

Hi all

I have just been appointed as your new Trials commissioner. I will endeavour to serve you well and put my best effort toward making your sport a “well oiled machine”.

First I want to pay tribute to my predecessor Warren. I personally think he has served us well and at the same time remained at the top of his game, been a good ambassador to our sport and a great Dad to his young family. That is not easy to do all at the same time.

You will not receive any lengthy mail from me after this one as my typing speed is abysmal, but at this time I would like to outline where I stand on Trials in NZ. After having said my piece I am sure that some of you will have the urge to reply and I have no doubt that some will disagree, such is the nature of ‘the beast’. You can call me old fashioned and even though you will probably hear/read this through personal channels I believe that our random sending of memos, as is happening at present, should be actually going “through proper channels”. That is through your/our CLUBS. I have been a bystander, watching, as emails have recently passed too and fro with really no chance of achieving a democratic result. As commissioner I welcome your feedback but if we want decisions from our dialogue we have to have some way of recognising the ‘majority’.

To this end I would like to see all clubs with Trials riders to elect a Trials representative/delegate for that club. [At this point I may concede that a more workable situation will be to work with groups of clubs from the same area, e.g. Waikato, as some clubs may only contain one Trials rider.] That person would be responsible for representing the MAJORITY view of their club/area. Most sports work in a similar way. I, in turn, will seek and ask people to share their expertise with me and the most obvious contenders [they have not been asked yet] are the NI & SI co-ordinators and immediate past commissioner.

Having said all that I want to go on record as stating that Trials is in a reasonably “good place” at the moment, with only relatively minor issues to deal to.

One that comes to mind would be to settle a ruling colour and how to administer that colour for the ‘President’ grade. I am sure that we can have this ‘sorted’ quickly.

At this point I advise that I am in firm agreement that the only grades that can be recognised as championship grades are Junior [age dependent], President [age dependent] and open. All other grades are voluntary and as such can only be treated as associate grades. I am sure you are all happy with the way it is working. It is a credit to our sport that we can “sort ourselves” into grades, enjoy riding an event and remain good mates with all at the ‘end of the day’.

I [and others] thank the dedicated people that continue to support the sport through their endless hours of section preparation, set out, observing, event administration, results and communications, catering, [don’t forget the toilet] and the many other tasks that make our day enjoyable.

What would I like to see achieved in 2 years:

1 It would be great to see everyone 'singing from the same song sheet'. I stood for this job with a belief in MNZ. It is YOUR organisation and I believe they have been listening and caring to our needs in Trials.

I believe that a major focus area should be, 'growing' the sport, and I think I can see how we let ourselves down. Most of you have, or will bring a son/daughter into the sport and will realise the time committed to this. This is AT LEAST the commitment needed to bring someone else's son/daughter into the sport and most of us would not want to commit that much time. To put that another way, if 10 kids under age 12 arrived at your next club event with their parents and a bike, WHO, from your club, would foster their needs? You could rightfully say that their own parents should do that. I say that your clubs will need systems in place should you get an influx of juniors like the influxes we need. I have seen some substantial junior growth in other sports that I am familiar with. It seems to be a case of 'if you get one, you get them all'. Getting other parents to grow your sport is partly achievable but the main reason they will be at your event is that they want 'little Johnny' to be a Trials rider [possibly because it is safer than MX] and that is where YOU are needed. That means YOU DON'T GET TO RIDE THAT DAY. Junior growth is the most achievable growth available but it needs club commitment, systems and bikes. MNZ suggests a 2% growth as desirable in their strategic plan with which I agree.

2 We would like to see clubs canvass for juniors, start an entry grade using something like 50 – 125cc trail bikes or similar [Trials bikes would be best] and teach these kids Trials skills on Saturday. Sounds like an effort. It surely is, but, in life there is no reward without effort!

Do we operate as the secret society of motorcycling? Advertising of regular events is almost exclusively by email/mail/phone to known riders. I have been asked by acquaintances on many occasions, "how do you find out where Trials events are?" or "I didn't know anyone did that around here?" We need to have a campaign throughout our nation to make the public AWARE that we have regular events throughout NZ, and often. More often in fact than MX [and cheaper]. I think it is imperative to have a REPETITIVE low cost advertising policy to promote awareness and I believe it is more important than "showcasing" our grand events, although I believe that is important also.

3 We need a low cost but regular campaign to have Trials events and/or results mentioned in your local media at approximately monthly intervals for at least the next 2 years. We also need to see ALL NZ Trials events scheduled in the "coming events" section of all appropriate magazines in NZ under the heading of "Observed Trials".

The sport needs champions and riders who become champions will usually be those who put in the greater effort. We need to support that effort but remember, ours is a low cost sport with most fees that we pay throughout the year only just covering administration [and that include your MNZ licence/permits]. To put that in perspective; it can cost about twice as much to ride a Trail ride as it does to ride a club Trial. We do need to put our hands in our pockets to support our 'champions' but that

is over and above what you pay to your club and MNZ. Far be it for me to suggest how you spend your money but Trials riders in general are not 'big spenders'. We would also benefit our 'image' by increasing our spending. Here are two simple examples of upgrading our image:

Signage.....Small or home made or 'rickety' signs = small or 'rickety' attraction.

Large professionally made signs = image that enhances and attracts awareness and spectators.

Fluro vests.....on observers = a sport with officials. It is a good "look" for both spectators and riders.

4 We need to see our sport in a position to support our elite riders to achieve and so provide champions for aspiration to others. This will be an added cost to Trials riders or sponsorship needs to be sought [obviously sponsorship sounds best]. Culminating in a team to TdN

5 It would be desirable to see the sport improve its "image" and to attract sponsorship to do same.

Jim on 'showcasing':

There maybe a call from the sport for major, high cost showcasing events. I am not convinced that they offer our sport a catalyst to grow. I believe that it is growth that should be our primary aim and one grand showcasing event will probably not add to our rider numbers without having put the previously mentioned points in place first. I concede that I may be wrong but I would be interested to know how many of our present and past members joined because they attended a grand Trials display or event. To the contrary I would imagine that more joined our ranks after they had a 'play' on a Trials bike whilst 'down on the farm' and 'far away from the crowd'.

Having said that I am also aware that that sport needs champions and NZ needs our champions to be able to compete at international level. These elite riders also need fostering and I hope that I will be able to work with those who are at the forefront of facilitating high level achievement. In fact it would be a hope of mine, along with many others, that NZ can send a team to Trials des Nations within my term.

By now you will realise that I am not naming people [except Warren]. That is because I am sure that there are some important promoters of the sport that I am not yet aware of and I don't want any embarrassing omissions.

Jim on Jim;

Some of you will not know me. I rode my first Trial in about 1973 and have been passionate about the sport ever since. Probably 'peaked' through the '80s' but still enjoy throwing a leg over my Scorpa, Husaberg or DR650. I have been in business [farming] but have sold to semi retire to the Waikato where I tutor part time for Dairy NZ. We [Cheryl and I] have 3 children and 4 grandchildren and you can contact me at anytime on anything at; 078236888 or 0273665842 or jim1@xtra.co.nz

Jim Henderson