



AHRMA Trials School

Ride the "Gentleman's Sport"

*The America Historic Racing Motorcycle Association
309 Buffalo Run, Goodlettsville, TN 615.420.6435*

www.ahrma.org



INTRODUCTION

Observed trials is a very significant part of historic motorcycle competition. It began as a wintertime sport for European enthusiasts, who tested themselves by tracing ancient Roman roads. These riders negotiated various obstacles along the way, all of which gave test to both man and machine. As the "gentleman's sport" developed, such obstacles became more specific, and more challenging. From the 1980s until today, the obstacles presented to trials competitors have been inconceivable for most motorcycle riders.

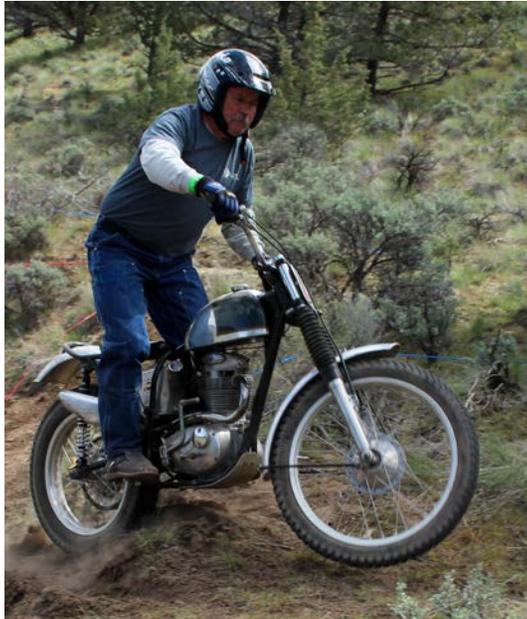
AHRMA's observed trials goal is to provide its members a safe, historically accurate environment to showcase and experience vintage machinery. The key to this enjoyment is the observed sections. From the 1950s into the '70s, sections were mainly composed of wide-open areas of challenging terrain, with the rider's choice of line determining his/her success. Observed sections reminiscent of this era are critical in AHRMA's representation of classic observed trials. With period-accurate sections, machines will remain true to their original concept, and the techniques required to ride them will do the same, enhancing the entire vintage trials scene. The trials-riding experience will undoubtedly result in good friends, good rides and good fun.



BIKE PREP

Tires and tire pressure, shocks, handlebars, lever positioning, your handgrip/glove combination is important for comfort, carburetion/timing for performance

Gearing – not too low, not too high



RIDING GEAR

Trials-specific boots are flexible with flat-bottom soles and no steel toes.

Trials helmets are high-cut in the back, with a shorter visor.

Trousers should allow you to move freely.

Long sleeves can provide some branch, crash, sun and poison oak/ivy protection.

BASICS

A well-prepared bike and an understanding of the fundamentals of riding a trials motorcycle will make your day infinitely more enjoyable.

Learn to be comfortable standing on the pegs, not sitting on the seat. Standing actually provides a lower center of gravity, and much more control.

Most of directional change and balance input is through the footrests, the handlebars are there to keep you pointing forward.

URNS

Turning is the basis for success – get comfortable turning, and the rest comes more easily.

Weight outside peg, keep shoulders up-and-out. A common mistake is to swivel your hips toward the outside of the bike, while actually keeping too much weight on the inside peg.

Explanation of offset weight = balance.

Stick-out your outside knee and elbow, even if it feels goofy. It goes a long way toward actually getting your weight in a proper position.

The further the bike is leaned into a turn, the tighter it will turn. It's up to the rider to counterbalance that lean. Use your inside leg against the side of the bike to help judge lean.

Practice in your driveway at home – Figure 8s are good, and consistent full-lock turns are the goal.

The rear tire is on a different, tighter path than the front. Always keep in mind where the rear tire is, it's the priority and can be key to a lower score. Ruts can form in turns, keeping the rear tire off the side of that rut goes a long way toward making the turn cleanly.

