

WITHOUT PREJUDICE

May 12th 2017

Hello all,

As President of the South Waikato Motorcycle Club I feel obliged to reply to the feedback surrounding the difficult decision made to cancel for 2017 the Waikato Mini X event usually held on Queens Birthday weekend. Please understand that while some of my words and responses to the comments may come across a little 'abrupt' in no way am I trying to upset or anger our club members, supporters or casual riders, I'm simply trying to relay answers and thoughts regarding the Facebook thread.

There has been some negative and disappointed member and parent feedback as well as some inquiry as to why the event will not proceed. With this statement I will endeavour to explain with the hope of some understanding from you all the reasoning behind the decision and answer the questions on other matters (regarding the club and totally unrelated historical events) that seem to have evolved from the initial event cancellation.

First and foremost I feel you the club members, Facebook followers or social riders utilizing the facility are possibly not aware that as a club we have only 7 committee members. Each committee member works full time and several are farmers working 7 days a week. 6 of the 7 committee members also have children of varying ages doing alternative sports through the week and weekends as well as these parents doing other activities of their own. Some of these committee members' children do not race or even ride dirt bikes or they have children racing on the big track that they never get to see ride as they are working the mini track, either doing starts, lap scoring or jumping on a flag after dropping the start gates or 10 second board etc. However these parents are involved in the club for the enjoyment and passion for the sport and to ensure the club remains open and operating.

Each year we hold our AGM. This is advertised in the local paper etc several weeks in advance and people from any area, job, club etc are all welcome and encouraged to attend. This past AGM in February consisted of 5 previous committee members followed on at the next meeting by one new interested party coming along to enrol and help where needed. We have since added one spouse to get to the 7 current committee members. From a club perspective this is incredibly disappointing that we have so many expecting so much of us and what we do but no one wants to join the committee and help.

I'm sure you can appreciate that running any event is difficult and very time consuming not only on the event day but also with what's required leading into that event and more often than not 7 people are simply not enough. For a committee this small operating two tracks requires a lot more time than the 5 or 6 hours the racing is running on race day. There is the near full day before at the working bee, cleaning, mowing, track prep, marking out, paperwork for sign on and MNZ etc and then the clean-up and quick debrief post racing on Race day. In every instance this is a lot of time away from our families which we gladly sacrifice to ensure the riders have somewhere to race. This pre-race day work also consists of multiple evenings spent on the phone or computers emailing from various people chasing and securing officials (which we seem to have a national shortage of), flag marshals, foodies, lap scorers etc (that at times don't show up on race day and cause last minute headaches). Not one person will tell you they actually have the time but we make the time so everyone can come and ride or race at our facility. I'm sure all clubs go through this, our club is not alone and we won't be the first or the last to have limited personal but perhaps those clubs only run club days and no other events in order to manage themselves better. We as a club are not and have not been like that. We wish to host more events but it's difficult with limited available personal.

I must say that after some of the remarks on Facebook (some from people we don't know or have never seen at our club for years and years) several of the committee feel dejected and also upset that they are clearly not appreciated for what they do and do for free in what little spare time they have. One comment was actually "we are damned if we do and damned if we don't" which for me as President is upsetting to hear as we love the sport and do whatever we can with the limited resources we have but sometimes we have to face the fact that we cannot do it all.

So, getting into the feedback and questions.

Cancelling for 2017 the Waikato Mini X Event was a difficult decision to make. However the decision has been made due to several reasons:

1. What can be best described as committee fatigue; our jobs, our own families, wives, husbands and children need to know who we are outside of work and school hours, our own activities plus we have a lot of events to run this year with limited full time personal (which will lessen by 2 possibly 3 through the calving and mating period on dairy farms) constitutes committee fatigue. As a result we unfortunately needed to assess what events played a bigger part on our calendar by way of reward for all of the efforts made. This of course relates to club days and National events we are hosting this year and as we already hosted a specific Mini orientated event earlier in the year we felt this Mini X event for a couple of reasons was our only option to forego. Not an easy decision by far.

