



# American Professional Motocross – A Five Year Plan



The Institute for  
Advanced Motocross  
Studies

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## Background:

While motocross racing has been active in America for better than forty years, it really started to become very popular in the 1970s, subsequently, the professional side of the sport became increasingly organized and managed in the 1980s. Today, this activity has developed into a professional motorsport business that attracts both fans and corporate interest, with venues scattered across the many American states - with mostly summertime dates from May through September. Although this athletic contest – a mixture of man and machine, originating in Europe and labeled as the “original extreme sport” - has attracted thousands to its rural locations, it has not had the occasion to be well represented on television. Additionally, the lack of services and accoutrements available “out in the country” have limited the access and availability of the size of crowds, that might quite well overwhelm the facilities, yet propel the sport of motocross to an entire other level of interest and acceptability - within American households. Accordingly, over the years, we have had a mixed bag of success with crowds ranging from a reported twenty to fifty thousand fans attending – on any given Sunday. Television coverage has been sporadic – in both frequency and quality over the years, with tape-delayed races often missing important parts of the contests – or sometimes entire individual “motos”. The reality is, that oftentimes the spirit and fury of live motocross racing - to the fan on the fence, has not always translated well to the medium of television, although increased awareness by the producers and, the recent development and widespread availability of HD (High-Definition) television, has definitely added to the appeal, charm and brutal realism that motocross provides.

Since the 1970s, many policies and procedures have been mandated and executed in the best interest of safety, fairness of competition, comfort and, the overall management of motocross and its facilities. Oftentimes, these decisions have been popular with the riders, the teams and the fans, as well as within the overall spirit of motocross, although many, sadly - have not. In many occasions, this has been most unfair to the those without a loud voice in the sport – the fans and the “privateer” riders. Many believe that – over the years, so many fine traditions of the sport have been either completely taken away, or replaced with less-than-acceptable substitutions for previous features. Many cite the removal of “works” bikes as a major step-down for the sport, as do traditionalists that remember the forty-minute plus two lap races that were reduced, ultimately - by ten minutes. The 500cc class, leaving in the early nineties- was another bitter pill for some to swallow, as was the more recent decline of the economical two-stroke machines in favor of the more ecologically sound – four stroke bikes. Controversy follows the four-strokes too, as while they have changed the fashion and feel of motocross, they have also managed to bring a strong distaste for their increased maintenance costs and high-level of traveling sound- that they emit from the mufflers. Also, for many of the grassroots fans of the sport, the missing aroma of the pungent race-fuels and two-stroke oils has been a source of minor grumbling. The very recent switch to Saturday editions of professional motocross has been an incredibly controversial experiment, with organizers arguing it’s a better situation for television production and the teams, with most traditionalists arguing that Sunday is the wiser option. Even more irritating to many fans – is the removal of the traditional qualifying races, both on Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings, which permitted

the locals to watch their familiar regional heroes compete against the world's best – these motocross races have been replaced by a stopwatch, as timed qualifiers are now in place, reducing the level of competitive action for the fans, and, by an overwhelming majority of opinions, disappointing for the overall experience of motocross, immensely.

The latest version of American professional motocross is the Lucas Oils AMA Pro Motocross Championship. This is a series of twelve races held in ten different American states, starting in California – which holds two events, and concluding in Pennsylvania – another two event state, after the four month tour is completed – and champions assigned. Currently, two classes are recognized, the 250cc class, which is, essentially, virtually all four strokes – and the 450cc class, which is also mostly four-strokes, with the occasional 250cc two-stroke(permitted under current rules) competing after qualifying. Also included -at some events, is a professional women's class.

Over the years, the changing of the sizes, sounds ,times, classes and nomenclatures devoted to the competitive classes of motocross - has only served to confuse the fans, as well as make the races themselves- difficult to follow. Constantly changing schedules, whether it be venues exchanging dates or the switch to Saturdays has allowed many fans to give up their spots along the fences as the frustration and confusion of this fairly simple sport – has been complicated by random changes – that have not been necessarily in the best interest of the fans of motocross – nor the future prosperity of the sport itself.

