

# THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO MOTOCROSS RACING

## SAFETY GEAR

**There is a simple rule in racing, dress for the crash, not for the ride.**

**The more gear you have on the more likely you are to go home sore then to ride in an ambulance.**

**Motocross racing is not a fashion show. Amateur riders, especially young beginning riders should be more concerned with wearing as much protection as possible than with looking like Jeremy McGrath. Buying safety gear is something that a good dealer can really help with. Sizes on gear vary a great deal and are not always accurate. Dealing locally will allow you to try on stuff before buying and also can help if there is a warranty problem later .**

**Helmet. If you have a \$10 head, you buy a \$10 helmet. This is the single most important piece of protection you will buy. A helmet should be snug going on and off but not so tight it is uncomfortable. There are different DOT and SNELL certification ratings rating that dealers can explain to you. A Full-face helmet offers more protection against both front and side impacts then a helmet with a bolt on mouth guard. When you strap on the helmet make sure the strap is snug so if you do go down it will come off easily and you lose your protection**

**GOGGLES. These should always be worn. Get used to them when you practice and you will feel naked with out them later. Try different brands on while wearing your helmet to find the ones that are most comfortable.**

**BODY ARMOR. Also known as Chest and Back protectors. It is important to learn to ride with these from the beginning since they can take some getting used to later. These can help protect from an impact injury by spreading the impact over a wider area. They also protect from roost (hard clods or small rocks thrown up from tires) There is a huge selection of makes and models in different colors available in both body Armor (front and back) and Chest only protectors.**

**Clothing. Long sleeve shirts are required to race. 100% cotton will be cooler but fades quicker. Racing pants are not required to race. Jeans are OK to start out in. We do recommend buying some sort of kneepads. Most dealers sell them to go inside race pants so you will have to buy them eventually anyway. If you want to know what happens with out kneepads let a friend hit you with a hammer on the kneecap. Gloves are also recommended. Elbow pads are optional also and are a good idea for beginners.**

**Boots. To race some sort of boot that covers the ankle is required. When you buy Motocross boots it is important to take the time to break them in properly. If you try to race with them before they are you will have a hard time working the controls on your bike which could result in an accident. If you are buying for your child get them a little big, but not too big, to allow for growth. If you take care of boots they will last quite awhile and then you can sell them to another rider.**

**YOUR BIKE OR ATV. It is important to carefully maintain your machine. Inspect it carefully and look for any sharp edges or protruding bolts that can be eliminated to prevent them from catching on clothing or injuring a rider. Make sure grips are glued or wired on so that they will not come loose while riding. Keep control cables lubed. Do not run broken clutch or brake levers because of the sharp point they have. ATVs over 90cc must have tether style kill switches and nerf bars.**

# THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO MOTOCROSS RACING

## JUST FOR PARENTS

Motocross racing is a great sport. It teaches discipline, the importance of preparation, goal setting and the satisfaction that comes from reaching them as well as dealing with the disappointment of working hard but coming up short.

Motocross differs from a lot of sports because unlike team sports like baseball, football soccer etc. it is an individual sport. This can be helpful in teaching young people personal responsibility. If they set a goal and come up short there is no one else to blame.

As in any sport that involves young people there are parents that sometimes push too hard for success. It is the classic "Little League Parent Syndrome"

The difference is that if you push too hard in motorsports it can result in your rider and possibly other riders getting injured. Motocross is hardly as easy as the pro riders make it look. There are skills that will develop only with time and practice. Besides if you stand on the side of the track and yell at your rider it is unlikely that they are going to be able to hear much less understand what you are saying.

It is a good idea to step back occasionally and look at racing through your child's eyes. Remember that the most important thing in racing is to have fun.

## PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

The best thing that can prepare you for racing is riding. When you go out to ride don't just ride in circles all day. There are different things you can do to improve basic riding skills. Practice riding wheelies and doing power slides. Concentrate on using different controls like the clutch, front and rear brakes etc. so that you will know their limits. Using the clutch will help you attack corners harder. Proper use of the brakes will shave seconds off your lap time. While jumping is important in Motocross races are still won and lost mostly in the corners. Practice corners by doing circles or figure eights to get better with the clutch, brakes and throttle control. Practice riding berms and ruts to get comfortable in them. Do not watch your front wheel or you will pop out of the rut or berm everytime. Practice looking further down the track. This will make you faster and make you a safer rider.

