

“High and Outside“

RMTA Trials Series
Rounds 1 & 2
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Colorado Springs, Colorado

By Ron Pocher
Photos By John Clement

“It ain’t braggin’ if you can do it”. For the longest time I’d always tell people “well, you know what Will Rogers used to say”, right before uttering the opening quote. It wasn’t until probably twenty years later, while reading a book of famous baseball quotes and sayings, when I realized that I had been mis-informed by a fellow worker. I can’t really blame the poor guy because, like myself, he was blessed with the gift of gab and wouldn’t let something as trivial as a few facts dilute the color in his tall tales. You see the truth of the matter is, or at least according to the previously mentioned scripture, that it wasn’t Rogers who spat out those endearing words, but Baseball Hall of Famer Dizzy Dean.

Jay Hanna “Dizzy” Dean grew up in Arkansas and, like fellow Hall of Famer Bob Feller, was the quintessential strong-armed farm boy often stereotyped in movies of the fifties. Dean was the last National League pitcher to win 30 games in a season when he accomplished this feat with the 1934 St. Louis Cardinals’ famous “Gashouse Gang”. Dean was a quoting machine and, while broadcasting in his days following baseball, often used his own word “slud” in place of slid – “Al Zarilla done slud into third”. During the Great Depression, when it was once suggested that maybe Dean shouldn’t use the word ain’t while on the air; he simply replied: “Lots of folks who ain’t sayin’ ain’t, ain’t eatin”.

There was plenty of slipping and sliding (and sluding) going on at the two opening rounds of this year’s edition of the RMTA Trials Series. Held on the Kyle Brothers historic Corral Bluffs Ranch, this 2011 version was again accompanied by some rather vicious Great Plains wind. Some sweet old gal from a motel somewhere in Omaha called Saturday night and said she had found some poor soul’s scorecard from that morning’s event. Sunday’s winds proved a bit more favorable, but the sign-up and scoring crew still remained within the confines of Stan Hensley’s enclosed trailer.

“Big Al” Duke headed up a team of Trials Masters that included Jeff, Jody and John Hutchinson; Jeff and Stephen Marcus; Keifer Jacobson, Nick Shaver and Ken “the Killer” White. Jody and Marcie Hutchinson were joined by Dian White and her daughter, Becky Hardekopf; and scorecard checking legend, Evelyn Peacock. All five of these lovely ladies showcased their usual score table wizardry while performing the unenviable task of schmoozing with the unruly cast who call themselves trials riders.

The Junior B class saw five different riders competing, over the two days, but only three of the tenacious tikes suited up for both rounds. Coen Fricke proved to be the most consistent youngster as he followed his Saturday victory with a hard earned second on Sunday. Fricke punched 7 and 19-point cards on his way to gold and silver, respectively.

Wyoming cowboy/comedian, Breyden Martinson found the windier conditions more to his liking as Day One's 19-card left him in the runner-up spot while Day Two's 43 was only good enough for fourth. Samantha "Lady Bug" Hutchinson improved one place to third, come Sunday, after rolling home fourth in Round 1. Jenna Smith rounded out the podium on Saturday, with 23, while Mr. Chase Bright was the "man to beat" on Sunday as he won handily with a fine 9-point outing.

Jackson Lewis and Mia Manniko, both newcomers to the Junior A ranks, kicked off the new season with the first two, of what will probably be many, hard fought battles. Lewis took the top spot on Day One when he just edged Manniko by a dab with his 8-card. Mia returned the favor on Day Two and claimed the gold with 16 while Lewis had to settle for second after punching 19. Ellis Goodwin joined the fray on Sunday and steered his way to third with 29 showing.

