

OFF-ROAD AMA Wiseco/Yamaha/Dunlop Grand National Cross Country Series: Final Round



Scott Summers scored the overall win in his final ride of the season with the number-one plate.

and Canadian Suzuki pilot Blair Sharpless. Finishing sixth overall of the day was local motocross hero Mike Brown, formerly a member of Team Peak/Pro Circuit Honda's 125cc supercross juggernaut.

Class winners included Sharpless in the 250cc A group, Yamaha-mounted Shawn Brell in the Open A class and Pennsylvanian Robert Bennett in the 200cc A division. Like Sharpless, Brell and Bennett both achieved top-10 overall scores en route to their respective class wins; Brell was a series-high eighth overall while Bennett directed his Kawasaki into the 10th overall position.

This was the cross country tour's second stop of the year at the track. The race was originally scheduled for mid-March, but was canceled when a freak weekend snowstorm (dubbed "the Blizzard of the Century" in this part of the United States) left the area under two feet of snow. The GNCC Series organizers decided to reschedule the race for the end of the year in hopes that inclement weather would not violate the race twice in one year. The move paid off, as the event was graced by a sunny and unseasonably warm November day. The course - tight and rocky for the most part - measured close to eight miles per lap; the race covered nine laps and lasted close to three hours.

To no one's surprise, Doug Blackwell, the Team Green-backed holeshot artist, captured the early lead as Summers, Plessinger, Hatch, Yamaha's Jan Hrehor and the rest of the Pro class competitors filled out the early chase group. Doug Jones, from Dalton, Georgia, was towards the front early but suffered a major endo when he caught a stump on one of the downhills. He dropped out of the race a short while later.

Brown, who will run number 92 in AMA pro motocross next year, was not used to the dead-engine starting procedure, in which riders sit quietly on the starting grid until the referee throws a green flag, signaling the start of the race. All day long, Brown was a contender on the entire track, and his highly-regarded MX skills made him the star of the motocross portion of each lap. But at the end of the first complete circuit, Brown was still back in fifth as Summers led Plessinger, Czech import Hrehor and Blackwell into the first scoring area.

"I took a different strategy into this race than I normally do," said the American Honda/Oakley/Bridgestone/Hondaline/Powerbar/Wiseco/Alpinestars/Specialized/Throttle Jockey/White Bros./Tsubaki/Camelbak/Arai/Answer-sponsored Summers. "I went all-out at the beginning rather than holding back until I needed to go faster. I found my rhythm early and just rode my own race after that."

Summers was also trying something different with his ever-reliable XR. "For the first time ever I decided to use a different motor than the stock one. I used a 599cc engine, which is over-bored to 78/1000. I wanted to test the motor in race conditions so that I will know in the future which type of engine will work best depending on traction and the layout of the course." Summers credited his mechanic Fred Bramblett and Forward Motion's Eric Gorr for getting the new motor together.

By the end of the second lap, which measured exactly 20 minutes on his mechanic's stopwatch, Summers was well in control of the race. Plessinger held second on the MSR/Duralube/Arai-backed KTM, while Brown made a push up into the third overall

Summers era ends on a high note

By Davey Coombs
Photos by Jim Talkington

GREENVILLE, TN, NOV. 14

Team Honda's Scott Summers had one more chance to ride with the number one plate that he's carried for three-straight years, and the four-stroke pilot extraordinaire went out on a high note with the overall win at the Dallas Ricker Sports Complex. The 26-year-old Kentuckian out-paced Suzuki's Steve Hatch, the '93 AMA National Enduro vice-champion, and KTM facto-

ry rider Scott Plessinger, runner-up to Summers in the '93 AMA National Hare Scrambles Series.

"I'm happy to end this series with one more win, but it's not really the same as winning the war," said Summers, who also won the final hare scrambles national of the year. "I did the best I could this season with all the things that happened - injuries, bad

luck, whatever. It felt great to win today but it doesn't make up for not winning the title for the fourth year in a row."

