

DRIVERS MEETING

The chief commissaire may call upon subordinate officials to chair the different meetings that take place prior to the beginning of a stage race. Many times the motorcycle referee will be called upon to run the drivers meeting. The chief commissaire is taking advantage of the driving experiences of the motorcycle referee.

The drivers meeting is attended by anyone who will be driving a vehicle in connection with the race. This includes the drivers of cars, vans, trucks, and motorcycles. The motorcycle referee must be prepared to run this meeting when called upon. The following is some of the information that must be covered in the meeting. There may be other considerations that are peculiar to a particular event, but the following information must be covered.

DRIVER'S LICENSE

The motorcycle referee must inform everyone that a valid drivers license is required and that proof of possession will be required prior to anyone driving for the race. Drivers from foreign federations must have an international drivers license and present it for verification when requested to do so. All drivers must have a valid drivers license in his possession.

This is a state law and a rule that must be adhered to in order for the sanctioning body to maintain liability insurance.

INSURANCE

Vehicles used in bicycle racing must have auto insurance. Large races often obtain vehicle sponsorship from car manufacturers, dealerships, or rental companies. When the race is provided with these vehicles, the auto insurance is usually in place. The existence of auto insurance should be verified by the driver when assigned a vehicle. If a driver is providing his own vehicle, proof of insurance must be provided. No vehicle may be used in a race if it does not carry auto insurance coverage.

Drivers in the race should have their own medical insurance. A race typically will not provide medical insurance coverage for its staff members. If an accident occurs, and medical insurance is not available, law suits and huge bills will be lurking on the horizon. In today's litigation based society the lack of medical insurance makes an individual without insurance an unacceptable risk. A simple rule to follow is "No insurance - No participation".

CONDITION OF THE VEHICLE

All vehicles being used in the race must be in good working condition. This includes the brakes, suspension, lights, horn, and tires. During the course of an event the vehicle will be subjected to severe operating conditions. If a vehicle cannot pass a safety inspection, the vehicle will not be used in the event until repaired and made safe.

When a vehicle is on the course in connection with the race, it will have its head lights on and the emergency flashers will be flashing. All vehicles will remain in the right lane, leaving the service lane open for technical support and oncoming vehicles. The vehicles will be operated in a safe manner and obey all traffic regulations, unless law enforcement agencies allow otherwise. Drivers operating their vehicles in an unsafe manner will be removed from the race at the discretion of the chief commissaire or law enforcement agencies.

DRIVER ATTIRE

All drivers in the race must meet minimum dress requirements. In all states and all Federation sanctioned events, the driver of a vehicle must wear something on his feet. This can include sandals and aqua socks at the minimum. The driver must also wear some type of shirt or T-shirt.

In the case of the motorcycle driver and motorcycle passenger, crash helmets meet-

ing minimum safety requirements must be worn. The motorcycle driver and his passenger should wear long pants. At the minimum, tennis shoes must be worn, but heavier foot protection is recommended.

PASSING THE RACE

Any vehicle not allowed in the immediate vicinity of the peloton must stay in front of the race. Under no circumstances will traffic be allowed to stay behind the race. No vehicles will be allowed to leap frog the race unless permission has been given to do so by the chief commissaire. This applies to the press and publicity cars, as well as civilian and spectator traffic.

In the case of the feed vehicles, they must use the alternate route to the finish line. They may not pass the race unless there is no other route available and they may not pass until all feed vehicles are assembled at the rear of the caravan. Permission to pass will be relayed from the chief commissaire to commissaire three. Commissaire three will send feed vehicles up when it is appropriate. When in the caravan, the feed vehicles must use head lights and flashers.

Any vehicle wanting to pass the peloton must obtain permission from the chief commissaire. The vehicle must pass safely and use the horn to alert riders to the presence of a vehicle. The horn is operated with short honks. The driver simply taps the horn button. The driver does not blow the horn in one continuous blast.

OFFICIALS IN THE VEHICLES

Officials may be assigned to accompany team cars in the caravan. These assignments are made by the chief commissaire. In amateur and Pro-Am races, the official will sit in the front seat on the passenger side. In Pro races the official may have to sit in the back seat. If the driver protests having an official onboard, his team car will not be allowed in the caravan. If the official in the car is subjected to harassment during the race, a report is made of the incident and the chief commissaire will resolve the problem.

When an official is in the car, the official is in charge of the car and regulates its activities. The driver is usually allowed to do what he wants while the official sits quietly and observes. If the situation changes and the official says to do something, that is what the driver will do. All other activities will stop. The official must be careful not to be overbearing, but must not appear to be intimidated and indecisive either. There needs to be a good working relationship between the official and occupants of the car.

