

2020 AMA MOTORCYCLISTS OF THE YEAR

Recognizing The Success Of Those Who Got Us Back To Racing

By Rob Dingman

There is no question that the biggest news story of 2020 was the global coronavirus pandemic. I first wrote about the impact of the pandemic on the AMA in the May issue (“Community in Crisis”). At that time, at least 20 states had issued stay-at-home orders and other directives prohibiting gatherings that included motorcycling events for which our members join the AMA in order to participate. We encouraged AMA-chartered organizers to comply with all restrictions imposed by federal, state and local authorities affecting AMA-sanctioned activity. Unfortunately, this meant that countless events, including many held annually, had to be postponed or canceled.

Since participation in events put on by AMA-chartered organizers is a significant AMA member benefit and because the AMA relies on those events to attract new AMA members, the inability to have races for a significant period of time would have been very detrimental to the AMA, its many chartered organizers and a significant portion of our membership.

Finding a new way to live with the new reality of life during a pandemic was essential. It was imperative that we find a way to get back to racing in the face of this major public health crisis. With leadership from race promoter MX Sports, a Safe-To-Race Task Force was empaneled to compile best practices and create necessary tools for event organizers to aid in their resumption of racing events.

In addition to MX Sports, organizations participating in the Safe-To-Race Task Force included Feld Entertainment, MotoAmerica, Racer X, MyLaps, Trackside Software, MotorsportsReg, Daytona Motorsports Group, Daytona International Speedway, NBC Sports/Ignite Partners, United States Motorsports Association, Lucas Oil Off-Road Racing Series, RedBud MX, Lucas Oil Speedway, TicketSpice, American Specialty Insurance, Airstream

Ventures and the AMA. JH Leale served as the rider representative, and medical professionals and local government officials also took part.

The task force developed a toolkit that provided recommendations, including developing a medical action plan for symptomatic event participants, attendees or crew members; prohibiting overnight camping for one-day events; requiring vehicles to be parked 10 feet apart; closing bleachers and other fixed spectator seating; eliminating fan activities such as autograph-signing sessions and podium celebrations; using advance registration to limit participation; encouraging the use of credit cards for on-site payment; and having competitors bring their own pens to sign documents.

The goal of developing this guidance was to enable motorcycle and other motorsports venues, as well as recreational riding areas and competition centers, to reopen. It offered best practices that were consistent with current health and safety standards for social distancing to enable racetracks and outdoor recreation facilities to resume activity on a limited basis.

This was the first effort of its kind in the world and was shared with our counterpart organizations in other countries, as well as with our own AMA-chartered organizers. There can be little doubt that the work of this task force enabled the completion of the AMA Supercross, an FIM World Championship, season, which had been suspended with a number of rounds left to complete. It also helped facilitate the running of MotoAmerica, the home of the AMA Superbike Championship, the AMA Road Racing Grand Championship, the AMA Flat Track Grand Championship and the Pro Motocross Championship run

by MX Sports Pro Racing, as well as countless amateur events that would otherwise not have taken place at all.

The AMA Motorcyclist of the Year is recognition for the profound impact that an individual—or, in this case, individuals—had on motorcycling during the past year. It is, then, only fitting that the 2020 Motorcyclist of the Year award recognize people who helped motorcyclists navigate the uncertainties of the most significant development affecting all of our lives in the past 12 months.

It is for this reason that the AMA Board of Directors has named the Safe-To-Race Task Force the 2020 AMA Motorcyclists of the Year. The Board decided to recognize the entire task force with this honor, because each task force member’s work was vital to the shared success of getting back to racing. Without their effort, it would have taken much longer for racing to be restored, if it had been restored at all in 2020.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the Safe-To-Race Task Force and congratulate its members for being named the 2020 AMA Motorcyclists of the Year.

Rob Dingman, a Charter Life Member, is president and CEO of the AMA.

