

## LEAVING HIS MARK

*John Ulrich Makes Motorcycling Better*

*By Rob Dingman*

Last month in this space, I wrote about the motorcycle lifestyle and how it includes all the activity surrounding motorcycling, not just the act of riding a motorcycle. While my column focused on maintaining and working on bikes during the off-season, the motorcycle lifestyle means different things to different people.

I can think of few people more engaged in the motorcycle lifestyle than 2017 AMA Dud Perkins Lifetime Achievement Award recipient, John Ulrich. The Dud Perkins Lifetime Achievement Award, AMA's highest award, acknowledges the highest level of service to the AMA in any area of activity, and its recipients are individuals whose contributions are nationally recognized. The award is bestowed by the AMA Board of Directors.

John Ulrich is a motorcycle journalist and magazine publisher, a road race team owner, and a race dad (his son Chris recently retired from professional road racing) as well as a racer himself. He also created an organization that purchases and facilitates the deployment of soft barriers at road races and flat track events to enhance rider safety.

John began racing motorcycles in 1973, starting with enduros and followed by motocross, road racing, drag racing and land speed racing. He worked full time for several different motorcycle publications from 1976 through 1986.

In 1980, he co-founded Team Hammer with Bruce Hammer, who was seriously injured in an AMA F1 race in 1982. He later incorporated Team Hammer with his wife Trudy in 1989. John is also a superior evaluator of talent, having signed both John Hopkins and Ben Spies to Team Hammer when they were each 15 years old, not to mention many others.

John and Trudy founded *Roadracing World & Motorcycle Technology* magazine in 1990. This publication and website are the premier sources of road race information.

In addition to John and Trudy, their son Chris is the racing editor and daughter Natalie is the advertising sales director.

In 2001, John established the Roadracing World Action Fund, a not-for-profit that has raised more than \$1 million to fund the acquisition and deployment of soft barriers such as Airfence that have made countless road race and flat track circuits safer for competitors.

Years ago, under previous leadership, the AMA actually labeled John as a troublemaker. John, like many other AMA members at the time, was not happy that the AMA had gotten itself embroiled in a couple of lawsuits regarding the business practices surrounding its professional racing activities. One of these lawsuits resulted in a judgement against the AMA and a \$3 million payment from the AMA.

John decided to do something about it and ran for the AMA Board of Directors. He ran on a slate with two other candidates: Hall of Famer Kevin Schwantz and Jeff Nash. Their campaign slogan was, "Take back the AMA," and all three of them won their elections. John beat the incumbent board member by an eight-to-one margin. In fact, he was so successful as a force for change that the AMA Board changed the rules to prevent him from running for re-election.

Those past board members claimed that because John owned a business in the motorcycle industry (his magazine) he was eligible to be a corporate member (today, called a business member) and would therefore need to join as a corporate member and get elected by the corporate members. So, John joined as a corporate member and was elected to the Board by the corporate members. He served on the board for 13 years until term limits that he helped impose took effect, and he had to leave the board in 2015.

In April, I had the opportunity to present John with the AMA Dud Perkins Lifetime Achievement Award at the first round of the 2017 MotoAmerica series and U.S. round of the MotoGP series at the Circuit of the Americas in Austin, Texas. It was a fitting setting, in the road race paddock among his fellow competitors.

I consider myself fortunate that John was on the AMA Board when I was hired as president and CEO. John was instrumental to the effort to bring about necessary changes to our organization to make it stronger and more responsive to our membership.

On a personal note, I want to thank John not only for his perseverance in making the AMA a better organization but for his support of me, personally. John has forgotten more about road racing than most of us will ever know. We are very fortunate to have him among us and advocating for our motorcycle lifestyle.

*Rob Dingman is AMA president and CEO.*

