

History of The Rock Island Grand Prix

-- 2021: Racing featured introduction of new King of The Rock pro classes for Briggs & Stratton 206 and 100cc competitors won by Michael Dittmer of Davenport, Iowa and Race Liberante of Sewickley, Pa. Meanwhile, Andrew Budjoso of Girard, Ohio became the latest winner of the coveted King of The Streets shifter crown. Tony Neilson of Delmar, Iowa, added to his collection of Rock trophies with 2 wins, bringing his total career victories to 22.

--2020: Race was not held due to restrictions caused by COVID 19 epidemic

--2019: The race featured the return of all-time Rock Island winner Gary Lawson who was challenged by his closest rival in all-time wins, Tony Neilson. Both pilots won 3 races. Meanwhile Evan Stamer won twice and Race Liberante from Pennsylvania won both the King of the Streets and Open Shifter races.

-- 2018: The domination of Tony Nelson and Cal Stewart is thwarted by drivers winning their first Rocks – and several winning two. Maryland's Rory Van De Steur made a statement winning both the King of the Streets race and the 125cc Open Shifter battle. Bermuda's Scott "Skitchy" Barnes won his second Rock in Margay Ignite Senior to become the 12th foreign driver to win at Rock Island. Quad-Cities area driver Morgan Schuler captured the two Yamaha Super Can races. Quincy native Riley Scott also notched two wins, including one over his father. The elder Scott won the Briggs & Stratton 206 Masters race, marking the second time a father-son duo had won at Rock Island. The three Vintage classes were won by Dave Fisher (Open), Shawn Welte (Sportsman) and Ken Wooldridge (Mac).

-- 2017: Tony Neilson and Cal Stewart each won three races, but their shared success came at each other's expense while running together in six classes. Austin Wilkins also won twice, claiming the wins in King of the Streets and 125cc Open Shifter 2. Also joining the list of champions were Peter in Ignite Masters, Spike Kohlbecker in Ignite Junior, and Jordan Bernloehr in Ignite Senior. Others included Tim Goettsch in Yamaha Medium, Anthony Honeywell in TAG Masters, Joe Ruch in 80cc Shifter and in vintage classes Kirk Gustafson, Josh Fisher and Tom Day. Jordon Musser won 125cc Masters to add to his Grand Prix win total.

-- 2016: Ideal weather contributed to a fast track and large spectator turnout, which was also encouraged by the promotional package offered by new naming rights sponsor Mediacom. Last year's six-win performance by Tony Neilson was followed up by a five-win fist full by Cal Stewart while Josh Lane and Remo Ruscitti each collected two wins. Lap speed records fell left and right including the 10 year-old record for the fastest lap ever run on the track set by Kyle Wiegand in 2006. It was broken by three drivers in the Jim Murley Memorial King of the Streets race. The new track mark was set by Texan Austin Wilkins (Sodi/stock Honda/MG) with a 31.084.

-- 2015: Delmar, Iowa's Tony Neilson won a single-session record six events, surpassing five wins by Jason Birdsell in 1998. The wins pushed him to 12 career wins at Rock Island, second only to Gary Lawson with 25. Adding to their Grand Prix career victory totals were Bettendorf's Tim Goettsch in Yamaha Heavy 1, Rock Island's Brandon Cather in Vintage, Chicagoan Josh Lane who claimed the King of the Streets Open Shifter. First-time winners were Boston's Jason Alden in 125cc Masters, Iowa's Matt Pewe in 4-Cycle Clone Heavy, Oklahoma's Anthony

Honeywell in TAG Masters, Florida's Jeremy Remick in the Margay Ignite Shootout and British Columbia's Scott Hargrove in TAG Senior.

-- 2014: It was a big year for local drivers. Michael Dittmer and Tony Neilson each won a pair of races as local competitors won six of the 13 races. Tim Goettsch and Shane Wells also won. Wells was the 14th local racer to win in The District. "There's a lot of hometown pride here," Neilson said after winning a race for the third straight year and boosting his career victory total at the event to six. "It's not any different than high school football games. You want to win at home. You want to win in front of your friends and family."

