

# 1950 BIG BEAR

Photo by Harry Ringer

## AUB LeBARD

— B. S. A. —

## REPEATS '49 VICTORY

by PAUL BROKAW

BIG BEAR, CALIF., Jan. 8.—Today the Annual Big Bear Dash was literally and figuratively put on ice for another year, with the laurels going to diminutive but intrepid Aub LeBard and his highly capable B.S.A. "Gold Star."

It is to be recalled that Aub also won this great event last year, riding a Matchless then. In fact, this Southern California exponent of fast cross-country motoring under conditions that would slow a coyote to a leisurely lope has consistently placed among the first ten in the eight Big Bear Dashes he has participated in. So—today's victory didn't come as a surprise.

The writer's reference to the event as a "Dash" is a title of his own choosing, but one more accurately descriptive of the event than the recent year's title of "Hare and Hound" and certainly more so than the vague appellation of "Run" bestowed upon it by the A.M.A. That organization, it seems, would honor the famous event with a National Sanction only as a "Run." Tch, tch! "A rose by any other name, etc., etc." The event, in fact, follows a very popular formula that is basic in many forms of motorcycle competition, specifically—the negotiation of a marked course between two designated points in the least possible time.



Enough of the folderol! Designate it as you wish, or as you are ordered, the Big Bear event remains the greatest cross-country motorcycle "run" in the U.S.A. and, for a multitude of reasons, in the wide world.

But come along on a verbal excursion and we will relive the occasion in hope that you may capture some of its thrills and possibly admit justification of the "World's Greatest" claim.

The alarm goes into action at 4:30 A.M.! We rise and shine, and, fortified by a hasty breakfast, take to the near-deserted streets of Los Angeles. Our ride starts out pleasantly, considering that these same placid streets will, in a matter of a few hours, be the scene of the daily "rat race" that best describes Los Angeles' notorious traffic. Under these favorable conditions the miles roll by quickly

and before we realize it we are well along on our 125-mile jaunt to the desert town of Palmdale and the nearby starting site of the contest. Once on the arterial highway across the Sierra Madre mountains, we fall in with the annual motorcycle pilgrimage to the start of Big Bear.

At this time we gain our first thrilling impression of the magnitude of the event as a procession of motorcycle laden trucks and trailers stretches out before us, interspersed with hardy riders, marked as contestants by their crash helmets, riding to the start. We reserve an extra share of admiration for these dyed-in-the-wool motorcyclists, although we can't fail to respect the wisdom of the majority who ride the cushions and in so doing preserve both their physical energies and the mechanical fitness of their mounts for the terrific ordeal of the day's contest.

The early morning air is crisp and the road-side puddles are sealed by shimmering sheets of ice as we gain altitude. Then comes rain splatters and we peep with concern at the overcast, wondering if this heralds more to come or is merely a passing shower. The threat quickly passes and we relax. Finally the dawn breaks and the mountains take shape from the concealing blackness of the night as though they were on an exposed film in a photographer's developing tray.

Here in this dawn is definitely one of the greatest shows on earth, a gift from God. ("Be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create." Isaiah 65.18) and s...



Lined up for inspection in the starting area. Photo by Chet Phebus.

complexity of a world troubled by man's own cussedness. From a black and white picture, the scene is progressively transfigured to one of brilliant technicolor, with the mountains standing out in relief against the magnificently colored back-drop of the sunrise. A sunrise, incidentally, supplied by the state of Arizona for the pleasure of Californians, or so the Arizonians declare.

It looks like a grand day for the boys, a hope substantiated when on reaching the far side of the mountains we see the vast Mojave desert panorama bathed in soft morning sunshine that casts long grotesque shadows from the weirdly shaped Joshua trees.

The long caravan abruptly swings from the surfaced road onto a dusty dirt trail winding into the brush and we are jarred back to reality from the spell-binding thrill of the dawn. Soon the starting site springs into view and what a scene of frenzied activity it is! As early as we are, we have been preceded by hundreds of spectators and contestants. Everywhere machines are being unloaded and warmed up in trial runs through the mesquite and cactus. We park on the fringe of the activity and hurry forward on foot, guided by the booming voice of Rolly Harper giving instructions over the P. A. system. The loud speakers, incidentally, carry the advertisements of Lamoreaux and Milne Motorcycle Sales of Glendale—a couple of famous names of the night speedway certain to be recognized throughout America.