Yamaha rider Fred Andrews clinched the championship at the 11th round of the series in West Virginia and did not attend the final race in eastern Tennessee.

Rounding out the top five overall were Team Mirage's Tom Norton

Doug Blackwell chased runner-up Steve Hatch before fading and dropping out of the race.

position, just one second behind Plessinger at the barrels. For several laps Plessinger and Brown remained in close quarters, Plessinger using his off-road skills to excel in the woods while the 20-year-old Brown controlled the faster field and motocross sections on his Honda CR250. But even as Plessinger and Brown engaged in their personal duel, Blackwell, Hatch and Norton all stayed within striking distance.

Hrehor, third in the year-end cross country rankings, quit the race when he gambled and lost on the capacity of his fuel tank. While trying to make three laps without a gas stop, Hrehor hit empty about a mile from his pit crew. Athens Sport Cycle teammate Tim Shephard also ended his day prematurely when he snapped a chain one lap after Hrehor ran out of gas.

In fact, as the leaders checked in to complete the sixth lap close to the two-hour mark, Blackwell raced up to second with Hatch shadowing him for third. Plessinger was still within range as the fourth-fastest rider at the two-thirds mark, but Brown was starting to lose a little steam. By the end of the next lap Brown had slowed considerably, allowing second-place Hatch to build a cushion of nearly three minutes on him while he occupied the sixth overall position.

One of those "Sportsman of the Year" occurrences took place on the sixth lap when Plessinger got hopelessly entangled in some barbed wire along the trail. Hatch, seeing that Plessinger might be in danger, stopped to help his rival free himself from the fence. Blackwell also stopped to check the situation and then waited until Hatch re-entered the race before proceeding. Plessinger himself got back into the race before Norton and Brown could catch up.

"I know Joel and Fred Andrews pretty well and I've been keeping up on how Fred's been doing in the woods this year," said Brown, who had just returned from a supercross in Tokyo, where he finished third in the 125cc main event. "I wanted to come out and see how I might do against these guys. This might be the next thing I get into after another season or two of pro motocross and supercross."

Brown could be pleased with his sixth-overall effort. Before he became tired in the closing stages, a top-three overall finish was not out of the question.

Brown was fortunate to out-last at least one of the GNCC regulars. Blackwell seemed completely fatigued after two hours of close racing with Plessinger, Brown and the others. With two laps to go, he departed the race and called it a season as the fourth-ranked rider in the year-end standings.

Up front Summers was in a zone, finding the right lines and the right places to pass the backmarkers as he lapped them. He finally accepted the checkered flag as the overall winner with three and a half minutes to spare on Hatch. Plessinger was another two minutes back in third, crossing the finish line just one second ahead of a rapidly closing Tom Norton. Sharpless, the 250cc A class winner, rounded the out the top five overall ahead of Brown. **CN**

Results

O/A: 1. Scott Summers (Hon); 2. Steve Hatch (Suz); 3. Scott Plessinger (KTM); 4. Tom Norton (Kaw); 5. Blair Sharpless (Suz); 6. Mike Brown (Hon); 7. Brian Keegan (Yam); 8. Shawn Brell (Yam); 9. John Vincent (Yam); 10. Robert Bennett (Kaw); 11. Todd Morain (Yam); 12. Barry Hawk (Suz); 13. Jeffrey Hupp (Kaw); 14. Kevin Hull (Yam); 15. Curtis Bardonner (Yam); 16. Gregory Rzeplinski (Yam); 17. John Schaeffer (Hon); 18. Ron Palermo (Yam); 19. Jeff Goss (Suz); 20. Darryl Kuenzer (Yam).



Scott Plessinger rode to a strong third-overall finish, and placed sixth in the final point standings.

