

NEPG Interview: Mark Hyde

Four-time Blackwater 100 winner, 1986 National Hare Scramble champion and ISDE Gold Medalist Mark Hyde has the enviable job of getting paid to go to motorcycle events around the country. Hyde works for KTM and is in charge of their demo ride program. In this interview Hyde tells NEPG about the program and what he has been doing lately.

Q: Tell us what you are doing with KTM right now?

A: I take care of KTM's demo programs. With KTM's rich history, we wanted to enhance this program and do something for our customers and give back something at the National Enduros. The National Enduro Promoters Group has really made this series come alive and we've always been a part of the Enduro scene and we want to continue to be a part of it. My job is to go to every round and to come up with something fun and exciting to do at each one.

Q: So, say a guy maybe doesn't even own a KTM, can he come to an event and sign up for one of these demo rides and spend an afternoon riding different KTM models?

A: Yes, and we are doing something a little different at each round. We've done spaghetti dinners at some, and in Florida we had all of our Enduro and GNCC guys there to give bike set-up tips and riding tips, and here at the last couple of rounds we've had the demo rides to let people come out and test the bikes. We are making these open to all riders, not just KTM customers.

Q: You, as well as KTM, have been involved in Enduro racing for a long time. What changes have you seen over the years?

A: It's changed a lot. Actually, when I started there were no computers and you had to do the time-keeping in your head. Then the computers came along and things changed. But then for a lot of the young guys coming up, the time-keeping thing was a struggle and a lot of kids started riding Hare Scrambles and the motocross thing and the dads would end of going with the kids so we ended up losing a lot of our grass roots people. With the new format you still get all the great benefits of Enduro: the great trail, reading trail and everything, but the time-keeping is not as big a factor. Still you need to know a little bit about it. But the new rules have just made it so much easier and I think the guys enjoy that aspect of it. I've ridden enough of them that my computer is gathering dust at home. Before, for a guy to be competitive he had to spend \$400 on a computer. And now we see guys like Charlie Mullins and Jimmy Jarrett – GNCC and Hare Scrambles guys – they can show up and be competitive. But still, guys like Russell Bobbitt and Michael Lafferty, guys who grew up riding Enduros, they still have that skill of reading trail for the first time, so the advantage still goes to the Enduro guys.

Q: What is the difference in trail from a GNCC and the AMA/Rekluse National Enduro Series?

A: At the GNCCs, they have the ATVs racing on Saturday so the trail is much wider. Plus, the guys get to preview the track and a lot of times they have been to the tracks before so they know them. But at Enduros, there is something new around every corner so you need to be able to go fast and read the trail for the first time. There is a real art to it and I associate it to Supercross and motocross. There are guys who are good at motocross but they are not good at Supercross. It's a similar situation, but still any guy can show up and he has a chance to be competitive and that's a great thing.

Q: Tell us about yourself, are you still competing?

A: I still ride a little bit of everything. I do at least one or two motocrosses a year, some Hare Scrambles, some Enduros, whatever my schedule allows. Plus, KTM also sponsors the dual sport series, which is kind of like Enduros without the checks. Those are a lot of fun to get out and see the guys and hang out. I don't get a lot of riding but I still get my fair share. But getting to work with KTM with this program is great because I love the aspect of being able to go to the events and getting to see everyone and seeing guys having a good time. The events are great. They had the youth event yesterday and a lot of the events are starting to do that. That is great because when I was a kid I would go with my dad and a few buddies and go riding every weekend. And this is kind of come full circle.

Q: Okay, so if someone wants to come out and check out one of KTM's events how can they get information about it?

A: For our demo rides they can go to www.ktmusa.com and we have all the information there. We have a semi full of dirt bikes and a semi full of street bikes and we are all over the country putting these on.