With the aid of a clean last loop, Paul Schaffer wound up on top of Saturday's Novice class contest. Schaffer's 13-card left the always-graceful Cindy Bright sitting in second with 19. Both plonkers managed to clean 23 of the day's 30 traps. Heidi Distel rolled home in third while Tristan Sinks just missed the podium, by two, with his 30-card. Bright turned the tables on Mr. Schaffer, come Sunday, as she nipped him by a couple – 20 to 22. Evan Manniko and Garrett Stokes toted their usual tussles up from the Junior A ranks, but Manniko was the first to post a Novice class podium when he topped Stokes for third – 52 to 66.

2011 NATC Hall of Fame inductee Fred Martinson was his usual "steady-as-a-rock" self. Fred needed one-third dab per loop over the course of the two-day event. Martinson began each round with a single, first lap point before cleaning the second and third circuits on both days. Fred's two 1-cards helped him pocket a pair of golds in the Vintage B division. Ed Peacock put up a pretty good fight on Saturday, finishing runner-up with his 4-point tally; but that first round must have provided all the wind he needed, as he failed to suit up for Sunday's action.

As usual, John Clement was hoping and praying for anything even resembling a fellow competitor in the Vintage A class and luckily Chuck Moline answered his prayers on, of all days, Sunday. Clement only needed 8 dabs while guiding his dapper TL 125 to an uncontested Day One victory. Moline was actually leading Clement by a digit after Day Two's first loop; but then John kicked in the afterburners and wound up in front yet again – 25 to 51.

2010 RMTA Novice Class Champion, Chase Abbott, seems to be making a nice transition to the Amateur ranks. Abbott stood on the top step of the podium after each of these opening rounds. Chase "Burger" squeaked by both Bevin Sharpe and Adam Faleck's 10-cards on Day One, with his 8-point tally, but won by ten on Day Two with a nifty 15-card. Sharpe bettered Faleck on cleans 24 to 23, to snatch the Saturday silver. Ben Smead claimed the runner-up spot on Sunday after rolling home in fourth in Round 1. Blake Larsen nudged Sharpe out of another podium finish when he escaped with the Day Two bronze – 27 to 31. Nine riders fought to the finish on Saturday while just eight wielded their weapons on Sunday.

Five entrants showed up to argue over the gold in the Senior Amateur class on Saturday; but they must not have liked what the wind was doing to their rockabilly hairdo's, because all five Elvis impersonators opted to stay on the sofa come Sunday. Russ Todd had the Day Two traps all to himself and left the ranch with the first place

award after posting a fine 16-point total. Todd was heard humming “It’s Now Or Never” on his way to the pick-up truck, so he too must have been donning a white jumpsuit under his riding gear. Dave Koerwitz had his usual tidy performance on Saturday, when he reached the top rung with an 8-card. Tom “Wolfy” Maddux broke out his modern bike, for a change, and made off with the silver after posting 18. Sharon Jubb, who is always as pleasant as Saturday’s wind was not, filled out the Round 1 podium with her 41-card.



Dave Koerwitz

The Intermediate division boasted the weekend’s largest class when thirteen heathens signed up for Saturday’s contest. This uncivilized group shrunk to nine, come Day Two. Darren Myers, who would have to be considered the favorite to win this year’s class title, didn’t disappoint when he added a Day Two gold to Day One’s silver. Drew Sinks came out on top in Round 1 when his 16-card just nipped Darren’s 17. Eric Krall rounded out the podium, just slightly off pace with 24. John Taylor upgraded his fourth place finish from Saturday, with a runner-up spot on Sunday, when he finished just one dab adrift of Myers – 33 to 34. Taylor, who’s in his mid teens at best, should prove “a force to be reckoned with” in future rounds. Krall again came up a few dabs shy in Round 2, but claimed his second third place bronze with 38. Due to the girth of the class, medals were handed out all the way to fifth place on Saturday and fourth on Sunday. Tony “Moon Doggie” Keady and Patrick “Dynamo” Dechant absconded with these prizes, respectively.

