

EXTREME OFF-ROAD RACING

TENNESSEE KNOCKOUT

Off-road racing just got gnarlier

TKO



When you think about extreme enduros and nasty off-road racing, Europe usually comes to mind. Here in the United States we've seen events like Last Man Standing and some National Enduros get pretty brutal, but for years the U.S. extreme off-road race scene has been dead. The inaugural Kenda Tennessee Knockout Extreme Enduro (TKO) in Sequatchie, Tennessee, brought extreme off-road racing right here to the States. It was rocky, it was brutal and we hope it is here to stay.

Mike Brown raced his 250SX with a Rekluse EXR clutch and hammered his native tough Tennessee terrain for the win.

For a video of this story, scan the Quick Response code with your smart phone.



Brownie and his mechanic Dungey (yes, Ryan Dungey's brother) celebrate the win.

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Cody Webb worked his way through the ten-man final and was right on the heels of Mike Brown when he stalled his bike. He had to settle for second place.



The four-round format of the TKO started with a single timed lap on a very nasty and technical "short" course. The lap times set the starting order for the 50 riders who would go into round two, with the fastest riders going first and getting the advantage of less dust, but the disadvantage of having to pick the first lines on the 10-mile loop. The 25 fastest riders then moved on to knockout round three, which was a head-to-head race with five groups of five riders on another burly loop. The top two riders in each group of five moved on to the 10-rider final round. Out of round three, Mike Brown and Paul Whibley qualified from group

one; Cody Webb and Colton Haaker qualified out of group two; Bobby Prochnau and Rory Mead qualified out of group three; Michael Williams and Kyle Redmond qualified out of group four; and Jordan Ashburn and Wally Palmer qualified out of group five.

The final knockout round featured the top 10 guys going head to head, racing around the extreme loop for 10 long laps. Off the dead-engine start, Brown launched to the front, while Cody Webb slid out and found himself on the ground in the first turn. Bobby Prochnau ran second, followed by Whibley, while Colton Haaker and Rory Mead battled for

fourth. Webb was on a mission after his first-turn mishap and moved past four riders on the first lap in a panic to get back up to the front and not let the leaders get away. Michael Williamson, a relatively unknown Tennessee-based rider, unfortunately crashed out on the first lap. By the halfway point, Webb had worked his way into second place and had begun to reel Brown in. Paul Whibley's chain derailed on his YZ250 two-stroke on lap five, so he lost valuable positions. Near the end of the race, Webb got right up on Brown but stalled and tipped over, giving Brown enough of a gap to hold on to the win. Bobby Prochnau

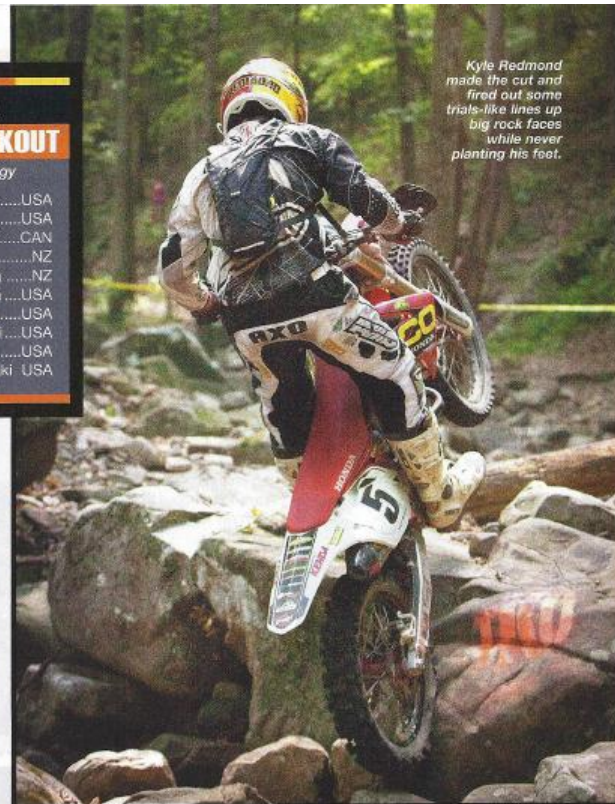
2011 KENDA
TENNESSEE KNOCKOUT

Fueled by Monster Energy

- 1.) Mike Brown.....KTMUSA
- 2.) Cody WebbBetaUSA
- 3.) Bobby Prochnau..KTMCAN
- 4.) Rory MeadHondaNZ
- 5.) Paul WhibleyYamahaNZ
- 6.) Jordan Ashburn ..YamahaUSA
- 7.) Kyle RedmondHondaUSA
- 8.) Wally PalmerChristini.....USA
- 9.) Colton Haaker.....KTMUSA
- 10.) Michael Williams..Kawasaki USA

TKO

Kyle Redmond made the cut and fired out some trials-like lines up big rock faces while never planting his foot.



held off a late charge to finish in the final podium spot. After his chain-derailment issues, Paul Whibley climbed back up to fifth, battling with an impressive Ashburn. Redmond and Palmer were the final two finishers in seventh and eighth. Taddy Blazusiak, the pre-race favorite (as he is in any extreme off-road race), was eliminated from the competition during the second knockout round when a minor crash knocked his fuel-injection system loose and forced him to pull out. Blazusiak was a good sport, though, and stuck around all afternoon to cheer on the other riders and hang with the spectators. □



Wally Palmer just made it into the final on his two-wheel-drive Christini two-stroke. It is powered by a Gas Gas engine.

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Paul Whibley came out on a YZ250 and danced through the day, running strong until a derailed chain kept him back to fifth overall.



It was a bummer Jamie Lanza didn't make the final; he was riding with serious aggression, as he always does.



Bobby Prochnau worked his two-stroke in the rocks and earned a third-place finish.

ERIC PERONNARD

You may not know Eric Peronnard, but you no doubt have heard of or been to a race he has created. Eric created the US Open of Supercross in Vegas, MinimotoSX, EnduroCross and was the driving force behind EnduroCross in this year's X Games. His latest creation is the Tennessee Knockout. Eric loves dirt bikes and rides as often as possible.

What gave you the idea for the TKO?

Five years ago, I was at TTC for a Trials championship and met the owner, Dan Brown. Within minutes we were talking about doing an extreme enduro! It was easy for me to get excited, because I was an enduro racer. The first race I promoted in 1982 with my moto club was an enduro.

Who helped you put together the TKO?

After agreeing with Dan Brown of TTC, I partnered up with Sean Finley and enlisted all my buddies from EnduroCross. And, of course, the TTC staff

who were awesome in making the TKO happen.

Do you plan on holding the event again next year? And if you do, what—if anything—will change?

Absolutely. We are already working on the date, but most likely it will be at the end of summer like this year. We will fine-tune the event, but in essence it will stay the same with maybe more riders in the final race. I think we could go up from 10 to 15 easily. Also, we were very lucky this year with the weather, but the TKO with rain would become arguably the toughest race in the world. I am sure it will happen at some point. We just need to be patient.



Eric Peronnard in front of the ten-man final.