

## MOTORCROSS RACING TIPS FOR BEGINNERS

Follow these motocross racing tips to make your race day as pain free as possible.

### **1. Accomodation.**

If you're racing in some small town somewhere, a well attended motocross meeting can nearly double the population overnight. Don't expect to just turn up the day before and get somewhere to stay. Book ahead and save yourself the hassle, this is also handy when you're on a budget and the last place with a vacancy is also the most expensive place in town.

### **2. Walk the track.**

Regardless of whether you've arrived the day before or race day morning, one of the more crucial motocross racing tips is to walk the track. Take notice of any wet sections which will rut up quickly and any other obstacles which may be a problem for you.

A really good idea is to walk the track with a faster, more experienced rider. They've probably ridden a lot of different tracks and you can pick up some good motocross racing tips by listening to them as they look around.

### **3. Scrutineering.**

Scrutineers have to check your bike (and quite often your helmet as well) to make sure it's safe and passes certain inspections. These rules and regulations vary so make sure you're up to date on what's allowed and what's not for your bike.

They will check things like wheel bearings, spoke tightness, functioning brakes and that handlebar ends are plugged etc. Some scrutineers can be quite pedantic so follow these motocross racing tips and give your bike another quick check over before you get it scrutineered. I once had my bike refused just because it didn't have a valve cap on the back wheel.

### **4. Rider's Briefing.**

If the race meeting has a rider's briefing then go to it! They have them for a reason and will explain the starting procedure and quite often will inform the riders of a last minute change to the race order or something similar. You'll feel like a real stooge if after all your preparation and studying these motocross racing tips you go and do something stupid like miss your race!

### **5. Practice.**

Practice sessions vary in length so find out how long your practice will be beforehand (remember our motocross racing tips about riders' briefings!). Too many riders go out and just ride at race pace, remember no-one ever wins practice.

Wait for everyone else to start and practice a couple of starts yourself. Work out what gear to start in and which gates look to have the best line into the first corner. Ride the first lap at a moderate pace and have a good look at the track.

It will look a lot different on your bike than from when you walked it so pay attention to different entry and exit lines in corners. On your second lap pick up the pace and try to put together a smooth sequence of corners and jumps etc.

Take notice of any sections you struggle with and on the next lap try to get it just right, also ride alternate lines on corners, this will be the only chance you get without it being a high pressure race situation.

## **6. Starts.**

Get yourself to the start line with a bit of time to spare, a lot of meetings will have a random draw to decide who gets first choice for a start gate at the first race.

Pick the best gate available to give you a good entry line into the first corner. Stamp down any loose dirt on your start pad and in front of your gate, if the rider before you left a wheel track that's not straight your rear wheel will follow it.

Once you're in position make sure you've got your goggles and you're ready to go. A technique I use is to close your eyes for a few seconds and visualise your start, I know it sounds like something only the guns do but it even helps gumby riders like me! Take a few deep breaths and try to relax, nearly everyone gets nervous on the start line, it won't just be you.

When the five second board is up have your goggles on and your bike in gear, once the gate drops accelerate smoothly off the line.

## **7. Race Plan.**

Your first priority after the start will be to get through the first corner unscathed. Hopefully you've pulled a good start and you're heading into the corner in a decent position. There couldn't possibly be a worse time to throw it away than right now when most of the field is right behind you.

Hold your line through the corner keeping an eye out for the occasional kamikaze pilot who goes screaming into the corner without any idea how he's going to get through it.

Ride smart, if a couple of riders pass you don't stress. So many times there are tangles in the pack in the first corner and you can pick up a handful of positions just by staying out of trouble.

If you're super fit then your race plan is pretty simple, just go as hard as you can for the entire race. However, if you're like the rest of us then you need to ride smart so you can get through the length of the race in reasonable shape. A lot of crashes are caused by rider fatigue some good motocross racing tips are to look for smooth and flowing lines that will allow you to conserve energy.

Use your legs to grip the bike, your leg muscles are the largest muscle group in your body and will take some of the strain off your arms and shoulders.

Try to put some space between you and the rider behind you early in the race, that way he'll be thinking less about catching you and more about the rider that's behind him. Resist the temptation to ride above yourself, especially when you're under pressure from someone behind you. Stay smooth and concentrate on your braking into corners, you'll expend a heap of energy unnecessarily trying to correct your line if you run wide in a turn.

### **8. Between Races.**

After you've finished your race, gotten your breath back and once all your friends have finished patting you on the back for your stellar performance, get your bike and your gear organised for your next race.

Give the bike a once over, lube and adjust the chain and check whether the air filter needs cleaning or replacing. Clean your goggles and fit new tear offs if you need them. Refuel if necessary and if it's muddy clean your number plates so the lap scorers know who you are. It's a good idea if you don't have access to a bike wash between races to just scrape as much mud as you can off your bike, it's amazing just how much weight mud can add.

Get yourself a drink and a bit of fruit if you feel like eating. One of the more important motocross racing tips is to go and have a look at how the fast guys are riding the track. Track conditions can change dramatically from race to race and you may see some lines that you didn't see when you were racing. Remember, the line only has to be a tyre's width wide.

Watch how more experienced riders tackle difficult sections of the track. Talk to other riders as they come in after their race, ask them how they went and how the track is, everyone loves talking about themselves and you may pick up a couple of handy motocross racing tips from the fast guys.

If you're particularly keen and want to get onto the infield, explain to a corner marshall that you threw your goggles away and can you please go and find them. It doesn't always work but sometimes it does.

So there you have it, keep in mind that most of us aren't racing for national titles so follow these motocross racing tips and just go out there and have fun!