Motocross is kind of like golf and tennis. Learning proper form early will make it easier in the long run. Keeping the elbows up and learning to stand up on the bike are very important. Learning proper body position will help you save energy and make you a safer rider because you will be in better control of your machine and will be able to respond easier to what the bike does when it hits ruts, bumps, and holes on the track. Watch faster riders when you go to practice and try to copy what they do. Most experienced riders are happy to offer riding tips because they had help when they were learning. Try to find someone that is close to your speed, maybe just a little faster and ride with them. Have pretend races for a set period of time and ride it like a race. Even if you fall off get up and keep riding until the time is up just like you would in a race.

So now you are ready to race.

Lets start with a list of what you need to bring to the race.

Copy this page and use as a checklist. Optional items are marked with an \*

## THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO MOTOCROSS RACING

### General Riding gear

Wallet ,(FIND OUT ALL FEES FOR THE EVENT) , AMA Membership cards (IF YOU DO NOT HAVE ONE GET IT AT THE EVENT), Notarized Birth Certificate (if required)

Helmet, 2 Jersey's, MX pants, MX socks, Knee pads, Boots, Gloves, Mud gloves\*, Goggles,

Extra lenses, Tear offs\*, Kidney belt\*, Hip pads\*, Body armor,

An extra change of street clothes, An extra pair of shoes, Towels, Spray glass cleaner,

Snacks (not junk food), Drinks (sport drinks) Water (for Clean up and drinking), Paper towels, An umbrella Rain gear/ light jacket or sweatshirt\* Lawn Chairs\* Elbow pads\*

Pen & paper, Track directions, gate times for opening and closing.

### Miscellaneous parts and tools

The more parts and tools you have the better your chances of being able to race after a fall. Other racers are very generous and helpful when another rider has problems but there is not always time to find someone that has the parts you might need. The items listed below are suggestions of things you might need:

A good basic tool set, Tire Irons, A patch kit or extra inner tubes. A tire pump, Tire gauge

Extra front brake and clutch levers Chain Lube. Extra clutch and throttle cables\* WD 40

An extra clutch lever perch, Carb cleaner, At least 2 extra sparkplugs, a plug wrench, Extra Master link

Extra air filter and filter oil, Duct tape, Some kind of bike stand, zip ties,

Gas can, Premix oil and mixing cup Electrical tape, Misc extra screws and bolts, Shop rags, Large trash bags If you did not get one at the front gate coming in ask for one, Lock and chain for securing bike\* Once you start coming to the races ask other riders that ride machines similar to yours what spare parts they recommend having at the races.

### Race day, what to expect.

Above all else expect to be nervous. It is natural. Riders that have been racing for years still get butterflies on race day. The secret is to accept that it is part of racing. When you go to the track for your practice get there early so that you won't feel rushed (check the times on the website). When you are about to ride concentrate on taking some deep breaths and stretching before going out on the track. Try to watch as much of the practicing / racing as you can so that you can see how other riders are doing different sections and obstacles. When you go out to ride concentrate on not riding over your head. It doesn't matter whether you only race a couple of times in your life or if you are a future McGrath you will only have one first race. It is rare that riders win their first race so just to relax, learn, and have fun.

### RACE DAY, WHAT TO DO

## THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO MOTOCROSS RACING

**Start the night before by going over your checklist and making sure you have everything organized and ready to go. Make a list of all things you are taking and enter it into a computer as: Lets go racing. List all things and if at the event you need something make note of this and add it to the "Lets go racing" list. This list will have everything from long johns to suntan lotion. On race day load up early so that you don't feel rushed. You should already have directions and know how long it should take you to get to the track.**

**PIT PASSES: The first thing that you will do when you come into the track is to buy a pit pass. Everybody will sign the required releases when they come on the grounds. This pit pass us usually an armband.....you must keep this on till the very last time you are leaving and not coming back. If you lose it you must purchase another one. If a newsletter is handed out get parked take a few minutes and read it.**

**PARKING: Where you park is a personal preference. At most tracks there is parking next to the racetrack. Some riders look for shade if there is any. Others prefer to be as close to registration as possible. When you park make sure you are not blocking any driveways or fire lanes, these are usually marked by a row of fence posts or stakes. If you are like me the quietest place with shade is best so you can bring your boombox and turn your radio on the fm station that our announcer is on and you can hear when you are called to practice as a class.**

