

NEOTT MotoTrials

Find Your Edge...

NEOTTNews - Special Edition - Sooner Cup

Oct 2, 2018

With the 2018 Sooner Cup fast approaching, NEOTTNews reached out to the winner of the first Sooner Cup back in 1986 and asked Rick "Brand X" Land to write-up his rider profile and some of his special memories of the event. The "Brand X" nickname was given to Rick by the MATT guys back in the mid-70s because he was the only top rider on a Japanese bike while everyone else was riding Spanish bikes.

Rick "Brand X" Land - Master Class Winner of the first Sooner Cup in 1986



Mike asked me to do a story about my trials career to celebrate the Sooner Cup event, so here goes, 40 something years of riding, we'll see how this turns out. I started riding motorcycles at age 9, after what seemed like forever before my Mom and Dad finally gave in to my desire/ obsession to have a motorcycle. They purchased a little 65cc 2-stroke Harley Davidson street bike for me to ride, living in a rural area outside Topeka Kansas I had access to some fields, trails and of course gravel roads to cut my off road teeth on.

A couple of years later we moved to town and my riding was limited to the back yard. It didn't take long out exploring on my bicycle before I found an area not far from our house where kids and adults gathered to ride their motorcycles. It was an area with a few trails, jumps and things like that, nothing big but way better than the back yard. Before long my Dad could see the little Harley was quickly succumbing to it's off-road life and purchased a new 1973 Yamaha AT-3 125 Enduro for me to ride.

My Dad would take me to the riding area with the Yamaha, but most of the time I spent riding around the neighborhood in the evenings beside my Dad on his motorcycle learning how to ride on the street. I was twelve or thirteen at the time so no I didn't have a learners permit or drivers license, we rode hundreds of miles doing that and by the time I could legally ride on the road I sure knew how to do it correctly.

Around this time I found out that Fred, the Custodian at my Junior High School, had several motorcycles, one of which was an Ossa Six Day Replica. Fred would pick me up once in a while on the weekends to go to some of the local riding areas. One day at school, Fred said there was going to be a trials event that weekend and we needed to prep our bikes by taking all the lights off. I asked "What's a Trial?" Fred didn't know, just that it was some sort of off road event, so off I went to start stripping my bike down to get it ready to ride the trials.

My Dad got home from work and found me tussling with the head light on the shiny new Yamaha and asked what I was doing? I look back on that moment now and realize he was really pretty calm about what he found me doing. I told him that Fred and I were going to a motorcycle trial and Fred said we should take our lights off. He asked the obvious "What's a Trials and why do the lights need to come off?" My answer that neither Fred nor I knew what trials was, but that the lights should come off for it, apparently wasn't the answer my Dad was looking for. He just said put the lights back on and we'll go and see what this trials thing is this weekend. So that weekend we went out on a cold, cloudy, rainy, drizzly day, perfect trials weather and watched our first trials....needless to say I was hooked!!! The next week I was nailing 2x4s together to

make a log to ride over with the Yamaha, standing on the passenger pegs to make it easier to lift the front wheel, *I was a trials rider!!!*



My Dad, watching my efforts and seeing my desire to ride trials, took the Yamaha down to the local Honda dealer and traded it for a new Honda TL-125. We joined the local trials club and I rode my first trials in the junior class and won, I was really hooked now.

We had moved to a different house and to my benefit there was a wooded area with trails and ditches just up the street. I spent every day of the summer there, one day I ran across two other boys on motorcycles, one riding a TL125 and the other a Montesa Cota 247. The older of the two lived just a mile from me and was old enough to drive; he had an old Malibu and a 3-rail bike trailer.

Between riding at the local woods and at the rock quarry about 20 miles away where the club held its monthly Trials, the three of us practiced a lot and tried to learn everything we could from each other, articles in magazines and snapshots of the top riders of the time.

The fall of 1974, I rode my first Novice trial, which happened to be the very first Quarry Cup event held at Kansas City. We heard a guy named Lane Leavitt who was the National Trials Champion was going to be there and we wanted to see him ride. Saturday there were exhibition sections, we were amazed to watch Lane, Kirk Mayfield, Jack Jacaty and the top local experts Dale Malasek and JB Miller ride these slick rocky gullies we didn't think anyone could get through. Seeing these guys ride really inspired me and I kept working with the TL, pushing it to do more and more, but it had its limitations. My Dad could see the TL was now holding me back, so around January 1975 he went to the local Yamaha dealer where he had purchased our other bikes, they had a new TY250 Cat sitting on the showroom floor that nobody had yet to show any interest in, at that time most everyone wanted the Spanish bikes.



Now I don't know what kind of deal my Dad made, but the day before the next event, we went to the Yamaha dealer and picked up the new TY250 and had it on the trailer in place of the TL. It was a cold snowy event in Wichita, I went to sign in and entered into the Amateur class for the first time on a bike I had never ridden, and it was box stock right off the showroom floor. My Dad questioned me, but I said I could ride the harder class with the better bike and at the end of the day I won by around 20 points. The next day we washed the bike and it went back to the showroom floor.

The next several weekends we continued the routine of pick up the bike, ride, win, and take the bike and now the trophies back to the dealer to be displayed in the showroom window. Then one day the Yamaha stayed home, the lights finally came off, this time my Dad agreed with Fred on that, and it was mine.

