

GET DIRTY

IT'S TIME TO...

THE 2020 FLAT TRACK SEASON PREVIEW

This season of **American Flat Track™** started on March 14. And if it's anything like past seasons, you'll be able to find the riders from Indian Motorcycle's Wrecking Crew (including six-time champion Jared Mees, pictured) at the top of nearly every podium. Here's how, when, and why to watch one of the most thrilling sports in America.

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PROGRESSIVE
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FLAT TRACK RACING



Who
TO
WATCH

The National Champion of the prior season races under the #1 plate. In 2019, that was Jared Mees (pictured, along with Briar, #14, and Bronson Bauman, #37). In 2020, Briar races as the #1.

AFTER SIXTY YEARS AWAY FROM THE SPORT OF AMERICAN FLAT TRACK RACING, IN 2017 INDIAN MOTORCYCLE LAUNCHED THE FTR 750—AND RELAUNCHED THE COMPANY'S HISTORIC (AND HISTORICALLY DOMINANT) RACING TEAM, THE WRECKING CREW. LAST YEAR, WRECKING CREW RIDERS JARED MEES, BRIAR BAUMAN, AND BRONSON BAUMAN SWEEP THE CHAMPIONSHIP PODIUM. AND THEY'RE READY TO DO IT AGAIN.



1

BRIAR BAUMAN

24 YEARS OLD
10 RACE WINS
1 CHAMPIONSHIP

Unlike many riders, Bauman didn't come from a racing pedigree: He started fooling around on motorcycles in his yard. That is until "my mom got the idea to take us to a local race a few miles down the road," Briar says. From that point on, other hobbies fell away, one by one, until it was just racing. His hard work paid off, and Briar won his first national championship last year for the Wrecking Crew. Finding success in the next year is a mixture of planning for races and leaving it all out there. "I have four or five events that I want to win. The rest of the year as a racer, I wing it. I'm a bigger guy, though, so I love the short tracks where you have to manhandle the bike more."

9

JARED MEES

33 YEARS OLD
48 RACE WINS
6 CHAMPIONSHIPS

Mees started riding flat track at 5 years old and hasn't missed a season since. "We had a little track at my house, a tiny track, and I just wanted to ride my motorcycle and have fun." After a decade of practice, he started racing amateur at 15 and moved to pro at 16 in 2006. By 2009, he won his first AMA Pro Grand National Twins Championship. He's been on the Indian Motorcycle team since it reentered flat track racing in 2017. "I've been with it basically since the birth of it all. For me, it's like a second family." And that family has had a lot of success: "I've won six championships and the record is nine. The personal goal is to match or beat nine. I want to leave being not just the best in theory, but the best on paper."

37

BRONSON BAUMAN

22 YEARS OLD
1 RACE WIN

Bronson Bauman grew up chasing his brother Briar around the track in the family's backyard. That first race their mom took them to, Bronson got third in a field of three, and he was hooked. Seventeen years later, he finished third for the national championship behind his brother and Mees. Before joining the Wrecking Crew, he was traveling the country in his van, prepping his own bike for each race. The first time he raced with the team, he couldn't quite shake that work ethic. "I was asking for stuff to do. I wanted to keep moving. That's what I'm used to. I was saying 'let me change a tire.'" He's got a team behind him now, but the goal is the same as always: to win. Especially against his teammates. "When the flag drops, it's off. We all have to make our own choices. We're all gunning for the championship."



How to
WATCH A RACE

WHETHER YOU'RE CATCHING YOUR FIRST RACE OR YOUR FIFTIETH, TO GET THE MOST OUT OF A FLAT TRACK EVENT YOU HAVE TO KNOW WHAT TO LOOK FOR. AND NO ONE KNOWS WHAT TO LOOK FOR BETTER THAN THE MEMBERS OF THE WRECKING CREW, WHO OFFERED THESE SUGGESTIONS.

1. Pick the Right Race

There are four types of flat track events in the American Flat Track circuit: TT (a non-oval course with jumps), short track ovals, half miles, and miles. (If you can't attend a race in person, you can access the entire season for \$10.99 at nbcspports.com/gold/trackpass.) If it's your first race, Mees suggests watching one of the longer events. Briar Bauman says, "The mile race is our specialty. The track is so big that we are going a lot faster." But at the same time, "because the track is so big, things don't happen quite as quickly," making it easier to follow along. In the longer races, Bronson Bauman says, "you never know who is going to win.

There is always the wild card out there." If you're still unsure of which race to watch, Bronson suggests the Springfield Mile or Lima Half Mile, where you're guaranteed to see people "battling for the win."

2. Buy the Paddock Pass

The best view from almost any track is in the grandstand. "There isn't really a bad spot, whether you're at the bottom watching us whiz by at 130 mph or at the top where you can see a bird's-eye view," Bronson says. If you're at the Springfield Mile, Mees suggests heading to the infield: "You can sit by the guardrails as we go by. It's the coolest thing." And don't



forget to buy a pit pass, called a paddock pass, at americanflattrack.com. It lets you see the motorcycles up close. Also, "you can hang out and talk to the riders," Briar says.

