



by Mark Mallory

A first timer's perspective **Never Too Late.**

Growing up in Michigan and riding dirt bikes most of my life, it's fair to say I was no stranger to the great trails we have up North. Several times each season, the group I ride with would head up and spend long weekends doing what we all loved to do. Some of the best memories I have were made on trails in Michigan and I think my friends would all agree - it just doesn't get any better than this!

A few years ago, some guys from my local off-road club began making noise about riding the Six Days of Michigan. There was a groundswell of excitement initially, but not long in, I was beginning to ask myself if this wasn't something I should have done in my misspent youth. After all, I'm older now and being honest with myself, I was wondering how well I'd hold up to six full days of single track and dual sport, or if I could do it at all.

Lucky for me, the idea really gained traction with my buddies so we all signed up with that "everyone's in it together" attitude that makes it impossible for anyone to back down. We were committed and by association, that meant I was, too. Six Days... here we come.

The campground experience was something I didn't think about much prior to getting there. Until

our staging day, my only focus was on the riding. Much to my surprise though, it quickly became clear there was a good deal more to the Six Days of Michigan than just seat time. After I had myself set up, some of the guys and I just walked through the campgrounds to familiarize ourselves with the place. We found the rest rooms, the showers and the pavilion where a lot of our group functions would take place during the week. The place even had a camp store with ice, bug spray and the usual essentials for life in the Michigan wilderness. Best of all though, the campground was full of riders from all over the country. I saw license plates from the East coast, the southeast and as far off as California and Washington. There was even a large group from Quebec who I later learned had attended previous Six Days events. It was pretty cool seeing bikes covered with stickers that none of us could read!

For Day 1, we all decided on single track and let me tell you, Six Days really delivered! We had a blast on the tight, twisty trails. It seemed like a smorgasbord with something for everyone - sand, rocks, log crossings and flowing pine forest trails. There was one section of trail that had just flooded from a beaver dam blocking a nearby creek. It didn't look

too bad so we soldiered on through the water (*it was marked trail*) but one of our guys managed to drown his bike in the nearly seat-deep water. We got him going again but we haven't let him forget. He stills hears about that to this day!

Day 2 was much of the same excellent trail but with more hills and long sections of hardwood forest. By the time Day 3 rolled around, some of us were feeling like dual sporting so we went out and had the time of our lives! It was a welcome break from the physical demands of single track but by the end of our route, we'd ridden 140 miles of prime two-tracks and forest roads, complete with a lunch stop at a rustic log cabin diner. It was an epic adventure for certain!

Throughout the week, there was a common thread running through my thoughts. I was kicking myself for not having ridden the Six Days any sooner. If you're a seasoned rider looking for that crown jewel on the bucket list, give Six Days a go. There's still time to experience something like this and the memories and stories you'll have afterwards will reward you for years to come. The Six Days is indeed something special. If you've never done it, my advice is don't put it off. It's never too late. ■