
AMA Flat Track Introduction

AMA sanctions many racing series, but the oldest and most traditional is flat track—sometimes referred to as "dirt track"--racing. Dating back to post-World War II, flat track is the uniquely American type of motorcycle racing. Riders finesse their machines sideways through the turns, just inches apart from each other, at speeds over 100 mph. In short, motorcycle flat track racing provides one of the most thrilling spectacles in motorsports.

Today, AMA Pro flat track racing is divided into two distinct classes: the Progressive Insurance Grand National Championship and the AMA Harley-Davidson Sportster Performance series. These classes travel under the banner of the AMA Progressive Insurance Flat Track Championship.

AMA Pro Racing also offers the National Hot Shoe series, which serves as a development platform for riders aspiring to compete at the Grand National level.

AMA Grand National Championship History

Prior to 1954, the fast and smooth Springfield Mile at the Illinois State Fairgrounds was the nation's focal point for flat track racing. Although riders competed at various tracks around the country, the Springfield Mile remained as the most prestigious event—a 25-mile race that determined the winner of the coveted AMA National Dirt Track Championship.

In 1954, the AMA announced the establishment of a Grand National Championship series consisting of 18 points-paying races. While the AMA Grand National Championship format was predominantly made up of flat track events, a number of road race nationals were included to show the versatility of machines and riders. As the sport grew and machinery became more specialized, the AMA recognized the need to separate these two disciplines. In 1986, flat track and road racing became two distinct AMA Championship series.

In 1997 a group of dirt track team owners, race organizers, and AMA board and staff members developed a plan which became known as Project 2000. While the plan included new developments in broadcasting, sponsorship and marketing of AMA dirt track racing, Project 2000 also called for measures to support young competitors coming up through the ranks, and major changes in equipment rules. The equipment rule changes were considered with the goal of bringing more manufacturers and teams into dirt track racing at the Grand National level.

In 1998, a set of guidelines for a new 1000cc engine formula were developed by a committee of racing professionals and AMA technical staff. Shortly thereafter, designers and team owners began to develop Honda, Suzuki, Yamaha, Ducati, and Harley-Davidson prototypes using the 1000cc formula. These prototypes were tested during the 1999-2001 race seasons as part of the AMA SuperTracker development series.

In late 2001, performance data gleaned from the SuperTracker series was used to integrate larger engine formulas into Grand National Championship series rules. The SuperTracker series was discontinued at the end of the 2001 season, having served its purpose as a development and research platform.

Today, the AMA Grand National Championship stands as the ultimate level of competition for professional flat track racers. The Grand National Championship series features custom built race bikes using a variety of engine types, competing on mile, half mile, short track and TT courses.

Over the years, a number of motorcycle manufacturers have made their mark in this all-American series. However, none have been as successful as America's largest manufacturer, Harley-Davidson. Since 1972, Harley-Davidson has captured a record 24 championships.

AMA Harley-Davidson Sportster Performance Championship

The Harley-Davidson 883cc Sportster engine has more than 35 years of history behind it. Now known as the "evolution motor," the 883cc made its debut on the 1957 Harley-Davidson Sportster and has been continuously developed and refined up to its present-day use.

The widespread availability and affordability of the 883cc made it well suited as a racing motor, and in 1993 the AMA created the Harley-Davidson 883cc National Dirt Track Series. In 1998, the Harley-Davidson Motor Company acquired name-in-title sponsorship rights to the 883cc National Series, and the series was renamed as the Harley-Davidson Sportster Performance Series.

The AMA Harley-Davidson Sportster Performance Series provides an opportunity for up-and-coming dirt trackers to excel at the sport without making the large financial commitment required to field a competitive AMA Grand National-level machine. Harley-Davidson Sportster Performance races are most often a part of the program at AMA Progressive Insurance Flat Track Championship events.

AMA National Hot Shoe Series

Prior to 1997, riders seeking a career in professional flat track competition worked their way up through a system of amateur and pro-am competitions until they had accumulated enough points to graduate to professional competition in the AMA Regional or 600cc Championship Dirt Track Series. In 1997, the AMA Regional and 600cc Championship Series were consolidated into the AMA National Hot Shoe Series, providing a cohesive national advancement series for professional dirt-track racers.

The AMA National Hot Shoe Series now serves as the last rung on the ladder for riders aspiring to compete in the AMA Harley-Davidson Sportster Performance or AMA Grand National Championship Series. The AMA National Hot Shoe Series features motorcycles produced by a variety of manufacturers racing in 505cc Expert and Pro Sport classes, and 750/1000cc, and 883cc Expert classes.

Fans at AMA National Hot Shoe races witness all the action and drama of pro dirt-track racing, and look on as tomorrow's Grand National Champions hone their talents. AMA Grand National and Harley-Davidson Sportster Performance riders are eligible for competition in National Hot Shoe Series races, and fans are often treated to appearances by these top riders.