



A Partial History of the Sport of BMX Racing

Compiled by Mike Carruth, July 2008 (Updated December 2011)

- 1816 Baron Karl von Drais de Sauerbrun invents the “Draisienne,” a forerunner to the bicycle (though it had two same-sized wheels and a seat, it had no cranks or drive mechanism and was foot-powered).
- 1836 Scottish blacksmith Kirkpatrick MacMillan invents the first bicycle with foot pedals. Locals disrespect his idea as “frivolous” and he does not patent the invention.
- 1839 Charles Goodyear invents, then perfects, the process for vulcanizing rubber after a stretch in debtor’s prison (without which we would have no knobbies or microknobbies under us).
- 1895 Ignaz Schwinn and Adolph Arnold found “Arnold, Schwinn & Company” (later Schwinn Bicycle Company) in Chicago, IL.
- 1933 Arnold, Schwinn & Company introduces the “balloon tire” (“tube-in-tire technology”).
- April 30, 1956 As part of a “Queensday” celebration in St. Anthonis, Holland, local youth take part in a “fietscross” (bicycle cross), held on dirt, with primitive berms and pie plates with numbers scrawled on them to ID the riders. Europeans contend this was the true founding event of the sport of Bicycle Motocross Racing, though critics in the US point to the fact that it did not give rise to an organized sport and, as such, could only be described as an anomaly--removed from \ California BMX of the late 1960s, from which the sport, as we know it, took root.
- 1963 Arnold, Schwinn & Company introduces the “Sting-Ray,” featuring high-rise handlebars, a banana seat, and the seed of a new industry and way of life in it’s DNA.
- July 10, 1969 A group of Los Angeles kids coerce Palms Park caretaker Ron Mackler into building a track reminiscent of (motorcycle) Motocross tracks of the time. The first organized race of the new sport, sometimes called “pedal cross,” sometimes called “BX,” and sometimes called “Pedal Power,” is held on this date.
- November 1970 13-year old Yamaha Motocross Racer and über-promoter Scot Breithaupt gathers his MX trophies and stages BMX races on trails used for MX practice. B.U.M.S. (named for the homeless who squatted on the land, but later tagged “Bicycle United Motocross Society” to present a more palatable image to the community) park was born.
- July 28, 1971 The film “On Any Sunday” is released in theaters in the US. Director Bruce Brown includes a footage depicting a pack of kids riding their Sting-Rays and mimicking the sounds, and movements of their older MX brethren in the opening scene. The film, featuring Steve McQueen, was nominated for a 1971 Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature and captured the enthusiasm of a generation of groms who wanted to do it in the dirt, sans motor.



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- 1972 Rick Twomey modifies a Sting-Ray and adds a higher bottom bracket, longer cranks and other enhancements to create a more “BMX-friendly” bike.
- 1972 Scot Breithaupt and his B.U.M.S. organization hold the first BMX state championship race in Long Beach, CA.
- November 1, 1973 Motocross promoter Ernie Alexander starts the National Bicycle Association (NBA), the sport’s first national sanctioning body.
- January 26, 1974 George Esser holds his first BMX race as an affiliate of the National Motorcycle League (NML) at Miami Hollywood Speedway Park in Florida.
- 1974 Motorcycle component fabricator Linn Kastan develops the first “unbreakable” tubular chromoly fork for BMX bikes, and markets them under the name of his motorcycle parts company: “Red Line” (later, and currently, Redline).
- 1974 Webco introduces the first production “straight tube” BMX frame, departing from the modified Sting-Rays, and garage-built rides of the day.
- June 1974 Elaine Holt publishes the first issue of “Bicycle Motocross News,” the first exclusively-BMX publication. BMX dad Bob Osborn is a contributor of stories and photos. “Moto Journalism” turns into a family affair when 13-year old daughter Windy picks up a camera and comes up with some great stuff. A ninth-grader, Windy gets masthead billing in the paper soon after.
- July 20, 1974 17-year old B.U.M.S. track operator Scot Breithaupt, convinces his former sponsor, Yamaha, to invest \$100,000 (~\$443,000 in 2011 dollars) in a four-race BMX series (three qualifiers and a final) to promote their new line of bicycles. The Yamaha Bicycle Gold Cup is born. The first race of the series (held at Birmingham High School in Van Nuys, CA) happens on this date. In their coverage of the event, Bicycle Motocross News calls it “the day bicycle motocross grew up.”
- September 7, 1974 The Yamaha Bicycle Gold Cup finals, attended by over 5,000 spectators in the Los Angeles Coliseum (later home to the 1984 Olympics) is a major moment in BMX history, with soon-to-be legends Stu Thomsen and David Clinton winning the Expert and Junior classes, respectively, and Bob Osborn (who, four years later, would start Bicycle Motocross Action magazine) as the flag-waving starter. A typo in the “Bicycle Motocross News” story had the “Hollywood Wheelmen” doing a demo on “**1980s** Highboy Bicycles.”
- September 1974 Automotive engineer Skip Hess designs and develops the “Motomag” after seeing neighborhood kids in Simi Valley, CA race and jump their bikes. His company, BMX Products, would successfully market the Motomag for more than a decade, and his Mongoose line of bicycles survives to this day, though under different ownership.



