



Baja Ultra Endurance 100k Race, battle to the end.

Baja Stile racing sounds like flat, sandy and hot desert, but it surprised me to find great rocky climbs, awesome singletrack and great views. The 100K race took place in the beach town of Ensenada, Baja California Mexico, The town is real into all kinds of sports and the nice locals love cycling. Besides being famous for great fishing, this town is also well known for holding the famous Baja 1000 car race.

I've heard rumors about Baja's sea food, and as soon as I arrived I tried many of the dishes, all I can say is that I will come back to this town just to eat the great fresh out of the water fish, lobster, shrimp you name it is all great and the best part it is affordable.

Well I guess I came here to race my bike, so back to the race details. Over 250 riders headed out to the Ensenada desert, Turbo one of the strongest Mexico MTB teams came to the second edition of the Baja Ultra Endurance, they made the trip from Guadalajara about a 3 hour flight to get here, with 6 total riders on the squad I knew that I had a good fight, if I wanted to win I needed to be smart and choose by battles. The pace was fast right out of the gate, I will look around and all I could see was the yellow colors of the Turbo team, with really strong riders working and attacking constantly for most the first 50k we were ahead of last year's record time established by former Olympic and World Champion Miguel Martinez by over 8 minutes, Martinez raced under the French colors and still is a great rider, his most recent victory includes winning the 2008 Sea Otter Classic XC race in Monterrey California.

For those who live in Orange County and are familiar with the MTB trail around here the course used for the Baja Ultra Endurance is like riding in the main divide area but with less climbing. The course compares a lot to the one used on the Traverse race.

Arriving 2 days before the start gave me the chance to pre-ride the first 20k and the last 18k of the route, it really came in hand to know the start as the organizers had a KOM \$500 price at the 13k mark, by this point I was riding with the 2 strongest Turbo riders, Emanuel Valencia former U23 Pan-American Champion and current Mexico National Champion Ignacio Torres the duo rode really strong, but they did not seem to have know where the KOM price was, my eyes where almost glued to my Powertap bike computer and when the 13k mark was near I went with all I had, by the time I crossed the line for the KOM price I had about 100 meters advantage on the Turbo duo. From this point on Turbo played a very smart race and decided to wait for the rest of the team who were chasing about 90 seconds back, once they made it to the front the attacks started. I made sure I covered Nacho" and Valencia because I knew that they were strong, eventually those two made a 1-2 punch and I got dropped, the gap grew to about 30 seconds at one point, when you are climbing 30 seconds feel like a long time . Once we crested the second biggest climb we had a long descent, I knew that my brand new 2009 S-Works bike was going to take care of business, by the time we reached the bottom of the descent I had them very close in range, once I caught them I counter attack them just to mess with their heads and let them know that I was still strong. From that point on we were starting to get tired and our bodies were starting to fatigue, this race happened right in the middle of my preparation for the La Ruta race so I had plenty of miles under my legs which gave me confidence that I was going to have it for the end of the race. Soon enough after I started to make plans for the win I get a slow leak on my front tire, this was due to hitting a water bar going 50+KPM, my tire bead got out of place and it started to lose air. The Turbo duo sensed what was happening and as soon as I stopped to put air on my tire they took off like mad. My Co2 did not work and I had to flag a rider that happened to be doing the shorter 65k ride, he was very kind and loaned me his pump, after I got some air on my front tire I got going, a little bit disappointed I rode a strong hard tempo with the faith that I will catch them, at the

same time I thought that they were so equally matched to my strengths that there was no way to catch them back. About 6K later I was able to see one of them and realized that I still had a chance to win this race, it was like a shark when it smells blood, I went after my pray and caught both of them, with 10k to go I lost air on my front tire again and had to come to a complete stop, by this point it was only Valencia who was ridding at the front with me, I asked him for air and guess what? He gave me his Co2 inflator, I quickly got it pumped and rolled by his side. I was not sure whether or not to pass him and take the win so I waited and rode with him for another 2k, very closed to the finish he got a flat tire and by that point it was over for him. Unable to see him in the final straight towards the finish I decided to take the victory, at the end of the race we all knew that the strongest rider won obviously thanks to the kind help of those on the race course.

I had planned to eat a fresh lobster after the race if I could take the win, so for dinner I went to the best Marisqueria place in Ensenada to have my prize.

The race was very well organized, the course was well marked and the staff was very friendly and helpful, I'm looking forward to coming back and do this race again in 2009.

[For those of you who also read Spanish check out the local news paper "El Mexicano" featuring a full article about the race with results and finishing times.](#)

Pro Elite Results:

- 1st Manuel Prado, Team Sho-Air**
- 2nd Emmanuel Valencia, Team Turbo**
- 3rd Juan Carlos Hernández, Team Turbo**

Thanks for reading.

