

## Memories of the Mark Hahn 300 – 2008

I've been looking for some kind of report or shake down of the MH300 and after all this time I can't find anything but the recently posted results. So I thought I'd take a few moments to reflect and share the experience from a long time stand up racer's view.

After all the rain we'd had on the west coast Havasu pulled out some great weather for the day of the event. The Crazy Horse beach was jam packed with watercraft, quads, Rhinos and racers as well as fans, media and family. Adding to the family flavor of the scene were plenty of cute dogs wagging tails and playing in the water. After a very informative and inclusive riders meeting that included roll call most of us took a parade lap to get oriented with the course and then it was show time.

Since I was on a stand up I wasn't worried about the Le Mans start ( I was going to let the big boys go first) and watched as at the very loud crack of gunfire all the riders ran down to their craft, jumped on, plugged in and took off in a mountain of whitewash and exhaust. The sound was incredible to hear with so many supercharged and hopped up motors nailing it and blasting off into the blue. To my dismay when I walked down and went to start her up my ski just went dah dah dah, I guess it didn't like waiting around in all that fresh water and refused to go. We yanked her tail in the air, got her going after what seemed like hours then I took off like lightning to hunt down the entire field of racers that seemed like they were already miles away. The water was relatively calm and that didn't make me too happy either, I was planning on some rough stuff and was prepared to use that to an advantage. Instead I got low and held on. Before too long riders appeared in front of me and I got to participate with the field. I must say that all the racers were incredibly friendly and many sit down guys would go by giving a thumbs up or a nod. I did my best to do the same, but at 3/4 throttle one handing it is not too good of an idea. Only once did I get railroaded by a sit down going around a turn boat, but I'm sure they did not realize it - no harm no foul.

After pitting for fuel on lap six I went back out and immediately knew that my ski was not running good, and in fact was getting worse by the second so I did what I dreaded doing, I came in thinking it was all over. We pulled the hood and smoke came billowing out - the headpipe had come loose, chewed up and spit out the gasket, loosing a bolt in the process. My heart sunk and before I could get bummed there was an amazing group of guys and girls that pitched in to fix it up and get me back out there. Emi Kanamori went running to look for a gasket, while Charles Simms (my competitor) grabbed tools and had the spare bolt needed. Johnny X2, John Bonkowski, Phillip Lytle and another friend I had just met that morning jumped in and they all had that thing back together before I could get my goggles back on. I was back in business! That is truly what the spirit of the MH300 is all about. Friends and foes helping each other out just to enjoy competing with each other. There was no end to the good deeds that went on that day and they all were part of what made the whole experience something to be proud to have been a part of.

The race went on, and on, and on and the field spread out until there moments of total solitude. Plenty of time for thoughts to drift. Which is exactly what happened - twice. Once I came in confused on how many laps I'd done and thought I needed fuel and the other time I got lost and when I looked around to see where I was at, I payed the price. Splat! My shoulder stills hurts from that crash. The lesson learned was that keeping focus is as a big of a part of endurance racing as having a fast ski or a strong back.

It was very hard to tell who the leaders were or how much racing was left so after many miles on the water the white flag appeared and it was one more lap to glory. On that last lap I passed many riders that just looked spent. Some were shaking their heads and some were obviously fatigued. This was where the endurance really showed as the strong raced it in and the rest limped it in. It was over and riders littered the beach, some tired, some pumped up, and some that looked like they needed an IV and a bed. Most of all though, everyone - racer, family and crew alike had a smile on their face and a glow in their eye.

After a brief respite it was time for the awards ceremony/dinner and some good times mingling. The banquet hall was more than spacious and there was swag everywhere. Tables full of Monster drinks, posters, magazines, buttons, medals, keychains and all the goodies you could shake a stick at. We all ate and drank together and then enjoyed a very professional presentation by Mike Follmer as he honored Mark Hahn and handed out amazing trophies to the winners. There were some great speeches which included a very heartfelt Sandy Hahn and a bi-lingual Adam Abadie. In all I think that everyone who attended the '08 MH300 got their money's worth and then some. I would do it again and I encourage everyone to give it a try, only thing is - do it Ironman/Ironwoman style.

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