



Ashley Fiolek

1990-Present



Early Life



- Ashley was born Deaf in Dearborn, Michigan, but she spent most of her childhood in Florida.
 - While growing up, she tried everything from ballet to basketball, track and field to waterskiing, dirt-biking, and, her later claim to fame, motocross (cross country racing on motorcycles).
- Ashley attended the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind, but later transitioned into homeschooling.
 - After becoming homeschooled, she spent a significant amount of time learning motocross, and her dad even built a backyard course for Fiolek with a variety of turns, jumps and other obstacles.

Working Her Way Up

- Ashley started traveling the country for competitions, and by seventeen she turned pro, and won her first championship when she was eighteen.
- By the time she was twenty-one, Fiolek had won the Women's Motocross Championship three times.
 - Even though she was a big competitor, Fiolek wanted the male-dominated competition to know who they were racing against. In order to make sure they knew, she dyed her hair pink.



Big Connections with Big Corporations

- Ashley had a reputation for being a smooth, speedy rider, and because of that big corporations noticed.
 - Fiolek was the first female appointed to what is called a “full factory ride.” She was a part of the Honda Red Bull Racing Team.
- Ashley is best known to many as the star of an Emmy Award Winning Red Bull commercials.
 - The camera shows an unidentified racer zipping around the course, and it ends with Ashley pulling off her helmet and saying “Welcome to my world. The world of Red Bull” in American Sign Language. It was a shock that the rider was a female to most viewers, but the fact that she was Deaf was an even bigger surprise.



[Watch Ashley Fiolek's Red Bull Commercial Here!](#)

A Deaf Motocross Racer?



- While her Deafness presented some unique challenges, Ashley learned how to work around those struggles.
 - Because Motocross is a sport that the athletes tend to rely on sound, Ashley had to learn how to feel the bike. Her dad proposed mounting flashing lights on her bike to help her by signaling when to shift, but instead she trained herself by tuning into vibrations and learned how to recognize the right buzz for the right shift.
 - Ashley also learned how to track the movements of the other bikers during competitions, learning when to take peeks and watched the shadows.
- Ashley has expressed that her being Deaf allows her to get into a zone and become one with her bike without the usual loud distractions.

Breaking Bone and Making Records

- Even with all of her adjustments, motocross is a dangerous sport. Ashley has suffered: a broken left wrist and arm, broken right wrist and ankle, a broken nose, smashed teeth and three broken collarbones.
- Even with all of these injuries, Ashley still managed to make a huge impact on the motocross course. She was the first Deaf professional racer on the women's circuit, the first Deaf National winner and first Deaf WMX National Champion, she is literally and figuratively breaking ground.



Creating her own Track



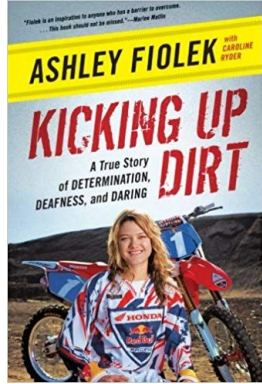
- Ashley wasn't satisfied with her success on the track, and decided that she wanted to help open the track up to other women. Ashley felt that it was more difficult begin a female in motocross than being Deaf, and it was the lack of support that led her to leave the circuit.
 - Since she left, she has started the Women's MX Schools, training girls in the hopes that they'll get more exposure and that things could change.
- Even after leaving the circuit, Ashley couldn't stand to sit still, and now she likes to Jet Ski, snowboard, ride pole position cars, or do *"anything crazy"* in her free time.



Kicking Up Dirt

- Ashley has also had many accomplishments in print as well.
 - Fiolek co-wrote a book called Kicking Up Dirt
 - She was the only female motocross racer to be featured on the cover of *Transworld Motocross Magazine*, and has also been featured in *Vogue*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *Rolling Stone*.
- When Ashley was asked what advice she would give to other women interested in motocross, she replied with a quote that sums up her life:

“Keep working hard and reach your own dreams. Hard work pays off. Most important is to have fun while you’re working hard to reach your dream.”



Sources

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