2. Cost versus profit. The Waikato Mini X event while growing in popularity in the last 3 years has for 2 years run at a loss and only last year did we cover costs. If you spread that small profit out over the last 3 years we have made no money from this event and as an organisation relying on profit to stay open making money on everything we do is a must, correct? That said this decision for 2017 does in no way represent us not holding the event for 2018.

We really enjoy hosting these events and are doing what we can for the minis to grow but are we the only club shouldering these opportunities annually? Don't forget we also host Minis Under Lights which is a great event giving the kids the real under lights SX feel like the AMA. We fully intend to run the Waikato Mini X event in 2018 when our event calendar is either not so big (with National Events) and we hopefully have a larger stronger committee to spread the load.

3: The volume of upcoming events. The fact we have limited time and personal available to organise and prep for these events as it's not as simple as just rocking up and racing. One off events require more immediate input and increased costs and a hell of a lot of hope the rider numbers stack up to the costs which has not been the case in the past. It can be very stressful and sometimes you just have to pick your battles.

This year events circulate around 5 club days, April, May, July, August and September being the final round unless we are required to postpone one round due to weather and we will then run that club day in October. Add to that, the year started off busy and somewhat stressful. With only 5 committee members we ran Minis Under Lights in January. It was ultimately successful in the end but it nearly didn't take place. We posted the entry forms up on the website in October and advertised on Facebook by various clubs and organisations. The hope was that entrants would be received before the busy Xmas holiday period but with only three days to go until we closed off entries we only had 22 confirmed entrants and we required 46 to break even on our basic running costs, not the overall costs involved. This was completely beyond the club's ability to control yet we had booked officials, pre prepared a trophy shop of what we may need, arranged foodies and spent a lot of time getting the facility in order and track maintenance right up until gone midnight the day before racing. This produced a lot of stressful times for the very small committee worrying over limited entrants, hoping to not have to cancel the event and then when we received enough entrants to push on quickly to finalise and construct the track, organise the trophies, confirm with officials etc etc all while most businesses are closed for Xmas holidays and a lot of people are also on annual leave elsewhere.

We also developed the main track over several weeks which was both very expensive and time consuming with the poor summer weather playing a major part in delaying and adding additional costs and huge lost revenue with the facility being closed much longer than anticipated.

Also in this year's calendar we also have a 2 day NZ Secondary Schools National event being held at our facility in July two weeks after our club day. This event, on a National scale under MNZ and Sanctioned by the NZ Secondary Schools Sports Council is a first for New Zealand and when offered to us it was the chance for the club to get back into hosting a large National event new to the motocross calendar. What club doesn't want to do that if offered the chance? Being such a large event, essentially the equivalent of two large consecutive club days it will require twice the input, twice the manpower and of course twice the costs. Again with our dedicated committee we will get the job done but sacrifices must be made elsewhere to ensure every one of the 7 current committee members are on their game for these 2 days.

I also have read the remark about Supercross and the track in 'ruins'. I've not seen the track in ruins yet hearsay says it is. It's now a mini track and has been for over 3 years therefore it will not be the same standard as a National Championship Supercross track if that's what the reference is to being 'in ruin' means. If it has been 'in ruins' at any point its only because of rule floundering of big bikes ripping it up costing the committee more repair time and money to get it right for the mini's again. Now with the 'back a few years ago' remark, hmmm, I've been involved with the SWMCC committee for the last 6 years. My time is post National Championship SX racing and pre the return of MUL and the introduction of the Mini X event so this particular interesting remark is obviously before my committee time and I'm considering this era being the early/mid 2000's. Through committee conversation and electronic records of meeting etc I can advise that for years through this era the committee personal was somewhere between 20 and 30 plus strong. That in itself means there were plenty of bodies and souls involved to share the load of any event or working bee. As for the 'T' In Team, we have a strong and dedicated team however more are always welcome to join us.

