

USGPRU

United States Grand Prix Racers Union



Rider: PJ Jacobsen
Photo by: Paul Nelson

PJ Jacobsen, the youngest ever American to enter a world GP race (and 2006 USGPRU 125GP National Champion), did battle with many top riders at the inaugural Indy MotoGP race weekend. Ultimately he finished in a very respectable 22nd position in his first world 125GP event, on a new bike, with a new team. He clearly discredited all of the naysayers that have for years declared that **there are no American kids with the skills to compete at the world level.**

But it's never been the skills that our riders lack, it's the support structure in the U.S. that has let them down. Lack of corporate support, no clear progression path, and an inadequate training program have all forced our young racers to climb a learning curve that our friends overseas don't have to scale.

The first problem is that our **corporate mindset is not geared towards supporting kids** up through the established GP structure. We could be, but that's not how the industry has operated over the years. What manufacturer is making bikes and actively selling them in the US to support these young racer's development? Currently the count is one, Honda with the Moriwaki MD250H. And it's not even legal to race in the world 125GP class. Honda does make a 125 2-stroke bike, but it's no longer competitive with the current European brands. Aprilia and KTM make great bikes, but they are extremely hard to obtain and prohibitively expensive even if you can get your hands on one. Consequently, we don't get the machinery and trick parts that our counterparts in the rest of the world enjoy. **They can get them because their industry has stepped up to support them.**

I'm not just talking about the motorcycle industry alone. **We need to figure out how to bring mainstream corporate America into the mix.** The only way to do this is through fan support and access to the action. We need to find ways to get new fans

involved and caring about the sport. People love racing, but have been forced to watch from the other side of the fence. **The promoters and tracks need to find new and exciting ways to get the fans involved and entertained.** Those fans are the consumers that the industry wants to advertise to. Those fans drive marketing dollars, which lead to more money for the racers to build their programs.

Next, **we need to develop a clear progression for rider development series.** There are pockets of good programs throughout the US, but no single clear path ties them together. There are great series like OMRRA, CMRA, CMRRA, SCMini, etc that have wonderful entry level mini roadrace classes. The USGPRU itself is the premier intermediate stepping stone. But prospective riders have to search for these paths instead of having them highlighted for them to follow. The paths that are there are too numerous and confusing. The series owners need to drive a coordinated marketing effort to make these paths clear.

Finally, **a formalized training program designed to address the total rider development needs to be beefed up.** The USGPRU's Apex Academy is a step in the right direction, but lacks the robust funding and manpower to make it an institution of learning to help these racers along.

The USGPRU is willing to work with any organization that shares these views. We will work together to shape the development path for the future stars as well as continue to make strides to build the support infrastructure to make us more competitive on the world stage. I have no doubt that our kids have the skill, drive, and heart to make it. But that will only take them so far. We owe them more than the support we've given. If we come together on these fronts we can show the world that our kids do have what it takes to compete against the best the world has to offer!

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Remaining Schedule

National Final
Oct 3-4: Miller (full course)

National Points Standings

as of 9/25/08

250GP

Adam Roberts (291)
Vince Rolleri (248)
Kyle Ferris (243)

125GP

Nobi Iso (322)
Royce McLean (310)
Lloyd Worrell (175)

MD250H

Jake Lewis (262)
Miles Thornton (258)
Garrett Gerloff (204)

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