



Celebrate!

CALVMX HELPS CELEBRATE WOMEN'S MOTOCROSS WITH A REUNION, RACING AND A RECEPTION AT GLEN HELEN RACEWAY

BY JEAN TURNER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DENNIS COX AND TURNER

Women motocrossers of the past, present and future gathered at Glen Helen Raceway on September 6 for an historic celebration – 40 years of women's motocross. Organized by Miki Keller and Tami Rice Greenhill, the event was presented by the CALVMX/AHRMA series, and the crew graciously hosted over a dozen classes for women racers.

Though the current state of women's motocross is in shambles, some of the fastest girls ever to throw a leg over a bike gathered from around the world to celebrate the 40th anniversary of women's motocross, resulting in so many entrants that the track actually ran short on transponders for the event.

FIM Women's Motocross World Champion Steffi Laier made the long trek from Germany to be at the 40th Anniversary of Women's MX event.



Despite a tip-over in the first moto, Sayaka Kaneshiro topped the Women's Pro class at the 40th Anniversary of Women's Motocross Celebration that was held at Glen Helen Raceway.

40TH ANNIVERSARY OF WOMEN'S MOTOCROSS CELEBRATION

“We were thrilled to have so many girls show up to race today,” said event coordinator and former head of the Women’s Motocross Association, Miki Keller. “There have been so many amazing women throughout the history of motocross, and we’re excited to host this reunion, see so many faces and of course, do some racing.”

The icon of women’s racing,

Sue Fish, was the honored guest of the reunion. The former women’s World Motocross Champion, two-time National Champion and Superbowl of Motocross Champion confessed that she doesn’t ride motocross anymore, but didn’t hesitate at the chance to be part of the 40-year reunion.

“I feel incredibly honored,” Fish commented. “I’m grateful that I was able to be in the sport when

it very first began. It’s amazing to come here and see all these past champions and everybody from the old times. It’s like no time ever went by. It’s been a really, really cool event.”

RIDING

Fish, like many of the past champions and icons, came to enjoy the event without lining up for a race herself, but still had a



(Above) Lady motocrossers pose for a group photo following the riders meeting. (Above right) (Left to right) Sue Fish, Jolene Van Vugt and Sayaka Kaneshiro enjoy some laughs during the autograph session.



chance to take to the track during the champions parade lap and open practice session.

"It was a fun chance to see a lot of past champions out on the track, along with a lot of current pros and racers," said Keller.

The parade lap and open ride session included notable motocrossers such as former National Champions Mercedes Gonzales, Dede Cates, Dee Wood and Tania Satchwell. Jolene Van Vugt, of Nitro Circus infamy, took time out of a busy filming schedule to come all the way from Maryland for the event.

"I'm so stoked I got to ride with some amazing trailblazers and champions today," said Van Vugt, who was presented with an award for "Stand Out Career" at the event. "I didn't make a big name for myself in racing, and I wasn't on the podium like most of these girls, but it's because of these amazing women and trailblazers that I'm able to make a living on a dirt bike today. I'm truly honored to be recognized for this!"

The course for the women's open ride session was originally re-routed to exclude the infamous hills of Glen Helen, but the ribbon blocking the first uphill was promptly taken down when Sue Fish rode through it on the first lap.

"I'm like, 'What do you mean I have to turn?'" Fish said with a laugh. "I got a drive outta the corner and was like, 'What?'"

"I loved it, though. I had a blast today in practice. It was like it came right back for a while... for about a minute and then I was like, 'What am I doing?!'"

Some former champions took the opportunity to dust off the boots and get back on the track, like Carey Steiner, who hadn't raced in decades, but soon found herself leading the first moto of the open intermediate class.

RACING

Racers and fans alike were excited to see FIM Women's Motocross World Champion Steffi Laier take to Glen Helen Race-

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(Left) Honored guest Sue Fish gives a speech at the award ceremony. The "Flying Fish" talked about her career in women's racing, competing against the men and being a pioneer of motocross. (Below) Womens motocross champions Tania Satchwell (left), Dee Wood (center) and Kristy Shealy (right).

way at the 40th Anniversary of Women's Motocross event. Laier, who made the long trek from Germany to be a part of the historic event, squared off against former factory Honda rider and WMX star Sayaka Kaneshiro in the Women's Pro class.

The two started a battle in the first moto when they immediately pulled away from the pack, but it was short lived as Kaneshiro went down in a sandy turn on the first lap. Laier went on to take the first moto win ahead of Kaneshiro, with Honda-mounted Lauren Woods in third.

It looked as though Laier was headed toward the overall win, but Kaneshiro soon reminded everyone that Glen Helen is her home turf. Sayaka battled Laier – and the excruciating late afternoon heat – in the second moto, coming away with the overall win. The German World Champion had a good ride, but admitted that the near 100-degree temperatures were a bit



much for her.

Birgit Schelkle traded in a 5-4 score to capture the final podium position, followed by Tiana Falls (4-5) and Shelby Ward (7-3).

HONORS

At the reception following the races, the "Flying Fish" was the honored speaker, giving a quick rundown of her career, including some amusing highlights. She spoke of a brief "free-style" opportunity she enjoyed in Australia at the invite of Evel Knievel, and recalled a story of

Evel slapping his son, Robby, in the face for being "too close" to Fish in the air during their jumps.

Fish also talked about her life post-motocross, and earning a silver medal in World Championship downhill mountain biking. The "Flying Fish" ended her speech and summed up the day by remarking that, "It still has the same fire that we all had back then. The athlete inside of us never goes away." **CN**