The jerseys of the promoting Three Point Motorcycle Club are to be seen everywhere, each wearer busily pursuing an appointed task. Contestants' motors and A.M.A. membership cards are being checked through a lane under the supervision of Frank McCartney, A.M.A. referee.

A sandwich wagon is doing a rushing business and the crisp morning air makes a steaming cup of caffeine irresistible to us, too. Between sips we greet the many



Above, "Pop" LeBard greets "His Boy," Aub, at the finish. Top right, Walt Fulton bends a wet corner in search of warmth and refreshments after checking in third. Photos by Phebus. Bottom right, Geo. Gunther, second place winner, surrounded by his admirers. Photo by Bill Bagnall.



friends and acquaintances passing by, and while time doesn't permit it, there is no doubt that somewhere in the ever increasing crowd we could find all the well-known figures in Southern California's motorcycle sport and business, to say nothing of a wide territory around. Yes, Sir, Big Bear is a mighty popular occasion.

Say, take a look over there! Harrison Reno and George Butler, Harley and Triumph dealers respectively of San Bernardino, are just pulling in together, with a Triumph and Harley lashed together in the same trailer, a sure enough indication that the motorcycle business is both pleasant and healthy in San Bernardino, as it actually is. In fact, the present occasion is brimming over with congeniality—almost at least. There appears a certain resentment in some quarters over the announcement that a side award of \$400 cash will go to the rider who wins the dash with a Harley Hydra-Glide. "There is no place for such commercialism in an event of this type," maintain the protestors, "buying riders have already driven the private owner from too many forms of motorcycle competition!" End Quote—but on the other hand the H-D riders voice no objection.

Busy "Chuck" Pollard and "Ez" Erhardt, of the California Highway Patrol, find time for a brief chat with us. These two men have been primarily responsible for putting into effective action the "Co-operation Program" that has so successfully eliminated the "moronic fringe" in California's tremendous motorcycling activity. Both are bonafide motorcyclists and swell all around fellows who are doing a

great job for the State Patrol and motorcycle sport, too.

A glance at our watches shows time for the start drawing near. We regret that we didn't set the alarm at least an hour earlier as these chats are a great source of pleasure to railbirds like ourselves. But let's hurry and see if we can't give the quarter-mile-long, double line of machines at least a quick once-over before they clear the starting field of spectators. It is a sight that warms the heart of a motorcyclist, believe me. Think of it! Over two hundred well prepared machines



Keenan Wynn, machine inspected, pulls into the line-up and greets his fellow contestants. Photo by Phebus



Referee McCartney checks Dale Martin thru inspection line. Dale and his father were later snowed in on the mountain overnight. Photo by Phebus.

toeing the double chalk line, each of their helmeted riders surrounded by a group of admirers, laughing, joking and wishing their favorites godspeed.

Let's see how many makes of machines we can spot in the line-up: Indian, Triumph, Harley, A.J.S., Norton, Rudge, B.S.A., Panther, Velocette, Mustang, Matchless, Ariel. That's right, twelve makes of domestic and foreign motorcycles. What an exciting escape from the monotony of the "two-brand" lineups that characterized our pre-war competition. Yes, indeed, motorcycling has really bloomed since the war.

Listen! An announcement is rolling out from the P. A. system: "All non-contestants must immediately clear the starting area. The 5-minute bomb is due." The announcement is well timed as it is still echoing against the mountain side when the heavens are fairly rent by the explosion itself. It is exactly 8:55 A.M. and at 9:00 A.M. the 209 hardy lads will be on their roaring, boisterous way to Big Bear, some 185 miles away. The announcer continues, "Shut off all engines, and line up 15 feet behind your motors. The next bomb will be the starting signal and you are on your way."

"Hold on there," an angry voice challenges the announcer, "My boy is still in that checking lane."

The announcer forwards the objection, "McCartney, how about the riders who haven't been checked in?"

