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***DYNASTY IN THE MAKING***  
***MASTERS OF MINI***





It was a warm September day in 2003 when it all began. The sun was out with just a few clouds in the sky. Someone had talked promoter Dave Olcott into running a pit bike race. Funny thing was, he didn't know much about them. At that time, in the roughly 10 years of doing events, the former Stimilon King Pin turned Red Bull Marketing guy had run a handful of Motocross races, one Snocross race, and a few skateboard events. Stimilon's main focus since 1994

however, had been snowboarding events. He and his crew had been around the world building, designing and running events for the US Open, the Japan Open, the Kodak Air & Style Challenge, the Bud Light Big Air Series, and the US Olympic Grand Prix events to name a few. But pit bikes, that was new.

The pit bike scene was small but growing rapidly at the time. In fact 12 inch bikes weren't really even around

then. The bikes were mostly made up of Honda 50s and maybe a handful of SDG's (the first of the Chinese knock offs to come on to the scene). Olcott coined the name "Masters of Mini" and laid out the ground rules for that first event. "Actually, a friend and long time expert rider, Pete Collins, really helped me understand the sport. He and his buddies were doing it for years and I knew he was the man. I have worked with Pete ever since," explained Olcott.

*Story by: Whitney Davis Photos by: Matt Francis*

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Red Bull backed the event and has been involved with Olcott's ventures ever since. That event hosted 16 entries, all of which signed up that morning. In fact, 2 of the guys who signed up at the last minute didn't have bikes and had to borrow from their friends, alternating between the motos. That first race in 2003 was held at Rocky Hill MX Park in Connecticut. Tony and Lisa Lorusso agreed to let the event run on their kids track. Normally, a Saturday would bring in good money for the Lorusso's on the kids track so allowing pit bikes to take over for the day was a big risk. But Tony had a pit bike himself and thought it would

be fun. And the rest, as they say, is history.

In 2004 the event was again held at Rocky Hill. It rained a ton the night before and the track was literally under water. Tony got in his dozer and committed to getting the track ready for competition, and he delivered on his promise (it would not be the last time the CT track was hampered by weather and certainly not the last time Lorusso would waive his magic wand to make a miracle happen and keep the riding alive). "We literally raced around a giant moat. Tony pushed enough dirt up to give us a track, but if you went off the track you were in anywhere from 2





to 6 feet of water. It was knarly but super fun!" said Olcott. That race drew 42 competitors and everyone left with smiles and stories.

In 2005 a third and fourth event were held. Rocky Hill played host for the third year in a row on a picture perfect day drawing 115 entries during the summer, and the fourth was literally thrown together at the last minute with Cycles 128 in Beverly, MA in the fall. "Pete (Collins) told me that John Rice (Cycles 128 GM) used to run the best race anywhere and that I should talk with him. I called John up and asked why he didn't do the event anymore and he said, 'Come on Dave, you run races, pit bikes don't make any money.' So I told him, 'what if I helped, would you be interested in resurrecting the dead?' And he said ok," Olcott recalls. "I think at that first race at Cycles we had around 72 entries, I'm not really sure, but it was a blast." The track was the first asphalt race MoM had ever held and the track was about 25 seconds a lap long.

In 2006, Olcott persuaded his then employer, Transworld Motocross Magazine to back his idea of growing the event into a small series. Transworld was reluctant at first, but agreed to bankroll the series. Now Olcott had the ingredients to really do something: media, credibility, and financing. 4 events were held that year – Round 1 was at the Marshfield State Fair in MA, Round 2 was again at Rocky Hill in CT only this year Olcott talked the Lorussos into letting him run on the full size Quad track, Round 3 was back at Cycles 128 in MA, and the finale was at Mototown USA - a brand new 300,000 square foot indoor track in CT. That year the series breathed new life into a slowing East Coast pit bike scene by attracting 844 entries over the 4 events.

In 2007, with Transworld's support and full page ads, MoM grew to 5 events adding Crow Hill in MA. The series attracted top names in the sport like BBR, Sano, Pitster Pro, AHP and

Thumpstar among others, as well as non-traditional sponsors like Red Bull, Vitamin Water and Smart Water. The tracks allowed MoM to grow each race by using their whole facilities. Now most lap times averaged 1½ to 2 minutes. Even John Rice and the Cycles crew opened up their warehouse, allowing the track to wind through it. By doing that, they doubled the track making it now a minute long. No more 'pit bike' or kids tracks, this series was the real deal. That year Olcott's vision was to hold a major event at Mototown USA with a \$5000 purse. That event alone drew nearly 450 entries bringing in the big names like Derek Costella, Derek Rose, Carl Schlacht and Kaven Benoit. The 2007 series saw a record attendance of 1488 entries.

