

VICTORIA-IOUS

Hett sweeps the CEC



By Angie Parker

Photos by Suzanne Pelletier

No Canadian female has ever raced the International Six Days Enduro, but this year there are going to be some changes. Canada has selected two women to represent our nation: Victoria Hett and Jillian Bolso.

Hett, the 2009 Canadian Enduro Champion, is thrilled to have the opportunity to race what has been labelled the hardest endurance race in the world, not to mention the oldest off-road event on the FIM circuit.

Victoria Hett (who'd rather be called Tory), is ready for the challenge and the fact that she will have to do all the wrenching on her own bike does not stress her. "I'm not worried because I've never had a mechanic! I've already done everything myself, and for the most part, I don't really feel comfortable with other people working on my bikes anyways," she says. "I won't pretend that I can do a top end in 30 minutes or that I can swap a clutch in five, but I'm working on it!"

Tory's father taught her how to work on bikes from an early age. She has always managed to tackle bike issues on her own, yet

looks to her dad for advice. She knows how vitally important it is to be able to do your own repairs, especially as an endurance racer. "I would have been stranded by myself more times than I already have if I hadn't been able to do my own repairs and improvise," she explains. "I still have a lot to improve upon though; my tire change times are hurting."

Tory is prepared to pound 250kms of out-back everyday for six days in Morelia, Mexico. However, to form a Canadian women's trophy team, a third girl is needed.

"We are one girl short. I know there are a lot of fast Canadian girls probably hiding out there (Karla Brandt), so they need to come forward and jump on the ISDE band wagon," says Tory. "Whether we can recruit another girl or not, we are still committed to racing, and look forward to competing in the most prestigious race in the world."

British Columbia might just be Canada's most diverse off-road playground, and is accessible almost all year round. Tory, who started riding when she was five, tends to tempt herself into challenging some of the gnarliest trails out there. It's been said that that's one reason why she's so fast, yet she remains humble.

"I'm not even close to being as fast as a lot of BC riders," claims Tory. "Some of the trails we have in BC are so crazy, it makes you think that the person who built them must be sick in the head!"

The serious aspiration for tough courses must run in the family. Tory's home course in Cherryville, BC was designed and constructed by her dad. It's an insanely technical course that requires a lot of dedicated skill. Tory shares her thoughts: "He'll find a ridiculously giant section of logs or rock slides, and spend months cutting a trail just to get to the ugly stuff! I guess it rubbed off on my brothers and I because we can't stay away from those kinds of trails!"

But Tory knows that riding trails like that will build your skill and generate an unforgettable sense of accomplishment. "It's a great feeling sitting on the tail gate of your truck with friends and family after a torture-fest trail, wondering how you even made it out! Riding that kind of terrain definitely makes you a good technical rider."

Tory raced the entire CEC series aboard her KTM 300 XCW and for 2010 is sporting the number one plate. The CEC hosted



rounds in BC, Alberta, Quebec and Ontario and Tory won them all.

The terrain varied at each of the provinces, putting Tory to the ultimate adaptation test. Her Valley Moto Sport KTM adjusted just fine to the BC and Alberta courses; Tory claims that those course terrains were similar. However, Ontario and Quebec proved to be different.

"I found Quebec to be very slick. Even when it didn't look slippery, it was. Guy Giroux warned us, and he was right," says Tory. "Ontario was much sandier than I expected ... we don't have a ton of sand riding in BC, so it took some getting used to."

She enjoyed the Eastern rounds with her Direct Motocross KTM Canada 300 XCW. "I was impressed with Ontario's extreme test section. It was very nicely done."

When she wasn't racing the CEC rounds, she was dominating at the local Pacific Northwest MC series and some local Okanagan races. Tory also took in some races south of the border, including the Desert 100 in Washington, the AMA National Endurance in Montana and "a very dominating endurance across in Orofino, Idaho."