The decline of the “spirit, spice and fury” of American motocross – is not just simply a recent development. Sloppy decisions made over the years, without full consideration of the impact on the sport and the fans, have set in place a haphazard formula for a series that has been complacent as to the recognition- that engaging the fan is vital. Whether they be casual fans or hardcore enthusiasts, it is paramount to the survival and success of the sport. Ultimately - policies with an elitist and scattered approach, have led to the misdirection we have today. Motocross, for its survival, well-being and to spread the seeds of further development and continual improvement – has to look back, recognize its failures and look forward with progressive change in mind, as well as being respectful to the sport and it's fans, appreciating its history, traditions and meaningful spot in world motorsports.

After careful thought and consultation, the Institute For Advanced Motocross Studies - has developed this Five-Year Plan to not only improve America's “World Class” motocross outlook, but as a means to preserve the culture, passion, enjoyment and integrity of motocross, presenting a highly professional version of racing entertainment with the world's finest motocross athletes, all the while maintaining the grassroots, all-inclusive “vibe” that motocross has often brought to the individual competitor and fan.

## **Discussion:**

### **SAFETY:**

#### **NECK BRACES:**

Since there appears to be solid medical evidence that these devices could potentially prevent injury, they should be mandated to be worn by all professional riders, effective immediately.

#### **FLAGGERS:**

Increasing the quantity and quality of flaggers should be mandated. Research into what color of caution flags can be more easily visible, with all flaggers outfitted with “referee” style black and white jerseys, exploiting the opportunity to be better noticed. All flaggers should undergo, at minimum, a two –hour session on proper flagging technique and, any pertinent local promoter safety information, that’s deemed essential.

\*Note, current yellow caution flags often blend in with background dirt- color, making visibility difficult.

#### **TRACKS:**

Should be slowed down with an increased amount of corners and hills. As the trend towards faster and better suspended bikes has made obstacles not so much of a speed reduction measure. Jump landings need to be more forgiving, whenever possible. “Supercross” style obstacles should be severely limited at motocross events. “Blind” jumps need to be discouraged.

#### **RIDERS SAFETY COMMITTEE:**

A ten person panel of racers should be assembled at every contest, consisting of ten randomly picked riders that are participating at that event. These assembled will discuss with the promoter and the officials any concerns they have regarding track safety, before the first practice session commences.

#### **PROFESSIONAL MOTOCROSS RACING CLASSES:**

150 Class = 150cc motorcycles (Any amount of strokes or engine configuration, 150cc max).

\*Minimum Age 17 -Maximum age 21, unlimited age for females. Can only win one championship in this class or three years of top-ten finishes; require advancement to 250 or World Class.

250 Class = 250cc motorcycles (Any amount of strokes or engine configuration, 250cc max ).

- Minimum Age 18 -Maximum age 26 . Can only win one championship in this class, or three years of top-ten finishes requires advancement to World Class.

OPEN “World Class” = 300cc or above motorcycles only (Any amount of strokes or engine configuration, unlimited cc’s and cylinders).

- Minimum age 18, no maximum age requirement.

## **WEEKEND SCHEDULE:**

The hectic and experimental Saturday single-day event should be discontinued, in favor of a more relaxed and accommodating weekend format, with Sunday hosting the premiere featured events. Saturday afternoon practice and qualifying races will provide local fans with an opportunity to see regional racers attempt to make into Sunday mornings qualifiers, which will feature seeded riders from the present year's top-ten in series standings. Saturday afternoon will also feature a women's event, with the top-ten seeded into the 150cc class on Sunday.

### **SATURDAY AFTERNOON:**

12 p.m. Practice sessions and short qualifiers for 150, 250 and Open ("WORLD CLASS") races.

**SUNDAY MORNING:** 8 am – short practice sessions. 9:30 – short qualifiers (4 laps)

**SUNDAY AFTERNOON:** 1 p.m – 1st 150 Class Race (20 mins plus 1 lap)

1:30 – 1<sup>st</sup> 250 Class Race (30 mins plus 1)

2:15: -1<sup>st</sup> World Class Race (40 mins plus 2)

3:30: 2<sup>nd</sup> 150 Class Race

4:00 2<sup>nd</sup> 250 Class Race

4:45 2<sup>nd</sup> World Class Race

5:30 Awards ceremonies for all classes

## **WOMEN'S PRO RACES ("WMA") :**

Women's Pro Races shall be discontinued and women will be encouraged to participate in the featured pro events. Initially, to encourage female participation in the program, ten of the top women from Saturday's women's race qualifier will automatically be seeded into the 150cc Sunday feature races, with this practice concluding two years into the five-year plan.

