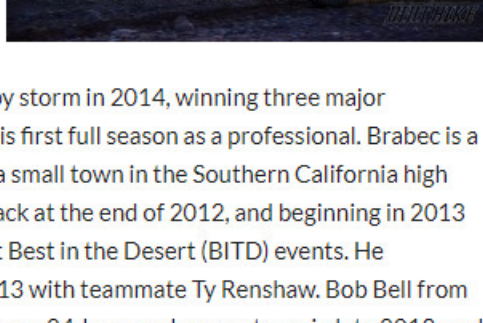


RICKY BRABEC: THE MOJAVE, BAJA, ABU DHABI AND BEYOND

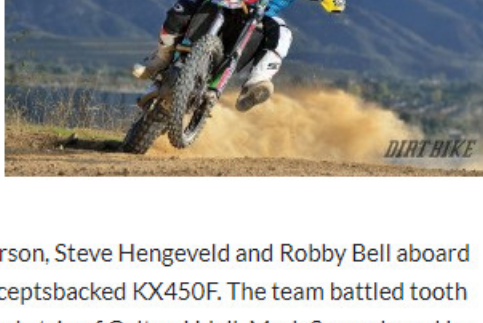


DIRT BIKE

A year ago, no one knew who Ricky Brabec was. Now, he has three National Number One Plates. He's a Baja 1000 winner, and he just returned from the United Arab Emirates where he finished in the top five of a real Dakar-type of rally. People still might not know who he is, but they're learning fast.



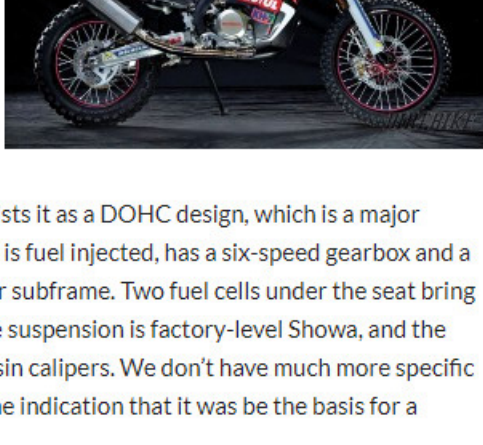
Ricky Brabec took the western deserts by storm in 2014, winning three major championships in what was essentially his first full season as a professional. Brabec is a 23-year-old who hails from Quartz Hill, a small town in the Southern California high desert. He first appeared on our radar back at the end of 2012, and beginning in 2013 he started challenging for overall wins at Best in the Desert (BITD) events. He eventually won that championship in 2013 with teammate Ty Renshaw. Bob Bell from Precision Concepts helped us put together a 24-hour endurance team in late 2013, and Ricky was a big part of that team's success as well. In 2014, THR and Precision Concepts teamed up and took on three major West Coast off-road series—BITD, AMA National Hare & Hound and the SCORE International series—to capture that coveted 1x plate. Ricky Brabec was the rider of record for all three series. Brabec teamed with Robby Bell for the BITD series, and the two dominated most of the events for a repeat championship performance. The National Hare & Hound series would be all Brabec. He had no team members to rely on, and 2014 was the first time he would compete in the entire series. Making the most of his opportunity, Brabec was the most consistent rider all year long, finishing on the podium a shocking 9 out of 10 rounds, and took home the overall win on four separate occasions on the way to his first AMA National Championship. Not bad for a rookie. During the SCORE International series, Brabec teamed with riders such as Max Eddy, David Pearson, Steve Hengeveld and Robby Bell aboard his THR/Monster Energy/Precision Conceptsbacked KX450F. The team battled tooth and nail all year long with the WFOx Honda trio of Colton Udall, Mark Samuels and Ian Young. In fact, the two teams were tied for the series' points lead entering the final event in November. Whoever won the Baja 1000 would win the 2014 championship. Brabec's 4x team of Max Eddy, Robby Bell and Steve Hengeveld had issues early in the race but came back to reclaim the race lead, bringing home the overall victory and claiming the 1x plate. This marked the first time in 17 years the Baja 1000-winning bike was not a Honda.