McCartney, the referee shouts back, well heard without the aid of a P. A. system, "This checking lane has been in operation since day break. We are not holding up the start for late arrivals." Right.

As if to punctuate the crisp announcement, the starting bomb lets go and the hearts of the tardy contestants fall. It is the calm before the storm as the competitors race the few feet on foot to their machines and then all pandemonium breaks loose. This is it, the long-awaited 1950 Big Bear, and the starting bomb is like a torch deliberately thrown into a fireworks display. The long lines of machines simply erupt, holding the spectators agog at the utter abandon with which the pent up riders project their bellowing mounts into the multiple hazards of the steep mountainside.

Up and up the struggle storms, through the maze of mesquite, cactus, Joshua trees, holes, washes, rocks, with the riders jostling each other without mercy when two or more seek passage through brief clearings that will hardly accommodate one machine.

It is audacious riding, to put it mildly, and if what first greets the eyes wracks the nervous systems of the spectators, the ruination is complete now that action is obscured by the walls of dust thrown up by the viciously spinning wheels, leaving only the imagination to tell how the riders are faring in that snarling, rumbling storm cloud of yellow dust. Higher and higher the mechanical typhoon rolls, finally to spill over the ridge into the wild blue yonder—well, at least, wild yonder—and there are 185 miles of it to be negotiated, terminating for the fortunate at frozen Big Bear Lake, lying in the snowy lap of 12,000-foot high Big Bear mountain. What a start, what an adventure!

Thus the curtain drops with a bang on the first act of the Big Bear Drama, and we quickly queue with a thousand others to secure a mimeographed map showing the location of the eight intermediate checks. For obvious reasons, these maps have been held up until the contestants are actually on their way. The riders' only way in locating the checks is to follow the line, and pity those who lose it as the Mojave desert is a mighty expansive bit of barren real estate.

Even with the advantage of a map and paved roads we find ourselves bewildered. In its brevity, the map calls for a rather intimate knowledge of the countryside, which we unfortunately don't have. A rather desperate situation if we are to be able to do any first hand reporting of the progress of the contest, for while we are trying to orientate ourselves like kids in a house of mirrors, the contestants themselves are putting miles behind them with fair highway averages.

Finally we cast the map aside in despair and latch on to a fast-moving car pulling a trailer and manned by a crew that impresses us as knowing their way around. That they are not following the map is readily apparent as we soon swing off the main traveled road onto a narrow desert trail that meanders around the countryside with all the aimlessness of a startled

jack rabbit. Grave thoughts begin to enter our minds that the bonding car ahead doesn't convey followers of the contest, but rather some characters dashing into the interior of the desert wastes to retrieve a cache of fermented cactus juice. An unhappy thought, because if we were confused before, now we are definitely lost. But wait, what is that ahead? The day is saved! It is a check. Our guides really know their Mojave and earn our gratitude.

The first check has four separate signature sheets in operation in order to handle the still heavy traffic with the greatest dispatch, thus an official leader is here not determined. The same situation holds true at the second check, but at the third the official leader is Del Kuhn, Matchless mounted, with Nick Nicholson, Matchless, second and Aub LeBard, B.S.A., third. The fourth check finds the order unchanged, but at the fifth, LeBard has replaced Nicholson in the second spot and is out to give the leader, Kuhn, trouble. Soon after leaving this check it is reported that Nicholson is out with chain failure, and to the elation of the B.S.A. contingent, LeBard is leading Kuhn. A chain failure eliminates Kuhn before the sixth check and George Gunther has moved into second place to do his darndest for the Matchless camp against the fleet LeBard.

The eighth and final check before the finish finds LeBard still leading with Gunther breathing heavy on his neck. Ernie May at this point provides the throng of spectators with a hair-raising wing-ding within a stone's throw of the check. At the eighth check the approach of the contestants is heralded by the dust stirred by the machines while they are still well out on the desert. Certainly none of these miniature dust storms materializes into a visible machine and rider more rapidly than does the one stirred up by May. Running in third position, it is obvious that it is "do or die for the old Alma Mater," as May bellows up the final stretch full out and laying flat on the tank. Had the unfortunate May known that there lay ahead of him an especially mean section of crazily rutted sand, he no doubt would have retained both hands on the bars and would not have rocketed into the cantankerous stretch with one hand on the tiller and the other engaged in removing the gas cap for a quick refueling. But he doesn't know, and pays for the lack of information with a corkscrew flip and crash landing that completely wipes the forks from his machine and fairly jars the daylight out of the rider.

