

Speedway - Overview

Speedway is a motorcycle racing sport which is very challenging and adventurous. The racing tracks are oval shaped dirt tracks. The motor bikes are constructed like some drag bikes which is covered by all essential components. They start with a very light steel alloy frame and comfort the rider with very less front suspension and no rear end suspension.



Six riders compete wheel to wheel in this motorbike racing. All the bikers start from the same position and compete to be the first to cross the finish line. The viewers can clearly see the speedway track and it is pretty clear which rider is leading and moving up.

History

The date and place from where the game started is not known but there are evidences which show that speedway race started before World War I. The first meeting for speedway race was held in UK on 9 April 1928 to feature bikes without brakes. These bikes had broad siding round corners on loose dirt.

The Olympic Stadium of Glasgow, Nelson witnessed the first Proto Speedway on 9 April 1928. The speedway racing was earlier held on well-built tracks. In Australia,

the tracks ranged from ½ mile showground tracks which are close to 520m like the Claremont Speedway in Perth and 509m like Sydney Showground.

Participating Countries

Mostly the European countries participate in speedway racing. The FIM permits governing bodies in each country for operating league systems. The league system is accompanied by one or more cup events in most of the countries. Given below are list of countries which actively participate in Speedway racing.

The International Speedway Championship is held every year in different nations. Some of the countries participating in speedway are United States, Finland, Germany, Britain, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Russia, Sweden, Denmark, Australia, and Bulgaria.

The Speedway Grand Prix (SGP) is held since 1995. These nations have numerous leagues in the entire season of speedway. This season runs from March to October. In smaller countries, the riders participate as part timers and have a second job.

Speedway - Basics

The game is quite simple and the rider who crosses the finish line first is considered as the winner. The beauty of the game lies in the numerous challenges which the rider has to face.

This is a motorcycle sport which includes maximum of six riders participating over four anti-clockwise laps of an oval circuit. These motorcycles have one gear and no brakes. Usually the tracks are flat oval and are full of dirt, loosely packed shale, or dolomite. These tracks can be seen in Australia and New Zealand.

Track

The track of speedway is oval in shape and the rules of its construction are made by Federation Internationale de Motorcyclisme (FIM). The track consists of two straight sections which are joined by two semi circles. The length of the track can be between 260m and 425m. The gradient must not be more than 5% in the straight section and 10% at the bends. Also it should be constant from inner edge to safety fence.

The width of the track is 10 metres in straight sections and 14 meters on bends. One of the straight section has a white mark which is also divided into four equal parts called **gates**. From this white mark, the racers start the race and drive the bike in anticlockwise direction.



Motorcycles

The FIM has also made the rules regarding motorcycles to be used in the race. Previously, the bikes consisted of upright engines but now a days the laydown bikes are used due to easy handling. There are no brakes in the bikes and to start the race and release the bikes, clutches are used. The fuel used in the bike is methanol which increases the compression ratio. This gives power to the engine which increases the speed up to 130 kmph.



The following criteria must be checked for a bike that is to be used in the race –

- Capacity should be 500cc.
- Must have a four stroke, single cylinder engine, with a carburettor and a spark plug.
- Dust collector must be fitted.
- A silencer should be fitted in order to reduce noise
- The width of the handle bar shall be between 650mm and 850mm.

Speed

The length of the track is between 260m and 425m and a rider can cover four laps within one minute. On straight section, the speed can reach up to 110kmph but on curves the speed slows down which lowers down the average. If the rider starts the race correctly, then he has the advantage over other racers. The riders who find the grippy part get more speed.

Speedway - Equipment

The following equipment are required while racing in speedway –

Leathers – Only a single piece leather suit is allowed and combination of jackets and trousers is not allowed in racing events. It acts as a protection against crash.

Helmet – Riders from different teams wear helmets of different colors. It is not recommended to purchase a second hand helmet.

Body Armour – Body Armour acts as a protective shield by absorbing heat from the effect of hitting the track.

Gloves – The riders should wear gloves made of nomex and leather to protect their hands and ensure proper grip.

Knee Sliders – It is highly advised to wear it as many a times the race leather comes in contact with the touch fasteners on the knees ready to attach the sliders.



Motorcycle Boots – It is recommended to wear good quality leather boots having a height of 200mm. Always go for the pair that is easy to use while driving.

CE Mark – It represents that the clothing abides with the rules and regulations laid. It is just a mark to ensure that the rider has the best safety equipment and it's not a big deal if the rider doesn't have this mark.

Identification Disc – It is important to wear an identification disc while practising and racing. It carries your complete details.

How to Play Speedway?

The race begins with four riders racing over four laps from a starting point. Each of them wears helmets of different colors. Generally, in team events, red and blue stands for home team riders, white and yellow/black stands for visiting riders. The starting area is divided into 4 equal parts/grids.

The riders from each team must take their position in their respective grid. Here the colors also denote the starting position in individual events. Red starts from gate 1, blue from gate 2, white from gate 3 and yellow/black from gate 4. The riders should be willing to get their bikes on their own without any outside help.



All the riders must be present at the start line within a reasonable period of time else they can be disqualified. The starting gate has two or more tapes across the start line. All the riders must take their position within 10cm from the starting point and never touch it after the green light is on. They are expected to remain stationary until the tapes are raised.

In any case, if a rider fails to comply, it is considered as a false start and the rider is penalised for it. The race begins by raising the start tape monitored by the match

referee and the riders must proceed around the track in anticlockwise direction without both wheels illegally leaving the track boundaries.

How to Drive

A new rider should always take care of the following things.

Wheel's Position

The rear wheel should be in the centre or back from the centre in its slot in order to adjust traction. If the wheel is set forward, it results in poor handling but the rider gets more traction. In order to make turns easier, the wheel has to be set right back but this results in more spin.

