

NATIONAL MOTORCYCLE MUSEUM

Over 30 historically significant motorcycles and over 20 sets of leathers worn by the stars of the Grand National Championship are part of the Allstate Motorcycle Dirt Track Heroes presented by J&P Cycles exhibit. Bikes ridden by Grand National Champions Bart Markel, Scott Parker, Bubba Shobert, Jay Springsteen and Chris Carr are among those featured.



The huge Dirt Track Heroes timeline, nearly 20 feet long features win statistics, rule changes and other landmarks in Grand National Championship.



Dirt track racing is an exciting and uniquely American story, and now the story of the riders, the tuners, their bikes and the championships won is told at the National Motorcycle Museum in Anamosa, Iowa. Allstate Motorcycle Dirt Track Heroes presented by J&P Cycles will be on display through April, 2014. Over 30 Class C and short track bikes plus a several road racers are on display, carefully selected, brought in from collectors all across America. They illustrate the machines built, tuned and ridden in Grand National Championship racing. But there's also careful attention to the stories behind the bikes. With over 25 individual champions in the GNC's nearly 60 year history, author and exhibit curator Greg Pearson had his work cut out for him. "It's very important to give these riders, and tuners, credit for the hard work, and the risks they took to try and earn the #1 plate. As author of two books on the topic, Pearson is well versed in Grand National history.

Pearson also worked with Mark Mederski at the National Motorcycle Museum to help dig up the bikes, leathers and some great art to illustrate the Grand National Championship history. "I thank guys like Chris Carter, Don Emde, Don Rosene, Jim Oldiges, Don Miller, Michael Lange and many more enthusiasts who are preserving these bikes in their collections, plus #1 plate riders like Chris Carr and Jay Springsteen who have kept their race bikes. They were confident enough in our project to let loose of their pride and joy dirt trackers and ship them to Iowa. And if you've ever wondered what's inside a production Harley-Davidson XR750 take a look at the full cutaway the Harley-Davidson Museum loaned for the project!"

The exhibit also features over 20 sets of racing leathers, a dozen helmets, in a sense each a piece art. Mederski says, "Don Miller of Metro Racing came up with a really great artifact he found on eBay of all places. It's a one half inch thick, 20 pound steel number plate Bart Markel gave to Gary Nixon, when Nixon won his first championship. Handing the heavy weight number plate to Nixon, Markel quipped, "Get used to it! These #1 plates are heavy!"

Photographs are an important part of telling any racing story. Official Camel Pro photographer Bert Shepard plus Jim Grant, Dave Hoenig and Ray Ninness all offered up their images. There are also one-off paintings, plus prints from artists like Melva Murphy and Harry Miller. Win posters and track banners help complete the feel. Probably a "first" for such a project, the Dirt Track Racing Riders Memorial created by Bert Sumner, a tribute to riders who gave the ultimate sacrifice for dirt track racing, is also part of the story presented.

To illustrate the nature of "go fast turn left," and what it means to tire wear, one display lets you play the "Quick Change Challenge." Curator Pearson says, "On a bench we set up a wheel with a Barnes hub, a dozen sprockets and a brake rotor plus a wrench for the big wing nuts. You can see how quickly you can swap the brake rotor for the sprocket, side for side, to start making use of the unworn side of the tire, just like a tuner needs to do."

The National Motorcycle Museum thanks sponsors Allstate Motorcycle Insurance, J&P Cycles, Federal Motorcycle Shipping, Metro Racing and Mike & Margaret Wilson for their support in producing this exhibit.

This temporary exhibit, on display through April 2014 only occupies about five percent of the space in the National Motorcycle Museum. The Museum is open every day 9:00 am - 5:00 pm, year around. The website will help you plan a trip; www.nationalmcmuseum.org. Or call for more information, 319 462 3925.



Racing leathers from Don Emde, Gary Nixon and Kenny Roberts frame a Bart Markel KR750, Nixon's last Triumph dirt tracker and a full cutaway of the legendary Harley-Davidson XR750 on loan from the Harley-Davidson Museum.



A fully restored Terry Poovey Harley-Davidson XR750 sits next to Jay Springsteen's multi-race winning MX250-based Harley short track racer.



Leathers from many GNC champs are on display, plus over 100 pieces of art; posters, prints, even original oil paintings.





Since the Grand National Championship rules were instituted by the AMA in 1954, about 25 champions have been crowned. You can learn about the careers of each #1 rider through these detailed biographical panels.

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Continued on page 11