

CHAMPIONS AMONG US

Honoring AMA Racers



By Rob Dingman

As this issue was being put to bed, we had the honor of welcoming many of America's most successful amateur racers to the 2013 AMA Championship Banquet. The annual gala event is where we celebrate the seasons of those who excelled in AMA-sanctioned motorcycle and all-terrain vehicle competition the previous year. On Jan. 18, riders from all disciplines sanctioned by the AMA came to Columbus, Ohio, to receive their AMA national No. 1

plates and championship medals.

The AMA Championship Banquet is more than a celebration of speed, endurance and skill. The best competitors stand at the top of the podium because they possess both superior athletic ability as well as humility, dedication and desire to be the best.

This is what makes participating in AMA racing events so significant. The AMA represents the gold standard of amateur motorcycle competition in America. Racing in an AMA-sanctioned event means the rules are fair, the rules are the same no matter where you go, you compete with others who are at your skill level, you have opportunities to advance, and every effort is made to ensure a safe racing environment.

Of course, this wasn't built overnight. Our current racers, and the hundreds of thousands of AMA racers who came before them, are the reason that AMA amateur racing has achieved the status it enjoys today. Since 1924, racers of all backgrounds and skill levels have competed in AMA-sanctioned events and have contributed to the collective wisdom that has shaped our sport.

One way those contributions manifest themselves is in AMA Congress. AMA Congress is the elected body that writes the rules in the AMA Amateur Competition Rulebook. They ensure that the rules put in place are consistent, fair and logical across all disciplines.

Another powerful quality of AMA-sanctioned competition was also on full display at the AMA Championship Banquet. The event isn't just about competitive success. It's also a celebration of family, good sportsmanship, mutual respect and responsibility.

It's that last characteristic, responsibility, that is growing ever more important in our sport. We have seen over the decades, and we continue to see today, that if we aren't responsible, then we find our favorite pastime at risk. In fact, if the AMA did not exist—or have the enduring support of many of our members—I truly doubt motorcycle racing in America would be possible.

The importance of that responsibility is reflected right there in our slogan: Rights, Riding and Racing.

Of these three, Rights is the most important thing that we do. If we do not fight for our right to ride and race motorcycles, that freedom will go away. There are many people and organizations that want to shut down your local racetrack. They want to stop



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you and your family from riding on trails in our national forests. Some even want to stop you from riding on your own property.

Some people don't understand that our sport is a family sport—that it is made up of moms, dads, brothers and sisters enjoying clean, safe fun. Others just think they know what's best for you and want to tell you what you can and cannot do. Others argue that motorcycles and all-terrain vehicles damage the environment.

Of course, we know that responsibly ridden off-highway vehicles cause no measurable environmental damage and represent a legitimate and viable way to enjoy, explore and travel across our public lands.

This is why one of the best ways we can protect our sport is to always ride and race responsibly, as well as encourage others to do the same.

Our champions would not be where they are—accepting their AMA No. 1 plates in front of hundreds of their peers—if they did not carry themselves responsibly. They do that every time they prepare themselves and their bike for practice or competition. They do that by respecting and following the rules in the AMA Amateur Competition Rulebook.

Even when they are not racing, true champions approach motorcycling in the same way. They are responsible when they ride recreationally, as well as when they are off a bike. The more non-motorcyclists we can win over, the more of them will be on our side when those who hate motorcycles try to take our freedoms away.

As an AMA member, you never ride or race alone. There are hundreds of thousands of AMA members who have your back. They love riding as much as you do. They are committed to improving the sport for today, and saving it for the enjoyment of future generations. Along with all of them, you protect your freedom to ride and race simply by being an AMA member. Thank you for your support.

Rob Dingman is the president and CEO of the AMA.