

#82 JUNE 2020



MIKKEL HAARUP

A STAR ON THE RISE



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JASIKONIS



PAULS
JONASS



WORLD POWER

JED
BEATON



KAY
DE WOLF



THOMAS
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Photos: MXGP

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WINNING STARTS HERE

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David Luongo
CEO of Infront Moto Racing

Dear MXGP Friends,

First of all I hope all of you and your family, beloved and friends are in good health.

It looks like that slowly we are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. The last days have been positive in many countries especially in Europe, where the new Covid19 cases are going down drastically. Some countries have already decided to slowly re-open their industries, restaurants and public areas with some restrictions, but it is very promising for the upcoming months. We all hope that the worst is behind us now.

On top of that, the beginning of summertime will see the opening of the beaches, lakes and seaside areas, and the next step should be to allow public events to take place again. MXGP should follow the same dynamic and we are still very confident to be able to run the championship from August. For sure the most important thing is to be able to travel, organize and host safely all the MXGP family and fans at the different Grand Prix.

WE ARE GETTING CLOSER TO THE NEW BEGINNING AND WE WILL ALL BE READY TO START OUR ENGINES!

As you have probably read in the MX press, Infront Moto Racing and the FIM are working closely to possibly adjust some regulations exceptionally for 2020 season. One of them is related to the Grand Prix program during the weekend. For European situated Grand Prix only, the MX2 and MXGP program will be delivered only for Sunday, which means that Free Practice, Time Practice and Races will take place on 1 day. The fans coming for the weekend will not miss races on Saturday, as the whole Saturday program will be dedicated to the European classes or the WMX classes. All the races from all the categories will be live on MXGP-TV.com as usual. Those changes will help the teams, mechanics and staff to have more time to work on the bike between the GP, as we will

face some back to back racing weekend for some weeks. This change is not valid for overseas GP as we don't have European classes.

Regarding the biggest and most important event of the season, the Monster Energy Motocross of Nations in Ernée – France, the preparations are going ahead, the organizer published some beautiful pictures regarding some changes made on the track and we can be sure that everything will be done to host in the best way possible the MX fans from the world. We are in discussion with FIM to adapt the regulations for 2020 season to assure a great show! More will come in the coming weeks about the changes.

Finally, on our social media networks you can find the latest news regarding MXGP, but also a lot of nice videos about the current training programs of the riders, some archives of the past Grand Prix and our weekly MXGP Studio show from home.

We are getting closer to the new beginning and we will all be ready to start our engines!

COOL SHOTS





FINISH



X-PROX X-PROX

BINSON BINSON

SCUIT

Collsport

PARTSPARTS EUROPE

PARTSPARTS EUROPE

PPF

metax metax metax

MONSTER MONSTER

MΦN R

MONSTER MONSTER



COOL SHOTS





COOL SHOTS

IPONE



PONE



RACING CATCH UP



Photo: Rick Heusschen



**KEEPING FIT IN
LOCKDOWN**



MOTOCROSS RIDERS ARE ATHLETES, IN FACT WORLD-CLASS ATHLETES AND AS CAN BE EXPECTED SUCH ATHLETES TRAIN FOR A LIVING. BY NOW WE WOULD HAVE BEEN IN THE MIDST OF THE 2020 FIM MOTOCROSS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON, BUT UNFORTUNATELY, WE HAVE ALL BEEN AFFECTED BY THE GLOBAL COVID-19 PANDEMIC. NOT MUCH EXPLANATION IS NEEDED AS WE ARE ALL VERY MUCH FAMILIAR WITH THE SITUATION, BUT MANY COUNTRIES ALL OVER THE WORLD HAVE BEEN IN FULL LOCKDOWN, MEANING THAT NO SPORTING EVENTS HAVE BEEN PERMITTED WHATSOEVER, AS A RESULT THIS HAS PUT THE MXGP SEASON ON HOLD.

While racing has not been taking place since round two in Valkenswaard, the Netherlands earlier in March, this doesn't mean that the riders have been sat at home doing nothing, although the occasional day on the sofa watching Netflix hasn't hurt anyone... In fact for most riders, training has remained a constant minus the riding of course as many tracks all over Europe were closed. Now though it seems like there's a glimpse of light at the end of the tunnel, as quite a few of the riders have been able to get back out on their bikes and start working towards the rest of the season.

This period has been an adjustment for us all, who have been so used to the constant



travelling and seeing our racing family almost every weekend, not only that but this has also been an adjustment on how the GP riders have conducted their training sessions. Restriction rules have been more severe in some countries than others, for example in Holland the public were able to go outside and do their daily exercise, whereas in places like Italy nobody was allowed to leave their homes for anything other than food and medicine.

To get an insight on what the world's fastest riders have been up to in the past few months, we caught up with a few of them, including their coaches and team managers to get some insider information on how they have been keeping fit!

F&H Kawasaki Racing

With roughly three months of no racing, you could say that the past few months could have been considered as an off-season 2.0 but speaking to F&H Kawasaki Racing's team coach and former GP rider Marc de Reuver he said that is not quite the case...

"No, we didn't do a complete off-season, you know, it's better just to keep going a little bit, the physical endurance we can make even better now cause normally we stop in September and then you have some test work, then 4 weeks off and you start with the winter training, but you also start quite soon with bike training and then the endurance training is a little bit less, but it's full endurance training for the guys and it was good and I think the guys will be in even better shape when we come back".

Of course, with a long period of no races, or riding for that matter due to lockdown restrictions, changes have been made to training routines in order to

accommodate these special circumstances says Marc.

"We changed the training program a little bit because in the winter you have long endurance training with low heart beat and of course we are already in the season, so we already changed to the intervals and more intense training, so now we switched back to long endurance and low heart beat and that's what we have been doing, it was a little bit of a change but that's what we had to. It went very good, so overall very positive".

During the period when the team riders Roan Van De Moosdijk, Mikkel Haarup and Mathys Boisrame were not able to get out on their bikes, they'd spend four days a week at the team base in Holland, working in the team gym alongside their physical fitness coach, to make sure they can continue with some form of training. But with no exact date of return (due to global progress of the pandemic) it has been tough says Marc, as it's hard to put together a training plan without exact dates.

"You need to be very cautious. You cannot train full gas because the number of GPs is uncertain for the moment and the guys need to be fit until the end of the year, so we can't blow them up, so yeah that's a big part, we changed some things like I said, but now we have everything under control. That's a very difficult situation that we're in, but I try to keep them as straight on the road as possible and that's working just fine and the thing is everybody is in the same boat so that doesn't make me so nervous, if other people are training, then you get nervous, but no, I'm ok".

Monster Energy Yamaha Factory Racing

Meanwhile the Monster Energy Yamaha Factory MXGP riders Jeremy Seewer, Arnaud Tonus and Gautier Paulin have been in their home countries, Switzerland and France, adhering to the social distancing and quarantine rules.

For Seewer this has meant getting creative with his fitness at home he says...

"I have been training most of the time in Switzerland, so a lot of cycling, a lot of running and I made a gym at home so that I could maximise everything that I had around the house so that I could mix up my training with circuits and intervals and stuff like that. I did a lot of mountain biking in the mountains and climbing up mountains with the bicycle, so that I could go down afterwards. Many road cycling tours in the mountains, too" revealed Jeremy.

"I have trained more endurance and fitness rather than the sharp intense stuff that is not needed during this time. There is nothing we can do to compensate riding, especially at GP level to be ready for the GP tracks and stuff. All I can do is keep my muscles alive with all the gym exercises. Being on the pit-bike is fun and it's good for your feeling but it is nothing like

racing and being on your Factory YZ450FM," he added.

While his teammate Arnaud Tonus has also incorporated more endurance blocks into his training program, including cycling, as well as various gym exercises. But during this period, he has also been keeping his focus and his mind sharp even when carrying out his everyday activities.

"During the lockdown I was bringing a full intensity of focus and presence into everything I was doing, whatever it was, cooking or brushing my teeth or even doing nothing but just being alert and trying to keep the attention sharp".

Meanwhile in the Monster Energy Yamaha Factory MX2 camp, riders Jago Geerts and Ben Watson have been taking the time to enjoy their training as much as possible.

"The goal now is to get my base condition a little bit better. I don't want to be in really good shape now so I can't do too much training either. I'm just keeping myself busy having fun while training. I'm doing a lot of low heart-rate training and when we know more when the season will restart, then I will start to prepare more specifically for that race," said Geerts.

Ben Watson, much like Seewer has enjoyed training from home, with a mixture of running and cycling, along with home workouts using what's available to him at home and getting creative with what's around him.

"I am trying to just enjoy doing what I love the most, making it feel easy. It can get heavy sometimes when you are following a schedule and doing intense training. With there being still some time before the season and already having a solid winter behind me, it's more trying to maintain the base and having some fun on the bike now, it is safe to do so. I've tried to mix everything up, including





Photo: Stefan Grootkens





cycling, running, home circuits and exercises with things around the house. It has been really fun actually and even though I didn't do any riding, I enjoyed every day," he shared.

"With gyms closed, it's been really fun to make some workouts at home in the garden and switch things up a little bit there. I tried to keep the fun in my training whilst I could not ride. But nothing compares to riding your bike so it's been a matter of keeping everything going and enjoying only physical training each day without our bikes!" he added.

Red Bull KTM Factory Racing

Some riders have used this time to keep up their fitness, but for Jorge Prado these past few months have been the perfect time to recover from his femur injury, sustained early on in the year.

"I have been working a lot on my left leg, the injured leg, as I didn't have time after the injury to fully recover so I used this time to work a lot on that to get it stronger and then pretty much on everything, on my fitness overall, as I didn't have much time for training because of the injury so taking this time to just get better in every way," Prado revealed.

With tracks closed in Belgium, where Prado has been spending his time during lockdown, his main forms of exercise have been cycling and general gym workouts, to help improve his physical condition and get his leg feeling stronger.

And he hasn't been alone in this, with his new fitness coaches Carlos Coloma, a Spanish mountain biker and Olympic medallist, along with his coach Mikel Zabala, who will also be helping Prado this upcoming season.

"Yes I have new fitness coaches Coloma and Zabala, who have been helping me a lot in this time, especially on getting my left leg stronger, and then also I was having some troubles with the knee so I also tried to make this knee

get better and I'm happy, I am improving in every way so I am really looking forward to riding as soon as possible when the leg is recovered, so we are heading in a good direction".

