

Buggies Roll At Night

Two California dune buggy teams last night were still battling after midnight in the fourth annual \$100,000 Mint 400 Del Webb Desert Rally, America's richest and toughest off-road race.

Only two of the 50-odd teams, still in the race, had completed 350 miles at 10 p.m. last night and a winner was not expected to be declared officially until sometime this morning.

Two minutes apart in elapsed time after seven of the eight laps around the 50-mile course were the teams of Fritz Kroyer - and Bill Harkey in a Hi-Jumper VW buggy and Bob Ferro, and Brian Skipper in a Sandmaster VW dunes buggy.

Their duel overshadowed the woes of Parnelli Jones and Al Unser, who briefly led the race after 100 miles.

Crowd favorite Jones started in the ninth wave of rivers, 45th in the order after

he first green flag dropped at 10 a.m. He was the fifth driver to complete the first lap and the second to finish the first 100 miles.

Unser then took the wheel charged past the leading team of Gene Hirst and John Harley on the third lap.

The Sandmaster experienced in 11 hours 47 minutes for the seven laps to 11 hours 49 min-

Kroyer-Harkey were clocked mental buggy driven by Hirst broke down and retired from the race.

Approaching check point way around the fifty-mile course, Unser noted the loss of power, which turned out to be a broken right rear axle.

After a brief examination, Jones brought the Bronco limping into the pit, where his crew worked an hour and a half with a welding kit, making repairs.

Jones, hopelessly out of contention, charged off into the darkening desert at about 4:30 p.m. to see how far the LPG-powered car would go.

Unser, meanwhile, showered, changed clothes and was last seen at the Mint Gun Club playing blackjack.

On the opening lap, Lee Breedlove Frank, world's fastest woman on wheels, was badly bounced around in the Olds-powered "Mula Del

Diablo" Special and had to be relieved by teammate Jimmy Jeffries at the second check point about 20 miles out.

Mrs. Frank, former wife of Craig Breedlove, came in badly bruised and with gashes in her crash helmet to prove that she was severely abused on the wild ride across the roughest off-road course in North America.

Veteran off-road driver Vic Hickey, whose Olds-Banshee was driven in this race last year by Actor James Garner, had some kind words to say about the Mint 400.

"This is -the best off-road race I have ever attended and you can quote me. Of course, there have been a lot of cars break down but this is an off-road race and that is to be expected."