

Southtowns BMX

BMX – BICYCLE MOTOCROSS

Welcome to the wonderful world of BMX racing! The manual you hold is designed to try to provide a comprehensive, yet simple guide to the various aspects of the sport.

In the early 1970's, a group of California kids were imitating their motorcycle motocross heroes on their 20-inch bicycles, and they built a homemade track to "race" their bicycles on. This new sport, created by kids, for kids, was happening throughout the nation.

In 1974, the National Bicycle League (NBL) was formed as the first sanctioning organization to turn the backyard racing into an exciting, competitive sport on a local, state, national and international level.

SOUTHTOWNS BMX

The Southtowns BMX Association began as a part of the NBL in the 1980's with a track located in Hamburg, NY. The track has continued to grow over the years and has become one of the fastest and most challenging tracks.

MANAGEMENT OF THE SPORT

The highest-level officials in the sport are the National Commissioner and the National Board Committee. Under that umbrella the country is divided into regions; New York falls under the Northeast Region. Each region has its own commissioner and board also. Under the Region, fall the various states. Each state has its own management system, consisting of a state commissioner and board. Lower down the ladder is each individual track, which is manned by a track director and the track board. At the end of this manual you will see the current personnel filling these various positions.

Southtowns BMX

GETTING STARTED!

EQUIPMENT:

Bicycle: Any 20-inch bicycle can be used for competition. You may choose to have pads on the handlebar's crossbar, on the frame and the handlebar stem. The handlebars must have grips that are in good condition. If your bicycle has a kickstand, chain guard and reflectors or other gadgets, they must be removed for safety purposes on the track. Remember however, if you decide to ride your bike on the street, you will need to add all of your safety equipment back!

Gear:

Helmet: A helmet is **the** most important part of your equipment! If you do not have a helmet to use, ask one of the track officials. Southtowns BMX has some helmets available for you to borrow. For racing purposes, you must have either a full-face helmet or a helmet with a mouth guard attached.

Clothing: You must wear long pants and a long-sleeved shirt. It is advised that if your pants are baggy and could possibly become entangled in the bike chain, you use some tape to fit the leg tight around your ankle. You will not be permitted to roll your pant leg up – all skin must be covered.

Optional: You may see many riders wearing gloves, chest protectors, extra padding, etc. These items are optional, however can be very helpful, especially to a new rider. Please ask any track official if you have questions about what is necessary or acceptable.

MEMBERSHIP:

The track at the Hamburg Town Recreation Area is not open to the general public. It is prohibited to ride the track when it is not open. To participate in any racing events or practices, you must become a member of the NBL. You may join the NBL with a 30-day trial membership to see if you enjoy racing. If you decide that you like it and want to continue, you can then extend your membership for the year and will receive a membership card with your NBL number. The last 3 digits of that NBL number will be the number you will place on the front of your bike

Southtowns BMX

Things you will receive through your membership:

- NBL publication, BMX Today (monthly).
- Membership card
- Participant medical insurance
- Qualified officials
- National and state point standings
- Awards
- List of tracks and schedules of events

RACING

LEVELS: There are three skill levels in BMX: Rookie (beginner), Novice and Expert. The brand new rider will start as a rookie and will race other rookies the same, or close to the same age.

Age classes in BMX are one year apart, beginning with the 5 year old and under class and continuing up to the 17 and older classes. Beginning riders will continue to compete in the Rookie class until they have won 15 races. When a beginner receives his 15 move-up awards, he then becomes a Novice. Novices move to Expert after 20 first place wins.

The classes for girls are slightly different – they can run either as a girl rookie and race in the boys rookie class or race in the girl class. However, if there are no girls to race that day in the girl class the girl will be placed in the boy novice class. Please ask the Clerk of Course if you have any specific questions about the girl classes.

REGISTRATION: The first thing to do is check the local schedule to see what time registration begins. You will need to register prior to each race to be included. Simply go to the registration area and present your NBL membership card or you may call the track and pre-register for that days race. Remember if you pre-register you must be at the track by 7:30 pm.

BIKE INSPECTION: The next stop you will need to make is at the “Bike Inspection Area”. If you are not sure where that is, ask any track official. The inspector will check your bike to see that all fittings are tight, that there are grips and ends on the handlebars, and that your chain is fitting appropriately. He will also check that you

Southtowns BMX

have the appropriate clothing and helmet on. Once approved, he will place a sticker on your number plate. You will not be allowed to sit on the gate without an approval sticker.

PRACTICE: Before the race begins there will be a practice gate session. This is an open session and is not divided into classes or age groups (at the local level). One of the track officials is called the “Gate Starter”. He/she is in charge of the gate area. During practice times, he will encourage riders to fill in all 8 gate spots.