Meanwhile his more experienced teammate, the 9-time Motocross World Champion Antonio Cairoli has also been taking this time to let his old injuries get better and working on his fitness from the comfort of his own home gym.

"Doing workouts at home and of course a little bit cycling inside and running on the treadmill when it was not possible to go outside because in Italy was one of the worst hit countries. Of course, I tried to do as much as possible but it's not the same when you ride or cycle outside or go running," said Cairoli.

Some teams and even riders themselves are fortunate enough to have their very own private tracks, but Cairoli did not plan to make use of these facilities, until restrictions eased, and it was safe to do so.

"A lot of tracks and everything was mostly closed, ok we have a private track as a team, I have a private track at my house but my choice not to ride was determined because of the situation in hospitals and the risk of crashing and being injured. Until the hospitals are better, like less full, then we will start again riding".

Team HRC

Team HRC's Tim Gajser and Mitch Evans have tackled the quarantine training with the help of their team trainer and therapist Filippo Camaschella, who has been working remotely with both riders to make sure they stay on track.

"It's a difficult period for everybody, in particular for the riders that they have to face this quarantine period without their bike and without a calendar because everything is in stand-by" shared Camaschella.









“During this quarantine period everybody had to change their program because they now needed to work from home. Luckily Tim has his gym at home where he can train. For sure this quarantine period gave a chance to work on some gaps in addition to maintain a good level of fitness. The training of the body has also helped the mind, keeping it always focused”.

And for Tim it's been non-stop, as he revealed in our Studio Show from Home to Paul Malin and Lisa Leyland, he spends a lot of time in his gym, at home in Slovenia, training two times a day, usually in the morning and in the afternoon. While his teammate Mitch Evans, has been working on rehabilitation of his injured shoulder which he had surgery on in April, after making the trip back home to Australia where he is currently based.

Camaschella revealed that doing LIVE workouts on social media and via FaceTime has been a great tool to keep his athletes motivated.

“Yes, it was my idea to spend this quarantine time together with professional riders in such a way as to motivate everybody to train and spend 50 minutes of training together. With the riders but especially with Mitch with the videocall we work and do exercises every day, it's a new way of working, and although I prefer to work together on site, I have to say that the remote training has also been a success” he added.

Not only working as a coach but also as the team physio, Filippo also shared the importance of looking after your body when your physio is not around.

“As I always say the biggest part of the job is made during the treatment but is also really important to work on yourself at home. Tim spends a lot of time for himself and his body, as you can notice when he rides that he has strength and flexibility. Using proper equipment like the foam roller, in my opinion, is essential, it's possible to relax the muscles of all the body alone

without the help of nobody. I think that is really important to insert in every training program a good stretching a mobility part/ side" he explained.

Rockstar Energy Husqvarna Factory Racing

Rockstar Energy Husqvarna Factory Racing MX2 squad Jed Beaton, Thomas Kjer Olsen and EMX250 rider Kay De Wolf have been tackling quarantine training much like the rest. Following Valkenswaard the team travelled to Spain in order to prepare for Argentina, which was then postponed right before Europe went into lockdown. So, as Team Manager Rasmus Jorgensen revealed, the team headed back to base in Belgium, with the exception of Olsen, who flew back to Denmark.

The last few months the team has been keeping it easy said Jorgensen "We've not been riding of course, and all the riders have been off the bike. Nobody really knew what was going to happen and it was difficult to plan anything and, so it was important to be smart in this case as well so we took away the bike riding and replaced it with physical training, a little like we do in November before returning and getting ready for the season".

Get the training done hasn't been hard for the team, with a gym facility at their base as well as being able to train outside, due to Belgium allowing outdoor exercise, keeping fit hasn't been an issue.

"We are quite lucky here in Belgium, where there has also not been any rules about not being allowed to go out or anything so we have all been able to go outside do our training, mountain biking, cycling, running whatever it might be, there was not any problems with that and in the workshop we do have a gym so for Kay and Jed it was easy to come over and do gym work here, so we have been quite fortunate let's say

compared to other countries in Europe and we've been able to do it quite easily without any big problems".

Though the riders are not the only ones who have been busy, as the mechanics have been onsite, getting bikes ready to go when the season resumes, and keeping busy has been a good way to get through this period shared Jorgensen.

"We have been trying to find work and trying to stay active in the workshop, the mechanics, getting a little bit ahead to build some race bikes so we are ready to go when we restart. The riders have done their thing and kept fit and the mechanics have tried to stay busy as much as they could, and this has been the story of this time off," he added.

Whereas the Rockstar Energy Husqvarna Factory Racing MXGP riders Arminas Jasikonis and Pauls Jonass have been keeping up their fitness in their home countries, Lithuania and Latvia, revealed Team Manager Antti Pyrhonen:

"After Valkenswaard when the corona crisis became so huge we made the decision to send the riders to their home countries with bikes and all the materials needed so both riders continued doing their normal physical workouts and they were able to do some riding as well at home which was a big benefit for them."

Speaking about keeping contact, Pyrhonen shared how helpful modern training tools have been to make sure the riders were staying on track with their fitness training, while everyone has been separated.

"We have been in contact constantly with video calls and messages and our team trainer Tomi Konttinen has also done some trainings with them via the video and monitoring them with the data he gets from the heart-rate monitor and all the modern training tools. It has been

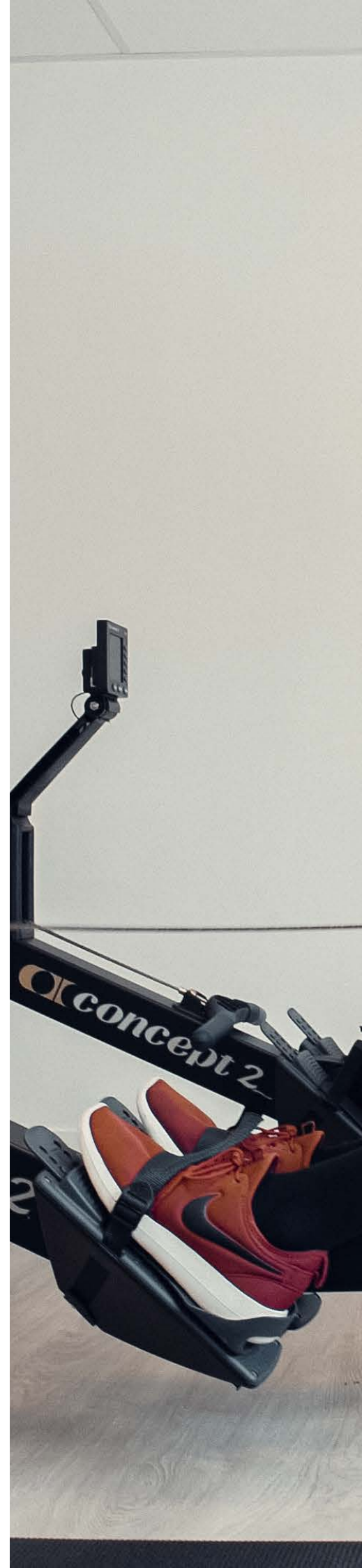




Photo: Rick Heusschen

great to see how well everyone worked together and have stayed motivated through this difficult time," he added.

But in terms of actual exercise, both Jasikonis and Jonas have spent this time doing long-distance base training, with both riders moving step-by-step towards increased intensity and more program-based riding training, in order to prepare for the races ahead.

Honda 114 Motorsports

For Honda 114 Motorsports, Team Manager Livia Lancelot had to make an important decision to send her two MX2 pilots Bailey Malkiewicz and Nathan Crawford back to their native Australia.

Talking about the decision Lancelot explained, "normally the riders are all based close to the team in the south west of France, they are normally practicing together all the time with Eric Sorby and Benjamin Benga, our mx and fitness trainer, but when the lockdown started, I prepped to send them back to Australia because when they have a routine with riding and fitness the life is pretty easy-going here but with the lockdown staying in the small apartment without family, without friends and all this I thought this was not the best option, so we sent them back to Australia and over there the lockdown was much better than in Europe so they could keep working physically, they couldn't ride but at least they can go to the gym and go cycling so it was better for them to be there".

Tackling this period has been strange for everyone, and Lancelot's Honda 114 Motorsports riders have been training like everyone, not going too hard and enjoying things that they may not usually get to.

"This period is pretty crazy because it's something completely new and also it was different in





Photo: Thibault Gastal





every country, so not all the riders could do the same thing; this was pretty hard to understand and to adapt. We chose to let them do what they can do, like some fun sports and some things they normally don't have time to do just to keep them fit without working too hard, because the problem is to stay some weeks or months without riding is like a second winter break and we have done this already once, so we chose to give them some activities just to keep the fitness on a good level without working too hard, but now that we are a bit more clear on the future, the program is getting harder to make them ready to go".

Though rules in certain countries have varied, speaking to many of the teams and riders, it is clear that for most it's been same. Gym workouts combined with some endurance-based exercises, such as cycling and running have been the main way these competitors have been keeping up their fitness levels.

Monster Energy Kawasaki Racing Team MXGP

Romain Febvre, who was able to keep fit after his knee issue, and Clement Desalle of Monster Energy Kawasaki Racing Team continued their normal training, revealed Team Manager François Lemarié: "Both riders were able to keep going training with cycling and running. Both Romain and Clement have their own gym where they have been doing their daily exercises".

Now the team have set their sights on a return to racing as Lemarié stated the team have been back on their bikes for the last couple of weeks: "We are happy that we can work again like before and we will be ready for the next GP," he added.

And Standing Construct GasGas Factory MXGP rider Glenn Coldenhoff is no different: "I didn't stop training, but I definitely do a little less. I still do one of two trainings a day depends on the day but in Holland we are still pretty lucky to be able to go outside for running or cycling. And gym work

I can do at home because I have a small gym at my place so actually to keep fit was quite easy for me," Coldenhoff shared.

"I went less with intensity because normally the season is already pretty hard with all the travelling and we have 20 races on the calendar, so yeah we definitely need to stop after the season just to recover and now it looks like we will be racing until the end of November so in my opinion I've done the right thing by taking it more easy not going more intense because I feel like you can also train as hard as you want next to the bike with cycling or gym stuff but the physical condition on the bike is different," he explained.

