

Professional motor racing is the best way to channelise one's energy and adrenaline rush, writes Praharsha Majeti

# Need for speed



**Q**uest for novelty is leading the youth to uncharted paths. Telangana, slowly but steadily, is finding its feet in the professional motor racing segment, one that is very different from the mindless rage we normally see on the crowded roads. A handful of youngsters from the State have already made a mark in the national racing circuit. For instance, Sandeep Varma Nadimpally, a rider at the Gusto Racing India, has won the 2018 Indian National Motorcycle Racing Champion 300 - 400cc category. Karthik Mateti, trainer at Race'ists, was the 2018 Indian National Motorcycle Racing Champion 165cc category. Rahil Shetty, who studied at St Mary's College, Yousufguda, was the 2018 Asia Champion. Then there is Peddu Sri Harsha who is a multiple national races winner. There are other national racers like Jayanth Prathipati, Phani Teja, Anil Varma, Kevin Sitaraman, Siddharth Reddy and Teja Namburu, the youngest professional motorcycle racer from Telangana.

Hyderabad now also has racing school that will nurture those who are not afraid of speed. Founded by Sri Harsha and Vikas Reddy, Race'ists at Kompally has made the best use of available resources to train themselves and also others by organising track day sessions on weekends.

Race'ists, according to the founders, is an attempt to the discrimination and insults they faced in their early days. "It's not easy to want to ride when there are people out there wanting to mentally block you or instigate you, especially with comments," say the duo about the experience that sowed the seeds for creating a platform for channeling the adrenaline on to race tracks.

They realised that there is a need for a platform where people with similar passion can have a ground where they can be what they want to be - a racer.

"Race is for neither style nor show. It is a race to be the best. We don't insult people, we don't break traffic rules. We respect people, we don't discriminate. We don't look down upon new riders; instead, we ask them to suit up and show their worth on the tracks. There's more to a ride than just a bike," the FB post further reads. It is now a leading team of track-focused racers in Hyderabad, which has less infrastructure for professional motorcycle racing unlike Chennai and Coimbatore.

The Chicane Circuit in Leonia resort Shamirpet, too, has played a vital role in aiding the youth achieve their racing goals at national-level racing events. Hasten Go-kart race track at Gurranguda and a few other small go-kart facilities in and around Hyderabad too are part of the racing ecosystem.

#### IS MOTORCYCLE RACING A DANGEROUS SPORT?

Motorcycle racing is a professional sport hosted in controlled environments like race tracks. The racing enthusiasts undergo intense training to get race certified and obtain a racing licence. The Federation of Motor Sports Clubs of India (FMSCI), the only recognised authority for promoting and governing motorsports in India, issues racing licence. The National Motorcycle Racing Championship is the largest motorcycle racing event in the country organised by the prestigious Madras Motor Sports Club (MMSC) at Madras Motor Race Track (MMRT), attracting racing talent across the country. Motorcycle racing should not be mistaken for the reckless and irresponsible motorcyclists raging at uncontrollable speeds on the crowded roads.

#### HOW TO BE A RACER

All it takes is the zeal to be a professional motorcycle racer. It is open to men and women. One should first reach out to an FMSCI accredited racing school like Gusto Racing India, Honda Ten 10 Racing Academy, R.A.C.R (Rajini Academy of Competitive Racing) and Apex Racing. The training modules aim at enabling the enthusiasts gain control over the motorcycle and understand the art of racing. Post-training sessions, the riders are provided with a race certificate which enables them to apply for racing licence at FMSCI. Riders with racing licence will then take part in the national championship events under different categories.

#### CATEGORIES IN RACING CHAMPIONSHIP

The National Motorcycle Championship is termed as "MRF MMSC FMSCI Indian National Motorcycle Racing Championship" and is broadly categorised into two major events which commence in the month of June and conclude in the month of September every year. It has five rounds with the first round being hosted by MMSC at Kari Motor Speedway in Coimbatore and rest of the rounds at Madras Motor Race Track (MMRT), Chennai.

