

**DUAL PURPOSE DUEL: DT250 vs. TS250**

# **DIRT BIKE**

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**THE PRIVATEER LIFE OF GAYLON MOSIER  
BLUE MEANIE: OSSA 250 PHANTHOM GP11**



# PIKE'S PEAK

The sky is starting to turn steely pink in the east and the long line of taillights up ahead are beginning to look more and more like the vans and pickups that they really are. There's a vague, misty cloud of fog hovering over the scene from the exhaust of all those trucks. You can almost hear the sound of the heater fans over the soft hum of the idling engines. Snow is everywhere. It's cold.

Here it is, New Year's Day again, and once again, here I am, right in the frozen thick of things, trying to stay awake and trying to keep my spirits up in the face of a long, cold day high on the side of Pike's Peak. Once again, fool that I am, I've volunteered to cover the Pike's Peak Snow Run for my friend, Bruce. I can't believe I am doing this. No sleep, freezing cold, a long wait to get a good parking spot once we get in the gate, frozen camera equipment, good Lord.

Every year on New Year's Day, a couple of hundred crazies from all over the state of Colorado show up to see who can get up to the top of this old mountain first. There's a slightly more elaborate version of this same race held each year on the Fourth of July, but that's a different story. Most of the guys who come up here for the snow run don't ride the race in the summer. In the winter the road is all covered with ice, see, and that's supposed to make things a little more interesting. It does.

The sun is up fairly high now and the gates are finally opening to let the first cars and trucks through to head for Glen Cove, roughly the halfway point of the famous dirt road up Pike's Peak.



All of the super-trick, high-zoot machinery showed up.

For the wintertime race, the bikes only run the top half of the course, about seven miles' worth with a vertical rise of oh, say maybe 3000 feet. It's the top half that's the toughest, the lower portion being mostly dirt. Ice and snow are what these guys come to race on and the fact that the edge at the top is more than a little higher than the edge down lower makes it all the more fun.

To get up this hill in the ice and snow, different riders have come up with different versions of the cold setup. Some like to go with the standard 1/4-inch sheet metal screws in a fresh knobby, while others prefer long spikes, much like the ones that gave you the willies in "On Any Sunday." Some guys even use a combination of bolts, spikes and chains wrapped between the rows of knobs. It's hard to say which works best.

As our cars approach Glen Cove, most everyone has noticed that the road is a lot clearer than it was last year, which will be remembered as a year of near disaster, what with several cases of frostbitten fingers and faces, high winds, blowing snow, three- and four-foot drifts, stuck vehicles and way too many CBs. That also most likely accounts for the drop

in turnout for this event. Looks like less than 200 total for this year. They'll probably be back in '78.

Very few of the bikes are particularly eager to start up under these circumstances. All up and down the road you see racers pushing their cold machines, huffing high clouds of coffee breath through their various scarves, face masks and whiskers. Moustaches have iced over and are becoming solid blocks of painful cold. You know it's cold when your hair starts to hurt.

Jetting for these conditions becomes either an art or a guess. Most of them have been guessing. Some will guess right, some wrong, most somewhere in between. Usually, the best you can hope for is something between lean enough to hole a piston and rich enough to four-cycle, unless of course your bike is a four-cycle, of which there are several present.

Some of the shoes have taken to covering the entire engine compartment on their machines, save for the very front. Supposedly, this will help keep warm air around the mill, preventing the thing from freezing to death. Maybe it works.

Nobody's forks work, the oil's

# SNOW RUN

*A sure cure for hangovers...*

by Chet Carman

Photos by Chet and Liz Carman



too cold.

At about quarter to twelve, after what seems like a painfully long wait (it is a painfully long wait), we head for the first turn in order to catch the excitement of the initial charge of the 200. On the way up the track, we notice, parked in the middle of all those bizarre racing machines, a little red XR75. Standing next to it is this kid, can't be more than ten or eleven, and his mother's helping get his goggles and face mask all ready. He's gonna get in there with the big kids and duke it out. No studes, no chains, no horsepower, just this shiny XR75 and all the guts in the world.