In the last week or so, Coldenhoff has been able to return to riding, with life slowly returning to normal for the Motocross of Nations winner. "You know this is still the feeling you live for, so there is no better feeling than riding my bike. I am really happy," he added.

Max Nagl & Kevin Brumann

MXGP rider Max Nagl has been working with EMX125 rider Kevin Brumann this season and as lockdown came into force, Nagl and Brumann made the decision to have the youngster to remain in Germany:

"We had a chat and decided that Kevin would stay at my home even if it will be for a longer period and now he's been at my home already 3 and a half months, so quite long, so he's living at my home all the time, but it's good because like this I can do the training with him every day, basically at the moment we were in the lockdown time we were training five days a week, sometimes six days, depending on how hard it was between four and five hours training a day, so we were really busy," Nagl shared.

"We knew the lockdown would be for a while so then you can train a bit different than usually

because in motocross in the season you can't train too much in the gym or on the weights because then your body and your muscles get too tired and too stiff, but now was the time to really work in the gym and luckily I have quite a big gym at my home, with all the equipment that is needed so we really didn't need to make a step back, and then when the good weather hits, we also went training outside, did a lot of cycling and endurance training" he added.

But now that restrictions have eased in Germany as well, training is basically back to normal for Nagl and Brumann, with both riders out on track two to three times a week, but taking a small step back on the intensity of their gym training, in order to give the body enough rest.

Meanwhile the defending WMX World Champion, Courtney Duncan has been spending her time a home in New Zealand, staying active making sure she is ready to go when the season resumes.

"I have been doing home workouts and running and cycling, I'm pretty lucky to have a gym set-up at my house which has helped a lot," she shared, adding "maybe a little more cardio but to be honest it was hard to know how much to do as there were no set dates for our return. I didn't follow a program as such, I just stay fit and active. I had a trainer who did TRX workouts with me via FaceTime. We did these twice a week and then other workout's I completed myself".

Having caught up with a few of the teams and riders, it seems like for most it's been the same, gym and cycling have been a popular way to remain fit while no bike time has been permitted. But with restrictions slowly being lifted all over Europe and tracks opening up, it seems like the majority of the riders are getting back to normality and their preparations for the season ahead under way.





RESULTS



MXGP CHAMP. STANDINGS

1. J. Herlings (NED, KTM) 94 p.
2. T. Gajser (SLO, HON) 85 p.
3. A. Cairoli (ITA, KTM) 68 p.
4. C. Desalle (BEL, KAW) 60 p.
5. G. Paulin (FRA, YAM) 58 p.
6. G. Coldenhoff (NED, KTM) 56 p.
7. A. Jasikonis (LTU, HUS) 53 p.
8. J. Prado (SPA, KTM) 47 p.
9. J. Seewer (SUI, YAM) 42 p.
10. J. Van Horebeek (BEL, HON) 39 p.

MX2 CHAMP. STANDINGS

1. T. Vialle (FRA, KTM) 87 p.
2. J. Geerts (BEL, YAM) 82 p.
3. J. Beaton (AUS, HUS) 74 p.
4. M. Renaux (FRA, YAM) 61 p.
5. R. Hofer (AUT, KTM) 54 p.
6. M. Haarup (DEN, KAW) 52 p.
7. T. Olsen (DEN, HUS) 51 p.
8. B. Watson (GBR, YAM) 48 p.
9. C. Mewse (GBR, KTM) 48 p.
10. J. Sydow (GER, GAS) 35 p.



MXGP MANUFACTURERS

1. KTM 94 p.
2. Honda 92 p.
3. Yamaha 66 p.
4. Kawasaki 60 p.
5. Husqvarna 56 p.
6. Gas Gas 56 p.

MX2 MANUFACTURERS

1. KTM 90 p.
2. Yamaha 88 p.
3. Husqvarna 75 p.
4. Kawasaki 63 p.
5. GasGas 38 p.
6. Honda 29 p.

PLAY WITH MXGP!

This time was useful to get creative! We at MXGP wanted to share some interactive activities with our MXGP Fans.

Are you looking for a fun activity for yourself or your little ones? We have got you covered!

You could imagine yourself as an MXGP Rider and create your own Team or get creative with the MXGP colouring pictures or even participate to the MXGP Bingo flagging the activities you have done with MXGP in your life!



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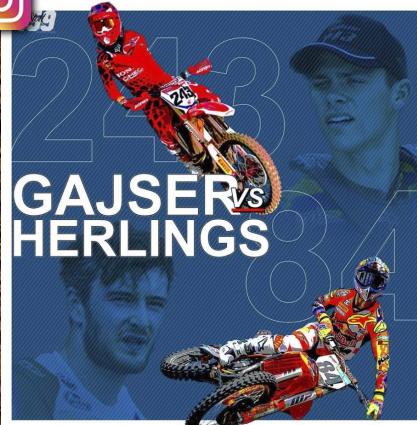




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New one done of @tiga243



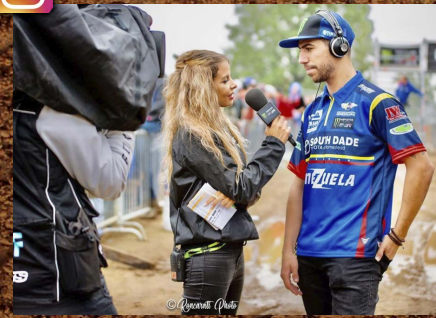
@pat459strana

When @mxgp returns.. who you got? #mxgp #ktm #hrc #honda #art #design #affinitydesigner #affinityphoto #affinity #motocross



STUDIO SHOW FROM HOME

Did you miss the Studio Show from Home with the nine time World Champion Antonio Cairoli #222, Red Bull KTM Factory Racing rider!

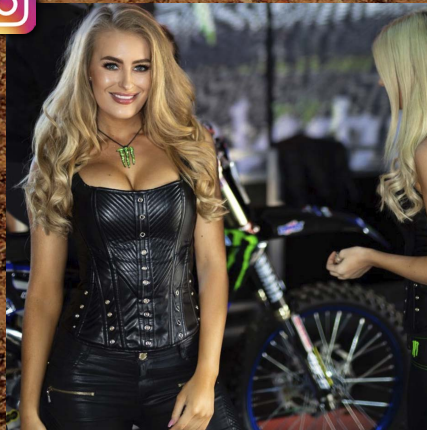


@anthonymx127

Missing the @mxgp days, do you think I should make a comeback soon?? #español Extrañando los días de el @mxgp , crees que debería de regresar a las pistas pronto?? #mxgp #mx #moto @



Need an adrenaline fix? Well this throwback to the Monster Energy FIM Motocross of Nations 2013 will do the trick! Re-live the epic MXoN in Germany Teutschenthal, as we watch the world's best riders battle it out for their country!



@missvickilund

Can anyone guess where my #MonsterMemories are from? *HINT these pictures makes me miss the sound of the mx bikes, the racing and most of all my @monsterenergygirls!!



@ncher_21

Thank you for this goggles @



@_bellamatte309

llemento virtuale



@hazelreidart

Painting of Rene hofer
I recently completed
#MXGP



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**GETTING TO KNOW
MIKKEL HAARUP**

CROSS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

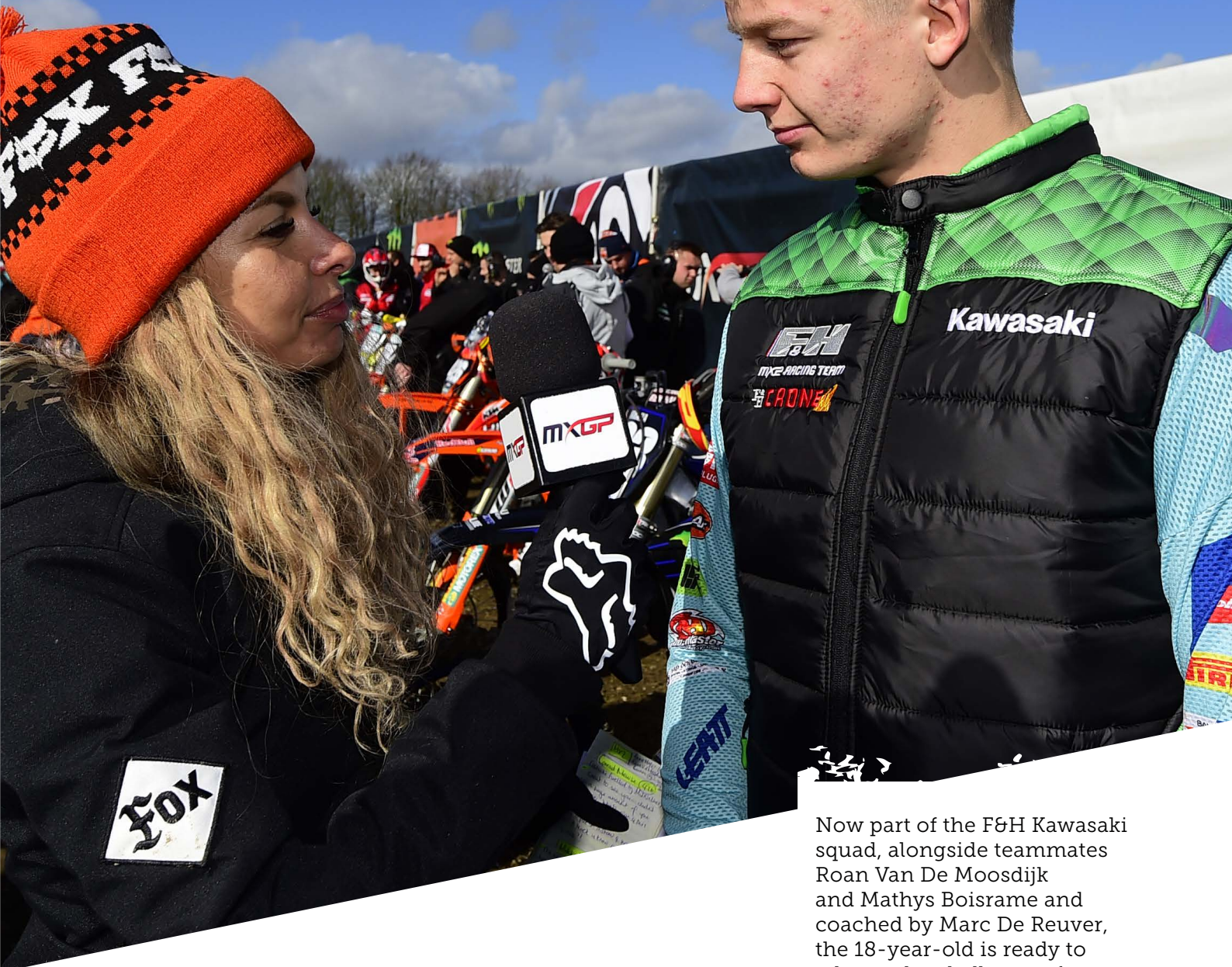
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A STAR ON THE RISE

MIKKEL HAARUP IS ONE OF THE FRESH NEW FACES TO THE MX2 CLASS THIS SEASON, THOUGH HE'S NOT ENTIRELY NEW TO THE MXGP PADDOCK. MANY THAT FOLLOW THE SPORT WOULD HAVE WATCHED THE YOUNG DANE RISE THROUGH THE RANKS IN THE EUROPEAN CLASSES, SO IT WASN'T A TOTAL SHOCK TO SEE HIM MAKE HIS SEASON DEBUT AT MATTERLEY BASIN WITH A THIRD OVERALL, HIS FIRST PRO PODIUM.

