

New MX Racer's Primer ©2008,2009, 2010 Hal Sanguinetti

For those motorcycle riders who are considering starting to race motocross, here's some good information on classes, procedure and other things you ought to know.

Where to Race?

Speedworld MX Park is Arizona's largest and most popular motocross track, in operation now for 13 years. It has 4 motocross tracks, including the National, AMS Front/Vintage, PeeWee & MX2; plus there is now an Arenacross track where the old flat track formerly was. Practice is currently run 4 days a week; visit the website for more specific dates and times.

Speedworld holds many motorcycle & quad racing events every year. Some are our own, some are part of AMX (Arizona Motocross). AMX is Arizona's biggest and most popular motocross club, by a substantial margin. AMX has the most tracks, the most members, the most races, the best and most prizes and the best riders. For 2010 AMX is a consortium of SIX tracks: Speedworld MX Park in Surprise (NW Phoenix); the Verde Valley Motorplex just outside of Cottonwood; ET Motopark in Apache Junction (far east valley); Canyon MX in Peoria (Northwest Phoenix); Motoland in Casa Grande and Grindingstone in the NorthEast Valley. AMX holds races on a regular basis. You should pick up a copy of Speedworld News and AMX News (when it's published) for current race information; it's available at virtually every motorcycle shop in the state. You can also call the track's hotlines: Speedworld is 623-546-1206; Verde Valley is 928-639-0387; ET is 480-926-6688; ET Motopark is 480-926-6688; Canyon MX is 602-803-4666; Grindingstone is 623-363-9665 and Motoland is 520-421-1716. Most AMX events require an AMX license, which is \$40 a year for Motorcycles; \$40 per year for Quads (quads race AMX at all the above tracks except Canyon for 2010). Besides entitling you to race, it enables you get discounts on parts & accessories at most of the racing-oriented shops in Arizona. AMX also runs some No-Membership events that do not require an AMX license, these are part of the summertime "Beat the Heat" Series. Speedworld may have some no-membership races too, as well as many non-AMX events during the year. One bonus for racers is that in 2010, ALL of the AMX tracks will have the same signup people & forms, same scoring crew, same starter and same beautiful trophies - the ultimate in racing management consistency.

AMX races are run in a "Series" format; that is, several races (from 4 to 12) where racers accumulate points towards series-end awards. The major AMX series is the Arizona State MX Championship Series (SCS): in 2010 there are 15 races with a points-per-day two-day format; these events are spread around during the year. There are also other AMX Series events (the EZ-Up/ AZ Dealer's Series and the Grand Canyon State Series) and in 2010, these series run SEPERATELY from the State Championship series. There are separate awards for the SCS, including huge trophies and yearlong passes for racing and practice to the winners and practice to the first & second runners-up (plus BMX bikes for the mini winners). All of this information is in the pages of Speedworld News & AMX News. They are available free at any AMX track, and is also found in nearly every offroad-oriented motorcycle & ATV shop in Arizona, as well at all the AMX tracks.

To join AMX, show up at any AMX-member track on a Series-race weekend, fill out the paperwork and pay the fee. If you are under 18, you MUST have a parent or legal guardian with you to sign the forms (the same applies at EACH race event - a parent or legal guardian must sign the release form in order for anyone under 18 to race.) Your laminated membership card will be given to you later that day, along with a current AMX rulebook (printed copies are very limited; the

rulebook is on this Speedworld website, use it that way if you can). If you have any questions, you can always ask any of the AMX promoters, or the AMX Referee, Tom Frantz (rides #47 at most AMX races.)

Once you have your license, you can sign up. Again, if you're under 18, you must have a parent or legal guardian sign the form for you. As to what class to run? If you've never raced, sign up as a Beginner. If you are obviously faster than that first moto, don't worry - you'll be moved up right away. If you're a Vet rider (over 25) you sign up by ability only, not by bike size. If you're not a Vet and rider a 125 or larger, you sign up by both bike size and ability. Example: 250F Novice (sometimes called Junior) or Open (450F) Intermediate. If you ride a PeeWee, 60 or 80, you ride either in Beginner or in an Age Group class (your age for the year is determined by your age on April 1). The rule book explains all this, or you can ask any AMX official.