DESIGN OF A RACE:

Officials:

You will notice many volunteers helping out during the races. Please realize that these folks are volunteers and do not get paid for the work that they do. Their only payment is for you to have a safe and fun race. Following is a list of the various positions of the officials:

- Track Director –highest ranking official at the track
- Referee – final say on all protests
- Clerk of Course – in charge of the registration process
- Stager – assuring that all riders are in the correct moto and the correct gate.
- Gate Starter – in charge of all gate activity
- Bike Inspector
- Announcer
- Corner Marshals – oversee each area of the track to record and observe racing. These are the folks who provide info to the referee in the event of a protest.
- Scorers (3) at the finish line.
- Paramedic/EMT

Your track also has a rider representative available. This is an elected position and it is his/her responsibility to be your voice to the Southtowns BMX board. Please learn who your rider rep is and feel free to ask them questions and express your opinions on issues related to the racing program.

Southtowns BMX

Motos

A typical race consists of 3 separate races around the track (not at the same time). You will race once, then you will have a break, then race again, take a break for a total of 3 races. These races are called motos. Once the official clerk has divided all racers into their class and age groups, they will post the moto sheets. These sheets will tell you what number moto you are in, what gates you will have for your motos and whether or not your class has a “main” (explained later). ***It is your responsibility to check the moto sheets, to know the number of your moto and what gate you have for each race.***

Racing

You will begin the race by sitting on the gate with the rest of your group. The Gate Starter will watch to make sure everyone is ready. He will then make a short announcement and push the button to begin the gate sequence. If the Gate Starter is beginning before you feel you are ready, you need to speak loudly saying, “hold the gate” and raise your hand. The Gate Starter will wait until you are ready. If you do not let the starter know you are not ready, he cannot be held responsible for beginning without you.

During the race there are officials posted at various points around the track to observe the racers and watch for offenses. If you feel that someone has purposely done something wrong to you during the race, you need to raise your hand in protest ***immediately*** after crossing the finish line. One of the officials will contact the Referee to hear your complaint and judge the action. No protests will be honored later or will be accepted if voiced by anyone other than you the rider. A parent may not protest for a child – the child himself must raise the protest.

Points

Your points from all three motos will be recorded and at the end of the race, the total will be tallied. Each rider in your group will be assigned a finish spot for the race and you will get an award accordingly.

For example: The 10-year-old Rookie class today has 4 riders – John, Robert, Kevin and David. Finishes for the 3 motos are as follows:

Southtowns BMX

<u>NAME</u>	<u>PLACE Moto#</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
John		1	3	2	6
Robert		2	1	1	4
Kevin		3	2	3	8
David		4	4	4	12

Robert will receive the 1st place trophy for this race, John will take 2nd, Kevin, 3rd and David gets the 4th place spot. Robert will receive one move-up point for this race.

Now let's try another set of finishes:

<u>NAME</u>	<u>PLACE Moto#</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
John		1	3	2	6
Robert		2	1	1	4
Kevin		3	4	3	10
David		4	2	4	10

Kevin and David are tied for 3rd and 4th place. The tie is decided according to who does better in the last moto. Kevin took 3rd in moto #3 and David took 4th. Therefore Kevin will take the 3rd place spot for this race and David will take 4th.

What happens if I am the only one in my class who shows up to race?

If there are not enough riders to make a class, the rider will be combined with another group. For instance, if you are the only 10-year old rookie who shows up, you will be combined with the next highest age rookie class just for the purposes of running the moto. This prevents you from having to travel the track by yourself.

When this race is finished, you will be pointed and trophied as you have crossed the finish line. If the riders in this moto are more than 2 years older, you will be trophied separately however will be pointed as you crossed the finish line.

What happens if a lot of riders show up in my class?

The BMX starting gate has 8 slots. If more than 8 show up to race in a particular class, the motos must be divided up. For instance, twelve 10-year old rookies show up to race today. The computer will divide the group into 2 motos of 10-year old

Southtowns BMX

rookies – 6 and 6. This is called having a “main” and will be listed on the top right of the moto sheet when it is posted. This means that each group will complete their 3 motos as usual. At the end, the top 4 riders from each group will advance to the main – 2 riders from each group will be dropped. Then the top 8 riders will race one more time in the main. These riders will receive a trophy for the day based on what they finish in the main. For instance, a rider may receive 1st place in all 3 of his motos. He advances to the main and takes 4th place in the main. He will receive the 4th place trophy for the day.

Points however are awarded based on the finishes in the motos. The rider from the above example will take the 4th place trophy for the day, but receives 1st place points for his motos.

The 4 riders, who were dropped before the main, receive points based on their finishes in the motos.

