

RESUMING ACTIVITIES UNDER NEW REALITY

AMA Racing Restarts, Business Continues

As our economy slowly emerges from its government-imposed slumber, we are beginning to see the welcomed return of some AMA-sanctioned activity.

The Grand National Cross Country Series, an AMA National Championship, resumed with Round 4 at Aonia Pass in Washington, Ga., and, albeit without spectators, the AMA Supercross Championship resumed to finish the last seven rounds of the series at a single location in Salt Lake City. Also, without fans in attendance, MotoAmerica, home of the AMA Superbike Championship, got underway at Road America in Elkhart Lake, Wis.

A number of off-road and motocross events are happening around the country, and we even got our annual AMA staff ride in with the one-month delayed opening of the Wayne National Forest in Ohio.

A number of AMA staff members, as well as a member of our Board of Directors, participated in a Safe-To-Race Task Force empaneled to compile best practices and create necessary tools for event organizers in planning for the resumption of racing events in the context of the current health crisis facing us all. I would like to thank and congratulate MX Sports for its leadership in bringing the Task Force together. Those tools, as well as others adapted for recreational riding event organizers, can be found here: americanmotorcyclist.com/COVID19resources.

Like many people confined by stay-at-home orders and starved for sports programming on television, my family and I were drawn into the miniseries about Michael Jordan, “The Last Dance.” What

was so striking about the series was how much of Jordan’s success came down to his fiercely competitive nature. Most will recall that Jordan owned a motorcycle road racing team that competed in the AMA Superbike Championship for a number of years in the 2000s.

While Jordan’s racing team achieved a modicum of success, that success was nothing like his success on the basketball court. That certainly wasn’t because Jordan had lost his competitive edge.

In fact, he was at a distinct

disadvantage, because he couldn’t get the same equipment as the U.S. Suzuki distributor’s official team. It has always baffled me that the executive in charge of American Suzuki at the time didn’t recognize that if the world’s most recognizable sports icon’s team won using your product, it was much better for your brand than if you beat that icon with your own effort using what has become known as “unobtanium” parts. Unobtanium, of course, refers to performance parts that were not made available to everyone. For those of you who watched “The Last Dance” and observed how competitive a person Jordan is, imagine how frustrating that must have been for him.

Additionally, the Jordan team brought with it to the AMA Superbike paddock a significant number of non-endemic sponsors. Had those sponsors been around long enough to spread throughout the paddock and even potentially to the series championship, it certainly would have raised the profile of the sport beyond motorcycle enthusiasts and created a whole new group of road racing fans.

Ultimately, it was rules such as those that allowed this type of situation, which

led to the sale of AMA professional racing assets in 2008. Some of those assets, such as the rights to the AMA Superbike Championship in which the Jordan team competed, have reverted to AMA ownership. Now, MotoAmerica is the AMA-sanctioned professional road racing series in the United States. It would be interesting to see how a Jordan team would do in MotoAmerica.

Like many businesses and organizations around the world, with a few exceptions, the AMA has temporarily replaced air travel with video teleconferences. In fact, the AMA Board of Directors conducted its most recent quarterly meeting by video conference. The Board has, of course, previously met by phone and conducted committee meetings by teleconference, but I believe this is the first time the Board has held its regularly scheduled quarterly meeting by video teleconference.

The meeting was actually quite productive, despite not being an in-person meeting, and I can envision the board using this technology more in the future, even when we can get back to traveling again. Once you get past the feeling of being in a dream where you are on the old “Hollywood Squares” game show (yes, I am aware how old that reference is!), the video teleconference works well for a board meeting.

The Board of Directors of the Fédération Internationale de Motocyclisme has resorted to video teleconference for its meetings, as well. Those meetings have an added level of complexity, however, with the requirement for translators and given that board members are in different time zones.

This is our new reality for the foreseeable future. I use the term “new reality,” rather than the term “new normal,” because there is nothing normal about what is going on in our country and, indeed, the world today. At least we have motorcycling to distract us from the stresses of our new reality.

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By Rob Dingman