

Scooterists to test endurance throughout Tahoe



Alan Spears, above, during the Hell's Loop T.T. 375-Mile Extreme Endurance Race; Linda Hurley, top right; Raven Fischer, right, on her 1981 Vespa PX200e.

Photos/Provided

By Jessie Marchesseau

Extreme is not necessarily the first thing that comes to mind when one thinks of motor scooters. However, this weekend's 320-mile Lake Tahoe T.T. Motor-Scooter Endurance Race may just change your opinion of scooting.

Riders will set out from Motel 6 in South Lake Tahoe at 7:30am May 4 traveling east to Carson City, then through Reno, Truckee, Auburn, Placerville, back to South Lake, then around the lake through Tahoe City and Incline Village, ending once again at the Motel 6. According to Mapquest.com, the entire route should take more than seven hours in a car.

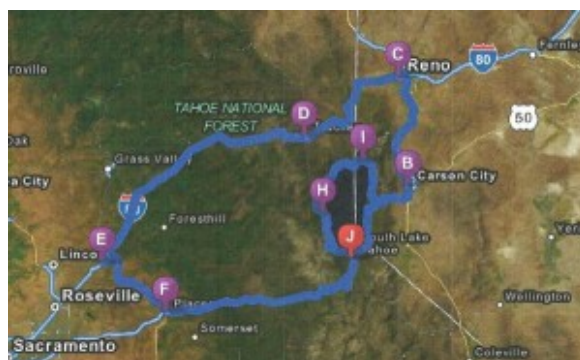
But these are not cars, they are scooters. They range from 49cc to 650cc. These machines won't be doing 75 up a mountain

pass. Alan Spears, president-CEO of Motor-Scooter International Land-Speed Federation, said most of them will only do 60 to 65 mph on a good day.

Participant Raven Fischer rides a 1981 Vespa that she said is “comfortable going 45 miles per hour.” Fischer is expecting to ride her scooter for at least nine hours straight on race day.

The term “race” is somewhat of a misnomer for an event that is really more of a rally. Riders will have designated checkpoints along the route, and breaking the law in any way, including speeding, is grounds for instant disqualification.

Participant Linda Hurley considers herself a very conservative rider; she does not break any traffic laws and hardly ever splits lanes. She also has one of the smallest engines in her class. However, she has won three MSILSF scooter endurance races and placed second in another. Her advantage, she said, comes from planning and sheer endurance.



The course.

“I definitely like the preparation and studying the route and trying to figure out what my competitive edge would be,” she said.

Hurley has added an auxiliary fuel tank to her scooter for this race. She estimates the entire route will take around 8.5 gallons of gas. The extra 5-gallon tank means she will likely not have to make any fuel stops all day. This four to six minute time saver could mean the difference between first and

second place.

Fischer, on the other hand, is not concerned about what place she finishes. As the rider of one of very few vintage scooters in the field, she expects to be in the back of the pack, and is just fine with that. Fischer is a newcomer to the MSILSF circuit looking for a fun ride and the opportunity to connect with other riders who share her love of scooters.

“You make your own fun in this world,” she told *Lake Tahoe News*. “That’s why I like scooterists; they make their own fun.”

Having recently completely rebuilt her Vespa by herself, Fischer, who is not a mechanic and did the work entirely from a handbook and YouTube videos, is hoping her handiwork holds up to the stress of an endurance race. She acknowledges that she may have to make adjustments during the race and could even encounter mechanical problems. But for her, that is part of the excitement.

All competitors will race at the same time, but the field is divided into four classes based on engine size, plus a sidecar division. Spears, who raced sidecar motorcycles professionally for Harley-Davidson in the late 1970s, will be participating in the sidecar class.

After taking a break from motorcycle racing, Spears switched to scooters for medical reasons. He wanted to give scooterists an opportunity to race, too, and founded MSILSF in 2010. The organization had its first land-speed trials in late 2010 and its first endurance race in 2011. The Lake Tahoe T.T. will be the sixth event hosted by MSILSF and one of the most challenging.

There will be a \$500 purse for the first place rider, but for most it’s not about the money. They are in it for fun, for a challenge, to enjoy the open road and to meet other riders. And for Spears, to bring a little recognition to scooting.

“Because someday we’ll all be riding them because of gas,” he told *Lake Tahoe News*.