We even shot some promotional pictures for Yamaha out at the KCI dragstrip at an event called 'Yamaha Dirt Days'.



I rode Amateur only 5 or 6 times, never lost, then moved up to Expert Class riding against Dale Malasek and JB Miller, remember them from my first Novice trials? I would ride every day even if it was only in the yard and my hard work



was paying off, before I had been riding trials a full year I had now moved to the newly formed Master class with my friends Dale and JB.

About that time a guy named Elliot Schultz, a sponsored Bultaco rider came through putting on trials schools, teaching us how to turn and bunny hop. He had been through about a year earlier and did this really cool trick, he would stop his motorcycle, balance it, move around on the bike, do a head stand, move back to the riding position, then start his bike and ride off without ever putting his foot to the ground.

Since seeing him do this at his first school I attended on the TL, I had been practicing this stunt and had become quite proficient at it also. So when Elliot did his head stand this time, I did one also, there was one other person I know of that performed this stunt, I did some riding with her at the Nationals in the 70's, her name is [Debbie Evans Leavitt](#).

During this time my Dad took me to every event he could get me to so I could ride against better riders and improve. Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, we did a lot of traveling, riding against riders like Kirk Mayfield, Tim Carr, Curt Comer, Charlie Mallow, Greg Ruoff, Mack Burnett and many others plus my usual buddies Dale and JB. That year Dale took me to my first National event held in Fairplay Colorado. It was a 2-day event with both days counting toward the overall finish, not two separate events like they do nowadays. It was quite a learning experience, I saw a lot of riders that I had only read about in magazines, but I wasn't intimidated, I watched them and learned. The next month there was an article in Dirt Rider magazine about that event, I was referenced in the article as the youngest rider to compete in the Championship Class at that time, 14 years old, they also mentioned another young man by the name of Bernie Schreiber, and he was a whopping 16 at the time.

The next year '76 my Dad traded the Yellow Yamaha for the new Blue model that was much improved. We continued traveling to any events we could make. Many times I rode a trial every weekend of the month. My Dad also took me to some of the nationals that year which helped me gain more experience, I was doing well locally and my National results were steadily improving.



In '77 my Yamaha days were over and I moved to the new Montesa Cota 348 Malcolm Rathmell Replica, my Dad took me to as many Nationals as he could that year. We traveled to the West coast, Oregon, Washington and California, Texas, Oklahoma and to the National in Michigan which was also the US World round that year. What an opportunity!

The US riders were riding at the same time, in the same sections and on the same lines as the World guys. Mick Andrews, Martin Lampkin, Vesterinen, Rathmell and many more, we were side-by-side with them, our trials heroes we only saw in magazines. I learned a lot that year, by the end of the '77 season I was finishing in the top ten at the National events and had won the Quarry Cup along with most of the other major 2-day events in the area.



The next year '78, I graduated High School and rode as many local events as I could. That was the year I met my Lovely Wife Sherri, that fall we were married and off on our own adventures. I was riding some local events occasionally but spent more time working and starting our family.

After joining the Military in 1983 and moving to Wichita in 1984 with my job, my riding picked up and I started riding the Nationals again in 1985. The sport had changed quite a bit, most of the guys I rode with before were gone. I worked hard at learning the new techniques and by the later part of the 80's had scored another top ten finish at a national, I achieved that feat once more in the early 90's making a top ten finish in three different decades.

In the early 90's my son Dustin started riding. Like me, he moved through the classes quickly and was soon riding Expert at 12 years old. We went to some nationals and by now I had moved to the Senior 30 class and Dustin was riding the High School Class. We also had another hobby, we both loved to Bass Fish and around 1993 we sold our bikes and started fishing local tournaments where we had a lot of great times together out on the water.

Dustin followed in his Dad and Grandpas footsteps and joined the Military in 1999, by the early 2000's he was married and starting his own family. In 2003 Dustin was getting the itch to ride again so he contacted our old friend Dale Malasek, who was the GasGas importer. Dale had some bikes on hand that were used in the Scottish Six Day Trial and as minder bikes at the USA world round and would soon be available. Dustin wondered, would Dad like to start riding again?



Without my knowing, Dustin talked with Sherri and they purchased the two bikes from Dale. Dustin picked them up then he and Sherri had me come out to his house where they unveiled the bikes. Needless to say I was thrilled! Sherri gave me that bike and got me back riding as a present for our 25th Wedding Anniversary.

Since that time Dustin and I have both won several National Class Championships, Dustin has gone on to achieve or surpass most all of my trials accomplishments, Sooner Cup, Octobertest, Quarry Cup, Best Day at the Ute Cup, and now his sons are riding Trials.

Here Dustin won his first Sooner Cup Overall in 2007.

I spend most of my trials time these days tinkering with my old twinshock Yamahas. Yep, came full circle back to where I started 40+ years ago. If I'm not tinkering with the TYs, I'm out watching the Grandsons ride and trying to pass on to them a little of what I've learned over the last 40 years of riding trials. Of all my riding accomplishments, none stand out more than winning the first Sooner Cup and then seeing Dustin win it multiple times.

The best for me was in 2012 when Dustin won the Master Class, I won the Expert Class and Dalton won the Novice Class, putting all three of our names on the Sooner Cup in the same year. I have no doubt there will be more Land names on it in the future!



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