3. Know the Strategy

Riders are only inches apart from one another, so it can be hard to know what to look for. Especially in shorter races. "There is a lot of trading and strategy in the miles," Mees says. "In half miles, you drop the hammer and go as fast as you can as quick as you can. And then in the shorter races it's tighter, more bump and bang, falling down." If you can, try to pick out the faster riders during qualifiers, then watch them throughout the race. That's where a lot of the action will be. For longer races, look for riders to tuck in behind the leader on the straightaways. "They're on the same motorcycle, but the guy on the draft looks like he's going 20 to 30 mph faster because the guy who is leading is breaking the wind," Briar says. "Guys will sit behind the leader and it turns into a chess match." Shorter races are an opportunity to look at lines riders take into and out of corners. Watch the "slidejobs," when one rider passes another—with only inches to spare—by slipping into the inside line of a turn.



How
THE TRACK IS BUILT

BEFORE EVERY RACE, THE TRACK MUST BE TRANSFORMED. THAT TAKES LOTS OF DIRT, LOTS OF WATER, AND SOMETHING CALLED A CONDITIONER.

Water is the most important part of flat track racing. If there's not enough, the track gets dusty, and riders fly into a dangerous cloud that they can't see through. Too much and the track gets tacky. The dirt sticks to tires and shoots off in every direction, sometimes slamming into the back of a rider's helmet. Neither is something you want when bikes are hitting speeds up to 140 mph, sideways, and often only inches apart.

Getting it right falls to Steve Morehead, American Flat Track's new track director. A week before every one of the eighteen SuperTwin races each season, Morehead and his crew of six show up to prepare the track, working with the machine operators and track



On race days at the Springfield Mile in Springfield, Illinois, an agricultural field sprayer moistens the track with 8,200 gallons of water and calcium chloride. Mid-race touchups happen just outside

the groove created by riders, effectively widening the racing line and the corners. The goal for riders is to chase the moisture for ultimate traction.

employees they find at each one. Some tracks are typically used for sprint cars, some for horses, either thoroughbred or harness racing. But by the time the first starting flag drops, every track has to be ready for motorcycles.

"All surfaces are different," Morehead says. "The mindset is, 'Here's what you've got to work with. Deal with it. Figure out a way to make it happen.'" At a thoroughbred track, that means pushing soft, deep dirt, piled high to protect horses' joints, off to the side to get to a firmer base. But at harness tracks the

hard-packed dirt that's already there has to be softened. Once they get the right consistency, the team uses a box scraper to level the track into a smooth and even surface. And that's when they can finally worry about the water.

Morehead's team uses a giant machine called a track conditioner. Dragged behind a tractor, the conditioner cuts three-inch channels into the dirt while simultaneously irrigating it with a mixture of water and calcium chloride, which pulls even more moisture up from the ground to the surface. The result is

a dirt that is consistently (and precisely the right degree of) wet.

On race day, Morehead's team waits. They wait and they watch. If it rains, they have to be ready to dig into the dirt again, working the moisture to the surface so the air can dry it out. If it's a bright day, they have to be equally vigilant, constantly watching the track for areas in the sun that go dry before the ones in the shade of the grandstand. Lighter dirt is dryer dirt, they know.

They have ten minutes between each event to erase the effects of one race

and prepare for the next. "The majority of that time is adding water to get color back to it," Morehead says. As his crew pulls the conditioner over the torn-up track, Morehead talks to the riders. "We're in it together," he says. "I want to give them the raciest conditions I can." The challenge is making sure it all comes together at the same time. And that it stays that way. If the track can be consistent—during every practice lap, qualifier, and the main event—it won't be the conditions that determine the winner, Morehead says. It'll be the riders.

Special Offer!
As an Indian Motorcycle owner, you can get \$5 off tickets to any AFT race by going to americanflattrack.com and using the code "IMCRIDER"

2020 RACE SCHEDULE

APRIL 4
CHARLOTTE HALF MILE
Charlotte Motor Speedway,
Concord, NC

MAY 2
TEXAS HALF MILE
Texas Motor Speedway,
Fort Worth, TX

MAY 9
SO-CAL HALF MILE
Southern California
Fairgrounds, Perris, CA

MAY 16
SACRAMENTO MILE
Cal Expo, Sacramento, CA

MAY 30
THE RED MILE
Red Mile, Lexington, KY

JUNE 13
LACONIA SHORT TRACK
New Hampshire Motor
Speedway, Loudon, NH

JUNE 20
OKC MILE
Remington Park,
Oklahoma City, OK

JUNE 27
LIMA HALF MILE
Allen County Fairgrounds,
Lima, OH

JULY 3-4
NEW YORK SHORT TRACK
Weedsport Speedway,
Weedsport, NY

AUGUST 9
BUFFALO CHIP TT
Buffalo Chip, Sturgis, SD

AUGUST 11
BLACK HILLS HALF MILE
Black Hills Speedway,
Rapid City, SD

AUGUST 22
PEORIA TT
Peoria Motorcycle Club,
Peoria, IL

SEPTEMBER 4
SPRINGFIELD TT
Illinois State Fairgrounds,
Springfield, IL

SEPTEMBER 5-6
SPRINGFIELD MILE
Illinois State Fairgrounds,
Springfield, IL

SEPTEMBER 12
WILLIAMS GROVE HALF MILE
Williams Grove Speedway,
Mechanicsburg, PA

SEPTEMBER 26
MEADOWLANDS MILE
Meadowlands, East Rutherford, NJ