Now part of the F&H Kawasaki squad, alongside teammates Roan Van De Moosdijk and Mathys Boisrame and coached by Marc De Reuver, the 18-year-old is ready to take on the challenge of the FIM Motocross World Championship.

Though he's been in the sport for quite some time, there are things we may not know about the MX2 rookie, so we sat down (virtually of course, all thanks to today's technology) for a chat to find out more about who Mikkel Haarup is...

MXGP: First of all, how are you? How's it going at home?

Mikkel: I am doing good. I am enjoying the nice weather





we have at the moment here in Holland where I'm based, though it is a bit strange actually, going into this season I thought I was going to be tired of training, and, to be honest, I am missing it quite a bit!

MXGP: Talking of training, how are you keeping fit during this time? Has much changed to your normal training routine?

Mikkel: The program has changed quite a bit, since normally we do moto trainings as the main exercise of the day, but now that, that hasn't been possible the last two months we had to adjust the program so we keep that same intensity as we have during riding, which is almost impossible because riding is such a complex training, but with that being said I have never been as fit as I am now!

MXGP: The idea of this interview is for fans to get to know you better, so tell us something about yourself that not many people may know...

Mikkel: Well the people around know that I am the king of buffets or just food in general... there is absolutely nobody who can eat more than me haha! I also love Ramlösa and can drink it 24/7!

MXGP: Do you have any other hobbies apart from motocross?

Mikkel: Even though motocross takes up basically all of my time during the week, I am a big fan of Crossfit, so if I had the time I would definitely do that more. Another hobby of mine, that I am really great at, is spending time on the couch watching movies!!

MXGP: What sort of music do you listen to?

Mikkel: When it comes to music, I am very different, because I love a mix of everything. 80s, 90s, 00s and of course the new stuff. One of

my favourite artists is, without a doubt, Eminem. There is not one day where I don't listen to his songs and I always try to play it for the other guys in the gym! From his new album 'Stepdad' is my favourite.

MXGP: Do you have a favourite movie? Or maybe a genre of movies?

Mikkel: I like action, war movies such as the American Sniper, Enemies at the gate, Braveheart or Black Hawk Down, I also like crime movies like Focus and Wolf Of Wallstreet which I think is very good as well... I also have a weird obsession with the series Friends and I don't know why! I think I have watched the whole series ten times by now.

MXGP: Do you have any interesting pre-race rituals? For example meditation or listening to certain type of music?

Mikkel: I usually don't do much in rituals and have never done. I already start focusing and preparing myself when I leave the hotel in the morning. I do like when they play some AC/DC over the speaker before the race, though.


MXGP: How old were you when you got your first bike?

Mikkel: I was three years old when I first started riding.

MXGP: How did you get into motocross? And when did you realise you wanted to be a pro racer?

Mikkel: Back when I was three, I wanted to do karting, but I wasn't allowed to race, so soon after that I got a motocross bike instead. When I was around nine or ten I started to do more and more international races and began to take it more seriously. I did have my success in my amateur days, but it has been my hard work and the will to do that, that made me





become a professional rider, without a doubt.

MXGP: You ride with #11, has this always been your racing number? And why did you choose to go with #11, is there a fun story behind this?

Mikkel: I used to ride with the number 722, since I was very little, but when I moved up to the EMX250 class someone else had that number, so I had to think of something new. The year before (2017), I rode in the EMX125 and when I would win, I would always win both races, we also call it going 1-1. My team manager, at the time, (Antti Pyrhönen), and I thought that was the greatest thing ever, so I stuck with it.

MXGP: You were a part of the Ice One Rockstar Energy Husqvarna Factory squad for quite a few years, how did it feel to be on a factory team while racing in the EMX? Did you learn any valuable lessons from being on such a professional team so early on in your career?

Mikkel: Yeah, I was a part of Ice One for four years. It was of course special for a then 13-year-old boy to be a part of such a big team. I have always surrounded myself with more mature people so for me it was a good fit. I have had great memories with the team, and they have taught me a lot, also some of my teammates like Gautier Paulin, Max Anstie, Pauls Jonass and Max Nagl have shown me and taught me a lot about how to become a good professional rider. I have been able to take many things that I have learned with me into F&H and combined with the team's knowledge to head in the right direction.

MXGP: Do you have a rider that inspired you when you were younger?

Mikkel: When I was younger, I would always watch supercross, back when Ricky Carmichael, Chad Reed and James Stewart used to duke it out, and I would

always root for Ricky. What stood out to me was his will to win and the fact that there was nothing that could knock him down. He would always come back.

MXGP: You're still pretty young and have a big career ahead of you, but what would you say has been your career highlight so far?

Mikkel: I have had many great races already, but my first MX2 podium in England this year would definitely be one of them.

MXGP: Tell us more about your career in EMX both 125cc and 250cc, what were the highlights?

Mikkel: My first year on the 125cc (2016), would be the podium I got in Lommel. The last year in the EMX125 class (2017) was also a great year, winning 8 out of 16 heat races. In the EMX250 class, I also got a few moto wins. One of my favourite races would probably be Latvia (2018). I have so many great memories that it would be impossible to pick one.

MXGP: Injuries are a part of the sport and not so fun to talk about... But have you ever suffered any injuries that have affected a racing season?

Mikkel: It's true, injuries are a big part of this sport. It has been a big part for me too, there have been times where I thought about what I could've achieved in my amateur career, if it weren't for the injuries that I had. I would definitely have a few more titles under my belt, but the most important thing for me is that isn't something I have problems with now, like many others have. I also know I wouldn't be where I am today if it weren't for those injuries. I have learned a lot!

MXGP: 2020, new season, new team, new championship. How have you found your move up to MX2?

Mikkel: Moving to MX2 has been great, the extra bike time you get during the race weekend and the longer race's suit me well.

Changing team has also been a great part of that success, we work great together, as a team. Now about the championship, I was in it for the long run, but this season is starting to look shorter and shorter, but we will get the best out of the situation with the virus. I feel like we adapt quick as a team so it will benefit us.

MXGP: How is it with your new team? And team-mates Mathys and Roan? What is the atmosphere of the team like?

Mikkel: Like I said before the change has been great for me. We work well together and there is no doubt we will have a lot of success, together as a team. One of the biggest changes in the team is having some younger teammates riding the same bike as me. Where, in the four previous years, I had 450cc riders as teammates. Having someone ride in the same class as me, has helped me a lot with improving my speed.

MXGP: As we all know, Marc de Reuver is your team coach... tell us more about what Marc is like as a coach? Are you enjoying having him as a trainer?

Mikkel: Marc is one of the best trainers I have had. He is very passionate and he always tries to find new ways to improve my riding. One of the reasons he is a fantastic trainer is because he learnt from some of the mistakes he made when he was a rider himself. He has the ability to see when mistakes are about to be made, so he can help me avoid those mistakes before they even happen.

MXGP: Let's talk about your results this season. In Matterley Basin you looked really impressive. You rode two solid races and ended the weekend with your first podium in MX2, how did that feel and was it something you expected?

Mikkel: Yes, it was a good weekend. Already before the season started, I knew that I was







able to compete in the top. I wanted to take it easy because it was going to be a long season, so to qualify P1 on Saturday was a bit of a surprise, not that I didn't know that I was capable of being fast, I just didn't plan to do it that early in the season. On Sunday, I managed to keep my head cool and make two decent races in the top three, which was a great way to start the season. I was bummed I didn't have two extra laps in the second race, so I could've taken the GP victory, but anyway, was a good start to my debut season.

MXGP: Valkenswaard was a different story, what happened?

Mikkel: Valkenswaard was a tough one. I knew I just had to get through the weekend with a decent amount of points, because I had a feeling this wasn't my weekend to win. I had a decent top ten in the first race, in second race I actually had the best start out of the four races so far, but coming out of the first corner, another rider in front of me and I collided with his bike, leaving me on the ground. Didn't score any points in that second race which wasn't good for the point standings in the championship, but there are many races to go!

MXGP: This season has been a strange one, with everything that is happening around the world, but do you feel ready to go? And what are your goals for the remainder of this season? More podiums?

Mikkel: With the physical trainings we have done in the gym and now when we can slowly get back to riding, I am not worried. My speed will be even better than it was when the season started! The goal is to go back racing for more wins and get the best out of this season.

Now that we're all more familiar with Mikkel, he is definitely a rider to look out for this season and it will be interesting to see what else he's got in store for us this year.



