

Computer, 50-ton truck aid in motorcycle race

Gary Fritz remembers when coordinating motorcycle events were as laborious as the races were dangerous.

"We used to sit back and play 'if games,'" said the president of the sponsoring Labor Day Association for today's American Motorcycle Association regional championship at the Gibson County Fairgrounds in Princeton, Ind.

"It used to take forever waiting for girls to get information, fill out slips and make carbon copies."

So Fritz sought former pro dirt track racer Terry Ferguson's computer expertise to ensure today's racing goes smoothly — from signing the riders in to paying them at the end of the day.

Fritz has no doubt the proceedings will run like clockwork. The race has already been enacted, over and over again.

"Terry built a mock race into the computer with 150 riders,"

Fritz says races today are performed to perfection. "It's trials, heat races, endurance races, and annual events. Success is the key in the motorsports, the track



Jay Stockman
Sunday staff reporter

"Before, fans used to complain that they saw more of water trucks than race cars," Fritz said. "Only about 1/3 of the track could be watered at a time."

A truck weighing 50 tons and carrying 30 tons of water will service today's race. The huge vehicle requires special permits and a police escort to move it down the highway.

"It can literally water the grandstand, infield grass and race track all at the same time," Fritz said. "If it malfunctioned, we would have mud drags instead of dirt racing."

the sport is one reason dirt track racing isn't nearly as popular as it once was in Southern Indiana. Costs are a primary reason.

"In 1980, the 750's cost \$6,500 out of the showroom and those were without brakes," Fritz said. "Once you bought one, you had to find a tuner, then pay another \$1,500 to \$4,000 to have him go over it."

In addition, there are license fees, race entry money and equipment costs. Helmets, for instance, cost about \$200 and according to the rules must be purchased every two years.

With straightaway speeds of about 100 miles an hour and only two wheels separating drivers from tragedy, racing such as what will be exhibited in Princeton today is among the most dangerous ventures going.

Safety considerations, combined with overabundant travel time, makes motorcycle racing a sport for the young. The average

Tired of watching the water truck make more laps around the track than the bikes? If so, take in the September 2 AMA Regional Championship Dirt Track Series and Indiana State Championship half mile races in Princeton, Indiana, because the truck shown above is what will be used to water the track. It weighs over 50 tons, carries 7,500 gallons of water, sprays water in any direction, and must have special permits and a police escort when moved from its strip coal mine base to the race track. Driver Gary Eads, seen here standing by one of the front wheels, said, "It can wash the grandstands, water the infield grass and the track all at the same time!"