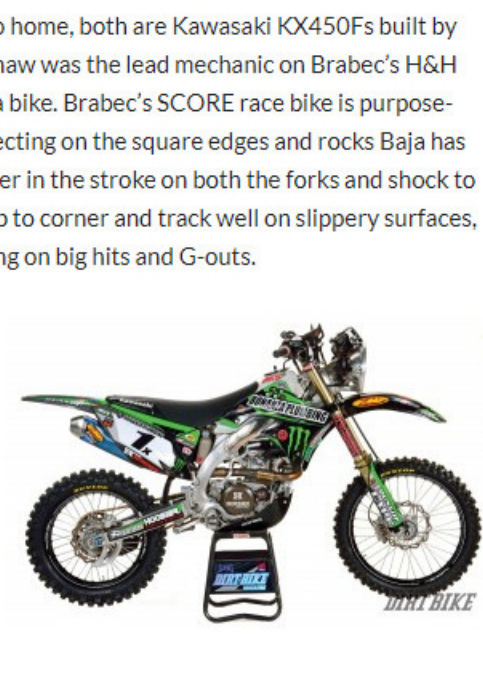
But that's all old news. Ricky's ride in the United Arab Emirates came about at the last minute when he was asked by the HRC team to fill in at the opening round of the World Rally Championship. When it was all over, he emerged as the top Honda rider.

THE BIKES

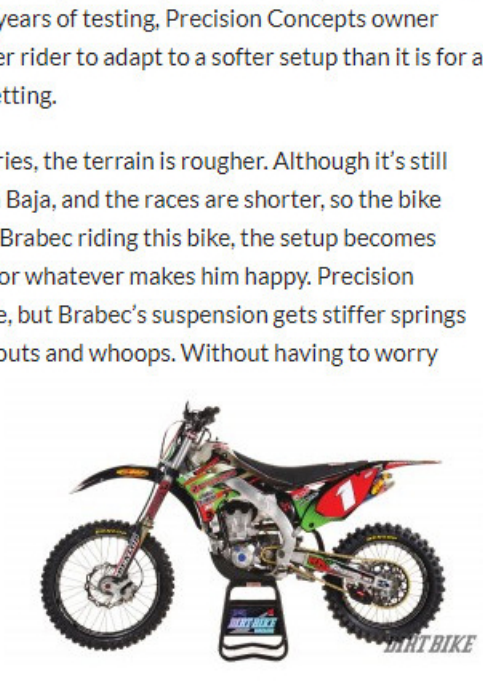
Here's a look at the machines that Ricky rides. The Honda that he rode in the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge was a full factory machine built by HRC specifically for the rally series. Last year, Honda raced a bike that was loosely based on the CRF450X, carb and all. The motor for the 2015 rally bike is all new. Honda information lists it as a DOHC design, which is a major departure from the production model. It is fuel injected, has a six-speed gearbox and a purpose-built chassis with a carbon-fiber subframe. Two fuel cells under the seat bring the fuel capacity to almost 9 gallons. The suspension is factory-level Showa, and the brakes are massively oversized with Nissin calipers. We don't have much more specific information on the bike, but there is some indication that it was be the basis for a production model at least in Europe.



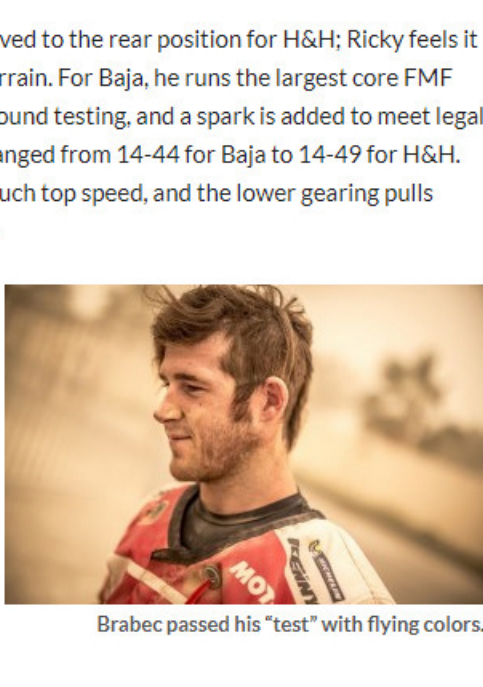
As for the bikes that Ricky rides closer to home, both are Kawasaki KX450Fs built by the staff at Precision Concepts. Ty Renshaw was the lead mechanic on Brabec's H&H bike, and Bob Bell is in charge of the Baja bike. Brabec's SCORE race bike is purpose-built to take on fast terrain without deflecting on the square edges and rocks Baja has to offer. Suspension is softer, going deeper in the stroke on both the forks and shock to handle highspeed impacts. It's also set up to corner and track well on slippery surfaces, but has maximum resistance to bottoming on big hits and G-outs.



The most important aspect of the Baja bike is it has to be comfortable for multiple riders to run long periods of time in the saddle—three hours plus sometimes—at speeds averaging around 100 miles per hour. Everything from the grips, seat, footpegs, bars and levers to the tires is taken into account. It's built for comfort as much as speed. With multiple partners riding the SCORE bikes, setup is usually a bit of a compromise, and it normally favors the lighter riders. After years of testing, Precision Concepts owner Bob Bell has found it's easier for a heavier rider to adapt to a softer setup than it is for a light rider to try and ride with a stiffer setting.