Riding Position

Many riders stand on the footrest with their right foot and put the left foot apart. This is a worst condition as there is much weight on the right foot and the arms get tired quickly. In order to make the handling easy, the right foot has to remain on right footrest and the pressure on the left foot can be increased or reduced through right thigh muscle which can be set across the front saddle. In this way, a rider can control and balance the bike through right foot.

Controlling the bike

The new rider can control his bike on the curves by putting off the throttle. While putting off the throttle, he has to take care of the speed with which he can control the bike on the curves. As soon as the straight path comes, he has to put on the throttle which swings and spins the rear wheel automatically.

Handling Over Slide

It is a condition where the rear wheel is too far out. This cannot be rectified by suddenly by closing the throttle. In this situation, it is better to push the bike down on its left side unless it is on the ground instead of going over the top or going around nearly 180 degrees and being thrown backwards.

Pass a Slow Rider

This is one of the most difficult situation one encounters. In this case, the rider needs to rush up in the inside but if the space is too small, cross the machine up to scrub off some speed and then simply follow that rider unless one can make an easy pass.

Making an Outside Pass

If a rider is about to make overtake a slow rider while exiting from a turn, he should make sure that he does not get squeezed into the fence. This situation can be

avoided either by easing up on the throttle if there is time or to cross up the machine more before the front wheel enters the gap between the slow rider's rear wheel and the fence, which will scrub off a little speed to avoid collision.

Once the rider is confident about having full control, get the body weight as far back as conditions permit. Then try to get the wheels as straight as possible while heading for the exit of the turn so that the maximum amount of traction is obtained during throttle opening.

Laying the bike down

If a rider has to stop or slow down the bike suddenly, laying down the bike is the best option. This situation can occur if a rider falls down and the rider behind him has to stop or slow down the bike suddenly.

Speedway - Rules

Rules for speedway motorbike series are made by the FIM. These rules mention the guidelines for the riders, track specifications, boundary, safety precautions and all other things. The rules of the speedway racing are as follows –

- Every team is represented by four riders with different helmet colors.
- Each round is of 20 drives. Each rider is destined to race in five drives and counter other riders during the meeting.
- The team that wins three points wins a **heat** (races are known as heats), one with two points finishes second and one with one point for a third place finish.
- When a team lags six points behind the leader, they are permitted to make tactical substitutions.
- Every team can have one joker if they lag behind six points behind the leader. No jokers are permitted during heats 17-20 still a tactical alternative is used.
- The final four heats are nominated by their team managers.
- If there is a tie, then the winner is determined by who finishes the first place first. If tie persists then the most second place finisher then the most third place finisher is determined and the process continues till there is only one champion.



Speedway - Champions

The first official speedway championship was first held in 1936. The FIM Speedway Grand Prix was started in 1995 where scoring system is on the basis of overall performance of each rider. Some of the major speedway championships are as follows –

- Speedway World Cup
- Grand Prix
- World Individual Speedway Championship
- Round Robin Tournament
- Pro Mazda Championship

Champion of Champions

Speedway is an adventurous sport in which bikers race in order to complete the laps and win the race. Some of the champions of speedway are as follows –

Tai Woffinden



Tai Woffinden is a speedway rider from England. His parents moved to Australia in 1994 and his speedway career started in Perth. In 2006, he won Western Australian Under 16 title. In the same year, he joined British team Scunthorpe Scorpions and took part in Conference League and won the championship.

In 2007, he again took part in conference league being a part of the same team and won the championship. In the same year, he took part in British Under 18 Championship and won it. In 2008, he won British Under 21 Championship. In 2013 and 2015, he won Speedway Grand Prix Championships.

Greg Hancock



Greg Hancock is a speedway rider from America. At the starting of his career, he came to UK to participate in exhibition races.

In 1992, he won many gold medals in World Pairs and World Team Cup. Speedway Grand Prix was started in 1995 and Greg participated in it and was ranked fourth.

In 1996, he won bronze medal in the same championship. In 1997, he participated in World Title and Elite League Riders' Championship. In 2000, he won his first Speedway Grand Prix.

Chris Holder



Chris Holder is a speedway rider from Australia who started his career with Isle of Wight Islanders team of UK. In 2007, he became a member of Atlas Wroclaw and took part in Speedway Ekstraliga league. In the same year, he won Swedish Allsvenskan league.

In 2008 and 2009, he won Swedish Eliteserien league. In 2007 and 2008, Holder took part in world cup. In 2008, he won Australian Championship. In January 2004 also, he won the Australian Championship. Holder also won the Speedway Grand Prix in 2010 and 2012.

Tomasz Gollob



Tomasz Gollob is a speedway rider from Poland who was mostly a part of Bydgoszcz club. He won Polish Individual Championships eight times that took place between 1992 and 2009.

He has also won Polish Paris Championship ten times. Along with this, he also won Polish Grand Prix eight times.

Gollob won the Jack Young Solo Championship which is held every year in the memory of Jack Young. In 1996, he won the World Team Cup and World Cup in 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, and 2012.

Jason Crump



Jason Crump is an Australian speedway rider who has won Speedway World Championships three times. Besides this, he has also won a World Cup and World Under 21 Championships. At the starting of his career, Crump won Australian Under 16 Champion in 1990. In 1995, he won Gosford Speedway Championship with his father. In the same year, Grand Prix was inaugurated and he participated in it but could not earn any medal.

In the same year, he won his first World Championship. He won first Grand Prix Championship in 1996. In 1999, he won World Team Cup and in 2001 and 2002, he won Speedway World Cup. In further years, he won many World Championships and Grand Prix Series.