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- 1975 Merl Mennenga starts the “Chandler Jaycees” BMX Track in Chandler, AZ. The track is still operating, in the same location, to this day and holds the distinction of “longest continuously running BMX track.” Two years later, Mennenga would form the American Bicycle Association (ABA) with the Chandler track as ABA Track 001.
- March 30, 1975 The National Bicycle Association holds its first national race in Phoenix, AZ. This race is widely accepted as the first “national” in the sport.
- February 1976 George Esser breaks from the NML to form the National Bicycle League (NBL). The organization would be a major factor in the promotion and organization of BMX Racing until its merger with the American Bicycle Association in 2011.
- April 1976 At the urging of BMX pioneer Rick Twomey, who was a contributor of motorcycle content, *Minicycle* Magazine changes its name to *Minicycle/BMX Action* (later, “*Super BMX*”). It is the first “slick” publication to regularly feature BMX.
- December 1976 After discussions on purchasing an interest in Elaine Holt’s *Bicycle Motocross News*, BMX dad/photographer/writer and fireman Bob Osborn starts *Bicycle Motocross Action* (later *BMX Action*) magazine with \$30,000 in borrowed capital. Brian Lewis graces the first cover, racing on the fabled Corona downhill track. *Bicycle Motocross Action* was the first exclusively-BMX “slick” magazine. The magazine would run for nearly 13 years before its final issue in September 1989.
- Summer 1977 While on Scot Breithaupt’s “Team Terrible” national tour (the sport’s first), Bob Haro develops a new product to raise spending money on the tour. The “factory plate” replaces pie plates and plastic squares and ovals with a form-fitting design and tricked out graphics. This product, first produced in limited runs on Bob’s mother’s stove, was the foundation for Haro’s BMX empire which ultimately included Haro Bikes and a multimillion dollar sale of the company in 1988 .
- October 13, 1977 Merl Mennenga forms the American Bicycle Association. With its unique “transfer system,” ABA would share the BMX sanction spotlight with at least one other competitor until merging with final competitor, National Bicycle League, in June 2011.
- February, 1978 ABA holds it’s first National race in Azusa, CA. The following year, Azusa track operator Richard Long would co-found GT Bicycles with partner Gary Turner.
- November 1978 Jim Stevens and Scot Breithaupt break from their positions at *Bicycle Motocross Action* magazine to form *BMX Plus!* magazine. Greg Hill is on the first cover, riding for Redline. *BMX Plus!* remains in print to this day, having never missed an issue in 30 years of publication (though there was no May 1983 issue, June 1983 was released at the same time the May issue was expected by subscribers, and on newsstands to synch up with new owner Hi-Torque Publications’ production and cover date schema).



