

STEVE LEIVAN ~ 2015 Race Report

Event: TORO Sprint Enduro; Denton, TX; November 22 & River Front Grand Prix; Ft. Smith, AR; December 6

Bike: 2015 KTM 250 XC

Result: TORO - 8th Pro ~ RFGP - 4th Pro

TORO: The crew in Texas is trying something a bit different for this years winter series by adopting a few Sprint Enduro events into their program. Like many, I had never done one before and so it was exciting to be doing something a bit different. Conditions were similar to Disneyland on a Dirt Bike which made for an awesome weekend.

There were two test sections that we rode four times each (eight total tests). The first section was a mixture of fast grass track, a sandy moto section, an Endurocross area, and some woods - portions of which bordered on ridiculously tight. The second test was faster paced with some jumps and a very fast grass track. Test "A" was around nine minutes long and test "B" was around seven (for me).

All of my test scores were amazingly consistent which means whatever I was doing, I was doing every time. It was a super fun event and I want to do more of them, but I need to be faster. I felt like I was riding good most of the day and not making mistakes (which is fine), but I need to push the limit a bit more in an event like this. The tests are so short that you need to be on the gas the entire way. There is no warming up - no settling in. It's "game on" right now in every section. It reminded me of interval training on my dirt bike and I am eager to try another one.

RFGP: This race in Arkansas is one of those super cool end-of-the-year races that has been around for 20+ years. It's cool that the promoter keeps track of the winners of each event and it turns out that I have won the race more times than anyone (5). It's been a few years since I have been able to make the trip but I penciled it in for 2015.

With all the rain, much of the track was really wet and forced the organizer to postpone it for one week, and then they still had to leave out some of the wooded sections that had standing water. What was left was about a six mile very fast, rough, whooped out, sand race. It was incredibly rough and favored the guys that are in shape. I've been there a lot of times but this is the roughest RFGP that I can recall.

The Pro class was stacked and I hoped that a good start would put me near the front and away from the chaos that usually comes during the opening stages of this race (fast whooped-out track - good purse - kids riding over their heads...). I was about sixth getting to the second turn. Not

bad - but then I got "torpedoed" by one of my Missouri buddies and ended up on the ground and everyone was out of sight by the time I got started.

It took a mile before I caught anyone and then things got sketchy. There was some standing water here and there so I had to hold back to avoid getting my goggles blasted as I tried to make progress. None of my passes were easy because guys were swapping all over the track making pass attempts a bit risky.

I got through a handful of guys on lap one and that put me up to ninth. I was able to pick up the pace on lap two with less traffic and use some strong moves through the deepest whoops to get a couple spots and end lap two in sixth. Things got tougher from there and I had to work harder and longer to make my passes stick. From about the half mile marker to mile four, I tried to be really strong, stand up, and be aggressive the whole way. This was the roughest portion so I tried to hammer the guys in there and take the wind out of their sails.

Although I continued to make progress, I got really hungry and it was still early in the race. We were 40 minutes in and I was starving, with another hour and twenty to go. I tried to keep sipping on my drink and focus on the pit stop that I had planned just past the halfway point. I was solid to there, got topped off on fuel, clean X Brand goggles, and informed that I was up to fourth.

The last few laps went good. It was all about staying on top of the whoops and being aggressive and in control of the bike rather than letting the bike be in control of me. I was pretty pumped to end the race in a solid fourth on the day. It was a very physical race and took a lot of strength and determination. The kids that finished in front of me were Drew Higgins (19), Zach Ingram (22), and Harrison Helmick (21). That puts me twice as old as any of them. Not that I'm using the age as an excuse, but I know the amount of effort it took for me to win this race when I was 21. It took a hell of a lot more this year to be "in the mix". It's all good though - I'm happy - and I'm not finished suffering.

Thanks you again for all of your help!

Steve Leivan