

# NBL Proposes Many Changes

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The NBL will announce today, at a press conference held at its Prunedale Last Chance Qualifier, that it is making sweeping changes to the way it operates, starting after the Grands. BMXNEWS got an advance copy of the remarks, and brings the scoop to you one hour before the official announcement.

These changes cover everything from how moveup points are awarded, to the Elite Series, to the very idea of what an NBL membership is.

Here are some early details:

## **MEMBERSHIPS**

The most profound change for 2011 is the way NBL will deal with memberships.

Instead of paying an annual membership fee, and then entry fees at each race, the NBL will now charge a per-month membership fee of between \$10.26 and \$40.93 per month, but all entry fees will be included.

There will be three tiers of memberships (tentatively called "Local," "Challenger" and "Champion"). The rider decides which to sign up for, based on the type of racing s/he wants to do. If you are mostly racing locals, you pay a one-time sign up fee of \$25, then \$10.26 per month (a total of \$148.12 for the first year). With that payment, you can race an unlimited number of local races, anywhere in the NBL system. You can still race nationals with a local membership, on an ala carte basis, by paying a \$60 per race entry fee.

To race the National series, you will pay a \$35 one-time sign up fee, and \$40.93 per month (\$526.16 for the first year). That includes an unlimited number of race entries of any kind (locals, regionals and nationals).

One membership is good for 20" and Cruiser, so for \$40.93 per month, you can race either, or both. There are discounts for multiple family members, or if you want to handle your annual membership in one payment instead of monthly.

Your existing NBL membership will need to be converted to the new system. And while there will not be any NBL National racing between the Grands and Christmas, there will probably be Regionals in October. Riders signing up for those regionals will be the first members to make the conversion. The second wave of riders will be converting at the Christmas Classic, which is the first national featuring the new format. Local racing will be last to convert, with any riders signing up to race locals required to convert to the new membership on or after January 1, 2011.

Members will receive \$5 credit for every month left on their existing membership. That credit will go toward offsetting the sign-up fee for the new membership, or toward offsetting the monthly payments, if the credit exceeds the sign up fee.

The membership will be a 12-month "contract," meaning that members will have to commit to paying for all 12 months. If you decide to upgrade your membership from Local to National, you will pay the difference in the sign up fee (\$10), and will be required to start your contract year over again.

A 30-day trial membership will still exist, and will be priced at \$25. That \$25 will be applied to the sign-up fee if/when the member upgrades. The Bring A Buddy program is back, and members will be awarded one month of free membership, up to 12 months, for each new member they sign up.

## **TRACKS**

Tracks will no longer pay any fees to the NBL (no race report fees, no insurance fees, etc). Instead, tracks will be paid by the NBL for each rider at their races.

Paid practice will also be a thing of the past, for better or worse. Tracks can run practice, but they cannot charge for it—but since they are not going to be paid to run it, it is doubtful you'll see many non-race-day practice sessions.

Tracks will be permitted to charge a small additional fee for riders who want a trophy at a local race. Indoor tracks will also be permitted to charge a supplemental fee to support the added expense of operating the facility.

## **CLASSES AND PROFICIENCIES**

The NBL will add 40 (you read it right, four-zero) new classes to their program for 2011.

While the full list is still being finalized, the proposal BMXNEWS obtained calls for a newly-created Girls Expert class (5-7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17-18, 19-25, 26-34, 35-40, and 41-over). The plan also calls for a 30-over Rookie class for both 20" and cruiser. The NBL will also bring in many individual-age cruiser classes for the boys (9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16).

The Novice class will be renamed "Challenger" class in the new year (so the common amateur proficiencies will be Rookie, Challenger and Expert).

There will also be a fourth proficiency added called "Super-X" (not to be confused with the SuperEx of previous years which was basically A Pro). The new Super-X class will be a birth-year class for 14-16 year olds, and is being promoted as a "Jr. Development" class. Unlike ABA's Jr. Devo, which is akin to an open class, this is a plated class unto itself. Riders racing the Super-X class will not race their normal expert class in addition to this one. The class will exist for both Boys and Girls.