For the AMA National Hare & Hound series, the terrain is rougher. Although it's still high speed, it's substantially slower than Baja, and the races are shorter, so the bike gets a more aggressive setup. With only Brabec riding this bike, the setup becomes more personalized and can be dialed in for whatever makes him happy. Precision Concepts uses the Baja bike as a baseline, but Brabec's suspension gets stiffer springs all around so he can push harder into G-outs and whoops. Without having to worry about extended periods of time on the bike like in Baja, he can push harder over shorter distances and afford to have a more aggressive setup. The gearing and rear tire are also changed to get more pull out of the motor and better traction, since tire durability isn't as much of an issue.

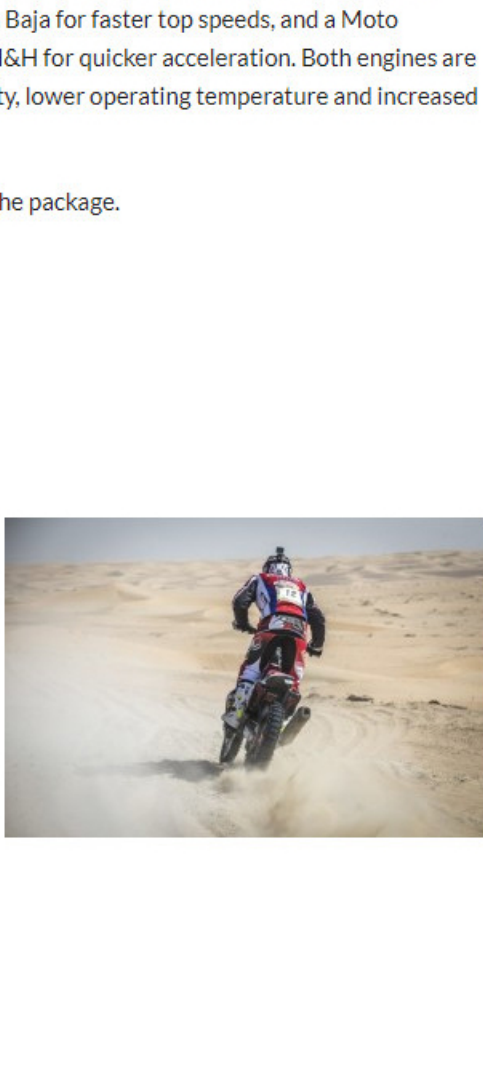


Brabec passed his "test" with flying colors.

Bar mounts are forward for Baja and moved to the rear position for H&H; Ricky feels it gives him better control in the tighter terrain. For Baja, he runs the largest core FMF offers. The silencer is changed to meet sound testing, and a spark is added to meet legal requirements of the H&H. Gearing is changed from 14-44 for Baja to 14-49 for H&H. Hare & Hound events don't require as much top speed, and the lower gearing pulls harder for the bomb run in sand washes.

Dunlop MX52 front and D606 rear for Baja, as the 606 has a longer lifespan. For H&H, the team changes the rear only to a Dunlop AT81. It offers better traction on softer surfaces and holds up well in H&H.

Suspension is the same general valving setup. Springs are stiffer front and rear. Clickers are tightened up for the slower speeds and the bigger hits, while the Baja-based valving allows it to soak up rocks and chop well at higher speeds. A stock air boot is used in Baja for faster top speeds, and a Moto Tassinari air intake boot is installed for H&H for quicker acceleration. Both engines are CryoHeat-treated for improved reliability, lower operating temperature and increased engine performance.



- Here are some of the parts that go into the package.
- FMF exhaust
 - Renthal 997 Twinwall bars
 - Renthal sprockets
 - AME half-waffle grips
 - GPR stabilizer
 - IMS tank
 - MotoSeat seat cover
 - IMS Big Foot footpegs
 - RK EXW chain with rivet link
 - BRP chain slider and guide
 - BRP triple clamps and bar mounts
 - 2006 KX chain roller
 - Acerbis skid plate
 - Acerbis handguards
 - Acerbis plastic
 - ARC levers and clutch perch
 - Excel A60 rims, 18-inch rear wheel
 - DT1 air filter and oil filter
 - Braking rotors and pads
 - Zip-Ty Racing shark fin, wheel adjusters, wheel spacers, brake pins
 - Dunlop tires and mousses
 - Hinson clutch components
 - LAPC piston kit
 - SealSavers
 - Maxima oil and lubricants
 - VP Race fuels
 - Precision Concepts suspension
 - Precision Concepts ECU mapping
 - Precision Concepts head porting
 - CryoHeat treatment to the motor and high-wear items

We'll be featuring an interview with Ricky on his Sahara exploits very soon. Stay tuned.