

Red Leg Raceway Offers Welcome Respite From Iraq Duties

Story by Master Sgt. Duff McFadden

The sound reaches you first. A low-pitched drone, like a swarm of angry hornets, winds its way through the hot, dry air near the 1st Battalion, 9th Field Artillery headquarters here on Contingency Operating Site Marez.

Dust flies up from behind a line of Hesco barriers, just beyond a parking area full of Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles and armored tanks, softly filtering through a bank of electrical lights.

It's Saturday night. Once the sun goes down and the lights come up, it's race time at Red Leg Raceway in Mosul, Iraq.

The 300-foot long, five-turn, four-jump raceway offers racing in its simplest form – there are no club memberships, track or entry fees. More importantly, it provides a welcome respite from the grind of daily missions for the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division soldiers and civilians stationed here.

According to track organizer and racer, Chief Warrant Officer Dan Howison, a battalion maintenance mechanic technician with the 1/9th FA, it took about a month for him and co-founder, Sgt. 1st Class Peter Ruiz, to build the track up to its present standard.

“The original pad was a flat pile of dirt with three jumps. Over time, we moved more than seven dumptruck loads of dirt by hand, shovel, sandbag, wheelbarrow and gator vehicle.

The Raceway debuted Feb. 7, on a Sunday afternoon, with 12 racers and four classes. Race night was changed to 7 p.m. on Saturday evenings to ensure more participation and to avoid the heat. High temperatures aren't just a stressor for the drivers and fans, but for the equipment, as well. It's hard to set a car up to run in 65-70 degree temperatures, and expect the same performance at 100 degrees or higher.

Racers show up as early as 5 p.m. to get a spot in the pits. Drivers sign out track-provided transponders so their laps will be scored by the digital counter. Once everyone has signed in, the order of the race classes are drawn from a hat.

The track sanctions nine different classes that includes an SC10 two-wheel drive class, a Buggy/Truggy class and a Monster Truck class.

The most popular class, by far, is the SC10 4wd, with approximately seven to 10 cars racing each Saturday.

While the track is used daily for practice, it's shut down on Fridays for maintenance and is off-limits until the green flag drops on race night. Volunteers spread fresh dirt, repair jumps, fix pot holes, rake and sweep rocks away, and then water the track. They also replace sandbags, repair the pipes lining the raceway, police the area, take out the trash and refill the fuel cans, light sets and refrigerator.

The Raceway also sponsors a Facebook page called “Red Leg Racing, Mosul.” The page features pictures, race results and point standings, as well as good-natured ribbing between the drivers. Read the entire story and see more photos online at www.motorsportamerica.com



The pit area begins to fill up, as competitors arrive for another Saturday night of racing at the Red Legs Raceway at Contingency Operating Site Marez. The five-turn, 300-foot track, built as a labor of love by Soldiers of the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, provides a welcome respite from daily missions in Mosul, Iraq.



Drivers man the tower, as the first heat of the Sports Class 10, Four-wheel Drive race gets underway.



Spc. Ken Ault, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 9th Field Artillery, adjusts the toe-in on his RC race car during Saturday night racing at Red Legs Raceway.



A stable of race cars await their turn to run at the Red Legs Raceway at Contingency Operating Site Marez. The five-turn, 300-foot track, built as a labor of love by Soldiers of the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division.



Chief Warrant Officer Dan Howison, a battalion maintenance technician with the 1st Battalion, 9th Field Artillery, helped create the Red Legs Raceway.

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