

Motocross: overview

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Good morning class. The theme of my IA is motocross but today I will speak specifically on the topic “ The development of motocross as an established sport”. What is motocross?.... Motocross is defined as a timed motorcycle race over a closed outdoor course consisting of a winding dirt trail with hills, jumps, sharp turns, and often muddy terrain. This sport originated in Britain as an off-road event called scrambling. The first known scramble took place at Camberley, Surrey in 1924.

The earliest motorcycles were little more than bicycles with small internal combustion engines attached. During these early years people sometimes, used the tracks built for bicycle racing for scrambling events. These early scrambling events were used to show case motorcycles entered by manufacturers to publicize their brand in much the same way they do today. By the late 1920's “ Scrambling” had become very popular in both Britain and France.

The French added new dimensions to the sport, they shortened the tracks added laps and man made obstacles such as jumps. They also changed the name to what it is known as today.....Motocross which is a combination of motorcycle and cross country. The bikes used for motocross during the late 1920's were very similar to those used on the streets at that time such as Harley Davidson's and Indians, which had rigid frames. By the 1930's these then gave way to frames containing suspension and more advanced swinging fork rear suspension by the early 1950's.

According to the FIM motocross went international in 1947 when the Dutch national motorcycle federation hosted a competition called the motocross

des nations for national teams on an estate in the Netherlands. Three countries were entered in the first year of the competition they were Great Britain, The Netherlands, and Belgium. The riders competed in races consisting of two heats each of eight laps, over a two mile circuit. Scoring was done by computing the total times of the top three riders from each national team.

The British who were represented by, Bill Nicholson, Fred Rist, and Ray Scovell riding 500cc bikes manufactured by the British Small arms company won the competition, beating the Belgians by only 9 seconds. The popularity of the event was shown to have greatly improved as the second staging of the event in Belgium attracted thirty thousand spectators. The British continued to show their dominance in the sport as they went on to win the motocross des nations 15 times in the first twenty years of the event.

In 1952 the FIM (Federation Internationale de Motocyclisme), the motorcycling's international governing body, created an individual European Championship, and then upgraded it to a World Championship title in 1957. In 1962 a young engineer in East Germany Walter Kaaden, made a technological breakthrough that greatly improved the two-stroke engine and its usefulness which in turn “ revolutionized” the motorcycle industry. His discovery was that of the principle of the expansion chamber, which when properly shaped, instantly increased the power of a two stroke engine by over 25 percent.

This gave the 2 stroke engine a power to weight ratio that easily exceeded the 4-stroke engine. Another benefit of the 2 stroke engine was that it was

less complicated and much cheaper to mass produce. As a result of this many industrial nations including Germany, Czechoslovakia, Great Britain, Sweden, Spain, and Japan quickly embraced the new technology. As engine design and power improved competition for 250cc motorcycles the class in which 2 strokes performed their best, began to gain in popularity and in 1962 the FIM created a 250cc world championship.

As a result of the introduction of the 250cc class the growth of motocross during the 1970s was nothing less than a motorsport revolution. The growth of motocross when measured by the number of American motorcycle association sanctioned events grew one hundred fold between 1965 and 1975. In the 1980's the sport developed even more in the US, the 250cc class went through the decade and in 1985 the East/West 125cc class which was created for the younger less experienced riders was formed.

During the 1990's the 250 class remained in the spotlight, with the main focus now moving from Europe where motocross had been more popular, to the USA, where riders such as Jeremy McGrath and Jeff Stanton consistently dominated the sport. Today, as a result of the advancements and achievements in the world of motocross it has allowed for the world to recognize it as an established sport in which many have excelled and shown greatness persons such as Jeremy McGrath, Ricky Carmichael, and James Stewart are some of the greatest names associated with the sport of motocross.