



## BIG MOUNTAIN ENDURO BRINGS WORLD SERIES TO U.S.

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY DEVON BALET

**T**he Big Mountain Enduro (BME) series has entered its third year in 2014, its second under the ownership of Brandon Ontiveros. The BME has seen some of the stiffest competition and tightest racing of any U.S.-based enduro series, and this year it brought competitors to Snowmass, Durango, and Keystone, Colorado; Moab, Utah; and, for the series finale, Crested Butte, Colorado.

With a late winter season, crews in Snowmass were scrambling to clear trails and prepare for the first event of the year. Racer numbers tipped the max with nearly 300 participants taking on Snowmass Mountain and the surrounding trails for seven stages of racing.

For many of the enduro races, resort bike parks are utilized for their wide range of trails. A unique aspect to BME is the use of comparatively more backcountry routes. Durango was a true backwoods enduro, as racers were sent off the top of Kennebec Pass on the Colorado Trail for 22 miles of grueling competition. Even though racers saw a massive overall descent from 11,600 feet at the top to 6,512 feet below in Durango, it was far from being all downhill.

“One of the most difficult things for us putting on these remote backcountry events is timing,” says BME director Ontiveros. “The locations of some of our stages make it difficult for timing logistics. We are always looking into ways to improve in this area, to continue to put on world-class events.”

And world class they have become. The World Cup of enduro, known as the Enduro World Series (EWS), recently announced it would be host-

ing one of its races in 2015 under the wings of BME in Crested Butte.

“The announcement on the 2015 EWS tour was huge for us,” continues Ontiveros. “We want to continue to produce world-class events for the riders, sponsors, and spectators. I wanted to get to the EWS level as quick as possible once taking over BME. However, the best part about putting on this race series is being able to select and ride the best trails that we can get permitted in our region and getting to see the energy and stoke of racers after finishing a stage.”

When asked about this year’s racing, 2013 series overall winner Nate Hills simply replied, “The competition this year is on another level from years past. Leading the series, I have a bullseye painted on my back. The veterans of this sport—Ross Schnell, Jeremy Horgan-Kobelski, and Mike West—are always contenders on any given day, on any given track, and the younger guys, like Kyle Warner, Marco Osborne, and Cody Kelley, are starting to figure this game out.”

The top pros in the series aren’t just racing for bragging rights. There is some serious coin on the line, with payouts going five deep in both the pro men’s and women’s fields. With \$34,000 of payouts during the series and \$10,000 for the finale in Crested Butte, it is no wonder that every pro is giving it their all for the top steps of the podium.

The future of enduro racing looks bright here in the U.S. With race series like BME, we’ll see this new discipline continue to grow and evolve as it goes from a relatively unknown event to the forefront of mountain bike racing. **DIRT**