



The Future of Off-Road racing in Baja... The bigger picture

By Andrea Tomba

Baja... For decades these four letters have conjured images of thousands of miles of desert dust and cacti in people's minds, but even more so, of tough and challenging off-road racing. As finding open space where permission is granted for organizers to host the Desert Racing events becomes a rarer commodity to find, the racing society is shifting their attention more and more to the wealth that this peninsula has to offer. And in particular, although SCORE has taken advantage of the full length of the Peninsula every two years for the Baja 1000, more and more people are starting to take notice of the success the Baja California SUR Off-Road Championship can boast, not only with its record number of entries, but mostly for the spectacular routes it offers. Few racers, old and new alike, are unable to pre-run races such as the Dos Mares 500 or the Loreto 400 without admiring the breath taking landscape.



Baja California Sur in particular embraces all the ingredients that could make it, not only the Off-Road capital in Mexico, but an Off-Road Mecca world wide. Counting with the highest number of racers per capita, the lowest number of inhabitants per square mile, a love for the sport which is awfully close to religion and ingenious and talented mechanics and designers, it holds riches that would make most racer organizers green with envy. For the last couple of years, there have been many talks about utilizing these assets to expand the racing scene in order to attract more international attention and coverage: a Baja 1000 from Cabo San Lucas running up the Sea of Cortez to Guerrero Negro and then back down to La Paz along the Pacific, a Baja 500 expanding on the Dos Mares, and even talks about organizing a local Short Course series, as Baja is a lot closer to California than Wisconsin for the SODA championships! More world wide attention would open the arms of the State to the biggest fuel of the sport: International

sponsorship. With a large number of drivers fighting for the very few sponsorship opportunities available, a large factor governing the success of a race team is not only the driver's availability or the team's commitment, but the individual financial funding available. A larger sponsorship program could unlock a lot of barriers and give more opportunities to deserving young drivers, as well as see an integration of more organized team managers and race organizers.

So, if the State has all these assets and natural resources, why is the circuit not inundated by ESPN, SPEED or FOX SPORTS helicopters and camerographers, why are local hotels not inundated by foreign racers and sponsors utilizing their race vehicle as a marketing tool to take their top clients for a taste of paradise combine with seeing their product name flash past them in one of the most valued and recognized marketing medias – Motorsports?

Unfortunately, one of the largest obstacles to the, what would seem natural, success that this state could hold as a race destination is short sightedness. The efforts of many is far too often drowned by the blindness of a few, blindness of seeing a larger, and much longer picture! Off-Road Racing may rightly not be the most

ecological sport, ripping through the desert, however correctly projected it could easily become one of the healthiest injection of funding and ecological protection that the state could encounter. International racers are attracted to our locations, not only because of the racing, but because it gives them the opportunity to combine racing with a couple of days of sport fishing, diving or simple relaxation, additionally giving them an extra incentive to bring their families and friends to join them, making the racing week end a family affair and taking some of the pressure of strained family relationships!

If the race organizers, the government bodies and private institutions responsible for repairing the trails after a race would fully understand the importance of the land owners support, who generally are willing to cooperate as long as they are given what they are promised, these races would only make the conditions better for the local ranchers, rather than worst, thus shifting the ecological balance in the racers favor.



The future of off- road racing is not this season’s success nor the next, but the integration of “recipe” that will allow us to enjoy this magnificent sport for decades to come, however this does not come without responsibilities. Firstly, the racers have to be responsible by respecting the land owners and their properties, the race organizers must be responsible by acknowledging the investment made by the racers and their commitment to the land owners and repair to the trail and private property. The Race Association has a responsibility to enforce that race calendars are presented well in advance and maintained, as most international racers need to draw their agenda almost a year in advance, and last minute changes of dates or routes can cause huge financial losses for teams that have non-refundable airline tickets and hotel rooms booked. The government bodies have a responsibility in recognizing the global importance of the racers, and facilitating their visits by making them easier, not harder, in questions of customs, transportation and policing. The fans have a responsibility by opening their eyes and realizing that the man made obstacle they build, which wasn’t there during the pre-running, in order to see more action or crashes, can sometimes not only cost a racer tens of thousands of dollars, but can sometimes cost lives. Most importantly however, is the necessity to remember that no matter how much beauty, fantastic people and great locations one can offer, the bad experiences stick in visitor’s minds the most.



[Click to Enlarge](#)

The possibilities that lie ahead for Baja California Sur in the international world of Off Road are endless, if we could all join efforts and head towards the right direction, and respect our commitments. The commitment right now is not always the priority, nor is it what each individual, group or company can get out of each race. If you make a commitment to sponsor, stick to it and earn his respect, even if you should get a higher bid, or that sponsor will be reluctant to get involved in the sport again, when there is always foot ball or baseball that would gladly take his money. If you commit to a land owner, make sure that the repairs are carried, or he will understandably be reluctant to give access for the next race. If you commit to a date or route, stick to it, and understand that for some changes in itineraries are not only impossible but also very expensive. If you commit to a racer or a team, stick to it, because remember that racing is not only made of nuts and bolts, but yields both

hearts and souls.

Hopefully, the future of racing in Baja will see all the different racing entities working together for a bright

and better future, putting efforts and energy towards finding solutions and improvements rather than criticizing and accusing. Then, the future will not be today or tomorrow, but for a long time to come.

For information on courses and clinics, contact info@deseabaja.com

Our thanks to DeSea Off-Road Adventures for sharing. To learn more about their adventure packages please visit their website at: or click on the logo below:

***DeSea Adventures
Marina Palmira Local 3
Carretera A Pichhilgue Km 2.5
La Paz 23060, Baja Sur Mx.***

***011-52-612-121-5100
www.deseabaja.com
Email: Info@deseabaja.com***

This story and photographs are property and copyright 2004, BajaInsider.com and can not be republished without written permission from the BajaInsider