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DESERT RACER ROD HALL TAKES THE FINAL FLAG

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Rod Hall Racing

Rod Hall

Desert racer Rod Hall competed in 50 consecutive Baja 1000s and won class victories in half of them, with an overall victory in 1969. He raced mostly in the American Southwest and in Baja, but competed in the Paris-Dakar and in long-distance races in Australia and Africa, too.

[Rod Hall](#), the desert racing great who used skill, patience, fearlessness and wit to win more races than anyone in the history of the sport, has died at 81.

“No one in SCORE International racing history has raced longer, harder or better than Rod Hall,” said a statement from racing sanctioning body SCORE International. “Since his (class) win at the inaugural 1967 1000, he has racked up a collection of Baja 1000 and Baja 500 wins, as well as a record of consecutive wins, that will most likely never be equalled.”

Hall competed in a remarkable 50 consecutive Baja 1000s, winning overall in 1969 and winning his class 25 times. His final Baja 1000 was in 2017, which he ran just shy of his 80th birthday. In the late '70s and early '80s, driving a 4WD Dodge for Bill Stroppe, Hall and co-driver Jim Fricker strung together 37 consecutive SCORE and HDRA race wins, according to the Off-Road Motorsports Hall of Fame, a record unbroken to this day and one that will likely remain so. He finished second in the 1982 Marlboro Safari Rally in Kenya, won the 12,500-mile Repco Reliability Trials in Australia and returned to that event in 1985 to win the Production 4WD class. In 1993 Hall switched to Hummer and represented that brand for the rest of his driving career, which included more class wins in Baja as well as fourth- and fifth-place finishes with son Chad in the 1996 Paris-Dakar.

His wins include 10 Mint 400s, 10 Parker 400s, 12 Fireworks 250s, and 12 Baja 500 and 17 Baja 1000 class victories. He won 14 major class points championships in production 4WD vehicles and “well over” 150 major events, according to the Off-Road Motorsports Hall of Fame, which inducted him in 2005

He wasn't always the fastest off the line, though. He learned early on the value of patience, especially in races that could last days instead of hours, minutes or seconds. Hall learned early on to take care of the race truck so it'd make it all the way to the finish line, epitomizing the adage that to finish first, first you have to finish.

“I was never a fast guy, and I was never the first guy to the first checkpoint,” Hall said in a SCORE video. “But I did learn that you don't go

any slower than you have to in the rough stuff, maybe you can just pull out a mile and a half faster than the other guys without beatin' up your car. Anybody can go fast in the fast area, but it's the slower areas, I think, where I learned how to win races."

Survival was critical, especially in early races when technology was crude or non-existent. There was no GPS in that first Baja 1000 in 1967, for instance.

"We all just dove off into the desert in Tijuana and a coupla' days later some of us showed up in La Paz," he once told Autoweek.

"The first Baja 1000 came by in 1967, from Tijuana to La Paz, and you gotta remember, in 1967 it was pretty barren country down there," Hall said in the SCORE video. "There were no paved roads and there were no signs that said, 'La Paz This Way.' The way we navigated was we just took the main road and the main road was what the race course was on, so the only thing you had to do was make the checkpoints."

He made them all, for 50 years straight, and did it with humour.

"To be a desert racer takes two things," he once said. "You've got to be tough and dumb; either order's okay."

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