

Travis Pastrana MX Challenge
Mech Tech MX Park

Webb, Smith Shine in Puerto Rico

BY DIANA BAILEY

VEGA BAJA, PR, JAN. 23-24

Red Bull-sponsored Cooper Webb and privateer Ryan Smith shined in the Travis Pastrana MX Challenge held in Vega Baja, Puerto Rico. On Thursday, a seven-hour torrential rain threatened the event, but by Friday the skies had cleared and the track, designed and built by Professor Gary Bailey, had drained perfectly and offered a challenge to the American riders, led by Pastrana himself, and the Puerto Rican riders as well. The track, which was built especially for the event and with Pastrana in mind, offered a series of triple jumps and a signature sweeping sand berm.

Not surprisingly, the riders the Professor had trained did well on the track. Pastrana captured the overall win in the Open A class with a first in the main on the first night and a second in the main on the second night. Smith, the Professor's own great-nephew, placed second overall with a third-place finish on the first night and an amazing first-place win, over Pastrana, on the second night.

The battle for first between Pastrana and Smith in the final main ended with Smith edging Pastrana by about half a second, but only after several lead changes and a pass by Pastrana in the sweeper that Smith quickly answered with a repass for the lead, which he then held for two exciting laps with Pastrana charging the entire time.

David Bailey was on hand to see his son Sean race and to help with the event. Sean finished a respectable seventh.

Other riders in the Open A class included Kyle Partridge (who placed third), Carl Schlacht (fourth), Kenny Day (sixth), Andy Mathew (eighth), Scott Darling (ninth), and Taylor McDonald (who rounded out the top 10).

In the Supermini class, Cooper Webb proved too much for the Puerto Ricans, grabbing the holeshot in every race and placing first each time out. Webb looked cool and composed in the tropical heat and flowed flawlessly over the triples and railed the corners like a seasoned pro.

PHOTO BY MITCHELL LEE BAILEY



Ryan Smith (831) and Travis Pastrana (199) battled this closely for 20 laps in Saturday night's main event.

At a Red Bull pre-race event, Webb donned his Red Bull hat and talked with Pastrana, who donned one as well. It was cool to see two generations of Red Bull stars sharing time together, and they certainly lived up to their star billing later in the week.

The event featured a freestyle show on Friday night featuring Robbie Renner and Pastrana and a half-time show on Saturday night featuring the whole Nitro Circus gang, racing demolition derby, and Pastrana and Robbie throwing down some classic freestyle tricks. Street Bike Tommy raced the 50cc

event, which proved entertaining. MTV was on hand, filming its upcoming series on Pastrana. Kudos to the ever-classy Pastrana, who stayed trackside and signed autographs until 1:30 a.m., when the last fan passed through the line. **CN**

MECH TECH MX PARK
VEGA BAJA, PUERTO RICO
RESULTS: JANUARY 23-24, 2009

OPEN A PRO: 1. Travis Pastrana; 2. Ryan Smith; 3. Kyle Partridge; 4. Carl Schlacht; 5. Ariel Garcia. **OPEN B:** 1. Rafy Rosario; 2. Roberto Gonzalez; 3. Juan E. Reyes Jr. **S/MINI:** 1. Cooper Webb; 2. Kevin Ceballos; 3. Jean Carlos Rodrigues.