

18th February 2012

Hells Gate Extreme Enduro Near Lucca , Italy

In the 9th running of Fabio Fasola's Hells Gate Extreme Enduro KTM rookie Jonny Walker made a serious attempt to win this prestigious event.

The weather was more favorable than of recent and what could have been expected, but still the IL Ciocco resort mountain had enough snow and ice to challenge the world's best extreme riders, race day would see mild temperatures with some sunshine.

Having made his debut one year earlier and gaining a top 10 finish Jonny was fortunate to have earned a seeded starting position, being number 4. The qualifying race started at 07.00 hours Saturday morning, still in the dark our Trailtech lights were needed on the first lap, 5 laps of just over 1 hour each would be the order with a special test on each lap except the opening lap. The circuit had no real challenges for Jonny and he rode without risk or using unnecessary energy, trying to save himself and the bike for the night race.

Jonny made light work of the special tests and rode well within his ability to make 4 safe results, his only issue was catching the slower riders in front, but at the end of the morning session he had a clear 40 second advantage over 2nd placed Jarvis. From the morning race the top 30 from 100 starters would qualify for the night stage, first place gave Jonny pole position for the Hells Gate Extreme Enduro. At the end of the morning Enduro we had just over 20 minutes to service the bike, fit new tyres and fit the special lights for the night.

The main race would start at 3.30 with a plan to make 6 laps, no checkpoints as the morning just simply first home is the winner !!, Jonny as expected took the holeshot and controlled the race at the front for most of the lap climbing up the mountain, on the descent he made a mistake and Jarvis passed and then when he dropped into one of the long steep river descents he found that his bike kept stalling because of the slow speeds, the tickover was just too low although had been fine for the faster morning race it was now a small but costly interference, after the first lap he was trailing Jarvis by 90 seconds.

Our strategy was to pit every 2 laps so Jonny had to make one more lap before he could make adjustments to the bike's tickover, midway through the 2nd lap he crashed off the track down a very steep banking and got the bike so stuck that he thought his race was over, eventually he managed to get back up to the course but it had cost him more than 3 minutes. Now trailing Jarvis by over 4 minutes he made a pitstop for fuel and to adjust the carb, on lap 3 he set off with more confidence and managed to gain back more than 2 minutes on Graham.



Going into the 4th lap less than 2 minute separated the pair and at the end of the lap when he stopped for his second and final pitstop it looked possible that Jonny may catch graham if he continued his pace, but Jarvis also responded and upped his game. The course being as brutal as ever was also quite fast which meant the leading riders pulled out quite a large lead early on, Walker and Jarvis set a pace that no other riders could follow, this meant that many riders would time out at the checkpoint, because if you fall 30 minutes behind the leader it is thank you and Ciao !!, With only a handful of riders still in the race and darkness closing in the organisers decided that 5 laps would be enough, just 4 riders started the last lap !!

So on the last lap with all his Trailtech lights blazing Jonny set off in pursuit of Graham but the gap was just too big , Jonny decided just to ride safe on the last lap and eventually finished at Hells Peak just 4 minutes down on Jarvis who won for the second year.

Jonny Walker SHR KORR KTM 300 EXC “ I'm well chuffed and super stoked, of course I wanted to win and I believe I had the speed to match Graham, but I made a few mistakes and he rode very well, although the race is very tough I found it a lot easier than last year simply because my fitness has improved so much and I am riding better, I look forward to coming back next year and hopefully making it 3rd time lucky, thanks to KTM and all my sponsors and helpers ”.

Julian Stevens Team Manager “ I am very satisfied with our result, the morning race went quite easy and without drama, Jonny could ride at a safe pace to comfortably win. The night race didn't quite go to plan but second is still a fantastic result and we know that we are on the pace to win should everything go in our favour. In the last year Jonny has reached the podium at every Extreme event he has entered so he is showing great consistency and constant improvement, its only a matter of time before we win an international extreme race” .

Result Overall morning race

1. **Jonny Walker SHR KORR KTM 300 EXC**
2. Graham Jarvis Husaberg 300 TE
3. Alesandro Botturi KTM 250 EXC

Hells Gate Extreme Enduro

1. Graham Jarvis Husaberg 300 TE
2. **Jonny Walker SHR KORR KTM 300 EXC**
3. Xavier Galindo Husaberg 300 TE

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