California's Rick Daniel, who's in pursuit of a second consecutive AHRMA Modern Classic Expert National Championship, has decided that the more time in the saddle, the better his chances. As he did at the past El Trial de España, Daniel chose to contest a "modern" intermediate event on his "vintage" steed – a worthy '77 Yamaha motor in a breathtaking '70 DMW frame. Daniel hardly seemed disadvantaged as he steered his way to victory in Saturday's Senior Intermediate division with a stunning 15-point ride. This would prove to be the second best Intermediate level ride of the day. Remind me to mail him a fresh cow patty sometime in the near future. Mark Jacobson ended up just two dabs back in second while Mike Bolas was right there in the hunt as well with his 22-card. Jacobson must have felt that "one good turn deserves another" as he snuck by Daniel for the gold, come Sunday, 22 to 23.

Mr. Mike Buchholz is obviously not very familiar with the term "don't kick a dead horse". Oakland Raiders owner Al Davis never would have coined the phrase "Just win, baby" if Buchholz had been the only cat around. Nobody needs to tell him much of anything about winning. "Michael B" handily won both rounds of the Veteran Intermediate class with his 4 and 13-point cards, which were the top intermediate level scores on each day. Ron Pocher managed to finish runner-up in each round, but did so by the skin of his teeth on Saturday as both he and Jeff Payne ended play with 17 points on the board. Pocher got the nod on cleans – 23 to 22. Don Reedy and Frank Petersen were right there as well with 21 and 25-point totals. Things weren't quite as tight on Sunday, as Payne had a rather trying first loop, but he still wrapped things up with third place points.

A bit of local knowledge never hurt anybody. A dash of that and a touch of stubbornness, and a substantial measure of skill probably all helped in contributing to Greg Howie's sweep of both rounds of the Advanced class proceeds. "Big Howie" was hot. Greg was enjoying a fairly safe margin after Saturday's ride, but he just flat spanked 'em on Sunday. Sarah Duke showed the rest of the fellas the way on Day One, where she trailed Howie by seven, 15 to 22. Sparring partners Ian Leeming and Bill Haskell enjoyed a gentleman's bout, for third, with Leeming just taking the spot – 32 to 33. Both lads received medals, so that made the pain a little more bearable for Lord Haskell. Stephen Marcus bagged the silver on Day Two, albeit a bit arrears of Howie's 10-card, with his 32. Leeming carded his second podium finish of the weekend, with 36, while Miss Duke was pushed back to fourth at 39. Alex Tucker, who finally may be a teenager, finished fifth in each round.



Greg Howie

Every rider that ever enters an RMTA round in the Senior Advanced division certainly knows a thing or two about observed trials. The scuffles are almost always fierce and this weekend proved no different. Mark Manniko rode exhibition on Saturday and needed two dabs on loop 2 and another on the final circuit after cleaning the opening go-around. Tracy Zentz has certainly won his share in the past and he again found himself at the top of the class in both rounds. Zentz won Day One by an adequate spread but Day Two was a real “nail biter”. Zentz carried home the gold after Ron Gardner’s opening loop 13 set the stage for an uphill battle that he just couldn’t quite overcome. Zentz finished with 19 while Gardner sat ten back with 29 and Neil Pieper’s 44-card showed improving scores with each loop. Tommy Thompson and Adam Leute returned to action, after a brief hiatus, and it was a pleasure to see both of these veterans back at it, with Leute’s absence measuring a bit shorter. Thompson hadn’t competed in over two years and he set aside his quarter horses and cowboy duds just long enough to show his fellow club members that he hasn’t forgotten much about trials.

Gardner came out firing on all cylinders on Sunday and led Thompson by one and Zentz by six heading into the day’s final circuit. Gardner had his two friendly foes right where he wanted them but was the victim of some poorly timed fate and took a tumble after leaving Section 10. “My front end washed out in a little sand wash and before I knew it, it felt like I was in the spin cycle of the old washing machine”, said Gardner.