As we pass the riders making their final preparations for the assault on the summit, we see all manner of device to aid the intrepid adventurer. One of the big problems facing the snow racer is fogging of the goggles. A lot of the racers are trying all combinations of breathing apparatus to help alleviate this situation. Perhaps the most common method is to take an old snorkel and tape it to your helmet. If you breathe through the snorkel, you shouldn't have any ambient hot air hanging around in the face mask or goggles to fog things up. Except that in the heat of competition most everybody tends to breathe through the nose, as well, which almost negates the effect of the snorkel.

Some of the guys have taken to recycling Dad's old WWII oxygen mask and duct taping every gap between their face and the lens. Some guys just run bare-faced. Their eyes generally freeze shut.

In the first turn, ten or fifteen people have gathered to cheer for their favorite and watch for a crash. We are there. You can hear the reluctant engines firing down the road in the trees. The adrenaline count of the racers is at an all-time high, the starter is watching nervously, waiting to make sure every bike has a chance to get started. Throttles are blipping, hearts pounding, the starter is waiting, the bikes are still having a little trouble warming up. The crowd is getting anxious, some of the machines are a little slow to ignite. The starter waits, the crowd waits, the cameras go back down, the



Weatherproofing courtesy of silver tape engineering.



Even with snowmobile gloves, additional hand protection is necessary.

adrenaline goes back down, the tension goes back down...we'll give them a little while to warm up, OK? (Just like really being at the races, huh?)

While we're waiting, we might take this opportunity to talk a little about preparation for this event. If you plan to attend the Pike's Peak Snow Run next New Year's Day, there are a few things you should know. Be sure to dress warmly and in layers so you can shed a layer or two if a freak warm spell blows in. You should be sure to have along some stale cinnamon rolls from Seven-Eleven, a thermos of hot black coffee, a gallon or so of a light aperitif (Mogen David Blackberry does very nicely), and a hip flask of medicinal brandy in your favorite variety. (Peach is very big at this race.)

All of these things are ...whoops, whoops, sounds



Weatherproofed rider attempts to find his face while pretty girl smiles beatifically.

like something's about to happen, all of the engines are at redline, *braaackaaaah*, fins are starting to melt, *braaackaaaah*, Maico clutches can be smelled at great distances, *braaackaaaah*, Bulls are blowing up, *braaackaaaah*, valves are floating, Amals are loading ... BaaaarrrrrvOOOOOOMP! they're off!

Into the first turn, the cheeriest looking C&J Honda around has jumped to the fore. Following behind is one each of every kind of motorcycle that has ever been sold. ATs, DTs, a Norton, a Penton, Greeves, Huskys new and old, everything. A 1971 TM400. It seizes. He's lucky. He knows it.

It seems to take forever for the bikes to all get around the turn. There are a few lowsides, a lot of near misses and right in the middle comes this tiny red XR75, one foot down, sliding it with the rest of them. You worry for a minute whether the other riders can see him all right. One guy on a vintage DT-1 goes down right in front of the kid. The kid gasses it, pitches it out, changes lines and cuts just to the inside of the crash. Just like a pro. I smile.

If you look way up to the top, you can just barely see a string of motorcycles slowly creeping along, making their way along the icy road to the summit. In a half hour, most of them will be on their way back down. Some will be down a lot sooner than that. The attrition rate along the road is quite high at this event. Even in a good year (like this one) a lot of guys can't make the top. Mark Iyler did. He tried to make it last year but the horrible conditions just got the best of him. This year, one of his eyes froze shut on the way back down but he could still smile. He made it to the top, farther than a lot of the cocky racer types with their spikes and chains. Farther than a lot of guys who spend the rest of the year telling everyone how fast they're gonna go next time. He did it quietly, determinedly and on his own. And when asked if he had a good ride he replies shyly, "Yes sir."

Mark Iyler is eleven years old and he rides a red XR75. If you come to the race next year, look for him. He knows what this race is all about.