Now in today's more modern era, there is an air of expectancy, we see it in jobs, home, schools, employees, employers etc all over the country. It seems it now flows into sport. Without wanting to discredit or upset anybody, how many people involved in our sport, be it riders, parents, grandparents etc actually commit to serious involvement with a club by joining the committee and making their voice heard and their vote count. It's very easy to fire shots at the club and committee when you don't like a decision that's made but by being involved you may see it from an organisational point of view and your vote may make the difference in certain situations rather than just the view of wanting others to do it all and you reap the benefits. Get involved and make a real difference. Taking our clubs situation I can tell you one of our members rides on occasion as the rest of us either don't ride on club days, have never ridden or worst of the worst have given up riding in order to run the day's events for everyone else to enjoy. I wonder how many people have heard or seen the slogan "Before you complain, have you volunteered yet"?

Prime example, at our last club day I asked at briefing that Mini parents man a flag will their child is racing, we allow parents or caregivers on the track to support their child as does most clubs but as our flag marshals did not show up I thought this was the easiest solution after all you are out there anyway correct? I was informed later that day that there were races where we struggled to get anyone on flags, yet people were on the track, add to that we had a lap scorer (with no affiliation to the club other than knowing a committee member) volunteer their day to come and manually lap score. A situation arose where she had to leave for an hour, and it was a struggle to find someone to agree to fill in. A huge thank you to that one person who had one child on the mini track and one on the main track for stepping in and helping out the club for that short period of time. We obviously had the same issue on the main track with flaggies but those spots were quickly filled, thanks again to those that put their hand up.

Queens Birthday events of the years gone by.

Yes historically this was a fantastic event. Riders everywhere, then the trail rides started up more

and more, then the school charity rides appeared on the scene (not requiring licences, permits or MNZ officials) and to be fair school trail rides are far less serious for families than a weekend racing. Add to that other large events took hold around the country (Michael Godfrey in the South Island for one) drawing the local riders to their event and the big names with them via race team orders (yes team orders in NZ are bigger than Dungey and Musquins, 'I made a mistake and he got passed') and before you know it we had maybe 50 of the previous 300 plus riders for a weekend event. Profit = none, costs = huge with a large resulting debt as a result. What happened to the event you ask, other events drew riders away and it simply became not cost effective to run.

Supercross. Everyone loved Supercross. Or at least that's what everyone thought until it began to suffer from rider fatigue (way too many events on the modern calendar that are no longer seasonal).

What I mean by seasonal, back in the day when Motocross was in winter, Supercross in Summer etc. (These days you can drive no more than 2-3 hours from home and fill up at least 40 weekends of racing if your budget allows). Add to this the limited SX entrants, lack of sponsors, timing in relation to National MX events and so on. So now Jim Cooper does his best to keep it alive in Winton every year with one round. With that said, we have been working with MNZ and some on NZs MX elite and race team owners and managers behind the scenes to have a Supercross Championship back on the calendar starting in Tokoroa on October 23rd 2017 for a daytime event. Yes that's the Monday of Labour weekend following the MX Fest in Taupo on the Saturday and Sunday and yes it is Round 1 of 2 (second round at Jims place in Winton) of the NZ SX Championship. More details to be available after a meeting at the MNZ AGM the weekend after next.

I hope I have covered your thoughts and enquiries off sufficiently with insight into our club and what we have in store for the remainder of the year. I welcome your feedback and I encourage you to join our committee if you want to make a difference to our sport or to have a legitimate say in our club particularly if you are a mini parent looking to help grow the future. The more people we have involved, the more we can do for you, your child the club and the sport. Making the real difference can be more than just encouraging your children to better themselves in all aspects of our sport and in life. For 50 years the SWMCC has been holding events, with more peoples help and commitment we can make it 50 more.

If you have an interest in joining the committee, please feel free to PM me on Facebook with any questions.

Yours Sincerely

Cory Duckworth
President
South Waikato Motorcycle Club.