vendors, youth ATV rentals — the 12 Hours of Pont de Vaux is worth checking out just for the peripheral activity.

ON TRACK ON TRACK ON T



This race was Paul Winrow's first ride on a Banshee. He obviously learns fast.



In these miserable conditions, Winrow was unable to twist the slippery grip. A helpful bystander ripped up some grass and handed it to Winrow for twist-throttle traction.

Make no mistake, though, the race itself is the reason for it all. Pont de Vaux (PDV) is like no other ATV event in the world. Riders from a dozen countries, including the United States, showed up this year to do battle.

Three pilots would represent the U. S., including Doug "Ike" Eichner, with three PDV wins, a Mickey Thompson stadium championship and three GNC Open Class titles to his credit. English rider Paul Winrow, unquestionably the fastest ATV racer living outside the U.S. and winner of the '92 PDV, teamed with Eichner for this year's event. Their machine, a Duncan Racing/Laeger Banshee 350, was meticulously prepped by Martin Fletcher at ATV World (formerly PCR Racing) in England.

Harold Goodman, who took the PDV win in 1998 with former GNC champs Tim Farr and Shane Hitt, would be teaming up with two Frenchmen including four-time PDV champ Joel Bontoux riding another Laeger Banshee. Desert-racing star Greg Row joined Italians Gilli and Beppe, riding a CT Racing Honda TRX.

After his first practice run this year at PDV, Eichner exclaimed, "It's fast out there!" His teammate Winrow backed up this statement by setting not only the fastest qualifying time, but the fastest lap

Other than minor clutch problems, Simons team (20) ran a smooth race and posted three, top-five session finishes. The team took second overall.



Inside Pont de Vaux

The 12 Hours of Pont de Vaux (pronounced "pon-duh-VOH") has come a long way since the inaugural event in 1987. For that first race, winner Joel Bontoux took home the winner's purse of his body weight in carrots.

The track, located near the village of Pont de Vaux in east central France, is a high-speed 2.3-mile TT-style grass circuit with four jumps and a 150-yard paved straight. A field of 100 two- or three-rider teams compete on machines between 250 and 1000cc.

The 12 hours is spread over two days and broken up into four sessions, one of them a night session with lights on the quads. Each session begins with a LeMans-style start, as riders sprint across the track, fire up the machines and rocket down the first of four wide-open straights. Between each session, the quads are locked in an impound area. Repairs can be made only during the race sessions.

Each quad is equipped with its own transmitter which sends a pulse to a bank of computers at the scoring chicane. The winning team is the one which has completed the most laps at the end of 12 hours.

Of particular interest is the organization

which promotes the race, the Association Motocycliste de Pont de Vaux, a non-profit group. That's right — the promoters don't make a cent off the race. All proceeds go back into the organization, allowing the race to become bigger and better each year.

For more information about the 2001 PDV, which will be held in August 31 through September 2, contact PDV Racing by fax at (country code 33) 385-23-10-07, info@pdvracing.com, or visit pdvracing.com.



The night before the race, a presentation and parade in the town of Pont de Vaux gives spectators a chance to see the riders and machines up close and personal — and clean! Yes, women do compete at PDV and a team of French women beat out 36 other teams

ON TRACK ON TRACK ON TRACK ON TRACK

This PSR Racing DS650 took fifth overall, and was the fastest four-stroke. Plus, its pilots earned the honor of being the fastest all-French team.





The Banshee on the left, piloted by American Harold Goodman and four-time PDV champ Joel Bontoux, DNF'd early in the race. The No. 32 Banshee from England posted the second-fastest qualifying time and won the fourth session.

ever at the 2.3-mile circuit. The second quickest lap was posted by a three-man team (also on a Duncan Banshee) led by Englishman Paul Rowlands.

The Battle Begins

The start of each of the four sessions at Pont de Vaux is one of the most exciting spectacles in racing. The 30-second board is held high and the crowd grows silent. The flag drops, the riders run across the track, jump on their ATVs and the roar of 100 race machines fills the French countryside. In the next 12 hours, who will prevail and who will fall by the wayside?

Winrow grabs the holeshot and, by the end of the first lap, he is nearly a half-mile ahead of the nearest competitor. After six minutes he has started catching the lappers. It is painfully clear to the other racers that, if Winrow and Ike don't break, they will win.

Major breakdowns are a big part of the picture, though, and they begin early. The frame on Goodman's Banshee breaks



Carnage

Pont de Vaux lasts 12 hours and you'd better expect some minor disasters in a race that long. There were no serious injuries this year, but a few of the quads were ready for the intensive care unit. Check out the chassis on the quad ridden by the Bontoux/Goodman team. PDV rules allow changing everything but the frame and, with this break occurring in the first of four sessions, even the best welding job would almost certainly fail in one of the remaining three sessions. The newer Laeger Banshee frames are double-walled at the location of this break.

ON TRACK ON TRACK ON TRACK ON T

completely through in two places and the machine limps back to the pits.

Last year's winning team of Richard Cole (England), Greg Lassaigue (France), and Stuart Walker (Great Britain), burned up a stator at the far end of the track. The time it takes to push the quad back to the pits and replace the stator means that their chances of a podium finish are slim.

When the checkers fell on session one, Winrow and Ike leed by almost 10 minutes. "This is my first time on a Banshee and it takes some time getting used to," said "Chips Ahoy" Winrow, back in the pits.