#### ONE MAKE CHAMPIONSHIP

This is a manufacturer level race event targeted at riders who are new to racing. Setup bikes are provided by specific manufacturers. This is, by far, the most affordable racing category for fresh talent looking forward to a racing career. This category includes events like TVS One Make Championship, Honda Talent Cup, Idemitsu Honda NSF250R Cup and Yamaha One Make Championship.

#### NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

This is focused more towards the seasoned and experienced racers who compete for the Indian National Motorcycle Racing Championship title. In this category, rider needs to be part of an FMSCI approved racing team. Bikes in this class are modified according to the guidelines provided by FMSCI. The events in this category include:

#### 4 Stroke Stock up to 165cc Girls

This event is for women and are provided with unmodified bikes from 150-165cc

#### 4 Stroke Stock up to 165cc Novice

This event is for the male riders whose age is under 23 and are provided with unmodified bikes

#### 4 Stroke Pro Stock up to 165cc Open

This event is for the experienced male riders and are provided with heavily modified bikes

#### 4 Stroke Pro Stock 201 - 300cc Open

This event is for experienced male riders and are provided with heavily modified bikes of 201-300cc

#### 4 Stroke Pro Stock 301 - 400cc Open

This event is for experienced male riders and are provided with heavily modified bikes whose cubic capacity varies between 301-400cc. Bikes in this class can reach to a heart-stopping top speed of 210 kmph.



#### SAFETY

Right from my childhood, I have always been fascinated by fast-moving cars and motorcycles, and it was in my DNA. In the process of growing up, I got into watching F1 racing and Moto GP, the world-famous international-level racing events on television. Maybe, that was the moment when I decided to put myself into the motorsports arena at some point in my life.

It all started in 2016 when I was formally introduced to professional motorcycle racing by a group called 'Motovation Track Days', the first-of-its-kind group in Hyderabad formed by a few national racers of that time - Nikhil Paul Johnson and Johnathan Johnson with a great spirit of building the racing talent in Telangana. It was then that I realised riding on a track is different from riding on city roads.

The track makes us feel more confident and safer than on roads as it is a controlled environment. It is mandatory for all riders to wear full protection racing gear including a full-body leather suit, full gauntlet gloves, boots and chest and spine protectors. There are multiple foreign players like Alpinestars, Dainese, Taichi and Spidi that provide the gear. There also Indian manufacturers like BBG (Biking Brotherhood Gears) vying for attention in the space.

When it comes to helmets, riders should use a certified (Dot /ECE) race helmet with double D ring type lock. Brands like MT, Bell, AGV, HJC,

Shoei and Arai are popular. The protection gear enables the riders to push limits on the race where many hit 150 kmph depending on the bike.

All these racing gear can cost upwards of Rs 50,000 and can go further up based on safety standards. FMSCI also mandates the riders to take a race cover, called as High Risk Insurance that offers a cover of Rs 6-8 lakh at a premium of Rs 4,000 per year.

Personally, I have had faced multiples crashes yet I came out without any major injuries except for some muscle catches, ankle twists and a few scratches on the race suit.

#### EXPENSIVE SPORT

Motorcycle Racing is an expensive sport considering the entry fees for national championship, cost incurred for setting up the bike, for protection gear, practice session and travel expenses. Support from sponsors can make a big difference.

#### REFINING STYLE

To fine-tune riding style and make adjustments to clock the best lap time, we desperately need our moves to be captured while we are on the track. Being a racer myself, I had a clear idea how photographs need to look from a rider's perspective. That moment brought out the sport photographer hidden in me. The effort is to aid fellow riders with pictorial feedback.



Peddu Sri Harsha, Karthik Mateti, Rahil Shetty and Sandeep Varma Nadimpalli are making Hyderabad proud.