

# THE INSIDER

The Latest News from Team HUMMER

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ROD HALL  
TEAM HUMMER

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## TEAM HUMMER® FINISHES ONE, TWO, THREE AT 'BAJA 1000'

Ensenada, Mexico - November 20, 2005: Almost 350 race vehicles from around the world gathered in Ensenada, Mexico on Friday, November 19th for the 38th running of the internationally renowned Tecate/SCORE 'Baja 1000', which may well have been the toughest race course we have seen in recent



Freshly Painted H3 - Ready to Race

memory. Of the 342 entries which started the event in various classes, less than 1/2 or 162 race vehicles would manage to cross the finish line in Ensenada during the 30 hours allotted to complete the 708 mile race. All of the **Team HUMMER** trucks were in good shape and the H3 looked particularly good sporting the new Black and Blue **Team HUMMER** paint scheme, which was applied in Reno after the 'Vegas to Reno' race, in October. We arrived at the 'Baja 1000' with a crew of about 30 people; the usual suspects plus a few people who we don't often see showed up to lend a hand. In Ensenada, the Contingency day at the 'Baja

1000' is a big event and either many schools give the kids the day off so they can spend the day at the tech and contingency inspection area where they can see all the colorful race vehicles and get autographs from their favorite drivers. Racing in Baja has its pitfalls, to be sure, but the enthusiasm of the children is infectious and is certainly one of the reasons that the 'Baja 1000' draws so many entries each year. As one of our crew members reminded me recently, "I think when the kids want an autograph, that it's neat that someone is that excited about off-road racing."

**Team HUMMER's** three production class entries finally got off the starting line about noon on Friday and it wasn't long before we were presented with our first significant obstacle, a large silty hill which had to be crossed. We had all seen this while pre-running but on race day it was covered with baja bugs who were hopelessly stuck in their attempts to climb up and over the hill. An additional complication was the presence of a large brush fire, set by locals who can always be counted on to increase the level of difficulty of the race with a variety of man-made booby traps. "It was like a battle zone" said Rod Hall. "All I could see through the smoke and dust were VW Baja Bugs sliding toward me from every direction. I asked my co-rider, John Chapman to look at the GPS and tell me if we are on the course and we followed the GPS through the chaos until we were over the hill and back in the clear!" Mike Winkel, who started the race behind the wheel of the **Team HUMMER** #863 H1 pickup, shoved a truck out of his way but as he was passing, the vehicle slid back



Baja 1000 Tech & Contingency Area



down on the side of the H1 causing some minor damage to the passenger side door. It turned out to be nothing that a trip to the paint shop won't cure. Once we made it into the Ojos Negros Valley, everything started to sort itself out. At Checker Pit #1 at race mile 75, the lead truck in the Full Stock Production Class was the #861 **Team HUMMER** H2 SUV, driven by Josh Hall with Thad Stump in the second seat. The #863 **Team HUMMER** H1 Pickup, with Mike Winkel driving a cautious race, went by Pit #1 in fourth place, just 11 minutes off the pace. Rod Hall, behind the wheel of the #761 **Team HUMMER** H3 SUV was out

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in front in the Mini Stock Production Class by over an hour. The 'Baja 1000' was a tough course and by race mile 75, there were only two Mini Stock trucks still running:



Rod and the #769 Honda Ridgeline driven by off-road veterans, Darren & Gavin Skilton. In spite of the experience of the Skiltons, the #769 Honda was not adapting well to the rigors of Baja and had fallen behind by 1 1/2 hours at the first pit. At Checker Pit #2 (RM 155) the H3 had to pit for fuel and to replace two LightForce HID lights which were damaged during a front end

collision. Since we had no replacement HID lights at this isolated location, Greg Krasnow, Carl Perez and Tom Heyl were able to rewire and adapt some conventional LightForce lights onto the front bumper and send Hall on his way with a minimum of downtime.

About 15 miles into the race, Josh Hall had developed a transmission problem in the H2 which caused him some confusion and concern. Due to some electrical glitch in the wiring harness or perhaps one of the many computers that are part of the advanced HUMMER technology, the transmission in the H2 insisted on shifting into passing gear every time Josh accelerated. This gave Josh just two options for driving the vehicle: either he had to drive with the pedal to the floor or he had to maintain a steady speed, without accelerating. Otherwise the truck would upshift, regardless of speed, which could be potentially catastrophic for the engine if this occurred at high RPM. At first we considered replacing the transmission at Pit #1 but that would likely cost Josh any chance for the win and no-one was certain that this was an internal transmission problem anyway. After giving it some thought, Josh decided that he would alter his driving style to conform to what the car wanted to do rather than having the car adapt to his driving style. He seems to have made this adjustment well and the truck came into the BFG Borrego pit at racemile 200 in the lead. On closer examination,



however, it turned out that he had sustained a broken idler arm which took them about 20 minutes to replace and caused him to drop to 2nd place by 15 minutes to the #879 Ford driven by Billy Bunch. By now, Mike Winkel had moved up to 3rd in the H1, but was still running 10 minutes behind Josh. Chad, the four-time defending 'Baja 1000' champion, took over behind the wheel in the #863 H1 Pickup and wasted no time getting back out on course in pursuit of the leaders. Riding second seat for the next 150 miles