It is very important that you always check your moto sheet to see if you have a main. If a rider leaves after the three motos are completed and does not show up for the main, he is missing a very important part of his race day!

At the end of your racing for the day, you may go to the registration area to pick up your trophy. You will need to tell the trophy staff your name and what moto number you were in. Please realize that the trophy staff is working as fast as they possibly can – be patient!

The points that you add up all year, decide what track plate you can ride for the following year. For example, you may come out with the most points of everyone in your class based on your performance. You will be given a #“1” plate to wear on your bike at the local track for the following year.

That is how local BMX racing works! Let’s move on and look at other levels you can participate in.

KEYSTONE STATE SERIES

There are 7 tracks that are part of the Keystone series:

Johnstown, PA

Drakewell/Titusville, PA

7

Southtowns BMX

Presque Isle/Erie, PA
South Park/Pittsburgh, PA
Westmoreland/Apollo, PA

Southtowns/Hamburg, NY
Charlie's BMX/Jamestown, NY

Even though we are located in New York due to geographical locations of the New York versus Pennsylvania tracks we have opted to participate in the Keystone State Series. The state series consists of 12 qualifying races and one state championship. A qualifier is a weekend race held at each track. Saturday counts as one qualifier, Sunday counts as another. Each track in the state series hosts either a qualifier or the championship each year.

Any registered rider may participate in the state series. To participate in the championship you must have completed a minimum of 4 qualifiers (2 weekends). It does not matter what place you take in the qualifiers, you can still compete in the championship. Points accumulate with each of the qualifiers and do count towards the championship, however only your top 4 races are counted.

The State Championship rotates to a different track each year. Based on the number of points you enter the championship with and the place you take in the championship race itself, you will be awarded a state place for the year. For example, you may earn the #1 10-year-old Rookie plate for the year in the state. You will be awarded a trophy and a number plate with "1". There will also be a small letter after the number telling the class you are in (rookie, novice, etc). Your plate will say "1" r. You can then wear that plate on your bike for the next racing year at all state and local races, until another #1 is awarded.

The State Series is a great way to improve your racing skills. You will be racing against the best kids in the state and that can only help you get better. Plus it is a lot of fun!

NORTHEAST REGIONAL SERIES

The Regional Series is run very similar to the state series, except it involves the entire Northeast region. There is a difference however, in the points system. In the regional series, all points accumulated in any race, at any track (local, state, regional, etc) count towards the championship. Once again, the total of your accumulated points, along with how you finish in the championship, decide the plate you will wear for the year. The plate can be used at any local, state, or regional race. Regional number

Southtowns BMX

plates will be recognizable because the number will have the first initial of your last name after it. For example if you take the number 2 spot in the region and your last name is Smith, your plate will say “2” S.

Schedules for the Regional Series can be found in the BMX Today magazine or on the NBL website.

NATIONAL SERIES

The highest level you can race at is the National Series. You must complete 5 national races to compete in the National Championship. These 5 races can include 2 regionals. Again the awards are given based on points accrued as well as the place taken in the Championship. If you win the national #1 rookie plate you can wear that plate at any race for the following year.

The schedule for the National Series can also be found in the BMX Today magazine or the NBL website.

THE WORLDS

Certain national riders may qualify to go to the World Championship. This race rotates to a different country each year.

The different levels of racing can be very confusing at first. Please feel free to contact any of your track officials and they can point you towards helpful information about the various series.

Well that is BMX racing in a nutshell! I hope it sounds exciting. Southtowns BMX will work very hard to make your season successful.

It takes many people to keep Southtowns BMX going. The track itself and all areas inside of the fence are maintained by the organization – not by the Hamburg Recreation Department. For this reason, volunteers are always welcome. Whether you would like to become an official and work the race itself, volunteer to help in the concession stand, or simply cut some grass or rake the track every now and then, we accept all help graciously.

Southtowns BMX

Financially the organization is self-supporting. We do not keep money collected for registration – your yearly fees are given to the NBL and your weekly fees get divided up between trophy costs, operating expenses and fees to the NBL for insurance. Therefore the only monies we get to keep is from fund raising, sponsorships and what we bring in from the concession stand. Monies that we do make are to be used for track upkeep, maintenance, and new projects, as well as the end of the year, Annual Awards Banquet.

So feel free to eat hearty while you are here and if you are interested in making a corporate or business donation, please see one of the track officials or the track director.

Hamburg Recreation Department is very good to our organization – without them we would not have a track at all! Please be courteous and respectful of the grounds around you by not littering, driving across the grass and please clean up your area after you are done.



This book has been prepared by the staff at Southtowns BMX to help newcomers understand the sport. Southtowns BMX will not be held responsible for rule changes or situations individual to your child which may differ from the information presented here.