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Eric Peronnard is one of the founding fathers of EnduroCross and is now taking it global.

SKY FAL

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It wasn't long ago that you could type the word "EnduroCross" into Google and come up with nothing. But unless you've been living under a rock, you know that the sport that didn't exist less than a decade ago tells quite a different story today. And if you crawled out from under that rock, you might see case marks on it from budding off-road racers desperate to find anything resembling an EnduroCross obstacle to

be corralled, and continued its expansion, drawing more factory support than any other discipline of motorcycle racing.

In 2011, we saw AMA EnduroCross take its rightful place in the world of extreme sports, officially becoming an ESPN X Games event, and bringing dirt bikes, boulders, logs and tractor tires into the Los Angeles STAPLES Center. With an eight-round series including a return to the Summer X Games in 2012, it seemed as though EnduroCross had reached quite a pinnacle,

GLOBAL EXTREMES

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TALKS ABOUT
ELEVATING
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train on. It's the best (or worst) of off-road, slammed together into an indoor arena for a relentless racecourse where anything can and does happen. Thanks to jaw-dropping moments unfolding season after season, with personalities and race endings that couldn't have been scripted any better, we've seen EnduroCross grow from a sparsely attended one-off event to a premier nationwide series. Even in the face of an economic downturn that crippled the motorsports industry, EnduroCross would not

but Eric Peronnard – the man most directly behind the creation and growth of AMA EnduroCross – is now ready to usher in the next era of the premier extreme off-road series. Global X Games.

Catching up with the affable globetrotting Frenchman is no easy task, but we managed to sit him down long enough to hear more about what it took to bring EnduroCross to such unthinkable heights, what is involved in the newly announced Global X Games Enduro X competitions, what it's going to take to score

ENDUROCROSS FOUNDER ERIC PERONNARD

an invite, and how a “Supercross aspect” could prove to be a real game changer for the world’s best extreme off-roaders.

Tell us about the next era of EnduroCross.

As everybody knows, we’ve been working really hard with ESPN the last two years. ESPN embraced the sport of EnduroCross two years ago and we had two very successful EnduroCross’ at X Games in the STAPLES Center. Following that from last year they started working on a global X Games program and starting in 2013 we will have four X Games traveling the world. It’s exciting to have the X Games expanding, but the biggest news is that EnduroCross is part of the expansion. It will be the only racing activity going global as far as motorcycles are concerned with at the X Games.

Which countries will be involved?

We have four races so it’s going to be mid-April in Brazil Foz do Iguacu. Mid May will be in Barcelona in the Olympic stadium and mid-June will be in Munich at the Munich stadium and we’ll be back in L.A. the first days of August for the final round of X Games.

Is the X Games series going to be separate from the AMA championship?

Yes, it’s a little bit complicated to try to have a U.S. championship on foreign soil. It’s not impossible, but I think the first year we should be careful and not



You know EnduroCross is something exciting to watch when ESPN accepts it into its fold.

make it overly complicated. So all four rounds will be stand-alone X Games events. So there will be the Brazilian X Games champ or the German X Games champ and so on.

These are going to be invitationals?

Yes. Actually the format will be slightly different because we will be using Olympic-size stadiums

so they will be Coliseum size. The track will be much wider, much faster. It’s going to be Supercross with EnduroCross. One of the things we’re going to do is have less riders but bigger heats. The format will be 24 riders instead of 30 but the main will be with 15 instead of 10 because the track will be much bigger. It’s really to be confirmed, but most likely, that’s



what it will be. I've been working on this project for several months already and it's kind of being fine-tuned at this point.

Are you planning to have the AMA big hitters at all these events?

Yeah, absolutely. Basically, everybody that made the main in the men's class at the X Games in the last two years is invited. Plus,

the top 20 riders from the 2012 AMA EnduroCross Championship are invited. And all the ladies that got a medal over the last two years are invited, as well. The great news is that the ladies are part of the program and they're coming with us.

Many of these off-road guys don't come from a very international background; what do

you think it will be like bringing them to compete in different countries?

To some extent, we will (need to hold their hands), but I think it's going to be very exciting. We talked with everybody already and everybody is just beside themselves. We're not having a great motorcycle economy and we have a lot of bad news in our sport, and in the face of the doom and gloom, I think something like this is like Christmas four times a year for the off-road community. This is also a great opportunity for all the riders' sponsors. Going global, they're going to be exposing their brand to millions of people. We're talking about 500 million people globally for the whole X Games as far as viewers.