It was just another of those unfortunate happenings that make any of the finishers of the annual Big Bear a hero in the eyes of their fond boosters. In the true tradition of the West, they sorrowfully give the fallen mount a slug from the old six-gun and lead May away, mumbling something about "haste makes waste."

From the eighth check, the snow-capped Big Bear mountain rears its ma-



Leaving a gas check, contestants "pour it on." Photo by Bill Bagnall.

desert floor. In the crystal desert air it seems no more than a short jaunt away, but to the contestants, already worn and weary, it is another 40 miles and definitely the most dreaded section of the course. Even to us spectators, it is good for a shivering thrill, as basking in the warm sunshine of the desert, we look up into a raging snow storm but a few miles away.

We can't ponder long on the contrasting moods of Mother Nature if we are to see the finish, so once again we are on our way and hardly more than minutes later find ourselves in the near-zero-visibility of the storm we had viewed with awe from the desert.

Our arrival at Big Bear finds the resort town crowded with hundreds of shivering fans, seeking at least partial shelter from the driving storm in the lee of the buildings and trees, all anxiously eyeing the roadway for the approach of the 1950 Big Bear Champion. Our timing has been right, as rousing cheers far down the street herald the winner's approach. Unmindful of the storm, everyone rushes forth to add noise and confusion to the great occasion. The new champ is Aub LeBard, wet and tired, but beaming in response to the uproarious acclaim he has so well earned, and happy that the long, arduous and hazardous grind is at an end. (His time over the approximate 185 mile course was 4 hours, 26 minutes.)

If Aub's circulation has been retarded by the biting cold of the storm, the boisterous and merciless back-slapping quickly restores the normal flow. Yes, indeed, everyone loves a winner.

Some ten minutes later, George Gunther arrives in second spot and is rewarded with a welcome but little less exuberant than that accorded the winner. Then comes Walt Fulton for another round of hearty cheers. What a thrill it must be for these fellows.

On and on they come, at irregular intervals, singly and in pairs, and not one without a welcoming committee. It is interesting to note that each succeeding arrival and his mount bears increasing evidence of the mounting fury of the storm. Where the early arrivals were wet, the later have ice frozen on their clothing. Where the early machines had rims ringed with snow, the wheels of the later are fairly packed. This evidence arouses grave concern for the security of the riders still out somewhere along the tricky, isolated mountain trails. Sub-zero weather and snow of several feet in depth often closes Big Bear in a mere matter of hours. We share the hope of all that no misfortune shall mar the great event.

It is a matter of record that, due to the extensiveness of the course and the inaccessibility of much of the terrain covered, the curtain sometimes doesn't fall on the Big Bear for several days following the event. In this instance, with arrivals ceasing with the 87th finisher, we wonder just how the 22 who have fallen by the wayside have fared. In many instances, it will mean an anxious search by their friends and families, involving likely an organized back-tracking and the questioning of



Tex Martin comes out of the wilds onto the cleared trail and sights the finish just ahead.  
Photo by Bill Bagnall

many contestants and officials. In past years the actual task of retrieving motors that had failed under the intense abuse, often was still in progress several days following the run. For us, at least, the 1950 Big Bear is completed and we wend our way back to Los Angeles. It has been a great day and a mighty thrilling one even in the modest role of spectator.

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Before adding Finis to this story, permit me a few more comments in retrospect:

First, great credit must go to the members of the Three Point Motorcycle Club who are responsible for planning, preparing and checking the run. It truly is a Trojan task and the many riders with whom I discussed the event were emphatic in their unstinted praise of the manner in which the Run was handled. Special credit is due Don Alfred and Sid Levy, the Master Hares, who rode over the complete run in advance of the contestants, checking the marking of the course. Also to be cited for meritorious service is Frank McCartney, the hard-worked referee, and the many checkers, especially those who manned the final check for hours in the face of driving snow and rain.