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- December 1978 Rock concert promoter and “Jag BMX” bike company owner, Renny Roker, promotes the first BMX World Championships in Indianapolis, IN. Unlike traditional BMX racing (held outdoors on dirt), the “Jag World Championships” were run in a convention center, on a cement track with wooden jumps (not seen in a major event since the Yamaha Gold Cup series in the 1974-75). A whole new riding technique and specialized parts would be developed to race “indoors-on-cement.”
- 1981 National Bicycle Association founder Ernie Alexander steps down as president (the first founder of the major sanctioning bodies to do so).
- December 22, 1983 The film “BMX Bandits” is released in time for the Christmas film rush. The first feature-length film using BMX as a main plotline, “Bandits” also marks the first major film appearance for a then-unknown Australian actress named Nicole Kidman. Though initially scorned by the BMX community as corny, the film is now a cult classic among the BMXers.
- Spring 1985 American Recreation Group acquires BMX Products and the “Mongoose” brand name from Skip Hess. This marks the first acquisition of an original BMX brand by a public company. ARG is controlled by Meshulam Ricklis, husband of actress Pia Zadora, who also owns the Riviera Hotel in Las Vegas (where the stage show “Splash” features the first on-strip BMX freestyle demonstration, with Gary Laurent).
- June 1985 The Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) is introduced to North America at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. It is widely blamed in the BMX industry for the sharp decline in BMX racing and freestyle participation that will follow in years to come. Others, however, point to the fact that a large percentage of riders turned 16 between 1985 and 1987, and thus became interested in cars and girls, though probably not in that order).
- March 21, 1986 Director Hal Needham (Smokey and the Bandit, Cannonball Run) releases the feature-length “RAD,” in theaters. This film, the first major feature to include actual BMX personalities mixed in with the Hollywood types (Talia Shire of “Godfather” and “Rocky” fame played the mom of lead character Cru Jones (played by Bill Allen)). 1984 Olympic Gold Medal gymnast, Bart Connor, starred as the evil-yet-fast villain, Bart Taylor. Leading up to the release, the BMX community was abuzz with stories of riders being paid \$3,000 to cut their hair (Martin Aparijo) and perks befitting the H’wood elite at the film location in Canada. It is widely accepted that BMX Supercross tracks in the modern era are reminiscent of the then-outrageous “Hell Track” in the film. As with *BMX Bandits* before it, RAD has become a cult classic among BMXers of all ages.
- October 21, 1995 Mike King and Brian Lopes are the first to use clipless pedals in a BMX national race at the ABA Fall Nationals in Burbank, California. The “clips vs. flat (pedals)” choice is the subject of vigorous debate among racers to this day. King would go on to become director of the USA Cycling BMX program, overseeing the Team USA’s BMX Olympic efforts.
- November 7, 1995 The domain name BMX.COM is reserved by Scott Products (at the time, owner of the “Schwinn Bicycles” brand name).



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- November 26, 1995 Christophe Leveque is the first non-US citizen to earn an American #1 Pro title (in the ABA series). Due to a never-before-invoked rule in the ABA rulebook preventing foreign riders from holding an ABA title, Leveque is not awarded the title...clearing the way for Gary Ellis to win his fourth #1 Pro title. The following year, the “foreign rider” rule is repealed. Leveque goes on to win the 1998 and 1999 #1 Pro titles. Riders from outside the US win the top title five of the next eight years (Leveque in 1998 and 1999, Wade Bootes in 2000 and Warwick Stevenson in 2001 and 2003).
- July 12, 1996 GT Bicycles co-founder Richard Long is killed in a motorcycle accident while en route to a Mountain Bike event in Big Bear, CA.
- June 29, 2003 International Olympic Committee (IOC) votes on, and approves, the inclusion of BMX Racing in the 2008 Summer Games in Beijing, China.
- April 2, 2006 Former racer/freestyler John Swarr and freestyle legend Mark Eaton release “Joe Kid on a Sting-Ray: The History of BMX.” The feature-length documentary contains rare footage and in-depth interviews with most every BMX personality of note. The title is derived from a quote Stu Thomsen gave in the film: “I was just...‘Joe Kid on a Sting-Ray’...”
- January 16, 2008 USA Cycling announces the addition of a permanent BMX training facility to the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Chula Vista, CA. It would be the world’s first permanent Olympic training facility for BMX athletes.
- June 14, 2008 Mike Day tops a seven-man field that includes (in subsequent order of finish) Donny Robinson, David Herman, Kris Fox, Steven Cisar, Danny Caluag and Tyler Brown at the US Olympic Trials in Chula Vista, CA. Bubba Harris also made the Olympic Trials group, but was injured in practice. Day’s win earns him the second of three spots on the very first US Olympic BMX Team (Kyle Bennett earned the automatic slot prior to the trials).
- June 29, 2008 Donny Robinson earns the “Selection Committee Nomination” slot to round out the 2008 US Olympic BMX Team. On this date, the three-man, one women team is set (with Jill Kintner as the sole US female).
- August 20, 2008 Mike Day of Team USA wins the first moto of an Olympic BMX Race at the Laoshan BMX Field in the 2008 Summer Games in Beijing, China. Marc Willers of New Zealand, Donny Robinson of Team USA and Andrés Jiménez of Colombia advance with Day.
- August 22, 2008 Anne-Caroline Chausson of France is the first person to earn an Olympic Medal in BMX Racing, with her Gold Medal finish in the Woman’s Final at the Laoshan BMX Field in the 2008 Summer Games in Beijing, China. Laëtitia Le Corguillé, also of France and Jill Kintner of Team USA join Chausson on the podium.