## **TIMED QUALIFYING:**

This practice will be ceased in favor of the more competitive and traditional racing format of qualifying races – these races will be sprints of a short nature, while the Sunday afternoon races have been lengthened in accordance with the traditional endurance style motocross events of yesteryear. Accordingly, the lengths of the races will increase as riders mature and gain experience and proceed to advanced classes. There will be no timed qualifiers, although times will be permitted to be taken and

disseminated to the teams, press and public - during practice sessions. Practice sessions, while splitting up classes in accordance with established guidelines, will be arranged so that the top team riders “factory” and “privateers”, have an equal chance of riding under varying track conditions. No advantage shall be given to any rider. Track time shall be equal for all qualified riders.

### **NOISE ISSUES:**

A continuing program of noise control and the subsequent enforcement of a yearly, progressive reduction in the amount of noise emitted from participating motorcycles shall be mandated .The ultimate goal - being that the continued reduction in noise enables our sport to be less offensive to its critics. Additionally, spectators should be all able to hear the loudspeakers and announcements.

### **INCREASED COMPETITION:**

Along with the revised classes and configuration of practice and qualifying sessions, each forty man race will have additional performance enhancers, which will, in turn, increase the competitive levels throughout the contest. All forty competitors will receive series and advancement points, providing they qualify for Sunday’s main moto’s. After the first ten minutes, any competitor that is lapped will receive the black flag and be removed from the contest. Should a rider not appear for his race (either moto) an alternate shall be chosen so that full gates will always be the case. As noted earlier, top riders will quickly be advanced up – promoting the best racing in every class. Practice and qualifying races will be shorter, Sunday “feature” races will be longer.

### **PRIVATEERS:**

The “privateer” racer, traditionally one without the benefit of a “team” will be recognized and treated with the utmost care and dignity, (as will all riders), enabling a greater sense of belonging to the riders that have not always had the opportunity of the fortunate(or more talented) ones. In the spirit of a more sincere way of identifying the “ True privateer” from the rest, especially when awards are presented – for the clarification of all – any rider that ever was employed directly by any “factory” (OEM)team , within the past five (5) years - will NOT be eligible for privateer awards. Additionally, privateers can only be considered to be eligible, if they are driven (or drive themselves) - vice flown – to at least seventy-five (75) percent of their events. All professional riders shall be permitted and accommodated in the assigned professional “pit area” and invited to participate in any press or fan-related functions. Additionally, privateers will not be discouraged or forbidden to form a committee- or union- to protect and advance their causes.

### **PRO LICENSES:**

To encourage more participation at the higher levels of our sport, all existing elitist and discouraging policies regarding the process of achieving the honor of holding a professional motocross license- will be removed. Current policies will be reviewed and adjusted with a more liberal set of standards installed -so that the inclusion and participation of a greater group of quality competitive motocross racers, both domestic and imported – shall be considered. Age limits will be enforced and educational provisions should be researched and, a committee formed - to study the potential mandatory inclusion of a high-

school diploma – or equivalency – to be acquired, prior to the recommendation of a 250 Class validation. A onetime fee of one-thousand American dollars (\$1000.00) shall be charged individual pro-license applicants, this will cover administrative costs and, in return - the applicant shall be issued a lifetime pro license. No further fees – either regarding entry – or licensing – shall be charged the individual. Pro licenses can only be rescinded in cases of poor sportsmanship, conduct unbecoming of a pro racer - or through proper adjudication procedures.