She won the AMA race and the Desert 100, adding those events to her list of prime accomplishments. It's not just a sense of accomplishment within racing that keeps Tory ticking. Outside of the sport: "I feel I have accomplished a lot by simply being a good person, be it a friend, daughter, sister, girlfriend, et cetera. Becoming an RCMP officer in 2005 was a good accomplishment, and being a good student is also something I am proud of."

Tory is unstoppable on and off the bike. She is currently working towards a Business Degree.

The BC girl might have been on a winning

streak in 2009, but she remembers her first race not quite being the same experience. "There were a lot of nice people who helped push me up hills and pick me up off the ground," she laughs. "A lot of the people who I still see at the races remember pushing me up hills when I was 12 years old."

Tory confirms that it was The Sasquatch in Hope, BC that was her most memorable race. It was her first cross-country-style race. In 1998 she punished herself on a very long course on her 1988 XR 200.

"I remember being at one of the highest elevation points of the race, and being so physically exhausted. I looked over towards a stump while I was riding, and I could have sworn I saw a garden gnome," Tory recalls. "It could have been the exhaustion mixed

with the high elevation, but he was there! I finished, but I don't even remember what place I got. It was a good feeling to know that I did it though."

The 2009 AMA National Enduro in Montana is another biggie in Tory's race recollection. It was "probably one of the biggest races I've been to. It was an amazing experience to speak with some of the fastest racers in North America."

Whatever the race, Tory gives it her all. There are a few reasons why she gets back on the bike day after day. She loves the sense of community in the off-road world. "A dirt bike person will invite you into their house and spend hours showing you around their local trails without really knowing you, and you've made a friend for life."





She also enjoys the sense of accomplishment. "Pushing yourself to the edge of what you think you're capable of, and then going even further" is motivation for Tory. "You may hate life for that split second you're laying under your bike drowning in a creek looking up at the impossible hill climb you have to make it up, but after you make it up, it's a good feeling."

Racing off-road at the level Tory conquers takes a lot of strength mentally and physically and quite possibly a little bit of fearlessness. Does Tory think that she's a fearless female? "I would like to think I have a healthy respect for danger, but I also have experienced how thrilling it is to face fear and overcome it. So I suppose I am fearless in some aspects of life." However Tory adds that, "this doesn't include spiders ..."

Despite her fear of spiders, Tory is an outdoorsy girl. "I genuinely love being in the mountains." And when she's not riding her KTM, she can be found riding her horse, snowboarding, camping, hiking, fishing, 4x4-ing, and even trials riding on her Beta 250.

But it's racing that she wants to pursue professionally. And she claims that she will, "race and ride until I am so old that I can't see through my goggles for the wrinkles on my face!" She also wants to race as many ISDEs as possible, competitively pushing the top female riders. The Extreme Enduro Series is also part of her plans. "The extreme races are irresistible to me, and it's only a matter of time before I fall victim to them!"

Tory understands that financially it's tough to pursue racing full-time and has her fingers crossed that this won't always be the situation in Canada. "I will continue to try as hard as I can to compete as long as possible, and when the day comes that I am either too feeble to lift a leg over my bike, or financially it is not possible to continue, I will continue to ride and train, and enjoy riding off-road."

Tory would like to thank her family and Valley Moto Sport. "They've supported me from day one and the owner, Barry Wellings, has known me since I was a kid."

She would also like to thank KTM Canada and Royal Distributing. As well as "Inside Motorcycles, Inside Moto-X and DMX for their continuous coverage of the off-road racing world. Without you guys racers wouldn't have a lot of hope obtaining and promoting their sponsors. You provide a very valuable service to everyone in the motorcycle industry.

"And of course, I want to thank everyone that is passionate about off-road riding and racing. You won't find a better group of people!"

Lastly Tory wants to thank her newest sponsors for 2010: Rider's Edge Suspension, Gnarly Parts and Scorpion Racing.

Check out Tory's website:
www.victoriahettracing.com.