

## THE ROBBY BELL REPORT: VIEWFINDER'S GP



District 37 BIG 6 Grand Prix

VIEWFINDER'S GRAND PRIX

Ridgecrest, CA



It had been nearly two years since I last attended a Big 6 race, which really surprised me when I came to that realization, so I decided to head out to Ridgecrest, CA for the sixth round of the series. The Ridgecrest round is always an enjoyable event for me: I think it's a combination of the fast course layout, the sandy terrain that offers ideal traction with a little bit of water, and the fact that everyone in town is so pumped up for the race to be there.

I arrived at the race a bit late Saturday morning, which meant I missed the muddy slip 'n' slide that was the unclassified practice, and I'd be going in to the 90+ min pro/exp/int Hare Scramble blind. I didn't feel that was big deal as the course is usually very similar year on year, and the WORCS event earlier in the season used much of the same terrain as well. My ideal plan was to get a top two or three start, follow along and key off a couple riders as I learned the course and then pick up my speed once I got comfortable.



We learned on the line that the race was going to be started via dead engine; I should have known this since most off-road events utilize this style of start these days, but I neglected to practice any dead engine starts except for one on the line right before the race would commence (brilliant, I know). As the starting light lit green I gave the kick-starter a solid kick, but my bike had no intention of firing up that easily for me; in fact, it took three or four more kicks before I got off the line.

As I headed around the first corner of the course in just about last position I realized I hadn't turned on my GoPro yet, so I made sure to do so (because I had that kind of time) and then set off to try to make a few moves through the pack. I got up to around eighth position fairly quickly and then was able to make a couple more quick moves into sixth place down a high speed straightaway.

Unfortunately by the time I had made it to sixth a bit of a gap had begun to form between myself and the three riders directly ahead of me, which took nearly the rest of the first lap for me to close down. Once I'd finally become the caboose of the now four-rider pack I was able to make two quick passes: one as a rider pulled a little wide and opened the door, and another when the third place rider had a violent crash entering a corner when his front end tucked on the freshly watered dirt (it looked like he was getting up pretty quick though so I think/hope he was alright).

Just before the finish of the first lap, paralleling the pit row, was a fairly basic, but lengthy Endurocross section and I was able to get through it just a little faster than the rider ahead of me, moving myself into third position. The two riders left ahead of me were Justin Seeds (who was leading) and Jake Argubright, and they had opened up quite a lead in that first lap.



It took nearly two more laps, but by the end of the third lap I had just edged up to the rear fender of Jake and when he dove in to the pits I was able to make the pass for second. Justin was a few seconds further up the course and as we completed our fourth circuit, I had again, just about cut the advantage to nil and as Justin made the hard left to enter the pits for his stop, I decided to stay out one extra loop and see if I could pull a gap and maintain the lead after my pit stop on the following lap.

I charged hard that next lap, and I was also beginning to really find my flow around the course, and after exiting the pits at the end of lap five I took a quick look back to see that I had maintained around ten seconds of an advantage over Justin. We both did our best to find as much speed as possible over the following couple of laps and Justin stayed right around ten seconds behind me; he was riding really well and I was happy to see him finding the speed that I know he has, but a part of me was yelling at him to stop pushing so hard so I could relax a little!

Over the final two laps the back markers were coming thick and fast and I think Justin had a few more issues with them that I did as he finally did start to lose a little time. In the end I was able to stretch out just enough of a lead to relax and really enjoy the last lap and I was able to mark my comeback to the Big 6 series with a win.

I really want to thank my personal supporters for everything they've done for me this year: Precision Concepts, Kawasaki, Alamo Alarm, MSR, Shoei, Sidi, Spy, Focus Apparel, EVS, USWE, FMF, BRP, THR Motorsports, Northland Motorsports, Ryan Abbatoye Designs, and ATP Mechanix. I feel I'm really starting to find some form as the year winds down and I'm happy to be able to repay their faith in me with some solid performances.

I had a blast racing in Ridgecrest again and I felt the Viewfinders MC did a great job with the event. Coming up next for me is the 24 Hours of Glen Helen, always a favorite among the riders, particularly around three and four in the morning, and especially the pit crews who have the thankless job of staying up all through the night. I'm thinking I'm going to try to sleep from now until the start of the race, I'm definitely going to need it!



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