

AMA MOTORCYCLISTS OF THE YEAR

Winning Against The World



By Rob Dingman

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The selection of the 2016 AMA Motorcyclists of the Year was a no-brainer. In fact, this year’s selection by the AMA Board of Directors required virtually no deliberation and the Board’s vote was unanimous.

The AMA Motorcyclist of the Year is recognition for the profound impact that an individual, or in this case individuals, have had on motorcycling over the last year. There can be no doubt that the team of young Americans who persevered to win the 2016 International Six Days Enduro for the United States for the first time in the history of the world’s largest off-road motorcycle competition—dating back to 1913—has had the most profound impact on motorcycling in 2016.

Due to the extraordinary significance of their accomplishment, the members of the 2016 ISDE U.S. World Trophy Team are the 2016 AMA Motorcyclists of the Year: Thad DuVall, Taylor Robert, Kailub Russell and Layne Michael.

The ISDE is the Fédération Internationale de Motocyclisme Enduro World Championship for national teams. Each participating country is allowed to have four riders on their World Trophy Team. The allowable number of Trophy Team members was reduced this year from six to four. The World Trophy winner is determined by totaling the scores of the team’s four riders each day for six days. The team with the lowest score after the six days is the winner.

The annual event, originally known as the International Six Days Trial, or ISDT, began in 1913 between two long-time European rivals, France and England. The original concept was a test of motorcycle reliability and rider skill under varied conditions. Within a few years of the first event, the list of entries from different countries grew. The competition has become known as the Olympics of motorcycling and now consists of six days of endurance riding over some of the most rugged terrain available in the host country.

Early Trophy Teams were limited by rule to motorcycles produced in their respective countries. In 1924, a new category, the Silver Vase, allowed riders to choose bikes from around the world. While the British continually dominated the Trophy class in the early years, Czechoslovakia won the Silver Vase 17 times, a record that still stands today.

Though the Eastern Europeans dominated the ISDT through the 1950s, ’60s and ’70s, in the 1980s—when the name was changed to the International Six Days Enduro—the Italians and Swedes started winning. In 1985, the Silver Vase was replaced by the

Junior Trophy for teams of riders under the age of 23.

The competition also includes Women’s World Cup Teams and a host of three-rider Club Teams also entered to represent their countries.

The 2016 event was held in Navarra, Spain on Oct. 11-16. In addition to the World Trophy Team victory, Taylor Robert also won the individual overall title while the U.S. Junior Trophy team took second overall in their category and the U.S. Women’s Trophy Team claimed fourth overall in its category.

Taylor Robert’s individual victory marked only the second time an American has taken the honor. The first was in 2015 when Ryan Sipes achieved the accomplishment. The Husqvarna that Sipes—who was a member of the 2016 team before being sidelined with an injury and being replaced by Michael—rode to victory in 2015 is currently on display in the AMA Motorcycle Hall of Fame museum.

The United States placed two teams in the top three in the club team division as well. This year was the first for the FIM’s Vintage Trophy and American Fred Hoess won the overall in that category.

U.S. ISDE team manager Antti Kallonen deserves special mention as well. It has been his leadership over the last few years that has elevated the U.S. program and led to the 2016 victory.

Competing in the ISDE each year requires significant funding and lots of volunteers. The logistics of getting dozens of riders, their bikes and gear to a foreign country is complicated. Each year, we can expect more than 100 volunteers to support the effort by traveling to the event, while hundreds more help out back in the United States. This support is critical to the success of the U.S. team.

Companies also step up to support the effort. The 2016 U.S. team sponsors included Arai Helmets, Elizabeth Scott Community, Hall’s Cycles, Motion Pro, Rabaconda, Seat Concepts, Thermo Probe, Trail Jesters and Zip-Ty Racing. The AMA also sells ISDE-themed shirts to support our team’s win. In 2016 we had the extra opportunity to produce some victory shirts celebrating the effort. You can get yours at AMAGear.com. Of course, all proceeds from these shirts sales will support the 2017 ISDE effort.

Congratulations to all of our American competitors and especially to our World Trophy Team champions, Thad DuVall, Taylor Robert, Kailub Russell and Layne Michael, not only for their historic victory, but for being named 2016 AMA Motorcyclists of the Year!

Rob Dingman is AMA president and CEO.