### **THE TWO STROKE DILEMMA:**

Currently, only a few motorcycle manufacturers are producing full-size (adult-type) motocross motorcycles with two-stroke engines. Although , many still make children’s motorcycles (minicycles) from 50 to 100cc in the two-stroke configuration. Most competitive motocross riders – switch over from 85cc or 100cc two-stroke machines when they are, generally, between fourteen to sixteen years old – to full size 250cc four stroke machines. This awkward adjustment, from small to big, two-stroke to four stroke – is not only a difficult transition, it is simply an unnecessary inconvenience that has somehow developed by the motocross’ community inability to directly communicate with the manufacturers. The inclusion of two-strokes in motocross is not only a popular feature of maintaining a large contingent of traditional fans, but a way for future generations of motocross enthusiasts to appreciate and enjoy the simple sound, smell and beauty of the basic two-stroke racing motocross machine. A reliable piece of motocross history that is still ridden and embraced, by many – including today’s youngest competitors. Therefore, it is highly recommended that the OEM’s recognize and maintain a fleet of dependable and inexpensive-to-maintain motocross motorcycles – for future riders to purchase – and enjoy. Accordingly, all restrictions involving two-strokes participating in their respective professional motocross racing classes, shall be removed.

### **RACE FUELS:**

Motocross fans enjoy the smells of the sport, accordingly - all restrictions regarding types of race-fuels used by professional racers will be removed. Permitted fuels shall be only fuels that the general public can purchase. Proper handling of toxic products or hazardous waste will be encouraged and ecological factors are to be considered - additionally, all federal, state and local laws shall be enforced.

### **WORKS BIKES:**

Factory bikes, “works” bikes and prototype machines will be encouraged to participate. With the recent inclusion of NASCAR teams and NASCAR management to the sport of motocross, we would be less-than-progressive to demand that the manufacturers provide “showroom stock” motorcycles to the world’s best motocross racers. This opportunity to be less restrictive with the research and development of racing motocross machines will, effectively - advance the level and performance of “dirt-bikes”, and manufacturers shall be encouraged to advance the safety factors of their machines, as well. This will assist with the theory of injury reduction - paramount in the process, all the while developing a renewed interest for fans of the engineering and progressive developments inherent to motorsports. Currently, American motocross is unique in the practice of providing basically showroom-stock machinery in a motorsport world that demands both unique performance and the attraction that only factory R&D based – “glamorous” and spectacular equipment - can provide. Essentially, many fans are attracted to

unobtainable motorcycles and are fascinated with the entire process of the display and presentation of “factory” or “works bikes”. Accordingly, these machines should be showcased and presented – to the public -in an “open pits” environment. Innovation and the forward motion of technical advances in motocross and it’s motorcycles -needs to be encouraged and rewarded , not stagnated by mandating policies that exclude innovation and technological advances which, ultimately, enforce the progression and success of motocross.

### **OPEN PRO PITS:**

Traditionally, for motocross fans, access to the “pro pits’ is a wonderful privilege that can often be arranged with either the correct connections or - by paying an additional fee. This opportunity not only permits the viewer to get up close and personal with the professional riders, this arrangement often permits the fans to glance at the factory machinery and take photographs – or perhaps , gain a memento from a team, mechanic or rider. Currently, the pro-pits have limited access -which prohibits the inclusion of many fans to gain access to their favorite riders and, potentially, the occasion to purchase rider-merchandise and souvenirs. The pro pits should have unlimited access, naturally within reason, allowing the riders to have their own private areas to withdraw to – when necessary. Riders, both the factory stars, team members and privateers, shall have free reign to market and provide any suitable souvenirs and merchandise for sale to the general public. This process, especially for the privateer, will provide an avenue and a venue - for revenue , while permitting the general public to appreciate better – the full experience, color and majesty – of the sport.

OEM’s: It is recommended that a Motocross Industry Council be developed - to better inform the domestic and imported manufacturers of motocross motorcycles, as to the preferences and demands of the U.S. market. It is generally recognized today amongst the customers and owners of the current four-stroke machines, that while the bikes themselves are expensive – it is more the cost of rebuilds that the customers tend to get upset with, with memories of inexpensive and easier to maintain two-stroke bikes fresh in their heads. Full-size 150cc machines should be produced (both two and four stroke)that would be competitive and better perform the duties of a “bridge bike’ - a mode of transitioning from the two-stroke laden mini-cycle classes, to the full range of mostly four-stroke – full size machines. The 150cc Class would be an ideal venue for younger riders breaking into the pro ranks, without the immense weight and power of the bigger bikes.

### **FREEDOM OF THE MOTOCROSS PRESS:**

It is imperative that the journalists, writers and photographers that cover motocross events, whether it be for print or web-based media, be permitted to be heard, seen and published freely -without fear of reprisal.