The class formerly known as SuperEx will now be known as Elite A, and the Elite class will be known as Elite AA. The rules behind qualifying for Elite A and Elite AA are coming together, and are a little more complex than we have time to talk about here.

## **MOVE-UPS**

One thing that is bound to cause a stir is the new policy that says whatever proficiency you start the season in, you will finish the season in that proficiency. Exception given to those who petition the Director of Competition specifically for a self-move-up. Self moveups are frozen as of 30 days prior to the Grands.

Moveup points will change from the long-standing "number-of-qualifying-wins" to a particular number of "gate drops," and other factors. For rookies, one year of experience and 40 gate drops will require a move up the day after the Grands. The way we understand it, if the rider has fewer than 40, he will stay rookie for another year, unless s/he petitions the Director of Competition specifically for a self-move-up.

Once you get to "Challenger Class" (Novice), the formula that decides how you move up to expert gets very complex, and will be almost impossible to calculate without help from the NBL office. The formula is: A minimum of 100 gate drops and a minimum of 24 months total participation. A rider who has met these minimum requirements will be moved to Expert if they are in the 90th Percentile in their class.

Any gate drop in competition will count toward the moveup tally. This includes motos, quarters, semis and mains...but not practice.

The Director of Competition must personally approve any moveup from Expert to Super-X, or to either of the Elite classes.

## **NATIONAL SERIES**

What was formerly known as the "Elite Series" will now, according to NBL CEO Gary Aragon, be spun off into a separate league, called the "NBL NationsTour." The NationsTour will feature four events during the season, plus the finals, which will be held in conjunction with the Grands.

The NationsTour will feature a supercross-style Friday Time Trial and Saturday racing format. The total purse for each series race will top \$40,000, with the top Elite AA hoisting a check for \$8,000, and the top Elite Woman taking home \$4,800. Even masters will be rewarded handsomely, with an \$1800 check for first.

The Championship Payouts will be double, with \$16,000 going to the top Elite AA, and \$9600 going to the top Elite Woman.

Unlike the amateur program, there will be no NBL membership required to race the NationsTour, and riders will pay an entry fee to race (probably around \$300).

In addition, the NationsTour events will also feature an amateur racing program patterned after the UCI worlds format of birthyear and wheel size (no proficiencies).

The NBL National series will now be called "NBL National Championship Series" and will consist of approximately 35 races, on 20 weekends. The races will be divided into four different types of races (Super ProAM, ProAm, Team Spectacular and Mixed Doubles). We will go into more detail on these in a later report, as they are quite complex, with many layers to each.

Rookies will no longer be plated at the national level, but will be plated at the Regional level.

## **REGIONAL SERIES**

The "Regional" series is being replaced by the "NBL Challenge Championship Series." At press time, this series will consist of 20 events, with 16 of them held on the same days in each of four regions. Four additional events will be spread out on the calendar. In addition to a Challenge Championship in each region, there will also be an "All-Challenge Championship" to replace the US Open on Friday of the Grands. The winner of this race in each class (Rookie included) will receive a Gold number plate which they can run at any NBL race (nationals included).

Novices (Challenger class riders) will be able to use TWO regional scores toward their six needed national scores. They must also have three local races to qualify. Experts also need six scores, and can only use one regional score as part of the six.

## **MAGAZINE**

As you have probably heard earlier this month, the NBL Magazine will be making a comeback. Rechristened as "N" Magazine, the first issue is expected to make its debut at the Grands. The NBL promises a "lifestyle publication" which covers "Life in the (BMX) Nation, rather than standings."

## **SUMMARY**

No doubt this is a lot for NBL members to get their heads around. The NBL will be filling in a lot of the broad strokes outlined here in the coming days and weeks. It probably bears saying that there is bound to be some tweaking to some of the terminology and exact mechanics.

But we wanted to get you the early scoop on these important developments. We'll be [talking about it over on the VIntage forum](#), so come join the discussion.