Bob Bower Photo

Damien Michelin buckles up for a ride

would be Damien Michelin, brother of Edouard, President of Groupe Michelin, the parent company of BF Goodrich Tires. He turned out to be a capable co-rider during his segment. Rod Hall brought the #761 H3 in about 45 minutes later, still leading in the Mini Stock Production Class with the second place Honda falling further behind, plagued with problems of their own. He handed the truck over to Mike Winkel,



Communications - Rick Grabowsky

**R**ick Grabowsky is our Director of Communications. On raceday he is responsible for keeping a record of the split times (the space of time between our HUMMERs and the competition). As our Communications Director, Rick also makes sure that our race trucks, chase crews and pit locations can all talk to each other during the race.

Rick is a modest, quiet sort of guy and a team player who is one of the hardest working members of the Team HUMMER crew, often choosing to work on statistics and updating our pit support plan long after the rest of us have gone to bed. Rick has been coming out to help support Team HUMMER on and off since 1994, when he bought his first H1. He became a regular member of the team about a year ago when he volunteered to help with our communications.

Rick is 56 years old and received his D.D.S. Degree from UCLA Dental School in 1975. He spent the next four years doing graduate work in the Pediatric Dentistry & Oral Biology Departments at UCLA and specializes in Pediatric Dentistry. Currently, Rick is an Assistant Professor of Pediatric Dentistry at the Loma Linda University School of Dentistry in Southern California.

In his spare time Rick enjoys four-wheeling, which he has been active in for the past 30 years. He also enjoys dabbling in electronics, photography and astronomy but, when asked will tell you that his favorite hobby is crewing for Team HUMMER.

Rick lives in Highland, California with Peggy, his wife of 27 years. They have two grown daughters, Erin & Peggy.

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took on some gas and Winkel headed out into the Baja night struggling to adjust to the variations between the 7,500 lb. H1 and it's 5,300 lb. sibling H3.



At BFG Pit #3, 335 miles into the race, the #861 H2 had moved back into first and held a 35 minute advantage over Chad in the #863 H1, which was now in second place. Billy Bunch, who held the lead for a brief time in the #879 Ford was nowhere to be found, having pushed his Ford to the breaking point in an attempt to stay in front of the H2. John Griffin, the SCORE Full Stock Points leader had taken over third place in his #860 H1 Slantback, about an hour behind Chad. In fourth place another half hour behind Griffin,

were our old friends, Eric & Terry Henn in their Edro Engineering sponsored #867 H1 HUMMER Pickup. The next production truck to pass through Pit #3 was the first place Stock Mini #761 **Team HUMMER H3 SUV**. It seems out of place to refer to a 5300 lb. truck like the H3 as a "Stock Mini" but the fact that it runs the 220 HP Vortec 3500 engine is the qualifier for that class. Rod Hall took over for Mike Winkel behind the wheel and settled in for the final 360 miles to the finish. This year's Baja 1000 had proved to be a race where the only production vehicles tough enough to answer the challenge were HUMMERS.



Vortec 3500 Inline 5 Cyl. engine

Although the H2 was in the lead, they had been fighting transmission problems all day and the Idler Arm they had replaced at Pit #2 introduced a host of new headaches to deal with. When the Idler Arm failed, that transferred the steering load to the Pitman Arm and wore it out, causing a considerable amount of movement to remain in the Pitman arm. This, coupled with the unusual torque loads being placed on the front suspension by the tranny problem, was causing the front tie rods to break under extreme conditions. This had not been much of a problem until Josh passed racemile 400 and began to climb the mountain up to Mike's Sky Ranch. As the #861 H2 turned onto the road to Mike's, Chad was about 75 minutes back in the #863 H1 Pickup. The H1 was able to tighten the gap to 70 minutes by the time they cleared San Telmo at racemile 475 but Josh broke a tie rod coming over the mountain to the pacific side and at racemile 570 his lead had shrunk to 55 minutes.

Rod was running a steady pace in the #761 **Team HUMMER H3 SUV** after taking some time to deal with a bolt that backed out of the front brake caliper. Although



Trackside Photo

he was a couple of hours behind Josh in the H2, he was in command of the Mini Stock class and was having a bit of a race with the #860 third place Full Stock HUMMER Slantback driven by John Griffin. At racemile 475 Rod was 1 hour & 38 minutes behind Griffin but by the time they arrived at Llano Colorado, 570 miles into the race, Griffin's H1 was only 4 minutes in front of the H3.