**REGISTRATION: Find out where rider registration is located. Riders under 18 years of age must be accompanied by a parent/guardian or another adult with a notarized statement authorizing them to sign for the minor. No exceptions. Fill out a registration form and a minor release (if under 18). Be sure to write legibly and then sign the forms. Do not leave sign-up until the staff has told you your riding number is good. If someone else has already registered with the same number ,you will be asked to change yours. You will also be given a practice sticker that needs to be put on your front number plate to practice.**

**The Practice order will be posted at sign-up so take a pen and paper to make yourself a copy. The race order will be made up and posted during practice.**

**After you have signed up go back and unload your bike and set up your pit. Look over your bike and get it ready for your practice session.**

**WALK THE TRACK: When you have everything set up walk the racetrack. This will help you relax as well as learn the track. Take the time to look at the different obstacles. Find a high spot and stand and look at the track like you are watching a rider go around it while they are racing. This will help you learn the layout. Take your time.**

**PRACTICE: About 30-45 minutes before your practice, start getting dressed. Check the gas in your bike and then warm it up. Ride in first gear to the staging area at the start gate. Do not pull into the staging lane until it is time for your group. Remember to take some deep breaths to help you relax before going out on the track.**

**Use the practice session to learn the track and warm up. Try different lines so you will know what to expect if you need to take them later. Pay attention to the track flags. Be sure and hold your line (don't zigzag) so that faster riders can get past you. Don't worry about racing with anyone and remember not to ride over your head.**

**When you are flagged off the track slow down to 5 mph as you exit. It is easy to go too fast because you are nervous and have a lot of adrenaline. Calm down and take some deep breaths again. Ride back to your pit and look your bike over. Refuel and lube the chain. Relax and drink something. If you are done**

## THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO MOTOCROSS RACING

then go to sign-up and write down the Race order. Watch some of the other groups. The rider's meeting will be next.

**RIDER'S MEETING:** Get somewhere near a PA speaker so that you can hear the rider's meeting. If there are any changes in the race order they will be announced. If there are any problems that have come up during practice they will also be addressed.

Following the riders meeting there will usually be a short break and then a prayer and national anthem. Riders in the first couple of qualifying races need to work their way to the start gate during the break so all bikes can be shut off. Riders in bigger classes will either get to pick gates by number draw or sign-up order.

**Start Procedure:** When you get up on the starting gate leave your bike shut off until the white flag comes out for the class racing. Start your bike and make sure the gas is turned on. The start card will go up with a 2 showing. If you are having problems starting your bike let the card man know by waving your hand so that you will get two minutes to correct the problem. If everyone is ready the card will be turned to one. The card man will check down the line again. If everyone is ready there will be a slight pause then the one will be turned sideways. The gate will fall 2-7 seconds later.

**STAGER STARTS:** Sometimes if there are several small classes that can be run on the track at the same time they will be combined and scored separately. If they are very small they leave the gate at the same time. If there are enough riders than the classes will be stagger started. One class will leave them line, the gate will be reset and then the second class leaves. Stagger starts are usually marked on the race order with slash marks ( / ) between the classes. If you are supposed to start with the second group and you start with the first you will be penalized one lap. Don't get excited and start with the wrong class. The second group must be ready when the card goes up for the first group.

**QUALIFIERS:** At the Indoor events Qualifiers are used to determine gate pick for the mains. If there are more riders than will fit on the starting gate these qualifiers will be used to narrow the field down to a full gate. Depending on how many extra riders are in the class there will either be a last chance qualifier or the extra riders will get to start on the back row. If the class is really big it can be split into two different divisions and each division will get separate points and awards. The details will be in the race order and rider's meeting.

The qualifiers will go very quickly so be sure and keep up so you don't miss your race.

**OUTDOOR MOTOCROSS:** The outdoor events are two moto's that are added together to place as an overall winning place and the awards are handed out from the final overall. Always check the bulletin board for results posted on the moto that you just ran. If all the info is right, fine, but if there is a problem with any of the info on you go to the sign up area and tell the ladies there. All info is kept in computer. When you get your AMA membership you will have a temp. number that will be different from the card number. Tell the sign up ladies that you now have a card and the temp number will no longer be used. When you get the AMA card if your name is William but you want to be announced as Bill join the AMA under the name Bill.

**RESULTS:** Shortly after your qualifier the results will be posted on the posting board at sign-up. It is each rider's responsibility to check the results for errors and notify the score clerk if there is a problem so it can be corrected. Once the results have been posted for 30 minutes they will be official unless it is changed because of a protest that came during the protest time. Riders get gate pick for the mains (or second moto) by their qualifier finish. There is usually no intermission between qualifiers and mains.

## THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO MOTOCROSS RACING

**Mains:** The mains , or overall finish ,are what count for awards and series points. After the mains the results will be posted on the board just like for the qualifiers. There is a 30 minute protest time for the mains also.

**AWARDS:** The location that the awards will be handed out will be announced at the rider's meeting. Please check the posted results before coming to pick up your awards so that if there is a mistake it can be corrected. No awards will be given out until the protest time for a class has expired. The number of awards given out should be posted.

### GENERAL RACE RULES

These rules are enforced at most tracks. Additional rules will be posted at events.

Rules vary for different tracks and promoters. Ask promoters for clarification.

**PIT RIDING:** Riders are allowed to ride their machines to and from the starting gate at 5 MPH. Absolutely no pit racing or burnouts will be tolerated. You will receive no further warning, You will be asked to leave the facility with no refund. This includes pit bikes. Please observe "NO MOTORCYCLES, ATVS, OR BICYCLES IN THIS AREA" signs. Bicycles should also be ridden with caution in the pit area. This is one rule that needs to be taken very seriously because it will be enforced at events. Parents should make sure their children understand this rule and they know how fast 5 mph is.

**SAFETY FLAGS:** Yellow flags mean there is a problem on the track and you should be in control of your machine and look for the problem so you can avoid it. Watch the flaggers to see if they are directing you to one side of the track. Passing is allowed under the yellow flag. If a Red Cross flag is out then there is a problem on the track that is causing a hazard or a rider is receiving assistance. Riders must slow to 5 mph and no passing is allowed through the area where the flag is being displayed. If you exceed 5 mph, pass another rider, or endanger or hit a track worker, EMT, or a downed rider you will be penalized. Penalties vary from a stop and go or being docked positions to disqualification for more serious violations. This rule is to protect you and your fellow riders and will be strictly enforced. Parents of young riders please explain this very carefully to them so they will know what the different flags mean.

**CUTTING THE TRACK:** If a rider leaves the marked, designated track for any reason they must go back and enter at the point they exited the track, or a point before or they can be penalized a minimum of one position. The worse the infraction the more positions they can be penalized.

**UNSPORTSMAN LIKE BEHAVIOR:** This includes dirty riding, fighting, use of profanity, obscene gestures etc. Violators can be penalized, including disqualification and being suspended from racing our series. If another rider tries to start a fight do whatever you have to do to get away and notify the Referee immediately. Riders are responsible for the actions of their pit crew and family.

Use of alcohol and/or drugs by participants while riding will absolutely not be tolerated at our events. If you are coming to the track to party then stay home or go to a bar. If you see a competitor violating this rule please bring it to the staff's attention so the problem can be addressed before it results in an accident.

**IF YOU do fall down:** If you go down on your bike or atv and are not hurt your number one concern is to get off the racetrack. If your bike is in the middle of the track move it before trying to restart it so you will not get hit by another rider or block the race track. Do not wait on the track crew to move your bike or

## THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO MOTOCROSS RACING

**start it for you. Their number one priority is to let the other riders know there is a problem and to keep you from getting hit.**

---

Hopefully this will give you enough basic information about racing that when you get ready to try it you will be able to concentrate on the most important things, having fun and riding safe. If you have additional questions please contact Victory Sports or one of the sponsoring dealers

A few extra tips that might be helpful

**Learn to service your own air filter. This and being consistent with your premix are the two most important things you can do to keep your bike running trouble free.**

**Loosen your front brake and clutch lever mounts enough that you can hit them with your hand to pivot them on the handlebars but tighten them enough they will not move around while you are riding. This can help keep the brackets from breaking if you fall.**

**If you bend a lever take it off and put it on a hard flat service and tap it with a hammer to straighten it. Replace it with a new one as soon as you can and keep the other one as a spare.**

**Do not fill your gas tank completely up. A full tank will last 35-45 minutes of riding. Running a third of a tank should be enough for a 12-15 minute race and will save as much as 10 pounds of extra weight. Experiment when you are out practicing and mark a level to fill to for racing.**

**Tire pressure can make a big difference in how your bike will hook up. Talk to other riders to see what they are running for each track, different track conditions, and tire compounds.**

**If it is muddy spray WD 40, silicone spray, or Pam cooking spray on your plastic and riding gear. This will help the mud fall off and make clean up easier. DO NOT spray on your seat or gas tank. You will slide all over and will not be able to grip the gas tank with your legs like you should.**

## SEE YOU AT THE RACES!!