-- 2013: Ohio's Gary Lawson won all four of his races in record-setting fashion Lawson now owns 25 career victories --14 more than anybody else. Lance and Josh Lane became the first father-son pair to win on the same Sunday. Lance, the 48-year-old father, defended his title in the 125cc Shifter Masters. Josh, the 25-year-old son claimed the 125cc Shifter title. Jordan Musser repeated in the King of the Streets. A pair of local racers also picked up victories in the Super Can classes. A month after serving as the best man in Michael Dittmer's wedding, Tony Neilson joined him in the winner's circle. Caleb Loniewski and Brian McHattie defended titles in the 2-Cycle Pro Open and TAG Masters, respectively. Canadian Cory Cacciavillani (TAG Senior) and Killian Keaveny (TAG Junior) won races for the second straight year.

-- 2012: Nine first-time winners delivered an impactful performance, accounting for feature wins in 11 of 15 racing classes. Connor Lund and Mason Chelootz came within an eyelash of joining the Grand Prix's short list of competitors winning three or more races in the same year. Canadian Cory Cacciavillani became a first-time winner and the ninth foreign-born driver to win at the local Labor Day Weekend tradition. Four former champs also held off youngsters for wins -- Jordon Musser in King of the Streets, Caleb Loniewski in 2-Cycle Pro Open, Brian McHattie in TAG Masters and Tony Neilson in Komet Senior.

-- 2011: Heavy Saturday afternoon rain pushed qualifying to Sunday morning. Entries were up about 20 percent over the previous year. Michael Giessen won the new 2-cycle Pro Open class and Derek Crockett became the new King of the Streets. Gary Lawson ran his impressive list of Rock Island wins to 22 in Yamaha Super Can Heavy and Sam Beasley doubled up with wins in TAG Senior and Rotax Senior. Logan Bearden and Chase Jones won the junior classes with Kurt Mathewson and John Dixon taking Masters wins. Five new class lap speed records were set.

-- 2010: Great weekend of racing highlighted by no red flags. Improved safety was attributed to incorporation of Scribner barrier system into the track design. Entries rebounded slightly with 239 running in 15 classes. Kyle Wiegand once again won the King of the Streets race and the North American Street Championship. Gary Lawson added 4 more wins to his historic total. Alec Udell won both junior classes and Phil DeLaO won twice in Leopard and Rotax.

-- 2009: The sagging economy gave the sport and the Grand Prix a huge hit as only 222 racers turned out, but that didn't stop the great racing. Gary Lawson built on his record-setting win total by taking four wins, only having to give two back after technical DQs. Michele Bumgarner repeated as winner of TAG Senior. In the first running of King of the Streets as a stock moto class, Texan Jordon Musser brought home The Rock. Wins by Bumgarner and Canadian Justin

de Sa in Rotax Senior ran the total wins by foreign-born drivers to eight in the history of the event. Junior racing returned with Sam Beasley winning the Tom Argy Junior Sportsman race and Austin Self winning TAG Junior.

-- 2008: The Philippines' Michele Bumgarner became the first female driver to win at the Rock Island Grand Prix, winning the TAG Senior race. Californian Alex Speed won the coveted King of the Streets crown to take home \$4,000 and Kyle Wiegand won \$4,000 in the ICC North American Street Championship. Iowa's Johnny Johnson won the TAG SuperPro class and Steve Kilsdonk survived some on-track accidents to win the 4-cycle Rumble at The Rock race. Derek Crockett won the 125cc stock moto race after Poland-born Chicago driver Voytek Burdzy led early but faded at the end.

-- 2007: Ohio's Gary Lawson became the all-time winningest driver at the Rock Island Grand Prix, pushing past Illinois' Jason Birdsell with a pair of victories. However, Lawson's chances to add to those 12 career victories fell prey to lapped traffic in a pair of races he started on the pole and a costly disqualification in another class he led on the last lap. Lawson was DQ'd in the \$2,000-to-win Rumble at The Rock, after getting tied up while blocking a pass by Indiana's Taylor Moore. The day's big money winners were Arizona's Alan Rudolph (his fifth King of the Streets) and Indiana's Kyle Wiegand (ICC North American Street Championship), who each earned \$4,000 for their victories. Poland's Voytek Burdzy (125cc Masters) pushed the number of foreign-born winners to six.