Sand: Keep the bike upright and be patient. Leaning the bike or applying throttle leads to front-end push and dabs.

CLUTCH

If the bike performs well and is geared properly, the clutch should not be necessary in most vintage-style sections on a vintage bike.

Learn to trust the bike, and learn when it will stall. Then, don't let it stall.

If you feel you must use the clutch, practice doing so in your driveway. The key is learning to release the clutch slowly and smoothly, without too much throttle.

THROTTLE

Smooth and careful application throttle is important, but not mandatory. Some situations (loose climbs, mud, rock steps, etc.) require being more aggressive with the power.

The reputation of trials is low speed, and for the most part that's the case, but don't be afraid to go fast in a section if it's warranted.



RIDING THE SECTION

Walk the section and pay close attention to the small things. Certain rocks or vegetation might knock you off line, or might provide a bit of traction that will give you an advantage.

Look for alternative lines that might be advantageous compared to the most-obvious choice.

If you're baffled, watch experienced riders who ride on your line. Observing a less-skilled competitor can sometimes make the obstacle in question look a lot more difficult than it really is/should be.

Be familiar with all the real estate available so if you get knocked-off your intended line, a "B Plan" comes to you quickly.

Don't let others in the waiting line crowd you toward the Start gate – be sure to start far enough away from the gate that you're fully balanced and positioned on the bike before entering the section. If you get off balance while approaching the start, abort the ride, and swing around to the back of the waiting line.

If things go pear-shaped and you find yourself sitting down, feet out, do what you can as soon as you can to get back into a normal, stand-up riding position. Don't let that moment of floundering ruin the rest of the section.

Take a planned dab, if necessary. A 'one' is better than a 'five'. When executing a planned dab, make it count – reach forward, firmly plant your foot, guide the bike past the trouble spot and get back to your normal riding positions when everything is stable. Likewise, make any dab count – a stabilizing, firm foot on the ground gives the same score as a quick stab that might actually upset balance.

Slick terrain: Do your best to cross slick rocks, roots and streambeds at right angles. If that's not possible, anticipate the motion of the bike and be prepared to move with it, maintaining balance.

The first loop always takes two-to-three-times as long as the remaining loops. Often-times sections can be ridden on the second or third loop without walking them, but if there's any doubt about the section condition (or your memory as to where to go), always walk it again. Don't be discouraged if the opening loop felt as if it took forever and was exhausting – loop two will be amazingly quicker and easier.

CHECKERS, OR OBSERVERS

When riding a trials event there is a Checker, or Observer that will score the rider in each section. They will point to you, or say "rider" to invite you into the section for competition. After you have completed the section, the Checker will punch or mark your score card. If you have a question about your score, ask them about it, and they can explain it to you. Be kind to your Checkers - they are volunteers who are out there all day for the riders, give 'em a thanks at the end of the day!

SCORING, AN OVERVIEW

The object of "Observed Trials" is to ride through a specified course without setting your foot down (dabbing), crashing, riding out of bounds. Each "section" has entry and exit gates and is marked on each side by colored tape: blue on the left & red on the right. Points are given to a rider for using his feet – or any part of their body – for support. The rider with the lowest score at the end of the event is the winner. Points are allocated as follows:

- 0** CLEAN: Zero points. The rider successfully negotiates the section without dabbing or having a failure.
- 1** ONE: The rider dabs once in a section. A rider may also be penalized one point for using any part of their body to regain balance - i.e. an elbow against a tree.
- 2** TWO: The rider dabs twice in a section.
- 3** THREE: The rider dabs three or more times. Three points is the maximum score given to a rider who completes the section without a failure. There is no such thing as a four - a rider can dab as many times as they need to after a three, and still receive a three point score.
- 5** FIVE: The maximum penalty for failure to complete a section. Fives are given to riders for: crashing, riding out of bounds, dabbing with a stalled engine or displacing a split marker intended for their class.

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