H3 Co-Driver - John Chapman

**J**ohn Chapman is Rod Hall's co-rider on the H3 race program. He works at the GM Desert Proving Ground in Mesa, Arizona where he is Chief Development Tech for Truck Engineering assigned to the H3. John was a key member of the team at DPG who built the H3 race truck and has been involved with Team HUMMER since 2000, most recently with the new H3 Mini-Stock SUV driven by Rod Hall.

John was born in Detroit, Michigan 55 years ago and graduated from high school in Howell, MI in 1967. He started drag racing at the age of 15, and his first job was at a Buick Dealership where he worked as a painter's assistant.

Since that first job, John has been involved with sprint and SuperModified programs and worked for several years on the Penske Indy Car team. Recently he helped build a truck for the American Race Truck Series, (ARTS) a spec series for trucks racing asphalt oval tracks.

John has been with GM since 1983 and his off-road racing credentials include co-riding with the legendary Johnny Johnson at the Parker 400. After that he co-rode and provided chase support for the Class 7 MacPherson Chevy truck driven to numerous SCORE points championships by Jeff Lewis.

John lives in Apache Junction, Arizona with his wife, Anne, who is also a DPG employee and an off-road racing mechanic with an equally impressive resume.

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Josh Hall with Sam Cothrun in the second seat were running the race they had to when they turned east out of Uruapan some 634 miles into the race at 10:30 on Saturday



One last stop in Ojos Negros

morning. Because there was no radio communication in that area, they had no way of knowing, the H2 was in the lead by almost an hour over the second place H1 driven by **Team HUMMER's** Chad Hall, who had been fighting suspension problems the entire day. About 15 miles east of Uruapan, they came to a short, steep, silty grade. They tried to climb the grade only to break a tie rod because the Pitman

arm was worn out and the transfer case refused to go into the "Low Lock" position. Sam fixed the tie rod only to break another one 100 yards later. They were tired and just about out of ideas when Sam remembered that the H2 had a *Tech 2* diagnostic computer on board, which is a specialized electronic "goznoid" the GM techs use to bypass and test the various electronic systems in the truck before the race. Sam plugged it into the data port under the dash and with McGuyver-like ingenuity, was able to locate a set-up screen for the transfer case. After fiddling with the screen for awhile, he figured out how to bypass the transfer case problem and engage "Low Lock" which gave them traction to all four wheels for the first time since racemile 155. They ground their way up the hill, making it to the top and over the summit of the last big hill in the race. As they passed through the final Checker pit at Ojos Negros, they picked up two more spare tie rods and motored in to a well deserved 'Baja 1000' win in a total time of just over 25 hours.

After four consecutive 'Baja 1000' victories, Chad Hall finished in second place crossing the finish line about 40 minutes later.

Team owner, Rod Hall turned out to be the third HUMMER to finish, on corrected time, when he finished first in the Mini Stock Production Class after 28 hours, 11 minutes on the course. Rod finished 32 seconds ahead of John Griffin's HUMMER, which was third in the Full Stock production class.

This was a great win for **Team HUMMER** and marks the 18th 'Baja 1000' Victory for Rod Hall, who turned 68 on November 22nd.

**Team HUMMER's** final race of the season is *Best in the Desert's* 'Henderson 400', December 2 - 4, 2005 in Henderson, Nevada.

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For more information about Team HUMMER, visit [www.team-hummer.com](http://www.team-hummer.com).  
To learn more about HUMMER and HUMMER vehicles go to [www.hummer.com](http://www.hummer.com)



H3 Mechanic - Matt Laramie

**M**att Laramie is our Lead H3 Technician. Matt started out with the H2 program and has been with Team HUMMER since 2003, when we first introduced the H2 to desert racing. Matt is a Senior Engineering Technician at the Desert Proving Ground and, along with Doug Moore, was one of the key members on the team at DPG who built the H3 race truck.

The 45 year-old Laramie, was born in Oklahoma but was quickly relocated to Arizona, where he graduated from Apache Junction High School in 1978. Being an avid motorcycle racer who also spent much of his time modifying and four-wheeling his Jeep, Matt worked as a mechanic in a local shop after graduating from high school, where he worked for eight years.

Matt has been pursuing his Associate Degree in Mechanical Engineering for the past few years through an internal GM Program in association with Michigan Technical University. Although family responsibilities have kept him busy for the past few years, Matt had previously been very committed to his hobby of competitive pistol shooting. In addition to having won a number of trophies for his skill as a shootist, Matt seems most proud of having finished second in the Arizona State Revolver Competition.

In 1981 he met and married his wife, Claudia. The couple have five children, ranging in age from 6 to 23. Mitchell and Lukas, the most recent addition to the Laramie family, are six-year old twins and keep both Matt and Claudia very busy. Matt and his family live in Apache Junction, Arizona.

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