Quite a statement, considering it comes from the rider who posted the fastest lap of the session. Winrow and Ike now spell big trouble for the other teams.

Lights On, Umbrellas Up

Heavy rain fell during the three hours before the night session, and the race course became a soupy, sloppy mud bog. Hopes that the 100 screaming quads would dry it out quickly faded when the flag fell and the rain came down again. The lights on most of the quads were covered in goop and basically useless, while the high-speed straightaways looked more like slow-motion "S" turns with quads skating wildly from side to side. Winrow stopped on the track to plead with an official to halt the race, earning a two-minute penalty for his team.

When the mudfest was stopped after 30 minutes, Winrow had taken the session win and his team maintained its 10-minute lead over Van der Laan in the combined standings.

The track dried overnight and, when the flag dropped, the Banshee-mounted team led by Johnny Simons grabbed the



You'd have trouble finding a faster 60-year old than Englishman John Elliott (right). His younger teammate, Edward Davies (center), completed a 90-foot jump, the longest of the race.

holeshot. Van der Laan's chances of an overall win faded when his quad slowed to a stop on the track. It was not an ignition problem, as they thought (and tried desperately to fix), but simply a clogged gas tank vent hose.

After three sessions, Eichner and Winrow's blistering and flawless pace had moved them ahead of Simons in the overall standings by 18 minutes. Van der Laan followed, less than three minutes behind Simons.

Countdown

They say everything happens in the final hour at PDV and many teams with a substantial lead have seen victory slip through their fingers. But luck was with Winrow and Eichner this weekend in France. When the checkers fell, they took the overall win, beating Simons by almost 25 minutes. Van der Laan, who broke a piston with only half a lap to go, still had enough laps to salvage third place.

As the Duncan Racing team took its bows on the podium, chief mechanic Fletcher leaned over to a spectator and, with typically dry British humor, joked, "I let the team down. One of the two tail lights burned out."

Of course, things couldn't have gone more smoothly and Fletcher never took out a wrench the entire two days of racing. This win at PDV marks the second for Winrow, the fourth for Eichner and the fifth for the Duncan Racing/ATV World team.

Pont de Vaux is about speed but it's also about endurance and reliability. A winning team must have huge helpings of those qualities — Winrow and Eichner had a lion's share.

Our newest editorial team member is a familiar name in ATVing. Bill Lanphier served as editor for ATV & Four-Wheel Action magazine for 10 years. He's also an accomplished musician as well as ATV expert. "WBGO" will contribute frequently to ATV Sport magazine.

Ageless

In America, a racer in his mid 30s — even if he's super-fast like 2000 PDV winner Eichner — is considered old. Not so in Europe, however. Guys much older than Ike are still racing, are lightning fast and winning championships. Take Holland's top quad pilot, 50-year Wil van der Laan, for example. A few years ago he stomped Mark Ehrhardt and Charlie Shepherd at the famous Veronica Beach Race (in Holland). He's never won PDV, but is consistently in the top five and always one of the fastest qualifiers. Immediately after one of his hour-long stints at PDV, he was seen furiously pedaling a stationary bicycle.

Two English pilots at PDV, John Elliott and Paddy Thorne, like to argue about who's older, but suffice to say they are both past 50. Paddy has been racing quads for 20 years. John, who's been racing for 10 years, holds titles for motocross motorcycles, sidecars, ice racing and speedway. His team finished fourth this year at PDV and his lap times were within 10 seconds of the fastest racer on his team.

ON TRACK ON TRACK ON TRACK

RESULTS: 2000 12 HOURS OF PONT DE VAUX

RIDERS	QUALIFYING TIME	LAPS/MILES/ SESSIONS WON	MACHINE	MAIN SPONSORS	COUNTRY
1. Winrow/Eichner	2:50.31	178/409/3	Yamaha Banshee 350	ATV World, Duncan Racing, Yamaha	Great Britain/U.S.
2. Simons/Chevrot/Aubijoux	2:59.25	171/393	Yamaha Banshee 350	Johnny Simons Racing, Yamaha, Douglas	Netherlands/France/France
3. Van der Laan/Gaillard/Abgrall	2:51.86	170/391	VLS 540	VLS, Goldspeed, Douglas	Netherlands/France/France
4. Elliott/Irons/Davies	2:57.83	168/386	Honda TRX280R	John Elliott Quad Racing/Irons	Great Britain
5. Bof/Fevre/Estelle	3:03.87	165/379	Bombardier DS650	PSR, Bombardier	France
6. Kuhn/T. Lassaigue/Baldwin	3:00.84	164/377	Bombardier DS650	PSR, Bombardier	France/France/G.B.
7. Gobert/Bigault	3:02.79	163/374	Honda 440EX	Team Motor Sport, Pro X Sport, Ohlins	France
8. Pion/Bertrand/G. Lassaigue	3:04.42	162/372	Yamaha Banshee 350	Speed Quad 01, Pro X, ODR	France
9. Rowlands/Mitchell/Reid	2:51.30	162/372/1	Yamaha Banshee 350	Par Racing, ATV World, Par Homes	G.B./Scotland/N. Ireland
10. Nell/Duke/Forster	2:56.48	162/372	Yamaha Banshee 350	Out of Control 2000, Andy Noble Motorcycles, L+G Plant Hire	Scotland/G.B./G.B. ■