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SPECIAL FEATURE



Photo: C. DESMIET



GOING SOLO

MOTOCROSS! NOT THE EASIEST SPORT IN THE WORLD TO COMPETE IN; IN FACT, EVERYONE THAT YOU SPEAK TO WILL MORE THAN LIKELY SAY IT'S QUITE POSSIBLY THE HARDEST OF THEM ALL. BUT LIKE ALL SPORTS, AND IN TERMS OF MONEY, BUDGETS AND SUPPORT THERE ARE A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT TIER LEVELS FROM WHICH YOU CAN COMPETE OR GO RACING. AT THE VERY TOP ARE THE FACTORY TEAMS, FOLLOWED BY SATELLITE TEAMS AND THEN THE RIDERS OR TEAMS THAT MAKE UP THE MAJORITY OF THE GRID, THE PRIVATEERS. WE CAUGHT UP WITH THREE EX-FACTORY RIDERS WHO HAVE RECENTLY TAKEN THE LEAP OF FAITH AND SET UP THEIR OWN TEAMS, BUT WHAT WE WANTED TO KNOW WAS WHY, AND THE REASONS ASSOCIATED WITH THEIR DECISION?

For most riders, racing dirt bikes begins at a young age and if you ask any of those kids what they want to do or be when they grow up, most will say they'd like to be a professional racer. Some will say they want to be a factory racer. Is there a difference? The answer is yes! To call yourself a professional in anything means you are more than likely getting paid to do it, but to consider yourself 'factory' means you have reached the ultimate level in terms of status as a rider and what you get paid, but more than that, the level of support you will have access to. And to many, that is the be all and end all. Okay, you still have to go out and perform, and with that comes a higher level of expectation and needless to say, a fair amount of pressure as well. Shaun Simpson, Kevin Strijbos and Tanel Leok are three riders who have ridden for some of the best factory teams out there but today, you will see them racing for themselves in their own teams, and so from that side they can see the differences between what they've had in the past and what they have now. And you know what? It is all about perspective.

Why Factory?

The FIM Motocross World Championship is the only motocross series in the world where the use of 'full factory material' is allowed in competition. In road racing it's MotoGP and in car racing it's Formula1. But what does factory mean exactly? Basically, factory allows the manufacturers to use MXGP as a test-bed for prototype parts as a way of continuing the development of their brands, whether it be bikes, suspension or whatever. Take Red Bull KTM for instance; the bikes that TC222, JH84 and JP61 will be riding in 2020 will in fact be the 2021 factory bikes, and whilst the difference between the previous model and this one might only consist of a few tweaks, the reality is they are racing the bike that will act as a base in many ways for the 2021 production bike model.

At the other end of the scale is the privateer, where you don't have such luxuries. But is that a bad thing? As was mentioned earlier, it's about perspective. When you've never had factory support, it's all you want, but when you've had it, surely, it's a devastating blow to the ego, right? Not necessarily. Now, the three riders that we spoke to are no longer the spring-chickens they once were, with all of them now racing MXGP in their 30's, but does that mean they need to stop racing, hang up their boots and just walk away? Of course not! And just because they are no longer considered factory, are they bothered? Not in the slightest. So, why did these three decide to go it alone as opposed to settle for something in between exactly?

Shaun Simpson: SS24 KTM MXGP

Ex-Factory: Red Bull KTM, Monster Energy Yamaha, TM Ricci Racing (with factory support)

'I think, for the last couple of years, I just haven't been 100% happy with the way that things have sort of been dealt with regards to technical issues on the bike – I genuinely believe that given the right amount of time and effort into any given bike I could get it quite nice for me. I'm not the typical new school rider; I remember being in a team with Arnaud Tonus and Jeremy Seewer where the suspension they were running ... they just wanted to run it way harder than what I did. Now, I don't know if that's me being more old school or different style or whatever, but I just like it to be a bit softer, and we didn't quite get things the way it needed to be and I just didn't feel safe. It's now got to the stage in my career where I'm not going to be able to get on one of the factory teams anymore, so those sorts of possibilities were closing down and I just thought, you know what? I really think I can do as good a job on my own and decided that with the amount of time that I've been







within the industry and the amount of people that I know, that I really could pull something pretty cool together and just give it a go on my own for a year or two, sort of finish out my career giving myself the best possible chance of feeling comfortable on the bike; and I felt that if I did that, I would give myself the best chance of getting the results that I still think I'm capable of.'

Kevin Strijbos: KSRT MX

Ex-Factory: Rockstar Energy Suzuki World MXGP (2003-2007 / 2011 / 2013-2017)

Unlike Shaun, who decided to start the solo ball rolling on the Sunday night of the 2019 Swedish GP, Kevin Strijbos' decision came much later, some three months later in fact:

'We decided at the beginning of December to set up my own team. Why? I actually don't know (laughing). In the beginning it was not the plan because I was still hoping I could get a ride somewhere or get involved inside a team as something like a test rider; that was actually a bit more the goal. And then the Motocross of Nations came and I was still quite good; during the season we struggled a little bit with the bike and the Nations came and I got a better bike and we had a good weekend, so I hoped there was still something available but then nothing came up actually and that's why I decided to try to find a brand to try and start my own team.'

Tanel Leok: A1M Motorsport Husqvarna

Ex-Factory: Kawasaki Racing Team, TYM Factory Racing Team, Rockstar Energy Suzuki

As for Tanel Leok, he has been flying solo now for a little while longer under similar circumstances to Kevin, whereby he still enjoyed the racing aspect but wasn't prepared to hang up his helmet at that time:

'I set up a team in 2016 with my friends to go to GP's because we enjoyed racing and a KTM dealer in Estonia allowed us to do that, but then I got an opportunity to be a test rider for KTM and so I ended up doing quite a lot of GP's, so it all started from there. In 2016 I started testing for KTM and Husqvarna, and the team with my friends was still continuing to support Harri Kullas and Karel Kutsar, and in 2017 I joined the Ottobiano team but I still continued testing. Then in 2018 we started our own team A1M Husqvarna Motorsport with the truck and everything, so for me it was better this way to still be able to test; KTM and Husqvarna were happy also and I was more flexible like this.'

As previously mentioned, all three riders have ridden for some of the best factory teams; they have also ridden in some pretty decent satellite teams as well, which is considered in some cases to be the next tier below full factory status. The benefits here are that some of those satellite teams still receive factory support for their riders, and who knows, if one of those riders impresses the big bosses, they could actually find themselves being drafted back in to the full factory squad. But, how difficult or challenging has the process been to walk away from the comfort of that type of team environment where almost every aspect of your riding gets taken care of?

SS24

'It's been a challenge, more so with the off-bike stuff! We decided we wanted to go for the whole championship but tying all of those pieces together with multiple parts of the jigsaw puzzle was harder than I expected. The technical partners were quite easy to tie up. There were brands that I wanted to work with, that I knew I would work well with; brands that would give me the support that I needed. It was more getting the funds together to go racing which was the hardest part but, in the end, I was really happy with the budget that I got, which

came together from multiple sponsors. It wasn't like I'd got one huge sponsor that came on board and sponsor me the whole job lot, you know? I've got a lot of personal sponsors who have really jumped in at roughly the same amount and from those seven or eight sponsors, we've made a package that's working well and we can pay our bills, we can reach all the races we need to and the fly-away races are within reach as well.'

KS22

'It was challenging because of course we had to start from zero; it was already late in the year that I decided to do that because we didn't think about it until maybe the middle of November. I had a small deal with a German dealer, Johannes Bikes, who do the German championship and that was on the table, so I said I wanted to do that, but I also wanted to go to GP's as well, but they didn't have the budget for that. While we tried to figure something out, that's when the idea started rolling. There was a lot of time and preparation went into it and when we came to December, we had to decide whether to go one way or another, so we decided to go our own way and from there on it was a lot of work and a lot of time.'

'I found some good sponsors, some friends of mine from the past who were willing to help. Also, Sylvain Geboers helped a lot with technical partners for me to get in contact with them because he has been such a great guy from the past and most of them were keen to help, so there wasn't such a big problem to get the technical side sorted. The biggest problem was getting the budget, so we decided to go with it and hopefully some more sponsors will come on board.'

TL7: Even now it's still difficult, especially because we never know what next year will bring, how badly some companies will recover from everything that's going on right now or how badly it's affected the economy and

things like that; it will be a huge challenge for everybody, for sure. It's still too early to see but in the beginning, some things were challenging; you think it will be easy but actually when you're running a team you see how difficult it is, especially all the travelling and handling all the different people.'

Tanel actually raises another point here that may have not been factored in to the original thought process of setting up and both Shaun and Kevin soon realised that there was a lot more to all this than meets the eye:

SS24

'One of the hardest things was raising the money, but then there's keeping multiple people happy as well; I've set up WhatsApp groups, email threads and newsletters to keep the fans happy; obviously The Simpson Army is still quite a big part of it with different levels going on there, so it's just been a lot of extra work tying everything together, like the little emails that might pop up where I've got to do this or do that, or this has to be signed off and done today ... just working more as a professional team manager as well as a rider; I now know all the cut off dates for my license and all of that kind of stuff as a rider, but you've also got team licenses, event passes, MXGP schedules that you have to hit pre-Christmas even; all of that has to be ready and tied off. Just going through all of that, and if we were to do it again next year, which I'm sure we will, then those sort of things will be easier but all those little things that come out of the woodwork ... a lot of costs that you don't even think about as well; budgeting for a team is all well and good but then there's always got to be some contingency there as well.'

KS22

'I'm someone who was always in a good team, I was most of the time a factory rider; everything was there! Everything was easy and if I wanted to change





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Photo: Rob Simpson

something it was there the next day, maybe even the same day. Now, it's not like that anymore and if I want to still work like that, it's just not possible, especially not as a private team in the first year. We need to build it up and then hopefully for the future, if we can continue for next year then maybe it's gonna be a little bit easier and then we can try to be better.'

'If we sit down with the small group of guys from the team and we speak about it, then it all seems easy, we say "ok, we're gonna contact them for the team clothes, they're gonna make the logo's, they will do this, they will do that ..." it's quite easy on paper, but when you need to get after it, it just takes such a long time. When I was on a factory team, I thought everything was easy, I just asked and it was there! And now you ask and they don't reply for like one week or something, and then you ask again and they say "oh yeah! Sorry, I forgot ..." I'm not saying it's their fault or anything you know, but that's just how it is. So, then you have to wait a week longer, and then it comes, and then the emailing back and forth, it's just a lot of work. Then trying to get the logo on; my logo is such an easy logo but it took like two weeks to get it done, and even if it's that easy, it still takes time! And two weeks? Especially when we started that late is quite stressful actually. In the end we got the team clothes right before the first GP on Thursday morning before we left for England.'