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- August 22, 2008 Maris Strombergs of Latvia is the first male to win an Olympic Gold Medal in BMX Racing. Team USA's Mike Day and Donny Robinson earn Silver and Bronze, respectively.
- September 17, 2009 The "ABA BMX Hall of Fame," first of its kind, started in 1985, is renamed the "National BMX Hall Of Fame" at a ceremony at the San Diego Hall of Champions in San Diego, CA. Over 300 of the sport's past and present stars are in attendance.
- September 18, 2009 The National BMX Hall Of Fame Museum is officially opened at the ARCO US Olympic Training Center in Chula Vista, CA. The permanent museum holds over 2,000 artifacts from the sport's 40-year history in its collection.
- October 2, 2009 The International Olympic Committee selects Rio de Janeiro as the site for the 2016 Summer Olympics, beating out Madrid, Tokyo and Chicago. BMXers born in 1997-and-after take notice, and begin their seven-year journey for an Olympic BMX slot.
- November 25, 2009 Gary Aragon, an Atlanta-area business consultant hired, by the NBL board to find a replacement for outgoing president, Ken Masters, is hired to serve in the position of NBL President. As an "outside-the-industry" person, the board hopes that Aragon will bring a fresh perspective and new ideas to the ailing NBL. Aragon's first day on the job would be December 7, 2009.
- December 31, 2009 The NBL announces Bob Tedesco has stepped down from his role as "Director of Competition," ending an involvement with NBL BMX that spans more than a quarter century.
- August 10, 2010 Retired US Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska is killed in a plane crash in his home state. Sen. Stevens was the sponsor and chief supporter of the "Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act of 1998," often called the "Constitution of the US Olympic program." He was 86.
- August 15, 2010 NBL President Gary Aragon outlines radical changes to the NBL's programming, membership structure and rules for the 2011 season in an interview with BMXNEWS.COM, conducted in Waterford, MI. The centerpiece of the proposal is the so-called "All You Can Race" plan, whereby members would pay a flat monthly (or annual) fee, and could race unlimited events in one of three membership levels (local, regional or national). It would be the first time since 1969 that BMX racers in the US would not have to pay a per-race entry fee.
- August 30, 2010 The ABA is the first BMX organization to release an "app" for smart phones.
- September 9, 2010 The leading source for streaming live BMX Racing content to fans around the world, provider GO211's parent is acquired by San Francisco-based Metacafe.
- Oct 20, 2010 GO211 CEO Sean Aruda is found dead in his suburban Boston home. The death occurred on the day that the GO211/MetaCafe merger was expected to be canceled, following the finding of grossly-under-reported traffic numbers of the acquired company.



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- November 9, 2010 Rennet Design Group debuts “Decimal Gearing,” a technology which allows riders to change their gearing in less-than-full-tooth increments. The invention is celebrated as the first significant development in BMX gearing since the advent of the “spider-and-chainwheel” design in the late 1970s.
- December 16, 2010 NBL President Gary Aragon announces the formation of Global SX Events, Inc. (GSX), a for-profit company, controlled by the nonprofit NBL. At the same time, Aragon announces that GSX has secured the exclusive global rights to promote the UCI BMX Supercross World Cup Series—the qualifying gateway to the Olympic Games for BMX Racing. Former UCI staffers Johan Lindstrom and Tom Ritzenthaler would be minority owners in the new firm, with Lindstrom serving as the company’s CEO.
- May 10, 2011 Rumors begin to circulate within the BMX community that the NBL will cease operations on or about May 31, due to lack of operating funds.
- May 17, 2011 The NBL announces a “Letter of Agreement” to merge with long-time rival ABA. The joined leagues would operate under the new name “USA BMX” after the transaction closes.
- June 18, 2011 Following 30 days of negotiations and due diligence, the NBL-ABA merger is signed. Word begins to spread at the 2011 ABA Midwest Nationals in Rockford, IL, which is in progress when the deal becomes official.
- June 19, 2011 The sport of BMX Racing operates under a single sanctioning body in the United States, for the first time in 37 years.
- June 25, 2011 The first day of the 2011 NBL Midwest Nationals in Warsaw, IN is the first BMX race to display the “USA BMX” banner publicly. ABA and NBL banners are displayed next to each other in the infield—something that would have been unthinkable just 45 days earlier.
- September 4, 2011 15-year old, Dalton Scales-Conklin of Lawrenceburg, KY wins the 14-15 Open Main Event at the 2011 NBL Grand National in Louisville, KY. Long-time NBL devotees are seen crying at the sight of what would be the final lap in the 37-year history of the organization.
- October 7, 2011 The ABA announces “BMX Canada” as its Canadian operating league.
- November 26, 2011 The 2011 ABA Grand Nationals in Tulsa, OK is the largest BMX Race ever held, with 603 motos and 3,425 entries.

Editor’s Note: This list is entitled “a partial history of the sport of BMX Racing” for a reason. We are not asserting that these are the only events of importance. This collection of historic dates and events is forever evolving. If you have content to add to the list, or spot an error in what we have written, please post it on the “BMX Timeline” thread on VintageBMX.com. —Mike Carruth, 12/31/2011