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Quality control

Tight racing expected in second year of class

By John Hopkins

What the Honda CBR125R Challenge may have lacked in quantity in 2008 it more than made up for in quality.

Each of the five rounds of the new series featured sensational, multi-bike dicing at the front of the field. That eventual champion Raphael Archambault was able to actually win all five rounds and clinched the title with a race to spare doesn't give a true picture of how competitive this class was.

It is quite likely we will see the same level of competition this summer. The very evenly matched CBR125Rs, with minimal horsepower and very limited modifications, are almost guaranteed to produce tight and unpredictable racing.

Some changes have been made to sweeten the pot for the second year of the class. Once again the series is scheduled to run alongside all Parts Canada Superbike Championship rounds, but a second event has been added to the Calgary weekend. In addition to tackling Race City Motorsport Park the little Hondas will compete on the Varsity Chrysler Speed Park adjacent to the big track. That round will be hosted by the very popular Alberta Mini Roadracing Association.

Additionally, the series will graduate to the

full Mosport International Raceway road course after being restricted to the Development Track in 2008.

In an effort to broaden the appeal of the class, the minimum age requirement has been lowered from 14 to 13 years old.

And in perhaps the most exciting development, especially if you're a young and aspiring road racer, is a trip to the Kevin Schwantz School at Barber Motorsport Park in Birmingham, AL for the 2009 series champion.

"We think the changes to the 2009 Honda CBR125R Challenge will make the series even more appealing to Canada's up-and-coming racers," said Honda Canada's Kim Moore. "The AMRA is a very successful organization and offers us a strong partnership, and what young racer wouldn't be thrilled to have the chance to learn from a world champion like Kevin Schwantz?"

So who will be in line for the grand prize when the 2009 season concludes? Picking a winner at this level is almost impossible, but names to watch will almost certainly include Steven Nickerson of Hamilton, ON, who is the protégé of Pro Superbike star Ross Millson, and Bodhi Edie of Saskatoon, a product of the AMRA mini road racing system.

Another worth watching could well be Leah Vignale, who will be competing in the Toolee

Motorsports team of Lee Kuhn Jr., second place finisher in last year's inaugural season.

And there is also Loic Viscasillas of Laval, QC, who won the RACE SuperSeries season opener in May.

If the racing is anything like last year the action will be close at the front, and whoever finally takes the title will have certainly earned it the hard way.



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