Then of course, there's the small matter of the bike itself and how you can make it work for you, and for Shaun in particular, this is one of the main reasons why he chose to go it alone in the first place:

SS24

'The actual building of my race bike to the spec that I wanted for going out testing and getting something in a package that I was happy with, I felt like that came as second nature to me because I'd been wanting that freedom for a few years now, and to actually to have the freedom to just say "right, let's try this, let's change that; this has been bugging me for

the last couple of years, let's work in a direction to get that sorted ..." all of that was easy!

You need to be at one with your machine and at the moment I feel that I'm giving myself that opportunity to feel safe and at 32, I couldn't be doing this if I didn't feel safe; I've got a family and I need to make sure that when I'm going out on track I'm going to my own personal limit which I feel comfortable with and I'm not riding over my head or above the capabilities of my bike.'

As for Kevin, he chose to go down a more sentimental route so maybe it was no surprise when he announced he was back on yellow:

KS22

'We decided with Suzuki because I felt it was a pity that there was not one Suzuki rider anymore in GP's, and second, because I was a long time factory rider with them, maybe 11 years or something in total, and if I decided to stop at the end of this season then it would be nice to stop on the same brand that I was riding with for so long. They gave me so much and I had so much fun on the Suzuki, so that's why we chose it. Also, if there was a chance that they decide to come back next year or maybe the year after or whenever, then maybe I could do something with them, maybe like a test rider or something else inside of the team; that would be nice, you know?'

One very obvious difference between the set-up at A1 Husqvarna Motorsport and the teams of SS24 KTM and KSRT MX is that Tanel Leok is using his platform to help nurture young talent from the Baltic States region and Finland, whereas at the moment at least, Simpson and Strijbos are quite literally racing as one-man teams. As a result of that, funds, budgets, support and everything attached to racing are multiplied significantly for the Estonian, but he does have the added benefit that he is now in his fifth term as a team owner/manager and as a result, his 'regular crew' is very much different and slightly larger than that of the other two:

TL7:

'Right now, we have six riders in the team and I have my mechanic, who is a friend and also a sponsor of the team. We also have another mechanic but then all the other riders bring their own mechanics. The riders are myself, Roland Edelbacher (MX2), Wiljam Malin and Henry Vesilind (EMX250), and Edvards Bidzans and Sampo Rainio (EMX125). It's important for me to have Baltic and Finnish riders in my team because I still think I can find talent here and they need the chance to get out there; look at Jorgen-Matthias Talviku. Last year he made some great results and now he has an opportunity with a British team, so for him, it was really good that he came to my team and had the opportunity to show himself. I will also try to develop talent like that and if I do and can have better support then maybe I can keep them but for sure I will not try to keep them if they have good options to go somewhere.'

Support Network

With Tanel now in his 5th year, his support network is still very much his wife Karoliina who will help from afar with emails and general day-to-day requirements whilst Tanel is on the road, and when she is at the races, she does her bit there as well. He also has his mechanic to keep things rolling along at home and at the races, but for the new team owners, there are a few key workers that all do their bit to ensure that everything runs as smoothly as possible.

SS24:

'My main guy is obviously my dad and we did all of our winter stuff from his workshop; me and my wife Rachel are only 4-5 miles away, so I just commute there in the morning, get some work done and then go riding, figure a few things out, we built our trailer and got all that sort of stuff going as well. Dad will drive the van and trailer to the races and he will come practicing

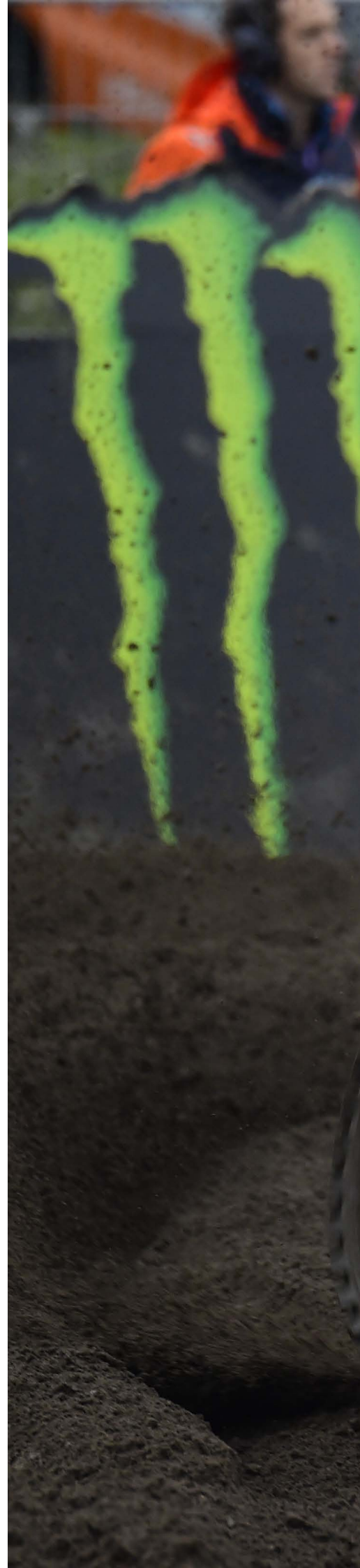
with me; he also takes care of the suspension and my engines, so he's my main guy. I take care of all the chassis and make sure that that's all serviced up week-to-week and looking pretty for the next races - changing tyres, putting stickers on and that kind of thing. So, it's a real team effort!'

'Rachel is in the background taking care of the books and all the other sort of computer jobs as well as looking after our little boy, and then she floats in and out when she can, fly's in, fly's out; she's at home some of the time, or sometimes she's in Belgium with us, comes to the races in the camper ... and then my mum, she has a job at home here in Scotland working 4 days a week, so she gets to the races as much as she can and helps with things like the hospitality and meeting and greeting sponsors, that type of thing.'

'I've got a couple of people up here in Scotland that help us out and a couple of people in Belgium as well that are just willing to give their time to help towards the end goal, which is more than I could ask of anyone because it's quite a labour of love; there's definitely a lot of hard graft that goes into the behind the scenes stuff that no one gets to appreciate, from Sunday night to the next Saturday morning when the show starts again, there's a lot of hard work that goes into cleaning and making sure that everything is spic and span and ready to go.'

KS22:

'In the beginning the main guys were my main sponsor HENS and then there's my mechanic Kevin Guilloux, Sylvain Geboers and me. Then my partner Yentel stepped in to try to get some things going, like team clothing and other things that she felt she could arrange. My mum and dad have also helped a lot, they're not always in the workshop but if I need something, I can always call them and they will help where they can.'







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RM-Z

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B
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SHIMANO

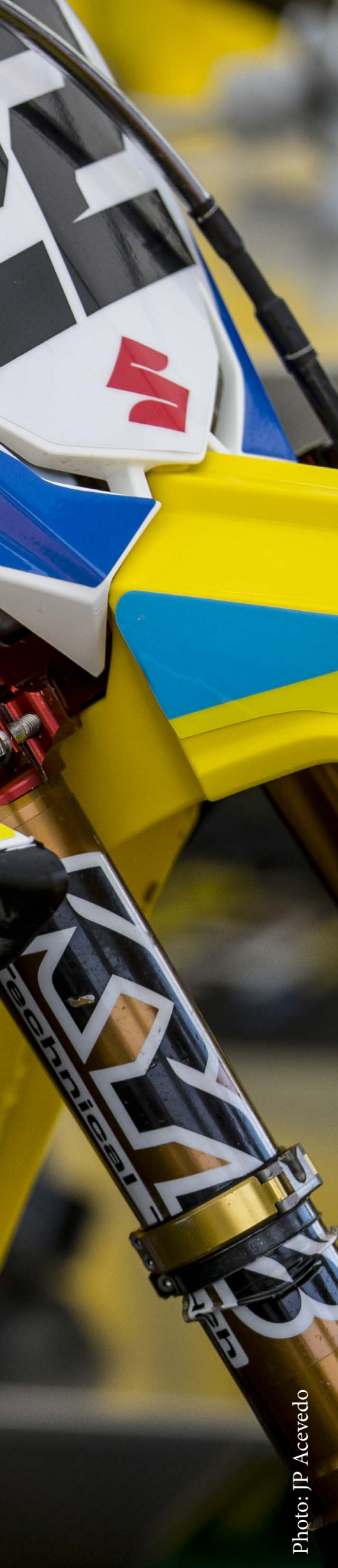


Photo: JP Acevedo

'Originally, we planned to use a Sprinter but then Paul Sannen Motorhomes bought the old Suzuki bus and said we can rent it from him, because that way we will have a bigger presence in the paddock and more exposure for the sponsors. He also lets us use a small part of the old Suzuki workshop as well, so we had some work benches made and put them in there. The plan in the beginning was to use my small workshop at home, but then you have no privacy anymore because there is always someone coming around.'

Weighing up The Odds

On reflection it appears that no matter how you go about setting up your own team, there will always be challenges, road blocks and a certain amount of adversity to overcome, but surely the advantages will outweigh the disadvantages right, because otherwise, why bother?

SS24

'I'd say the biggest advantages are getting to do what I want, when I want and just making all the decisions about the bike and from helmet, goggles, chains, sprockets, tyres ... all the products that I feel like are best for me, I can choose those and work with those partners. If I come in from a race and I want to put the rear wheel in the front and the front wheel in the back and try it for the second race; if I think that's gonna make things easier for me then I can do that as well. So, that's just the pro's there. Also, I have no one to impress other than myself, and if it's a total-shambles then I've only got myself to blame, so it's quite an easy little circle of responsibility there; I'm quite happy having the weight on my own shoulders.'

'The disadvantages are pretty much the exact opposite of being a factory rider like having a lot of extra jobs to do and quite a lot extra to think about coming up to a race weekend; maybe I have to suffer a little bit when it comes to riding or training, a lot more people to talk with at the weekends, like new

sponsors ... those kind of things to try and keep things rolling along, and trying to make sure you can pay your bills at the end of the month financially and things like that. Rather than just taking a pay cheque at the end of the month and focussing on your training and chilling out on the lead up to the race, there's a lot of things to keep things ticking over. But like I say, I'm quite happy with having the weight on my shoulders, running the show and sort of working hard for the results that we think we're capable of getting and there's no better proof in the pudding than when you can make that happen.'

