



ON TRACK

By Ryan Dungey

Suzuki's Ryan Dungey breaks down the strategies in preparing and racing in a Monster Energy® Supercross race:

Walking down the tunnel, I'm ready and focused. The adrenaline starts flowing once the official signals the bikes to the line. A lot of things go into picking my starting position on the gate and it's crucial because I want to get off to a good start. As I push my bike into the gate, I start putting the track together (the layout and the timing of jumps). I know that week in and week out I've done everything possible to prepare for this moment. When the gate drops, I want to win the holeshot.

When the gate does drop, I want to get the full amount of power from the bike, so I will shift gears when the engine's RPMs reach the sweet spot. Your thoughts are on technique, timing and the right amount of clutch control.

Coming into the first turn there are 19 other riders vying for the holeshot. I make sure that I protect myself on the inside so that nobody can creep under and take my front wheel out. I also have a better chance to get away from any other crashes that take place in the first turn.

The first lap is very important because everyone is still pretty bunched up, so I am very aware of what is going on around me. Not only am I subject to making a mistake, the other riders can make a mistake and ruin the race for you. If I can get out front and open a lead, it's easier for me to flow with the track.

On each lap, there are multiple sequences that come into play for all sections of the track, such as: shifting gears, setting up for an obstacle, carrying momentum, throttle control and good technique. Before I get to each section I am thinking about it in the section prior.

1 In the **RHYTHM SECTION** after the start straight, I would stay to the outside and try to land on top of the table-top jump (the third jump in). I would then pre-load my suspension off the table top jump to bounce over the next single jump so I could double the next set.

2 Then I would seat bounce to triple jump into the turn (down shifting to second entering the turn). I would **TRIPLE-TRIPLE** the next section after seat bouncing out of the turn (hitting third gear in the air).

3 Going through the **WHOOPS**, I want to go through the 180-degree turn in third gear. As I hit the apex of the turn I shift into fourth gear. As the whoops approach I want to get my bike as straight as possible so that when I hit them there is no side movement as I go through. While riding through the whoops, I stand up, keep the front end of my bike light and transfer a little more weight to the rear so that I gain traction and momentum off each whoop. I concentrate on hitting every whoop with my front tire which keeps the bike balanced. I think of keeping my body as still as possible and letting the bike do all the work.

4 I doubled into the **LEFT-HAND CORNER** after the whoops. I would gain as much speed as I could across the start straight (all in second gear).

5 I would approach the next section to the inside standing, soaking up the first single jump with my legs to keep the bike on the ground. I then double the next set of jumps and click into third gear to gain momentum to clear the **65' TRIPLE JUMP**. I'd land off the triple and approach a set of small, high-speed rollers, which I would blitz through.

6 I would let the bike rock beneath me while using my front and rear brakes simultaneously to slow down and set up the next left-hand turn, which is a **LARGE BERM**. I would go through the left-hand turn in second gear.

7 I would land on the downside of the second jump to carry momentum off the next single where I'd jump onto the **TABLE TOP**. I'd use my momentum and pre-load suspension to get off the table top. As I do so I gas and clutch the bike to get that extra burst of speed to carry me over the next single and into the turn.

8 I stay in the same gear (third gear) around the turn repeating the sequence of jumping on and off the table-top jump then singling into the right-handed, 90-degree turn that leads to the **FINISH-LINE JUMP**.

While the AMA Supercross and AMA Supercross Lites class bikes look alike aside from their number plates (the Lites class display white numbers on a black background), there are some major differences between the two machines. Because the 450cc bike (shown below) produces close to 15 more horsepower power than the 250cc bike, heavier materials are used to construct the 450cc machine. If the bike is made up of lighter materials the increased power would tear it apart, hence a 450 weighs more to help handle the power it produces. The roughly 20-lb weight difference between the bikes is enough to support that massive horsepower that the brute 450cc puts out.



Track illustration: MIKE FISHER
Photo: FRANK HOPPEN