A comment on the system of checking should be of interest. In addition to the usual signed check sheets, each machine had a card taped to the top of the tank which was rubber stamped at each check. At the finish a quick glance at this card told whether the rider had completed all checks, making it possible to immediately determine the official winner.

In order to fill in many of the blank spaces necessarily left in this relatively brief recording of an event of such magnitude, you are invited to study the tabulated results accompanying this story. In

addition to the official list of winners, you will find a box score showing the position of each of the first ten places at the intermediate checks. For example, you will note that sixth place winner, Carey Loftin, was 31st at Check 3; 22nd at Check 4; 20th at Check 5; 13th at Check 6; 12th at Check 7; 9th at Check 8, and, of course, 6th at the finish. This certainly established that he was doing a mighty fine job of riding. You will find it interesting to compare each rider's performance in this manner.

The next box score shows the first 10 men to arrive at each intermediate check and will enable you to determine the approximate distance at which many of the early contenders, for one reason or another, disappeared from the scene.

The third box score shows the percentage of starters and finishers for each make of motorcycle.

Oh yes, hearkening back to the comments in the story regarding the difficulties in retrieving some of the disabled motors in the run—consider this newspaper item printed the day after the Run: "After spending an uncomfortable night in a Jeep snow-bound on Big Bear mountain, Bill Martin and his son were today rescued from possible freezing after being spotted by a searching helicopter pilot. The men were trapped while endeavoring to retrieve their motorcycles which had stalled in the Annual Big Bear Run."

It wouldn't be proper to close without extending congratulations to the lone (I believe) Eastern representative in the contest, well-known and popular Julius Kroecker. Julius finished in 5th place after a splendid performance that you may see by checking the box scores. I share with all California motorcyclists the hope that next year will see Julius back again and with a group of Eastern contestants.

# OFFICIAL BOX SCORES ON BIG BEAR NATIONAL

(COMPLETE LIST OF FINISHERS—TWO HUNDRED NINE STARTERS)

1. Aub LeBard ..... BSA	30. Everett T. Lower ..... Triumph	59. Dale Brown ..... AJS
2. George Gunther ..... Matchless	31. Don J. Jones ..... BSA	60. Tex Myers ..... Triumph
3. Walt Fulton ..... Triumph	32. Dick Austin ..... Harley	61. Rick Pearson ..... Matchless
4. Charles Minert ..... BSA	33. Richard Mills ..... BSA	62. Bob Bratton ..... BSA
5. Julius Kroeger ..... Matchless	34. Max Bubeck ..... Indian	63. Robert M. Law ..... Triumph
6. Carey Loftin ..... Panther	35. Hazen Bair ..... AJS	64. R. G. Lasker ..... Triumph
7. Chuck Parkyn ..... Matchless	36. Bill West ..... Norton	65. Vic Marshall ..... AJS
8. Guy Lewis ..... AJS	37. Bob Harrison ..... Matchless	66. Dan Kline ..... BSA
9. Cleve McNeal ..... Triumph	38. Rolla Henderson ..... Indian	67. Doug Postell ..... Velocette
10. Dalton Holladay ..... AJS	39. Harrison Reno ..... Harley	68. Bill Rantz ..... Indian
11. Swede Belin ..... Harley	40. Tex Martin ..... Triumph	69. Keenan Wynn ..... AJS
12. Edgar W. Sumner ..... Indian	41. John F. Blakeney ..... AJS	70. Eddie Jones ..... Ariel
13. Ray Phillips ..... BSA	42. Doug Laffer ..... AJS	71. Chester Sitterly ..... AJS
14. Wally Remmel ..... Triumph	43. Paul Rasmussen ..... AJS	72. Harold Walker ..... AJS
15. Bob Sothern ..... Triumph	44. Gordon Millen ..... AJS	73. A. J. Leidy ..... Matchless
16. Dutch Sterner ..... Matchless	45. Garret H. Dokter ..... Matchless	74. Roger Smith ..... Indian
17. Otis E. Griffin ..... Triumph	46. Garry Mullard ..... Velocette	75. R. P. Rudge ..... Norton
18. Wilbur Webb ..... AJS	47. Harold Morris ..... Triumph	76. Joe Shaffer ..... Triumph
19. James Mercier ..... AJS	48. Wm. McInerney ..... AJS	77. Al Jacobi ..... Ariel
20. Paul Sperlich ..... AJS	49. Gene McAfee ..... Triumph	78. Frank Calla ..... BSA
21. Doug Slayton ..... BSA	50. James G. Johnson ..... AJS	79. Ted K. Martin ..... Norton
22. Wally Allbright ..... AJS	51. Donald Carey ..... Matchless	80. Howard Streman ..... BSA
23. Ralph Gordon ..... Harley	52. Dick Dunavant ..... Triumph	81. Johnny Simpson ..... Matchless
24. Burt Raush ..... AJS	53. John E. Burns ..... Panther	82. Glen A. Lenz ..... Triumph
25. Chuck Cripps ..... AJS	54. Vernal Sumner ..... Indian	83. Gordon Russell ..... BSA
26. John McLaughlin ..... Harley	55. Woodie Keller ..... Triumph	84. Jack Colby ..... BSA
27. Danny Macias ..... Triumph	56. James Gilmore ..... BSA	85. Jim Holmes ..... Matchless
28. Al Titus ..... BSA	57. Irving Libow ..... Harley	86. Garry Hull ..... AJS
29. Herbert Boesch ..... Harley	58. R. A. O. Pertus ..... Triumph	87. Roger Gamaunt ..... Harley

