



**Supercross  
NIGHTLIFE**  
PAGE 115

# RAAAR



**NO 1**  
VOLUME 2

**RICHEST SX EVER**  
**LAS VEGAS' US OPEN**  
**COMING TO AMERICA**

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW  
WITH 250CC WORLD CHAMPION  
SEBASTIEN TORTELLI

**EMPIRE OF DIRT**  
25 YEARS OF FOX RACING



# I

admit it: I had never seen an Arenacross race before. It wasn't because I was uninterested in this condensed

form of supercross, where races take place in buildings a fraction of the size of the big supercross stadiums. It was because I had only followed the actual AMA Supercross and Outdoor Nationals, and they kept me quite busy. But after two full seasons of keeping busy, it was time to check out the season premiere of a different series — the 1998-'99 AMA/PJ1 Arenacross Series 1999 kickoff in Des Moines, Iowa.

## Background check

For the past several years it seems like the PJ1 Arenacross Series, founded by Mike Kidd but now under the umbrella of PACE Motor Sports, has been gaining in popularity and prestige. The races are on TV, the buildings are almost always full, and the riders are getting faster and more competitive by the season. The origins of arenacross racing date back to at least 1977, when a Pennsylvania promoter named Armon Hostetler started holding indoor motocross races every February at the Farm Show Arena in Harrisburg. Since then arenacross racing has gone through sporadic periods of growth, especially in the northeast. In the mid-1980's promoters SRO and World Sports put together the AMA National Arenacross Series, which brought some of the first dirt bike races to metropolitan areas like New York City, Philly and Chicago. And Drew Wolfe's popular Ohio-based Action Sports company has been putting races in Columbus, Ohio and Louisville, Kentucky for years. Now, with the Mazda Nationals and Toyota Supercross Series blowing up everywhere, the PJ1/AMA Arenacross Series appears set to go with its big brothers.

Arenacross has a reputation for attracting guys who are either on the downside of their professional careers or just starting out as professionals. Although there are a lot of veteran pro's and aspiring teenagers out there on the arena tracks, the sport is beginning to attract more established racers in their prime, like Heath Voss and Jeff Willoh, both of whom joined the series for the opening round in Iowa. One thing about the veterans out there like Mike Jones, Buddy Antunez, Denny Stephenson, and Cliff Palmer: They all know that they might not have much time left in their careers, so they ride each race as if it were their last. That urgency makes for some

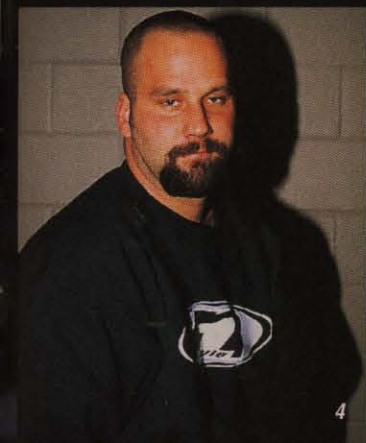
excellent race action in both the 125 and 250 classes, as both classes count towards the overall point standings.

## Des Moines

Here's my first impression of arenacross in one word: Passing! The races are non-stop action. After 15 years of working out the format, Mike Kidd and the rest of the Arenacross crew have worked out an ideal track design that works in the 5,000 to 10,000 seat arenas. Each track features a start that leads to a first turn sweeper, whoops, one big double-jump, more jumps, plus turns that are designed for passing. The turns are made wide with outside banking so they don't become one-liners. Each turn on the track has room for block-passing, a wide sweep, or an inside dive.

The racing was held over two nights, and the program was great! After years of practice, the handlers of the PJ1 Arenacross tour really know what to do and how to stay on track. The racing was fast and unpredictable, with a schedule that called for the first heats to start only 5 minutes apart. In Des Moines they pulled off seven heats in 35 minutes!





1. Stunt pilot: Reigning champion Buddy Antunez aviates his Primal Impulse Suzuki for the Des Moines crowd.
2. Snake charmers: A throng of Cobras strike from the line.
3. Barnstorming: The intimate Des Moines Memorial Coliseum launched the traveling AMA/PJ1 National Arenacross road show.
4. Sometime to return: After a year off from professional racing, former AMA 125cc East Region Supercross Champion Brian Swink showed up for work in Des Moines.
5. Hittin' the gravel: An unfortunate rider shotputs his Honda.
6. Gather round: Mike Kidd holds court.

