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## Junior Road Racing Forum Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the Junior Road Racing Forum of Motorcycling Australia held at the Mercure Hotel Sydney Airport on 4 December 2008 at 10:00am.

### PRESENT:

Cameron Scheuber	Chairman, MA Junior Development Commission
Braxton Laine	MA Junior Development Commissioner
David Bancell	MA Road Race Commissioner
Leo Cash	
Alan Redman	Junior Parent
Craig Johnston	St. George Motorcycle Club, MRRDA Committee member
Paul Edwards	Chairman, MRRDA
Chris Baker	MRRDA, St. George Motorcycle Club President, Member of the Road Race Administrators of NSW
Mick Smith	Honda Australia representative
Rob Carter	Manager, Troy Corser Agencies & Metrakit NSW
Jennifer Diles	Metrakit Australia
Anthony Davies	Junior Parent
Christine Tickner	President, MNSW
Daniel Gatt	MNSW
Dave Morgan	Vice President, MNSW
Ray Howard	Yamaha Motors Australia representative
Steven Cotterell	Director, Yamaha
Murray Sayle	Kawasaki representative

### APOLOGIES:

none

### IN ATTENDANCE:

David White	MA Chief Executive Officer
Amit Oberoi	MA Risk & Compliance Manager
Sam Ryan	MA Events Officer
Erin Lagoudakis	MA Communications Officer
Paul Fink	MA Communications Officer

## **ITEM 1 INTRODUCTIONS:**

Forum opened at 10.00am

David White welcomed all to the meeting, and explained that Junior Road Racing discussion has to have a large emphasis on safety, while knowing that the sport still needs to progress. He then commenced proceedings by asking everybody to introduce themselves, who they are representing, their reason for attendance and what they hoped to gain from the forum.

## **ITEM 2 GROUND RULES:**

David White provided an overview of the following ground rules for the Forum:

1. We are here to focus on Junior Road Racing. We do not want to personalise issues. Focus on the issue not the person.
2. Everybody will have the opportunity to be heard on any of the issues.
3. One person talking at a time.
4. We acknowledge that there are differences of opinion. Whilst we may not agree, we respect the views of others. We welcome the diversity of opinion.
5. Focus on what we have in common.
6. At this meeting we are all equals.
7. Progression not Perfection.
8. We make decisions on consensus not by vote. You may not totally agree with a particular point of view but make your decision/stance on the premise "Whilst I may not completely agree, can I live with the decision?"
9. We will be honest and frank so we say what we mean and we ask if we are unsure.
10. Focus on the future, let's not dwell on the past.
11. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

## **ITEM 3 OBJECTIVES AS DISCUSSED ON 14 MAY 2008:**

The following objectives – as raised at the forum on 14 May 2008 – were presented to promote discussion as to their continued relevance:

1. Develop a plan that will lead Junior Road Racing into the future for the next 3-5 years.
2. Establish what motorcycles are going to be used.
3. Do we have the right age groups?
4. Is the class sustainable?
5. Will the plan be followed in the future?
6. What training will be provided for riders?

## **ITEM 4 ARE THEY RELEVANT NOW?**

In a group discussion, it was agreed by most, that all of the listed objectives in Item 3 are indeed still relevant, and that the following objectives should be added to the list:

- Safety:
  - Safety is the most important factor to consider, which stresses the importance of training.

- Junior Training:
  - A national, across-the-board training regime should be considered, especially if rider ages are going to be lowered (e.g. a five hour Kick Start is not adequate)
  - Should training be related to the tracks?
  - Younger age groups should be more about getting rider levels up rather than racing and competition.
- National Tracks/Circuits:
  - Not all age groups and classes are suitable for all circuits - low-powered machines on large circuits don't necessarily teach children much, and where possible smaller tracks should be used.
  - Lack of venues is an obstacle.
  - More licensed venues (e.g. go kart tracks, car parks) need to be available for children to be able to go down with their parents and ride.

## ITEM 5 SUMMARY OF WHERE WE ARE AT?

5.1 No significant changes are proposed, because we need to spend 2009 as a year to "get things right" in order to start afresh in 2010 with a set of ages and classes that we know will be carried through into the future and can be consistent.

5.2 There will be no Junior Road Racing Championship in 2009 – same reason as 5.1 above – we need to draw a line in the sand and make 2009 a development year for 2010 and beyond, with a degree of comfort and consensus from all parties.

5.3 The 125cc two-stroke and 250cc four-stroke age limit will be 14 from 1/1/2009.

5.4 Championship for 250cc four-stroke

There was much discussion in relation to age groups and classes and the following points were raised:

- The total number of juniors racing is relatively small (roughly 50-80 people under 16) – this makes it important to set the right classes and age groups in order that they are financially viable and that they are also competitive.
- Compared to MX, Junior Road Racing is in its infancy and we need to develop a platform for it to grow.
- Even though the racing situation in NSW is an issue, we need to focus on a national solution.
- At the moment there are three main classes: 70cc 2-stroke, 80/85cc 2-stroke and 150cc 4-stroke. 15 year olds can ride a 125cc GP bike.
- In relation to age groups, there are: 9-U13, 11-U16, 13-U15. 11 year-olds on 80cc bikes were also accepted at last Board Meeting as a result of the previous Junior Road Racing Forum.
- Other developed countries have different age groups to Australia, and maybe we are out of step. By the time they get to Road Racing in many of these countries, they have 2-3 years experience already. At the same time, Chris Vermeulen is pushing to *raise* the ages.

