

A FOX Family Get-Together

Fox Shox gathers racers and the media to celebrate 30 years of success

By Tom Kaiser
Photos by Tom Kaiser
& Clarks Motorsports Imaging

After three decades of building innovative suspension products, multi-dimensional racing success and effective brand marketing, there are a few people into powersports who haven't heard of, rode or raced with Fox Racing Shox.

Not to be confused with Fox Head Inc., a separate company owned by the same family, Bob Fox started Fox Racing Shox in 1980. An ambitious engineer and a speed freak, Fox started his suspension company after realizing a need for better quality, longer-travel dirt bike shocks to keep up with the growing racing scene.

It's been a wild 29 years for the company, with plenty of incredible ups and frustrating downs along the way. These days, Fox Racing Shox has its roots firmly established in the ATV, dirt bike, snowmobile, off-road truck, and bicycle businesses — with racers in nearly every respective series. On the eve of the company's 30th anniversary, Bob and the team thought it was a good time to get everybody together at a California MX track for a big family reunion of sorts.

A Fast History

The attending media and a few Fox racers were treated to drinks, dinner and a film touting the company's roots. In the 1970s, we learned, Mr. Fox had a profitable poker hobby, which afforded him the means to quit his day job and get his company off the ground. At the time, Mr. Fox didn't feel the available dirt bike suspension components were up to the task, so he set out to design something better.

"You've got to enable people to win races," he said in the film. "Our goal [was] to make the best product the customer can buy."

As it turns out, Bob's a very personable and entertaining guy, whose go-get-'em attitude has kept the company taking chances and moving forward.

From the early 1980s, the company gradually expanded beyond dirt bikes and became a force in car racing, off-road racing, mountain bikes and has recently become an original-equipment shock provider for various biking and powersports companies looking to take advantage of the high brand awareness and favorable reputation of Fox Shox.



Family Reunion

So there we were, gathered in one packed dining hall, opposing sides of the wheel-based recreation crowd: dirt bikers exchanging cold glances with the ATV crowd, off-road truck racers strutting around with chest-thumping confidence and wiry mountain bikers wondering how they'd keep up without the power of internal combustion. The room's tension was palpable. Due to the snow-free conditions, snowmobilers were not invited to the festivities.

The following morning the diverse crew gathered for breakfast. Everyone was clearly ready to test out some product with the company's fleet of vehicles from every side of the business. Attendees were encouraged to check out product from every division. Even the incredible Ford F-150 SVT Raptor off-road truck would be available with a professional desert racer behind the wheel, giving thrill rides around the Zaca Station MX facility, located about 40 miles up the Pacific coast from Santa Barbara.

With an ATV MX track, a more aggressive dirt bike track, as well as an elevated, cross-country-type loop around the fringes of the property, there were no restrictions — just grab any Fox Shox-equipped

HIGHLY EVOLVED: Equipped with the Float X Evols, the top-end KTM 450 XC was a fantastic choice for hitting the ATV-specific MX track and the rough woods trails on the property.

machine and drive it like you stole it.

The ATV crowd was accommodated with three utility quads wearing Fox's new utility-specific Podium X air shocks, and a range of sport quads fitted with top-end Float X Evols, Float R AirShox and the Podium X Coil Shocks. Side-by-side enthusiasts were also treated to rides in a Kawasaki Teryx equipped with the company's 2.0 Piggy-Back shocks, with a stock Teryx available for comparison.

Ready To Ride

More than prepared to hit the dirt, everybody grabbed a machine and headed to the respective test areas to experience the product and ride the machines with various Fox shocks installed.

Hitting the sport quads first, we checked out a Can-Am DS450 with Float Rs, a pair of Polaris Outlaws with the Podium X, a Yamaha YFZ450R and KTM 450 XC with the Float X Evols and a Suzuki LT-R450 also beefed up with the

FLEET FOXES: With a pack of Fox-equipped sport quads, utility quads and side-by-sides, it was pretty difficult deciding what to ride next. Actually, it was pretty fun!

Float X — not a bad roster for a day's ride.

Engineers and product gurus pointed out the subtle differences and key qualities to notice out on the track and trail. From this guy's first perspective, it was clear every machine was wearing suspension dramatically better than that of most stock quads.

Across the choppy XC trails, every machine handled the harsh bumps better than a stocker. On the ATV MX track, all machines soaked up harsh landings well, with very controlled, progressive action at the very bottom of the shocks' compression. As expected, the highly adjustable Float X Coil Shox and Evols were best in all situations and delivered noticeably softer landings after every jump.

On the utility side, everyone enjoyed jumping the Polaris Sportsman XP 850

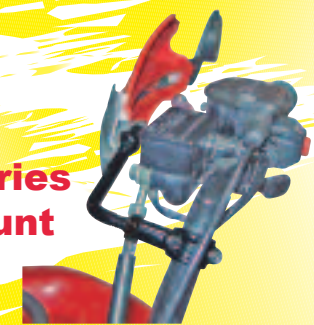


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PROFESSIONAL LINEUP: Fox's full line of ATV and side-by-side shocks. For more information, visit www.foxracingshox.com.

with Podium Xs, with one comparing it to "jumping an Escalade." It was an appropriate analogy, as the already-plush machine was absolutely pillow-soft over trail chatter or harsh landings. It wasn't set up for a rider as substantial as I, so it bottomed out with every big jump. Even so, the suspension travel was progressive and the bottom was softened. Designed to greatly increase the fun factor for utility quads, rebound and dual-speed compression adjustment could have easily tamed the bottom out with more time to futz with settings.

At the end of the scheduled ride time, Fox brought out the big guns with riders Doug Eichner and Larry Heidler taking quads to the dirt bike track for some massive jumping — very impressive.

A Raptor of A Different Color

While we were all encouraged to test out everything, I wasn't about to make a fool

out of myself on a professional dirt bike track, even though I dig dirt bikes, and there wasn't enough time to ride any of the mountain bikes, with all the ATV product to check out.

Taking a break from the track, Fox had a big rush in store for everyone who took up Best In The Desert driver Greg Foutz's offers for rides in Ford's upcoming F-150 SVT Raptor, a street-legal, very cool looking, Fox-equipped desert truck that won't be mistaken for anything else and is just barely breaking a sweat at 85 MPH.

Holding the "oh dear" handle with full force, we rode shotgun while Foutz comfortably extolled the truck's virtues while powersliding through corners, launching the beast into the air and periodically asking his passengers, "You doing okay?" Without exaggeration, it was one of the most thrilling rides of my life, and there's some competition for that title.

A more intellectual buzz came from witnessing a pair of mountain bike guys taking a spin in a Teryx, clearly their first



NO LIMITS: With a good track, professional rider and quality shocks, a mostly-stock ATV can do anything.

such encounter with a side-by-side. While noticing from a distance, they handled themselves well and were absolutely ecstatic about their rides. While switching riders, one exclaimed, "It handles so well! That's just amazing!" Seeing him recount the experience to other bike riders at lunch was the personal highlight of the mission — another convert into the dark world of gas burning, delightful.

Fox officials said they hope to bring the crew back together every year, and we hope they do. The product is clearly top-end, with affordable options as well, the location was great and the company's history within power-sports is legendary — definitely worth the trip. ■



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