

Aonia Pass
Southeast Regional Championship
Round One
February 20, 2010

Words by Mike Taylor

A week before the event, a five-inch deep blanket of snow covered much of the Southeast, overnight temperatures dropped into the teens, and not being used to such conditions, life in the Southeast pretty much came to a standstill. One week later, the overnight temperatures were still unspeakable cold, but at Aonia we enjoyed a beautiful bright-blue, cloudless sky, and after an early morning frost the daytime high reached a welcome seventy-one degrees. The Atlanta Motorcycle Club once again welcomed riders to a relaxed day of events, and for the motocross fraternity laid out a very fast 1.5-mile circuit. And it was fun!

Australian Matt Evans, now a resident of North Carolina (Sportsman 250 Expert), South Carolina duo Steve Shelton (Vintage 50+), and Rapid Robert Vannarson (Vintage 60+) all got good starts in the first race of the day. Steve unfortunately locked his rear wheel going into the second turn having just taken a slight lead, and found himself lying on his back looking up at the aforementioned beautiful blue sky. Robert and Matt had a tremendous battle for the lead, while Steve valiantly tried to catch them, and Robert was able to hang on and take the checkered flag first. The Second moto saw Steve take the flag just ahead of Robert with Matt close behind. Curt Elliott aboard his 400 CZ took Vintage 60+ Intermediate, while Richard Light and Alan Talbott took the honours in Vintage 60+ Novice, Richard in first place, Alan second.

Beno Rodi took Premier Open Twin Expert; Mark Siebert, whose Norton recently graced the pages of Britain's *Classic Bike Guide* (and will do so again at some point at some yet to be determined date in the future) took the Intermediate class. Father and son duo Butch and BJ Huff enjoyed a family battle in Classic 125 with BJ taking second place in the first moto and Butch finishing third. The positions were reversed in the second moto; the class being won by Jonathan Moore with two first place finishes.

Hang around AHRMA for an hour or two and someone will say, "It's all about the people." It was particularly pleasing to see three members of the Huff family making their competitive debuts. Butch's second son John and Daughters Amy and Catherine rode in post-vintage motocross and in cross-country. John finished third behind his brother BJ and Sean Buckingham in post-vintage open age, while Amy beat sister Catherine in the women's novice race.

John Johnson had the Classic 500 class to himself; Keith Berry had the same situation in Sportsman 125 Intermediate, as did Clyde Brown in Vintage 70+

Intermediate. All three riders thus picked up a few points to take into the second round of the championships.

In the first moto of post-vintage racing, Robert Vannarson took a brief moment to lie on his back and marvel at the clear blue sky, leaving Steve Shelton and Matt Evans at the front of the pack. In the second moto, Steve took the flag just in front of Robert with Matt coming in just behind them. Jerry Murphy took Post-Vintage 50+ Intermediate ahead of Richard Plant, and Butch Huff won Post-Vintage 60+ Novice. Beno Rodi took the honours in Historic 250 Expert; Scott Hasty grabbed Gran Prix 500 Intermediate.

Newcomer Ray Weiss from Columbia, South Carolina riding in only his second AHRMA event was the overall winner in Classic 250 Novice with a second place in the first moto and a win in the second. Charles Goman took second spot with a first and a second, while your truly missed the first moto trying to fix a dodgy clutch, and made it three for three for South Carolina by ending up lying on his back looking at a the sky in the second moto!

I would dearly love to write a gripping tale about the cross-country race, but I can't claim to have seen much of it from my vantage point stuck in the middle of a Georgia bog. I saw trees and bits of Georgia I'd never seen before, bits of Georgia I wasn't meant to see, and mud. Lots and lots of mud and water filled holes. The previous week's snow had ensured the going would be tough, and I confirmed that an AJS Stormer is not a good cross-country mount. While trying to extricate myself from a ditch full of mud, Catherine Huff went past, making it all look very easy and riding as though the ground was dry, and on one of the few dry bits of the circuit, Leo Stinnett buzzed past with his bike sounding like a hungry wasp. For the most part I was left to my own devices, and stuck once more, Toby Morriss, riding his first cross-country event, gallantly stopped to help pull the AJS out of yet another hole full of mud. Toby won his class, his second medal of the day, having won his class in Trials earlier in the day.

Full Motocross and Cross-Country results and Regional Standings can be found on the Southeast regional website at ahrmase.com. Mike Taylor can be reached by e-mail at ymxe40@yahoo.com or by telephone at 803-237-9163.

Postscript

Sadly, Toby Morriss was a victim a hit and run accident the following day that left him hospitalized with serious injuries. Toby passed away on Sunday, February 28, 2010, not from injuries received in the accident but from an apparent pulmonary embolism.