## ITEM 6 DISCUSSION ON THE FOLLOWING:

6.1. AGE GROUPS – What is a realistic age considering risk management, duty of care, OH&S issues?

In regard to injuries, it was generally accepted that injuries had been minimal in the last 1-2 years of Junior Road Racing, however with only 60 riders the figure could be significant. Need to compare with other disciplines.

Suggestions were put forward in relation to what the minimum age should be, as follows:

- Anthony Davies suggested 9 – As long as training has been undertaken (e.g. 1-2 years on MX).
- MRRDA supported ages no younger than 11 – with training.
- Alan Redman suggested the training needs to be Road Race specific training, he didn't believe Dirt Bike riding is good training for Road Racing. He suggested parents aren't looking to get their children into Road Racing until they are 11.
- Metrakit: Training is important – if the age is 9, then 8 is a good age to start practicing, being coached and training (as a novice introductory class, not a competitive class).
- Leo Cash: from a parents and coaching perspective, the age should be 11.
- MNSW said the youngest age in NSW is 13 for juniors to race, according to State Law based on many initial negotiations.
  - MNSW are not opposed to lowering that age, but in order to approach the Government they would need sufficient information/research/statistics to provide a basis for the approach.
- Need to give children an alternative to going into MX.
- Whatever is decided, it needs to be an across-the-board approach.
- If the age for Road Racing age was hypothetically 11, can we justify having a lower age for MX?

In summary, two age groups were considered: 9 years with correct training; or 11 years with correct training. Either way it should be a national system across the board. We should await information to be sourced from FIM and overseas (via MA) in relation to what other countries' age categories are.

## 6.2 CATEGORIES OF MACHINES

We are starting with a small base of people which is a worry. The biggest challenge is to convert people from MX to Road Racing. Steven Cotterell mentioned that it is logical and economical to try and allow MX bikes to convert into Road Racing bikes, but only as an introductory class to expose them to Road Racing because at the moment it's too difficult. Craig Johnston expressed his support for this. MRRDA also supported this, but not for 13-U15's. It was established that the rules are already in existence to allow for this – 85cc rule. Honda does not support this from a safety perspective, and also a cost perspective it becomes too expensive to *make* these bikes adhere to minimum safety.

The following classes were suggested for consideration:

- 70cc two-stroke
- 80cc two-stroke / 85cc modified
- 150cc four-stroke controlled classes
- 125cc two-stroke production class
- 250cc GP Mono (no modifications)
- 125cc GP (unmodified)

- Up to 110cc four-stroke

### 6.3 SUITABILITY AND APPROVAL OF CIRCUITS

**Track standards/licensing:** It was discussed that there should potentially be a RR specific approval process for circuits, and whether Juniors should be treated separately from Seniors when it comes to track approvals/standards. Speedway has separate track licensing standards – should Road Racing adopt a similar method?

Despite the fact that bikes are only going 120-130kmh maximum on tracks designed to be safe for fast speeds over 300 kmh, there are issues are things like concrete walls and other things that children are potentially going to hit. Children's minds are not as developed and they are not as advanced as riders as Senior riders are – e.g. to avoid crashes etc.

**Potential Use of alternative venues:** We should be exploring the opportunity to go to new places for junior Road Racing (e.g. go kart tracks, training schools) for practice etc. A suggestion was put forward for two types of track licence, whereby Juniors would need to have sufficient time spent on level 2 tracks before being permitted to race on level 1 tracks:

- 1) Australian Championship (level 1) – e.g. Broadford, Wakefield Park
- 2) Other tracks (level 2) – e.g. Go-kart tracks etc.

### 6.4 MNSW/MV SPORT & REC ISSUES

To date, MNSW's laws state that the minimum age is 13 which has been determined by NSW Sport & Rec. Nothing different (e.g. facts/statistics or otherwise) has been presented to them to alter their stance, and MNSW are reluctant to approach Sport & Rec without the necessary factual information to back up any proposed age changes.

It was decided that MA would support MNSW to review this with a view to supporting a proposal for change to be presented to NSW Sport & Rec (i.e. lowering the age from 13).

Amit Oberoi will contact Simon Mass while David White will pursue some statistics through the FIM and other governing bodies on Junior Road Racing classes, injuries etc.

#### ITEM 7 MINUTES OF 14 MAY 2008:

#### ITEM 8 IDEAS SUGGESTED BY ALAN REDMAN:

Alan Redman raised the following issues:

- The cost impact of any rule changes needs strong consideration, otherwise it can become "chequebook racing" which will turn people away.
  - David Bancell informed that cost is indeed a high priority from the Road Race Commission's perspective.
- Timing: People need to know as early as possible what is happening for 2010 so that they have time to buy/sell/plan/budget for any series they are considering entering.
  - There was unanimous agreement for this by everyone in the room.

#### ITEM 9 IDEAS SUGGESTED BY BRAXTON LAINE:

Braxton Laine raised the following issues:

- We should be aiming to form a Junior Championship starting in 2010.
  - This was supported by everybody.
- In order to assist the marketing of junior classes and protect the interest of manufacturers, perhaps consideration should be given to uniting all the classes into one meeting.

**ITEM 10 ARE OUR OBJECTIVES (AS IN 3) STILL RELEVANT?**

It was agreed that these objectives were still relevant.

**ITEM 11 WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?**

- David White to gather information from the FIM and overseas on Junior training, injury stats, ages, classes etc.
- MA will work with MNSW on a proposal to present to NSW Sport & Rec for lowering the minimum age.

**ITEM 12 NEXT MEETING:**

We will aim to meet again in approximately March 2009.

Distribution: All present

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