KS22

'The advantage is that we can decide a lot more what we want, like how we want to set up the bike and what we think is the best way. The disadvantage is there is just a lot of work; it just takes a lot of time, there is not so much budget to get what you want. That's probably the main thing, I think. I wish had more budget to get some more people in my corner, for the engine, for the electronics and for everything else, like it used to be, but now we are just such a small group that sometimes it's difficult. There are good and bad points actually!'

'Also, the day-to-day responsibility of emails and everything; most of the time it's me taking care of that but obviously at the moment it's fairly quiet, but before the season it was mostly me. Once we were going, it was easier for my mechanic to send some emails or if he told me to order this and that then I could do it straightaway, but these are things I don't usually have to worry about. When you are just a rider, you come home and that's it, have some food and go to bed, but now, I come home later than normal most of the time, I want to try to help the mechanic a little bit sometimes by cleaning or whatever and then when I come home, I realise I still have to do something, and then I can't sleep. I underestimated it a little bit actually, I thought it would be a bit easier but then again, now that the season has started, it was getting a little less

stressful because everything was there and everything was going, so it was a bit easier.'

TL7

'One of the advantages is that with having the truck I can travel to the races, and if I want to stop on the way to a race to go training I can. Because I am also a test rider, I will ride Wednesday or Thursday and sometimes it's necessary to ride on Friday as well, so we find a track and park the truck and that's how we do it, and having my own set-up allows me to do that more than if I was riding in another team.'

'The biggest disadvantage is having to take care of all the other people; it's not like I can just wake up in the morning, do my workout, go riding and drop the bike off or leave it with the team mechanic for him to prepare so I can go away and sleep or rest. Now, I have to organise everything which creates a bit more work with emails and planning and all these kind of things, so I can't focus 100% on riding. It also gives me the flexibility to race when and where I want and it was easier for me to organise my schedule. It was a bit of a challenge but also it was more exciting and it's something I've enjoyed doing.'

Like anything you do that requires work, there has to be an end goal; you need to feel a sense of satisfaction in what you're doing, so for Shaun, Kevin and Tanel, what do they hope to achieve by going solo?

SS24

'You know, maybe five, six, seven years ago, you could've maybe asked 'what were your aspirations?' and at that point I probably could have still said "top three in the world championship". We got to 4th in 2015 but nowadays, anywhere inside the top ten for me – I'm 32 years-old – but if I'm in the top ten, top five week in, week out, then I have to be absolutely over the moon with that! So, that's

kind of what I wanted to do for this year; unfortunately I didn't get amazing amounts of time to prove it at the beginning of the year to myself or to anyone else but I think that Valkenswaard showed that things were on the right path and although those conditions suited me, I felt like I was riding reasonably well at Matterley as well, although the results didn't really show it. I'm feeling comfortable on my bike which is also important, and being able to choose specific sponsors, choosing my own set-up, working hard on the areas that I think need to be improved on the bike. My own personal gain in being able to spend the time on those things is absolutely crucial, not having to run it past four or five different guys, sign it off with different people within the team. Being confident and feeling comfortable on the bike is absolutely number one for me and I think the underlying issue for the past couple of years is that I haven't felt comfortable on my bike.'

'So far for me it's been a good decision, and it's amazing that you can cut quite a lot of bullshit out of your life just by making your own decisions, waking up in the morning knowing what you've got to do, although the workload is a lot heavier, you're able to channel it into just one guy on the track, and that's me! I'm kind of relishing that fact.'

'So, I think what I want to get out of it is just the peace of mind that I do what I want, when I want and keep some flexibility with it all, but mainly have fun. Also, just having my family around, my little boy growing up around our own set-up, no one really to impress; just having a really cool, fun, family environment where people really actually feel comfortable coming in and being a part of such a cool process as well.'

KS22

'First of all, I was just happy that I was back on yellow and that Suzuki was back in MXGP, that





was actually the main point. I felt sad; I feel like I have a yellow heart and there are many people I know, like Sylvain Geboers; he also has a yellow heart and it was sad that there was not one yellow bike anymore in MXGP. So, that was actually the first thing that made me happy. Secondly, is that hopefully we can try to continue this you know, even starting as a small team, and then building it up and who knows if or when factory Suzuki is gonna come back, I have no idea when that's gonna be but that would be just a dream for them to say "we are happy with the way you guys worked and we're gonna support you maybe next year a little bit with some parts and some stuff or maybe as a testing team ..." that would be great, you know? Something like I am really hoping for, even if it's 99.9% uncertain, but if you don't dream you will never know.'

TL7

'For me to be able to continue riding because I enjoy it and if I can still get the support to do that, then I will continue riding, but also the main reason is that I want to do this; I've already invested a lot of money in this team and while my age is already up there, sooner or later I need to stop, but I don't want to put in so much money to just throw it away. I would like to continue the team, have some riders from the east for sure, at least one or two and then all the rest can be from anywhere else in the world where I can find some good talent and surprise everybody, that's my goal. But nowadays it's a little bit more difficult because everybody knows who is fast in any kind of corner in the world.'

With Tanel Leok, it's clear he and his A1M Motorsport Husqvarna Team are in this for the long haul, but what about SS24 KTM MXGP and KSRT MX? Knowing what they know now, would they do it again?

KS22

'If I decided a little bit earlier to do this (and not in December), if we had just a little bit more time then





SUZUKI

SUZUKI

DUNLOP

22

HINSON

Twin Air

D.I.D.

EXCEL

Mika

DUNLOP

MOTO X LIFT





yes, but to go that late like we went ... I'm not too sure if I would still want to. But, I'm not ready to stop. I still feel good, even if I'm turning 35. I'm just happy on my bike and as long as I want to put the work in during the winter time, and if I still want to go to the races – even if the first two races were horrible – I think and I feel that if we have a good base with everything, with the bike and the mechanic and myself, we can still run 10th, you know? Like 10, 11, 9 ... who knows, you know? So, if I can be up there it's fine; I know I will not be world champion anymore and that a podium or a top five might be far off, as long as I like to ride I think it's nice to just go out there and try to have fun of course. Even if

it's not always fun, because I've been on top, I've been 2nd in the world and 3rd and if I'm battling for 17th place it's hard to accept, but it's also different from the past. Now there are twenty good riders, maybe even thirty and in the past, there were maybe only five good riders in the class, so I think you also need to see through that, I think.'

SS24

'Definitely! I'm actually slightly disappointed that I hadn't done it a year earlier and 2019 would have probably been the year to go for it and get started. I think it's one of those things where you've got to take the plunge and just really go for it and once you get started it can only get easier really, because you know what you're doing and you can maybe

cut some corners for the next year or learn by your mistakes but overall I think I've done a decent job of getting started; with the way that the races went to begin with were quite good, I was quite happy with how I was feeling and the show that we put on, on and off the track, the results that we got kept everyone motivated and I was just starting to feel like we were just getting some momentum going. It's just a shame that things ground to a halt, but the plan is to go on in 2021 again and just keep grinding away and really just enjoying racing my bike and having everyone else be as enthusiastic and motivated by it as I am and I think that's pretty much where we are at. Obviously, we've still got a job to do in 2020 hopefully, a few races to tick off and get a few more teething problems out of the way and roll on 2021.'

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KTM

HALL OF FAME



JOSHUA 'JOSH' COPPINS

JOSH COPPINS HAS BEEN ONE OF THE BEST NEW ZEALAND RIDERS INVOLVED IN THE MOTOCROSS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS WALKING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE KING BROTHERS. IT TOOK HIM A LONG TIME TO REACH HIS FIRST PODIUM AND LATER HIS FIRST GP WIN, AND HE WAS AT HIS BEST WHEN HE TURNED THIRTY AND JOINED THE YAMAHA RINALDI TEAM, MISSING UNFORTUNATELY THE WORLD TITLE IN 2007.

With eleven GP wins, two podiums at the Motocross of Nations and twenty-eight national titles conquered in five different countries (New Zealand, Australia, Italy, Belgium and Great Britain), he is one of the most successful Kiwi riders.

Born on 11th March 1977 in Motueka, Josh Coppins was one of the most promising kind in the early 90's, he started racing when he was eleven years old and won for the first time at the second race he entered! Winner of his first Junior title at the age of fifteen, he then entered the his first GP one year later when the world championship visited Manjimup in Australia. A first taste of a dream, and after winning the national Supercross championship in 1994, he was only seventeen when he flew to Europe to enter the 250cc World Championship as a privateer. His first experiences were tough, but Josh never gave up and during several years did two seasons in one racing both the GP's and the New Zealand championships where he claimed wins, titles and money to finance his career in Europe. He finally got his first



great result during his fourth campaign when he stood on the podium of the 1998 Motocross of Nations alongside Darryl and Shayne King. In fact, it was a turning point of his career, as he finally got some support from Sylvain Geboers and Suzuki for his fifth attempt in the 250cc class.

For the first time in his career he entered the top ten of the series and in 2000 managed a factory ride alongside Mickael Pichon. While his teammate fought for the world title, Josh claimed his first ever GP podium in France and scored a final fourth position. Hard worker he improved his results every year, moved from Suzuki to Honda and did a nearly perfect 2002 season when he got eight podium results and finished runner up in the 250cc World championship.

The following year he joined the main class late due to a heavy crash while practicing in the US during the off season and he won his first GP one year later in Arreton on the Isle of Wight and claimed two series podiums in 2004 and 2005. Missing the first part of the 2006 season due to injury, he went back racing in the

mid-season for the 8th round of the series and impressed everyone as he got a total of thirteen race podiums and was the only rider able to beat Stefan Everts that year!

To replace Stefan Everts, who retired at the end of 2006, Yamaha and Michele Rinaldi signed Josh Coppins who received full factory support for the second time in his career. He started the season with consecutive wins in Valkenswaard and Bellpuig and stood on the podium of the first eight rounds of the series. After ten rounds, with five GP wins and a total of nine podiums, he was strongly leading the series by 107 points and was the favourite for the title when the series arrived in Loket for the Czech round. That event was dramatic for him and his team, as he damaged his shoulder that day and was forced to miss the next two rounds; he tried to race in Great Britain despite the pain but couldn't finish the season and missed that title he deserved so much. It was the pinnacle of his career, and even if he won one round of the championship in 2008 and 2009, he was never again a title contender.