## **FAMILY VIEWING AREAS:**

Designated regions of spectator viewing shall be patrolled by security and policies put in forth so that those wishing to view the contest in a drug and alcohol free environment can do so - without associating with those that choose to do otherwise.

## **RESTROOM (TOILETS) FACILITIES:**

All promoters shall be encouraged to build permanent and sanitary restroom facilities to accommodate the crowds that attend professional motocross races. Currently, the outdated and primitive plastic “Port-A-Potty” is generally the only option, with a few venues having very limited permanent facilities and some offering innovative and fairly sanitary trailer-toilets. Proper restroom facilities, especially for women, are simply a mandatory piece of the puzzle – in terms of not only presenting a professional, sanitary and, sometimes an oasis – for the weary fan – but also a civilized and modern feature of today’s motorsports. In a day and time when even small-town high-school stadiums have proper bathroom facilities, it is unheard of - for a sport as popular as professional motocross- to still be offering the same toilet options as forty years ago.

## **CONCLUSION:**

While MOTOCROSS has served America well, nobody has, over the years, stood up and defended motocross as a sport when she has been deconstructed. This cannot continue to be the standard. A steward or guardianship must be installed so that the spirit, history and traditions of the sport of American motocross can be appreciated by future generations and, the brave men, women and children that enjoy the sport today.

## **The FIVE YEAR OUTLOOK:**

*2010 – A Return To Sunday Racing*

- The Inclusion Of Two-Strokes
- “Open “ pits
- Neck Braces Mandated
- Manufacturers and teams authorized and encouraged to prepare and compete with
- “factory’ or “works” equipment.
- All legally purchased race-fuels permitted.
- Remove Timed Qualifiers And Return To Racing Qualifiers
- Saturday Afternoon Qualifiers For Those- Not -Seeded And Women’s Class
- Propose Additional Future National Round In Southeast States
- Construction Of Permanent Bathrooms For Women At National Locations
- Mount Morris Returns To Memorial Day Weekend
- Assigned Family Viewing Areas At Every Event

- Proposed age/ class and educational requirements adopted
- TV package to include comprehensive coverage

#### 2011 -

- Change Name To “ AMA WORLD CLASS MOTOCROSS” to better identify its International participation and flavor.
- New Classes Adopted : 150, 250 And World Class
- Women encouraged to qualify for 150 class pro event (last year for segregated Womens Class)
- Dissolution of WMA
- Additional New Construction Of Permanent Bathrooms For Men At National Locations
- Proposed Additional Round in Canada
- Motocross of Nations 2012 To Be Held in RED BUD, MICHIGAN – announced and finalized.
- New professional flagger procedures and attire adopted.
- Mandatory chest-protection devices worn by pro riders.

#### 2012 -

- Paved parking areas for pits and VIP Parking – construction initiated.
- Additional Men’s and Women’s Permanent Bathrooms constructed.
- Standardized signage for traffic routes surrounding WORLD CLASS races outlined.
- Plans for proposed 2013 SOUTH AMERICAN round of World Class Motocross announced
- Two-Stroke/ Legends Of Motocross Series Announced
- NASCAR Infield areas investigated as future World Class Motocross sites
- Free WIFI standard and offered at all venues

#### 2013 -

- Men’s and Women’s showers and bathrooms constructed in camping areas of World Class Motocross venues.
- Proposed 2014 Motocross Of Nations At Glen Helen Announced
- Extended paved areas of General Parking – construction initiated
- Mandatory high-school graduation certificate issued before pro license.
- Blueprints of future franchised VIP/ Scoring towers disclosed
- Electric mx bike exhibition race proposed
- Proposed 2014 Round of World Class Motocross in ENGLAND announced.
- Eclectic food offerings, including vegetarian - and wine added to vendor options.

2014 -

- Racing expanded to fifteen stops.
- Twelve stateside, one Canadian and one European.
- More permanent bathrooms constructed
- Electric mx bike exhibition series expanded to all venues.

### **About the INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED MOTOCROSS STUDIES:**

Founded by Rupert X Pellett in May, 2009 – The Institute for Advanced Motocross Studies is a North American based think tank dedicated to the preservation of motocross racing.

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