If there is no official assigned to a vehicle, then the driver of the vehicle must get permission from the chief commissaire to do whatever it is he wants to do. The chief commissaire will usually grant permission, unless a problem will be created by the request. When permission is given, the driver will do what is needed in a safe manner.

The bottom line is that every vehicle in the caravan is under the control of an official in the vehicle, or the official in charge of the caravan. No driver has the freedom to "run wild". Every position change must be cleared through the officials. Safety is the primary consideration when cars are working within the caravan. The officials are responsible for ensuring that safety.

RADIO COMMUNICATIONS

Every vehicle in the caravan will have a radio for race communication. But that does not mean the radio will be in use all the time. The chief commissaire will use the radio to control the activities of the caravan. Most communications will be official information to the caravan. The radio channels must be kept clear for important communications.

The press channel can be used as much as press personnel want. In order for the press to keep track of what is happening there must be a free and continuous flow of information. It is important to note that the press channel and the official's channel are separate.

The official's channel will only be used by officials and caravan drivers. The official's channel will only be used for communication of official information. The press may monitor the official's channel, but they may not communicate on it.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Technical support for the riders must be

provided in a safe manner and from the correct side of the road. Service for the racers will be provided from the far right side of the road only. The service lane (the left lane) must be kept clear as much as possible. Drivers, in the caravan following the peloton, will stay to the right. It is not permissible for team support cars to hang over the center line and observe what is happening up the road. Support vehicles must stay close together and to the right.

After technical support, the rider is left to his own abilities to regain the peloton. There are no national or international rules that allow towing or pacing of riders who have suffered a mechanical problem requiring technical support. The driver of the support vehicle may follow the rider to see if any further problems develop. The support driver returns to his proper position in the caravan as soon as possible. Failure to follow this rule will lead to the rider being penalized and the driver removed from the race.

Caravan support vehicles will be called up to the rear of the peloton to provide technical support. The chief commissaire will call the vehicle on the radio and the car will move to the front of the caravan using the service lane. When the front of the caravan is reached, the driver will pull onto the right shoulder and stop behind the rider. If there is no official to call the support vehicles, the support drivers will have to watch for a hand signal from the riders requesting service.

If there is limited technical support, the support vehicle must stay close to the back of the peloton and cover the money. That means if a break goes up the road close to the end of the event and gains at least one minute on the peloton, the support vehicle will move up to provide support for the leaders and leave the peloton without support.

DRIVING THE PACE CAR

The driver of the pace car must resist the urge to drive close enough to the front of the peloton to be able to observe the action. The pace car is in front to provide warning that the race is approaching. That means staying at least 1/4 to 1/2 mile in front of the leaders. If there is a VIP in the car, the VIP won't be seeing the racing he thought he would.

When the pace car is told to move ahead by the officials, the pace car must move immediately. Being too close to the race can cause congestion at the front of the peloton and endanger the riders. An uncooperative driver in the pace car will find himself out of a job very quickly. A pace car driver that stays too close to the front of the race cannot do his job and compromises the safety of the riders.

DRIVER RESPONSIBILITIES

All drivers in the race must understand exactly what their responsibilities are. The person making the driver assignments must make sure the driver knows what he is supposed to be doing. The

drivers must be given tasks that they are capable of performing. A driver must not be afraid to turn down an important job for one of less responsibility. No driver should try to do something beyond his capabilities.

The motorcycle referee conducting the meeting should stress this point to the drivers. The motorcycle referee should be prepared to offer instruction to drivers who have questions about how to do the job they have been assigned. Drivers, very often, have never had the opportunity to work in a bicycle race before and have no idea how to do the job. It is important the motorcycle referee educates the drivers and make the drivers comfortable with their jobs.

CARAVAN MARKING

Another responsibility that may be given the motorcycle referee is the marking of the caravan support vehicles. The motorcycle referee must get white shoe polish in a dauber bottle and something to clean windshields with. The motorcycle referee will also need a copy of the caravan order (derived from G.C.). The caravan number is written on the driver's side front and rear windshields. If the caravan order changed from the previous stage, the previous caravan number will have to be removed before the new number is put on.

It will be up to the motorcycle referee to find the caravan vehicles. The caravan usually stages in a designated area one hour before the start of the race. There will

always be one or two support vehicles that park in the wrong place or arrives late.

The motorcycle referee will have to organize his time so that he will be ready to sprint to his motorcycle and start the race at a moments notice. The motorcycle referee must have his own race equipment ready to go. It will be very busy before the gun fires to signal the start of the race. This is one of the challenges that makes bicycle racing fun.

CONCLUSION

The goal of the drivers meeting is to give out information that will make the race safe and fair. Drivers must understand what their role will be once the gun fires and racing begins. The roles of individual drivers may have to be explained during the meeting. It may be up to the motorcycle referee to make sure that goal is obtained during the drivers meeting.