## PROGRESSIVE SCORE OF THE FIRST TEN FINISHERS

Contestants	LeBard	Gunther	Fulton	Minert	Kroeger	Loftin	Parkyn	Lewis	McNeal	Holladay
Finish	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
8th Check	1	2	4	6	12	9	3	5	8	17
7th Check	1	2	4	8	14	12	5	6	9	22
6th Check	1	3	6	7	16	13	8	9	5	24
5th Check	2	4	6	8	17	20	11	14	12	13
4th Check	3	4	7	15	18	22	8	14	9	11
3rd Check	3	4	6	7	16	31	11	18	15	14

## LOG OF THE LEADERS AT THE 3rd to 8th CHECKS

8th Check	7th Check	6th Check	5th Check	4th Check	3rd Check
1—Aub LeBard	Aub LeBard	Aub LeBard	Del Kuhn	Del Kuhn	Del Kuhn
2—Geo. Gunther	Geo. Gunther	Del Kuhn	Nick Nicholson	Nick Nicholson	Nick Nicholson
3—Chuck Parkyn	Ernie May	Geo. Gunther	Aub LeBard	Aub LeBard	Aub LeBard
4—Walt Fulton	Walt Fulton	Ernie May	Geo. Gunther	Geo. Gunther	Geo. Gunther
5—Guy Lewis	Chuck Parkyn	Cleve McNeal	Ernie May	Ernie May	Ernie May
6—Chas. Minert	Guy Lewis	Walt Fulton	John Bolotin	John Bolotin	Walt Fulton
7—Ralph Adams	Ralph Adams	Chas. Minert	Walt Fulton	Walt Fulton	Chas. Minert
8—Cleve McNeal	Charles Minert	Chuck Parkyn	Chuck Parkyn	Chuck Parkyn	John Bolotin
9—Carey Loftin	Cleve McNeal	Guy Lewis	Cleve McNeal	Cleve McNeal	Moose Paige
10—Ray Phillips	Ray Phillips	Ralph Adams	Wilbur Webb	Wilbur Webb	Ralph Adams

## RECAPITULATION OF STARTERS AND FINISHERS

Make of Machine	A.J.S.	Ariel	B.S.A.	Harley-Davidson	Indian	Matchless
Start	49	9	36	32	17	23
Finish	20	2	14	9	6	11
Percentage	41.65%	22.22%	38.88%	28.12%	35.30%	47.83%

  

Make of Machine	Mustang	Norton	Panther	Rudge	Triumph	Velocette
Start	3	3	2	1	31	6
Finish	0	3	2	0	18	2