In 2008 the series had a few set backs. Mototown USA, which was slated to host the Series Finale for a third year in a row closed down in April. And although it reopened in the fall, the

**"This was never suppose to get this big. We just started running Pit Bike races for fun with friends and now we are averaging over 300 entries per race!"**

series schedule was already in place and a deal could not be put together in time to hold another major event at the indoor Connecticut facility. So the series was limited to just the other 4 venues: Marshfield, Rocky Hill, Crow Hill, and Cycles 128. The Rocky Hill race was again threatened with poor weather conditions but the track crew rebuilt the track that day. Attendance, however, suffered and MoM only drew 237 entries in the mud (down from a normal 333 the year before).

Another major set back was the fact that the economy caught up with MoM. The financial downfall didn't just hit the motocross industry but the entire publishing world, and Olcott was laid off from Transworld before the series finished. Ever the promoter, he vowed the show must go on, and despite negative opinions towards the magazine from some of his loyal competitors, Olcott finished the season with Transworld as title sponsor. "The Masters of Mini Series was around before Transworld, but their support has helped us to grow beyond where I could have ever imagined. I am bummed not to be part of their family anymore but I made a commitment to all my sponsors, including TWMX, for the entire season. It wouldn't be right to just drop them with one race to go." And MoM actually finished the year stronger than ever. Despite losing their biggest venue from the tour, and less than average attendance in the mud at Rocky Hill, the series drew 1133 entries over the remaining 4 events. In fact, many of the riders said they didn't want the series to end, so the MoM staff threw together a last minute open practice at Mototown just before the Christmas Holiday and drew 150 riders. Afterward they went to their favorite hangout just down the street, The Hartford/Windsor Marriott, and held an impromptu holiday party at their bar.

Now, in 2009, MoM looks to be on a mission! Plans include a potential 10 event schedule; 7 races, up to 2 open practices, and another big party at the Hartford/Windsor Marriott the Friday before the Southwick National in August. Despite a horrible economy, Olcott and his staff have rallied the industry (and outside industry) sponsors to "SUPPORT FUN," as he puts it, and almost all of his previous years supporters are helping out in some way or another. The Masters of Mini Series has had tremendous success promoting its sponsors over the years. MoM claims to retain over 90% of its support year to year through loyalty and creativity.

Olcott continues, "I give my 'NASCAR speech' during every riders meeting and I think the riders get it now. They know I am not saying it to put money in my pocket. They understand that when they purchase sponsor's products from sponsor shops they are actually making a difference. And that difference is what keeps their series going.

And they did make a difference. MoM is an amazing example of basic business success. By actually educating the riders on these essential business principles and endorsing MoM sponsor's products and shops, it has become its own little economic entity. Several shops that participate with the tour have reported noticeable sales related to the growing pit bike series, and in this market anything helps.

Olcott attributes his success to what he feels is the best event staff anywhere. "These guys have shown me their dedication to running a professional event while still having a blast," he said. Several of the staff, including Olcott himself, actually race in each event, allowing them to experience first



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hand what the competitors go through at each race. He feels that helps keep the events grounded. "We also have great tracks that really have worked with us over the years and helped us to grow. But I especially want to thank our sponsors who come out year after year and help us make this possible, as well as the riders themselves. They always have great feedback and have given us solid ideas on how to keep it fun, and that's what is most important to me, showing everyone a good time."

And a good time is the perfect description as each event is more of a party than just a race. While the Masters of Mini Series has drawn some of the top names in the sport as well as local rippers from all over the Eastern half of the country, it is mainly made up of regular riders. MoM draws all abilities, ages, and personalities. According to Olcott, "We try and offer something for everyone. We wildcard our top pros to Mini Moto SX, the Super Bowl of our sport, but we also realize that most of the riders racing with us are not that serious. They just want to ride with their buddies, so we provide plenty of classes that allow for that also." 7 years after their first event, The Masters of Mini Series

is still rewriting the rules on what people can expect from events. If their past is any indication, this series isn't done growing yet. Maybe that is just another factor of MoM's success: Keeping it simple. In fact, some argue that this once 'backyard event' has become the largest pit bike series in the country! And with an average of over 300 entries per race, a third of which actually pre register up to a month in advance, a lot of people are taking the Masters of Mini seriously.

MoM has a new website, [www.mastersofmini.com](http://www.mastersofmini.com), and a new motivation. "I know the economy sucks, but I believe people will still come out to have fun. We have worked with several of our top riders to revamp the series. We have added new classes, new formats, new tracks, and have done everything we can to remain a leader in the market place," said Olcott. This year, the series starts in April and runs through November. Check out their website for all the details. If you have a pit bike or have ever wanted to have a good time, you need to go to a Masters of Mini event. I can promise that you will come back, and as Olcott always says, bring friends!



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