PRO: O/A. Scott Summers (Hon); 1. Steve Hatch (Suz); 2. Scott Plessinger (KTM); 3. Thomas Norton (Kaw); 4. Michael Brown (Hon); 5. Doug Blackwell (Kaw).

250 A: 1. Blair Sharpless (Suz); 2. Brian Keegan (Yam); 3. Todd Morain (Yam); 4. Jeff Goss (Suz); 5. Brian Hess (Kaw).

OPEN A: 1. Shawn Brell (Yam); 2. John Vincent (Yam); 3. Ron Palermo (Yam); 4. Carl Ennis (Yam); 5. Daniel Palermo (Yam).

200 A: 1. Robert Bennett (Kaw); 2. Curtis Bardonner (Yam); 3. Jeff Lauth (Kaw); 4. Daryl Conner (Kaw); 5. Steven Gordan (Kaw).

VET A: 1. Darryl Kuenzer (Yam); 2. Mike McCarren (Yam); 3. Wesley Miller (KTM); 4. Joel Baker (Yam).

40+ A: 1. Terry Mealer (Yam); 2. Ronnie Hale (Suz).

S/SR: 1. Harry Greenlee (Yam).

OPEN B: 1. Adam Karliski (Hon); 2. Neal Singleton (KTM); 3. David Gaitan (Hus); 4. Jess Conway (Hus); 5. Martin Sprecher (KTM).

250 B: 1. Jeffrey Hupp (Kaw); 2. Clint Bardonner (Yam); 3. James Rodgers (Yam); 4. Darius Lattea (Yam).

200 B: 1. Kelvin Hull (Yam); 2. Rob Thompson (Kaw); 3. Paul Chaney (Kaw); 4. Jared Smith (Kaw); 5. John Lenard (Hon).

4-STRK B: 1. Barry Hawk (Suz); 2. John Shaffer (Hon); 3. Daryl Gaitan (Hon); 4. Ralph Thorn (Hon); 5. Charles Dailey (Hon).

VET B: 1. Gregory Rzeplinski (Yam); 2. Steve Cooke (Yam); 3. Mark Allman (Kaw); 4. Darrell Harley (Hon); 5. John Strange (Suz).

SR B: 1. Butch Rose (KTM); 2. Tom Parfitt (Yam); 3. Robert Cox (KTM); 4. John Thompson (Hon); 5. Shelby Murray (Yam).

S/SR B: 1. Donald Harless (Yam); 2. Daniel Freeland (Hus); 3. Ted Shortridge (Kaw); 4. Gerald Cox (Hon); 5. David Sanders (Kaw).

200 C: 1. Scott Fontaine (Kaw); 2. John Bennett (Suz); 3. Gregory Stallard (Suz); 4. Jeremy Hannah (Kaw); 5. Robert Moore (Suz).

250/OPEN C: 1. Tony Taraborrelli (Yam); 2. John McDonald; 3. Theodore Zak (Yam); 4. James Hayes (Hon); 5. Brian Moore (Kaw).

TRAIL: 1. Travis Rouse (Suz); 2. Michael Winslow (Yam); 3. Steve Strange (Hus); 4. Kenneth Lauer (Suz); 5. John Fisher (KTM).

AMA GRAND NATIONAL CROSS COUNTRY SERIES FINAL SERIES STANDINGS: 1. Fred Andrews (155/4); 2. Scott Summers (149/3); 3. Jan Hrehor (148/2); 4. Doug Blackwell (137); 5. Thomas Norton (126); 6. Scott Plessinger (101/3); 7. Tim Shephard (101); 8. Gene O'Neil (92); 9. Craig Jones (87); 10. Blair Sharpless (80); 11. Gary Roach (61); 12. Jeff Lauth (60); 13. Duane Conner (57); 14. Dwain Miller (56); 15. Brian Keegan (55); 16. Todd Morain (55); 17. Robert Bennett (50); 18. Daryl Conner (43); 19. Ron Palermo (40); 20. Jeff Murgel (37).