-- 2006: Gary Lawson won multiple races in his fourth straight trip to The District, moving within a victory of the Rock Island Grand Prix's career win mark. Travis DeVriendt and Tony Neilson also pushed the event's list of all-time local winners to 10. Indiana's Kyle Wiegand lowered his track record in the Intercontinental C race with a fast lap of 31.176 seconds. England's Martin Pierce won the TAG Senior race for Wildkart. Alan Rudolph reclaimed the King of the Streets title. Fast-lap records were set in five classes before rain slowed times, even delaying the Junior Sportsman race for an hour.

-- 2005: Despite an event-high 411 entrants, Gary Lawson won three races for the second time. Mike Welsh is the only other Grand Prix competitor to ever win three or more races two separate years. Kyle Wiegand and Pennsylvania's Billy Dickson also won twice. Wiegand repeated as the King of the Streets and lowered his day-old track record in two classes. A 31.406-second lap in the Intercontinental C trumped his fastest run in the King, marking the first time the event's signature race did not own the course mark. Only one of the 15 racing classes didn't set a lap record in Sunday features, as 92 drivers flew by their event standards, set just a day earlier in time-trial qualifying.

-- 2004: Terry Riggins was hired as race director after Tom Argy Jr. was tragically killed in an auto accident in November 2003. Using what was called the greatest comeback in event history, Mike Welsh capped his second three-win performance in his hometown event. The pole-sitting Welsh rebounded from a horrible start in the last race of the day, erasing a 3.5-second deficit in the final eight laps to win the Yamaha Medium class. In all, a record 11 polesitters won races on a weekend when the event's all-time number of entrants was tied at 391.

-- 2003: The tiny town of Mentor, Ohio, accounted for four of the 15 victories in Gary Lawson (3 wins) and protege Ritchie Kuhn (junior champ). Lawson almost won a fourth race in the rain but finished second after a spinout ruined a late lead.

-- 2002: Frenchman Nelson Phillippe became just the second foreign winner in event history. Overall, 10 first-time Rock Island winners came from an event-high 391 entrants and 254 drivers.

-- 2001: A not-for-profit corporation was organized to take over the races in partnership with The District. Rudolph was again The King of the Streets. The star-studded victory list included fellow former multiple-race champions such as Iowans Mike Welsh and Scott Evans and Illinoisans Jason Birdsell and Todd Bolton.

-- 2000: Mike Welsh joined Jason Birdsell and Eric Jones as the only Rock Island champs to win more than two races in the same year. Coupled with the junior-class championship by fellow Davenport Iowa resident Michael Dittmer, Welsh's three wins helped double the hometown title-take in the event.

-- 1999: With no red flags flying for the first time in event history, Illinoisans Todd Bolton and Dan Schmalshof each kartered away a pair of titles.

-- 1998: Jason Birdsell won a Rock Island record five races in one day and came close to winning all nine of the events he entered. Taylor Ridge, Illinois' Andy Cook and Rock Island's Travis Porter also were winners.

-- 1997: A midsummer cancellation of the races was forced by legal liability issues raised in a lawsuit stemming from the accident-marred 1995 event. The District assumed control in a race reorganization.

-- 1996: Tom Argy Jr. was hired as race director. Eric Jones claimed four races, and Davenport's Brian Harris and Bettendorf's Brandon Powell became the first QC drivers to gain first-place money, each benefiting from one of eight accidents in the finals.

-- 1995: Two tandems of siblings dominated the accident-marred action, with Indiana's Brent and Brian Smith, and Kentucky's Jarrod and Jeremy Whitley, combining to win five of the 14 races. Four red flags before the end of three races forced a driver's meeting and the installation of several emergency safety measures.

-- 1994: A cold, hard rain marked the event's maiden voyage. Such notable names as Alan Rudolph, Eric Jones and Scott Evans each won twice.

-- 1993: Tom Ott and Mike Berg were behind a push to bring a karting street race to the Quad-Cities. However, plans for The Rock Island Argus newspaper to partner with Gus Traeder's Quincy-based Professional Karting Association on a Labor Day race were put on hold by the Great Flood of 1993.