Race Day Practice.

To get the most out of your racing day, it's best to arrive earlier rather than later. This gets you a better pit space nearer to the starting line and a chance to walk the track before practice. Once practice is underway, the track and infield are off limits to racers, crew and parents (except during the PeeWee races, when parents may follow their kids in the infield.) Practice varies from track to track and also how much time is available. The normal grouped practice schedule is usually (but not always) in this order: Quads, motorcycle Beginners, motorcycle Novices, motorcycle Pros/Intermediates, Vets, 80s, 60's, PeeWees and a 2-lap late practice.) Ocotillo Raceway sometimes varies from this routine, and depending on the conditions and time available on a given day, the other tracks sometimes change things too. The practice schedule is always posted and announced. Find out when your practice runs and be ready for it; if you miss your assigned session, you can only ride the 2-lap late practice (which is NOT open to Minis or Quads). If you race two size classes (80 & 125, or 125 & 250) you must either ride both bikes during your ability level practice or one bike in the late practice. DO NOT run in a practice that you are not assigned to; it may cost you either laps in your moto or disqualification from the day. Also, DO NOT ride your bike in the pits, even for a little ways going to or coming off the track. Pit riding is *not* allowed, and you can be docked laps for doing it - besides, it is *very* dangerous! At some smaller events, you'll be told you may ride in the pits, but better to assume you can't and not get docked a lap!

Practice is just that: practice. It is NOT a race session. The smartest riders take the first lap slowly, making sure the track hasn't changed since the last event and making sure they know where every obstacle is. The dummies & posers go out and go as fast as they can on the first lap, and frequently injure either themselves or their bikes while trying to "win practice." Practice sessions are usually 8 minutes per session (or 4 laps), which allows plenty of time to take the first lap real easy and then work up to speed. Why throw away everything you invest in the day and risk injuring yourself by trying to win the first lap of practice? It's a stupid thing to do, so don't be pressured into it by the "fast guys" in your class (that should read "idiots", actually!) One important thing to remember; when you are practicing OR racing, DON'T change your line when you hear some one come up behind you, especially on a jump. Stay in the line you've chosen and let them go around you. If you change your line, the other rider may run into or land on you - not a good thing, and it's not his fault!

After practice, come in and clean off your bike, especially the number plates. Here in Arizona, the promoters MUST soak the track before practice if there is any hope of having the track stay dust-

free all day, so practice is frequently a bit muddy. If you don't clean off your number plates and they can't be read by the scorers, you won't be scored, period. It's YOUR responsibility to have legible number plates with the correct numbers. NEVER have two different numbers on your bike at the same time. If you have the wrong number or an unreadable number, you won't be scored. Also, ALL Quads must have a permanently-fastened rear number plate mounted on the REAR of the quad.

Clean off the extra mud, lube and adjust your chain, check the controls for proper operation and then (if necessary) change the suspension settings, jetting or gearing as necessary for that day at that track. Many, many riders run the same jetting and the same gearing at all the tracks, and wonder why they do just fine at one track and get smoked at another. If you have a question on setup, ask someone - almost everyone is happy to help you at the track, even your competition. If your bike isn't handling right either, there are almost always suspension specialists at the tracks who will assist you with the settings. One thing that new racers should always remember: make sure the bike works correctly for you before you start making it faster! More power can actually slow you down if the suspension isn't set up for your weight and ability, and can cause you to get hurt, too! Get the suspension set right before you do anything else!

The Race.

