

Be Nice at the Races

By Steve Jonas

Why am I talking about being nice at the races, you might ask? Shouldn't we try to be nice all the time? Well yes, we should, although I don't know anyone, including yours truly, who succeeds in that endeavor. But the races are a special place for those of us in the sport. We train hard to get to them and we do want to have a good day when we get there. "Good day" is defined differently for each of us, but one of the great things about our sport is that it is open to so many definitions of that word. As my regular readers know, being there and finishing happily and healthily is my own principal goal. On any given Saturday or Sunday, in addition to my training, being nice, or at least trying to be, does help me to achieve it.

But this column is not about us. It's about all of those folks who make it possible for us to be there to try to achieve our goals, whatever they may be. And it's about our fellow racers too, for it's all of us together who make the day special. And so we come to being nice. Why? Well first of all, doing so will help to make us feel better and feel better about ourselves, which will necessarily increase our chances of reaching our goal(s) for the day. But second of all, there is that whole bunch of folks around the transition area and out on the course without whom we wouldn't, and in some cases couldn't, be there. Those are the volunteers, the race officials, the race organizers, and the law enforcement folks. And there are the spectators, too.

There are two ways that you can show your appreciation to any or all of them. One is by saying thank you as many times as you can. Because I am usually going relatively slowly out on the course I really do try to do this, especially to the law enforcement folks controlling traffic for us and our safety, and of course to the volunteers. But then there are the faster folks who are going to be focused on, yes, going fast(er). They should be focused primarily on the course and their fellow competitors. I for one would not expect you to be distributing thank yous as you go around the course. But one can still be nice.

Now that's pretty easy if things are going well, but it's especially important when they are perhaps not going so well. Even if the "not so well" is a support person's fault, try not to yell or scream and especially don't curse. Everyone is trying hard, including the support people. They are doing their job just so that we can go out there and have fun. If there is a problem, report it, but always with a mind about how doing so can make things better the next time around. Anger gets neither you nor the rest of us anywhere. Complain nicely and you will have a much better chance of getting things improved.

In addition there are our fellow competitors. In the heat of competition, some racers do strange things; they do inconsiderate things; they do unsafe things. And yes, in the heat of the moment if you are on the receiving end of such an action, you might not feel like being nice about it. But if we get into one of those situations,



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we can always try.

As for spectators, two points. A) They are there to enjoy themselves, too. B) You never know which one of them might be critical in making sure that that day's race gets the permits it needs to be run again next year. So all around, I suggest being nice, for your own well-being and for our sport.

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