Ron Gardner

In the weekend's closest match, Gardner soldiered on with what was probably a mild shoulder separation. Thompson made up that one point deficit with a five to Ron's six but it was Mr. Zentz who took the biggest bite with his clean last loop. All three of these gents ended up with 14 points and Zentz needed all ten of those final circuit zeros to just edge Thompson in the clean department, 24 to 23. Gardner's 18 cleans left him in third while Leute rounded out the class with his 35-point tally.



Tracy Zentz

The Busch brothers weren't the only Expert class siblings, for a change, as Steven Deines decided that brother Kyle needed a little company at the Corral Bluffs rounds. Steven held the upper hand with his 9-card, after Saturday's contest, but Kyle couldn't have been too upset with his 25-point, silver medal showing. Brian Martinson came all the way down from Casper to fill out the Day One podium, with 26, while the older Busch, Kevin, hopped his way to fourth with 30. Steven Deines posted the best score on Sunday, as well, when he trumped Chris Hertrich for the gold – 10 to 21. Kyle Deines was forced down a spot to third, with 26, while this round found the younger Busch, Keith, resting in fourth with 42.



Steven Deines

The Championship class was only sporting three talented lads on each day, but they undoubtedly provided plenty of entertainment for all of the spectators and observers on hand. Bailey Tucker was having his way with Saturday's sections, or at least as much as one can have one's way with traps dreamed up by the irrepressible Mr. Duke. Dustin Hedwall was putting in his usual steady performance when he encountered mechanical issues for the second straight visit to this unforgiving venue. Hedwall would not start Loop 3 or the following days' round. Tucker topped Wyoming's Shad Petersen, 35 to 82, to take the Round 1 gold.

Nine-time State Champ Keith Wineland flew into town early Sunday morning after wrapping up the final stop on the "Nuclear Cowboyz" Tour in Glendale, Arizona the previous night. Wineland seemed to be in fine form while on his way to 6, 2 and 5 point scores for a final tally of 13. Tucker's scorecards improved with each loop and he rolled home in second with 58. Petersen's third loop total came in at 15 marks lower than his opening lap score and he rounded out the class in third on a challenging course.

Leroy Robert "Satchel" Paige was another cat who could hurl both a baseball and a grin-producing quote with equal amounts of ease. Paige was the first star of the old Negro Leagues to be elected to the Hall of Fame and was the oldest rookie in Major League Baseball history, when he broke in at the not-so-young (in baseball years) age of 42. Paige pitched for five years in the majors from 1948 to 1953, twice making the All Star team.

Legendary owner Charles O. Finley, of Kansas City and later Oakland Athletics fame, was never known to pass up a marketing opportunity. Finley signed Paige to a one game

contract in 1965, where Paige became the oldest player to appear in a Major League game. Paige started the contest, at age 59, and pitched three scoreless innings before leaving to a standing ovation at the top of the fourth. Satchel pitched his final game in professional baseball, in the Carolina Leagues with the Peninsula Grays, in 1966.

Like Dean, Paige had more quotes than “Carter had pills”; but being the deadpan fool that I am, picking my favorite came rather easily. Satchel would gladly tell whoever would listen: “My pitching philosophy is simple – keep the ball away from the bat”.

After watching Mark Manniko clean a section, that had been giving most of the field fits somewhere near the end of last year, I remember telling him: “you made that look like you were riding up your driveway”. He then replied with a quote that would have left ole “Dizz” and “Satch” both beaming with pride. “Trials is easy when you do it right”, said Mark. I didn’t say anything because I wouldn’t try to tell Ben Hogan how to hit a golf ball either, but I remember thinking: “Oh, thanks for the tip”.

Later that same day, for the first time in my short trials history, everything went just right during my pass through a section. Every knob on both tires went exactly where I had intended them to go. My (substantial) weight was right where it should have been through every turn and over every obstacle. It was so easy and effortless that it almost gave me a feeling of euphoria. “Wow” I thought, “Now I kinda understand what Manniko was talking about”. Needless to say, it’s now a thousand sections later and I’m still waiting for that feeling to wash over me for a second time.

See Results for both rounds at: <http://www.rockymountaintrials.org/results.html>