The race order is usually posted just about the same time as practice ends. When it's announced that the moto lineups are posted, go to the lineup board (usually next to the signup area) and make sure you are on the list in the class you think you're supposed to be in. If you're not, don't panic; simply go to the signup area and calmly tell the people there your problem, and they'll get it fixed. The main thing to remember is to stay calm; yelling at any official for any reason (right or wrong) will get you nowhere fast! Also, if the lineup sheets aren't posted yet, DON'T go to signup and ask when they'll be done. Trust me on this one!

Make a note of the moto(s) you are in, and take your bike to the staging area usually 2 motos ahead of yours. When the staging official calls your number, you may push your bike to the start line and choose a spot. If you miss being called, you'll have to take whatever spots are left. This is another good reason to signup early, because in the first moto, your gate position is determined by where on the lineup sheet you are. In the second moto, you will be lined up according to your finish in the first moto. If you aren't sure where the best places are to line up are, watch which spots on the line are chosen first in the motos before yours.

As soon as the white flag come out, start up your 2-stroke bike - a cold 2-stroke doesn't make much power and there's a chance you might do damage to it if it's cold. 4-strokes don't need much warmup; in fact, they'll boil just sitting there idling if you start them too soon. Wait until just before the starter starts to walk to the center of the start area to ask everyone if they're ready (if you have a 4-stroke). DON'T put it in gear at this time, but wait until the starter gets ready to start the race. He will look down the starting line with his hand; if you're ready just nod, if not, raise your hand (he can hold the race up to 1 minute for you.) If everyone is ready, he'll put a board with a number (usually 1 or 2) up over his head. DON'T put it in gear yet! After a short time, he'll either turn the board over (revealing a lower number or 30 meaning seconds); now put your bike in gear! Then he'll lower the board and as it gets all the way down, he'll either run into the starting gate lever booth and drop the gate or run to the side and someone else will drop the gate. DON'T watch the starter after he starts to lower the sign; watch the gate. When it moves, GO! You might get off the concrete starting line better by slipping the clutch a little to prevent a big wheelie, but in

any event, try to keep the bike straight and head for the first corner. Good luck!

A couple of things to remember. Don't stop going around the track until you see the checkered flag at the finish line. You will probably see a white flag (meaning one more lap) but if you don't, it's not biggie - always keep going until you see the checkered flag. When you do, slow down past the finish line and pull off the track - do NOT go another lap. When the leader finishes, everyone behind him finishes. Remember to push your bike once you are in the pits.

Your race finishes will be posted on the moto lineup sheets about 15 minutes or so after your moto. Your finishing position is the number of points you receive, and you'll add the 2 motos together to get a final number of points. The lowest point total is the winner. In the event of ties, the better finish in the second moto gets the spot. AMX pays 33% trophies (PeeWee's 100%), and they're the nicest trophies in Arizona! After your moto's second moto results are posted, check and see if there is a star or 'T' after your finishing position; if you, you've won a trophy. Go to the signup desk/window to get your trophy! If you have a problem with the scoring, again CALMLY go to the signup window and tell them of your concerns about the scoring. You must do this within 30 minutes of the end of the moto, and you should do it in WRITING. Once 30 minutes has passed, the finish is official and will not be changed. Only the person in the race may protest a finish (except for the littlest kids that can't write).

Just to let you know, most races are run rain or shine, so it's always a good idea to have several packs of tearoffs and extra lenses, along with a set of hand/lever protectors for your bike with you at all times. If the rain is too intense or the track conditions get dangerous, the event may be delayed, postponed or cancelled. *Speedworld News*, *AMX News* and each track's hotline phone number will let you know what's happening. It's also a good idea to call the hotline of that weekend's track in case there is the possibility of bad weather; the hotlines are always the first thing to be updated whenever there's a change.

That's about it. AMX moveup points and series points are explained in the rulebook you receive when you join. Everyone at Speedworld and in AMX is happy to answer your questions, but please don't ask anything of the scoring crew during a moto, as they are very busy at that time.

Good luck, good racing, and welcome to AMX - Arizona's #1 Motocross Club!