What sort of coverage will be coming to the U.S. from these games?

The same live coverage as you have in the U.S. Brazil is on east coast time, so we will be watching the X Games like it was in Florida, basically. That's valuable. As a one-off event, X Games motorsports – freestyle or Enduro X – gets bigger coverage than the average Supercross. But that's only one time a year. Now it will be four times a year.

How many hours of ESPN coverage will they get?

It's going to get an hour and a half of EnduroCross racing – men and women – at every race, which is basically what they have in the U.S. So we're talking about six hours of coverage.

ENDURO CROSS FOUNDER ERIC PERONNARD



Peronnard is liked among the riders - he listens to them, like he is here with AMA EnduroCross champ Taddy Blazusiak.

different tracks into one track.

I think people are getting confused and thinking that the AMA rounds will incorporate more Supercross-type elements. But you're saying that is not the case?

No. Just the Global X Games are going to get faster and bigger because of the size of the stadium.

Kawasaki ended its Team Green off-road program last year but the company will continue to support Taylor Robert and Justin Soule in EnduroCross, which is good news for all, but factory support is certainly hard to come by for off-road right now. How frustrating is that for you?

It's not [so much] frustration because frustration is something you can control. But at the same time we have small teams - we have Husky doing great, Beta is doing fantastic. This is the last chance you have to expose your product to 50,000 people in the U.S. a year without being a \$5 million factory team. Anybody could come to an EnduroCross and win, overnight, if he had the talent. He would not be slowed down by equipment. We have one of our best riders - Bryan Roper - who is a contender for the junior championship and he was on a four-year-old bike. You cannot do that in any other sport.

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I think that's a big satisfaction to all the people that have been working hard to build EnduroCross.

Can you talk about the format for 2013? We keep hearing about Supercross aspects being brought into the series.

Just the global ones. The U.S. will stay the same. Maybe in the future we'll end up at a bigger stadium for EnduroCross once we see how it works globally. But right now it's not in the picture yet. The Global X Games will be held in stadiums, and the Enduro X course will be built around the outer section of the floor, with Freestyle in the center. We have Freestyle, Speed and Style, and Enduro X - we have to get three

ums we're at. We have to let riders shift in third and fourth gear when you have that size track.

It's comforting to know that the core of EnduroCross is going to stay strictly “extreme enduro” and not moving in a Supercross direction.

Absolutely not.

On that note, do you think that EnduroCross will ever be as big as Supercross? Will it eventually fill stadiums as a standalone event?

It's too early to say. I do not believe we can get the size of Supercross because Supercross has a 40-year lead. I think it could have had potential if EnduroCross could have been invented in the 70s. I think it could have



been big like Supercross, but today we have to be very happy with what we have. We have the third-most successful off-road series in America, after Supercross and Motocross, and it's only eight years old. It's nothing to be ashamed of; we are where we belong.

What types of riders can we expect to see at the Global X Enduro X rounds?

We hope to be appealing to some motocross and Supercross stars. It's going to be easier and more flowing so hopefully we'll have a chance to see motocross riders and Supercross guys wanting to take a chance.

Very often in AMA EnduroCross – especially the Vegas rounds – we see top Super-

crossers poking their noses into the arena... like Justin Barcia and Kevin Windham. What do you think it's going to take to get them onto an EnduroCross track?

I think those guys are tempted. I think it's not up to them, sadly. It's corporate policy – they're not really allowed to do other things. But you never know. I know a few riders that would be excited to be part of it. Older motocross riders are tempted; they want to test it, but maybe they won't test it at Global X Games.

Several years ago, Chad Reed was taking a private track walk at the Las Vegas finale. Has he ever talked about coming back?

No, but Justin Barcia was

The EnduroCross podium is the place you want to be these days.

ready to race Ontario and got stopped by Honda. Those guys have the talent; it's just a matter of fine tuning it and adapting to EnduroCross. But they have the talent.

I'm surprised we haven't seen the Alessis line up for an event because they've been in the front row of EnduroCross races cheering like crazy.

They told me they would do it at a later time in their career. It's difficult right now, but I know Jeff and Mike would love to do it at some point. You see ex-Supercross champions like Mike Brown – you see the future! [laughs] **CN**