

The Sweep Rider

By OC Dualies

The Sweep Rider is an important and key position on a dual sport ride and may be misunderstood by many people involved. This article will attempt to clarify the responsibilities of the Sweep Rider to all. For the benefit of riders, promoters and Sweep Riders alike, defined responsibilities and a clear understanding is important so that we can all focus on the reason we are riding....to HAVE FUN.

In my experience, a lot of riders have a misconception that a Sweep Rider is their personal pit crew. IT'S NOT. A few "Sweep Riders" think that it's a free ride without obligation or responsibilities. IT'S NOT. Also a small number of promoters look to Sweep Riders as paid staff, and while I'm sure that can be arranged by mutual agreement, it's NOT automatic.

Depending on the size of the ride, there are often 3 sweeps; an early sweep, a mid sweep and final sweep. Quite often the final sweep is responsible for pulling the ribbon which helps restore the route back to pre-ride condition. This is done the day of the ride so that no one has to miss work on Monday and is the most efficient use of resources. If you're riding slow and are caught by final sweep, you most likely will be asked to take a bailout. Otherwise, you risk getting left behind, without any ribbon or ride support. Follow the Sweep riders' directions!

To the participating riders, Sweep Riders are NOT guides, gas trucks, mechanics, tow services, paramedics, doctors or nurses. They are Dual Sport riders, just like you and I. Sweep Riders often have a lot more experience riding (and racing), and will therefore have a better idea of where they are, and which way is home. They may know how to jury rig or repair something in the field, how to get you back to where your support crew or riding buddies can pick you up with a truck. While some sweep riders are paramedics, most are just aware of the basic dos and don'ts with an injured or unconscious rider.

Sweep Riders are not responsible for saving you from yourself! If you dawdle, take side trips or wrong turns that get you off course or cause the sweep to bypass you, they can't help you. So make every attempt to keep moving at a reasonable pace and on course, well ahead of the final sweep. Be aware that Sweep Riders in the middle of the "pack" will assist you and is a warning to keep moving. Remember time is your biggest enemy on most dual sport rides. If you keep moving, you will have the time to finish the entire route and/or make repairs if you have problems.

Sweep Riders are not normally paid employees of the dual sport event but customarily volunteers who provide this service in lieu of a reduced entry fee. If the ride permits, Dual Sport Clubs (such as the O.C. Dualies) may provide sweep services as part of a fundraising effort in exchange for a small donation to a charity they support.

As a matter of economics and logistics, some rides are too small to require or support a sweep. Most of these rides are restricted by permits from land management agencies to 40 or so riders, making the a ride very costly almost to the point of a guided tour instead of a "ride" where the promoter is not supplying sweep or "chase" vehicles in addition to gear transportation. These "rides" are for experienced riders that are more self-sufficient. This is also the ride that demands riding in pairs or groups. Get yourself a partner you know and trust. That's always the best way anyway. You'd be amazed at how partners keep each other on track/course

Then there are the larger rides that have sufficient numbers of riders that will support free entries or other remuneration or inducement for a sweep and/or chase vehicle (LA-B2V comes to mind). The promoter is able to supply logistics for a lot more support. This still doesn't mean that you don't have to plan for your own support, just that there is a lot more help. You must still use your head.

During the most recent LA-B2V, one rider actually told two different sweep crews that his riding partner had gone for a pickup truck and was then left by the chase 4X4. Then his partner got all of the way into Vegas (passing through the lunch/gas stop without mentioning his stuck

friend) and demanded the chase truck go back out to pick up his friend! Turned out that they didn't have their own pickup/support!

The other option is the fully guided ride. There, a promoter charges for the rider's full support. This is the only way to go when the ride is far away from home, without riding partners or friends to support you unless you are experienced and very self-reliant.

To the promoter, inform participating riders at your event whether there is a Sweep and what the responsibilities of the sweep will be. Once this is done, clearly define your expectations and responsibilities for the Sweep Riders. It is important to understand that the Sweep Riders are an extension of your event and they are there to support you.

To the Sweep Riders, you are there to have fun, but also must realize that this position includes responsibilities. Coordinate your efforts with the other groups of sweep riders and the promoter. Know your route and the best bailouts. Get the cell numbers of everyone involved.

Always travel in pairs. Four riders together are better yet, allowing two to stay with a down rider while two go for help. Always maintain your position with the roll chart so as to be able to help riders who have "gotten off track" and to be able to locate the scene of accidents/injuries and breakdowns to get emergency workers and assistance to the site. A GPS is also helpful, but should not be relied on, solely, as batteries have been known to go dead and shake loose!

Always carry a pencil and paper. Write down riders' information (including emergency contact info.) on those you assist to bailouts or help to pickup points and call for assistance for.

Try to always have basic first aid kits/supplies/survival supplies for those few times you'll need them (taking a basic first aid class or refresher is time well spent). Try to maintain the basic trail tool kits to assist with trailside repairs/assists, tire/tube repairs. Basic communication tools, such as a cell phone, two-way radio, even a dime/quarter (you know most payphones take a quarter now) to make emergency phone calls.

Try to get any broken down riders going again, weighing time, the problem and route, with towing them to the nearest pickup point or leaving the bike to return for it later. Try to get everyone out before dark. Urge slow riders to hustle up, get going or take bailouts to allow them and you to finish before dark.

Should final sweep come up on slow riders, urge them along to the nearest bailout, and then insist they take it as you intend to make speed and pull ribbon (if you are pulling it, and possibly even if you aren't!).

The main thing is.....not to PANIC!

Use your head. Talk out the best solution with your sweep partners.

Have fun!!!

One last thing, the Sweep Rider position is a commitment! If you aren't willing or able to stay the course (i.e. you've got a plane to catch Monday morning, your mother wants you home by 9 p.m., etc.) then don't take on this position. You can still ride with your buddies doing sweep, just let them know that when the going gets tough, you're going, not TOUGHING it out! You might consider volunteering to help out with sign ups or laying out ribbon for the ride.

IN CASE YOU ENCOUNTER AN INJURED RIDER OR ANYONE NEEDING ASSISTANCE PLEASE GATHER THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION AND GIVE TO THE RIDE PROMOTER AFTER THE RIDE.

Rider Name:	_____
Phone #:	_____
Emergency Contact Name	_____
Emergency Contact Phone #	_____
Type Of Problem:	_____
His Location (GPS or Roll Chart)	_____
His License Plate #:	_____
Ask them to check in after ride:	Rider checked in YES/NO @