Josh decided to join the Aprilia project for his last season in Europe and afterwards he went back to New Zealand. He remains passionate about the sport and shares his amazing experience with young riders. He built the JCR Yamaha team in 2013, has won several titles as team manager and helped Courtney Duncan to discover the Women's World Championship.

Text & Photos: Pascal Haudiquert



- 1995:** 39th in the 250 World Championship (Suzuki)
- 1996:** 23rd in the 250 World Championship (Suzuki)
- 1997:** 17th in the 250 World Championship (Suzuki)
- 1998:** 13th in the 250 World Championship (Suzuki)
3rd at the MX of Nations with Team New Zealand
- 1999:** 7th in the 250 World Championship (Suzuki)
- 2000:** 4th in the 250 World Championship (Suzuki)
- 2001:** 6th in the 250 World Championship (Suzuki)
- 2002:** 2nd in the 250 World Championship (Honda)
- 2003:** 12th in the MotocrossGP World Championship (Honda)
- 2004:** 3rd in the MX1 World Championship (Honda). Winner of 1 GP
- 2005:** 2nd in the MX1 World Championship (Honda). Winner of 2 GP's
- 2006:** 7th in the M1 World Championship (Honda). Winner of 1 GP
3rd at the MX of Nations with Team New Zealand
- 2007:** 3rd in the MX1 World Championship (Yamaha). Winner of 5 GP's
- 2008:** 5th in the MX1 World Championship (Yamaha). Winner of 1 GP
- 2009:** 6th in the MX1 World Championship (Yamaha). Winner of 1 GP
- 2010:** 12th in the MX1 World Championship (Aprilia)





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Paddock Talks





- 1 Geared up and ready to go! Jorge Prado enjoying his time back on the bike at Lommel.
- 2 Birthday Santero Wine showers! Maxime Renaux celebrated his Birthday by sharing a throwback from his podium in Valkenswaard.
- 3 Pauls Jonass showing off for the camera as he returns to riding!
- 4 Talk about a day at the beach... MX + F1 = EPIC!
- 5 Looks like Jed Beaton has used his quarantine time to grow an interesting looking beard...
- 6 Tom Vialle taking the time to enjoy some other hobbies during his time at home.
- 7 Nancy Van De Ven back on the bike!
- 8 If you didn't take a picture did the workout actually count? Adam Sterry keeping fit at home.
- 9 Good Memories! Gautier Paulin shared this GoPro snap with his fans!
- 10 Here's a throwback for you! A young Ben Watson picture post race...
- 11 Keeping up appearances... Jago Geerts chatting to local Belgian TV station about his return to riding.
- 12 DJ Hoff in the house! Glenn Coldenhoff taking up a new hobby during lockdown.





STEFAN EVERTS 1995 KAWASAKI KX250

WITH 10 WORLD TITLES UNDER HIS BELT, STEFAN EVERTS IS THE MOST SUCCESSFUL MOTOCROSS RACER IN THE WORLD AND WITH 101 GP VICTORIES, 169 RACE WINS AND 166 PODIUMS, THE RECORD BOOKS WERE TORN UP AND RE-WRITTEN. HE ALSO WON TITLES WITH FOUR DIFFERENT MANUFACTURES, BUT WHEN HE WON THE FIM 250CC MOTOCROSS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP IN 1995, HE WOULD GO DOWN IN HISTORY AS KAWASAKI'S FIRST EVER WORLD MOTOCROSS CHAMPION, AND IT'S HIS 1995 KX250 THAT WE WILL FEATURE IN THIS ISSUE OF MXGP MAGAZINE.



Kawasaki's journey into off-road began in 1963 with the bike known as the B8M, but it wasn't a motocross bike as such; that would come much later, but when Ollie Petterson placed 14th overall in the 250cc world championship in 1972, Kawasaki decided to up its game, and the following year, armed with a factory machine, Sweden's Torleif Hansen took the green side of Japan to 4th overall. Whilst there no race wins, he did claim 2nd on three occasions and 3rd no fewer than four times on the first factory KX250.

The following season, 1974, Kawasaki unveiled its first purpose-built motocross bike when it introduced the first production KX250 to the market, and whilst

racers were getting to grips with it, Hansen was making his own piece of history, and on May 19th 1974, the Swede claimed Kawasaki's first ever race win and GP victory when he went 1-3 in Yugoslavia. He would win twice more that year, at Lady's Mile in England and at his home track of Upplands Vasby in Sweden on his way to another 4th overall in the campaign.

Fast forward twenty-years to 1994 and the wait for that first title continued to drag on; even Stefan Everts himself came up short in the '94 campaign, but that would all change the following year though.

A Rough Start

Everts' first test on his KX250 came at the end of 1993 when he'd just switched from the factory Suzuki team, but before he left Europe for Japan though, the Belgian

had injured his knee at the Bercy Supercross and so decided to take his custom knee braces as 'I didn't want to miss the test.' Problem was, he'd only ever used them once before and never felt comfortable in them, so he took them as a precaution, just in case. On the first day of the test in Japan, Stefan missed his rear brake at the end of a fast straight as a result of the braces feeling uncomfortable, and as panic set in, he grabbed the front brake and crashed hard. Not the best way to impress the new bosses by any means, but maybe it was a sign that 1994 would follow the same kind of pattern. Despite a double DNF at the first GP in Spain, and a broken collarbone which caused him to miss the Finnish GP, the title still went down to the final round in Germany, but it was Greg Albertyn who was crowned champion for a third successive time, by just 11 points.

1994 marked a three-year run of bad luck for Everts and





after Germany, he was mentally destroyed. When he went into the '95 season he hadn't really prepared in his usual manner, and by his own admission wasn't even close to being 100% ready. After Valkenswaard, Round 2, Everts led the championship, but after a disastrous outing in Italy, Round 4, his teammate Tallon Vohland was the new leader.

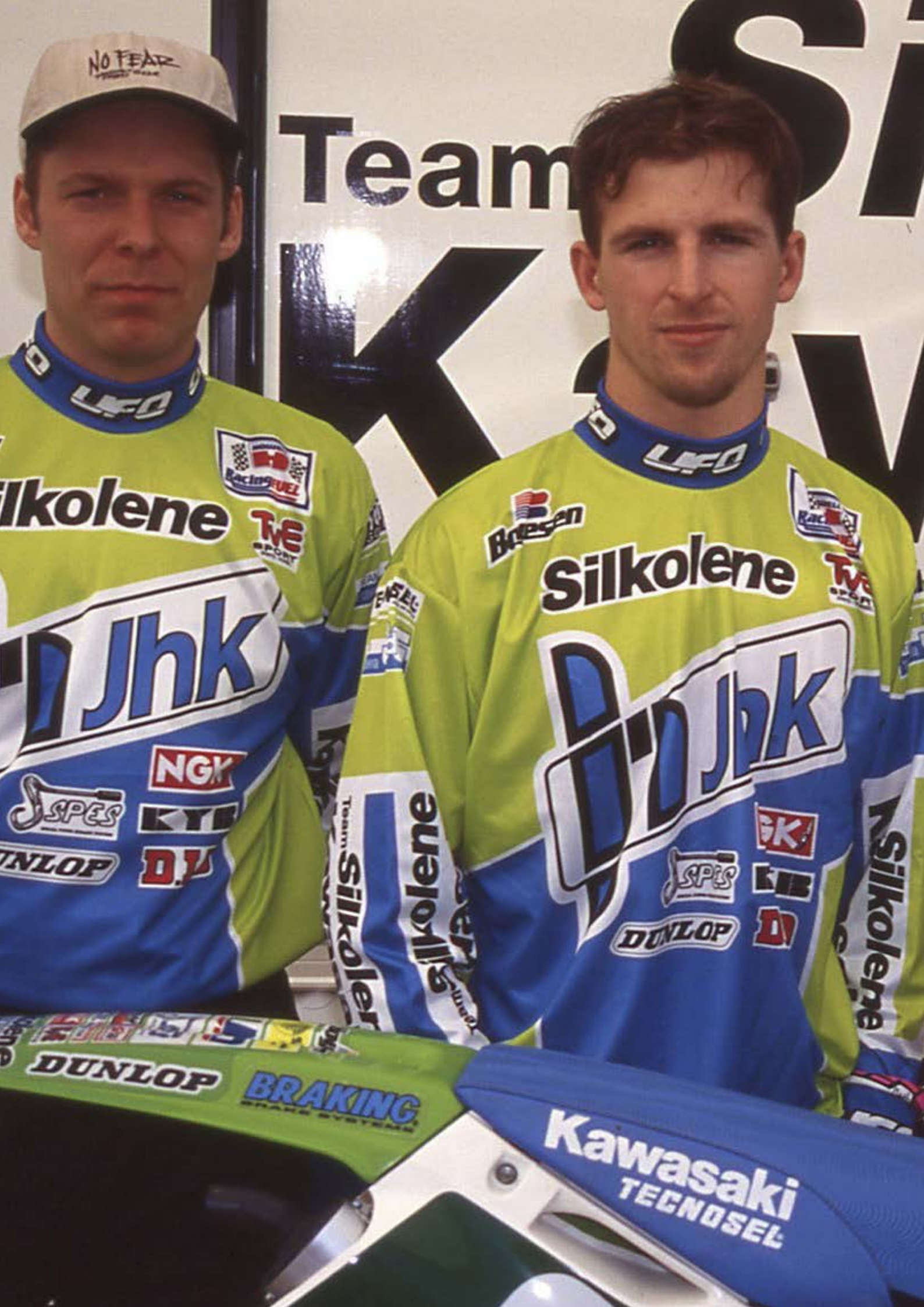
'Maggiora was a bad weekend for me, I don't even remember what happened in the first race, my riding was so bad; also in the second race, and after that weekend I was in a dark place again, like the end of '94 where I thought it was gonna be another one of those years. I struggled at the next race in Austria, but Sweden is where it started to come back. I remember I won there and then we went to Foxhill in England – that track was always good for me – I won both races there and was leading the championship again.'

Taking Stock

As far as the bike, Stefan's KX250 was relatively unchanged from the bike that he raced in the previous season, but the biggest surprise was that this bike was not a full factory SR250 as many had suspected. In short, Everts had walked away from a factory team; his Kawasaki was nothing more than a modified production bike at best. But this bike came with a difference.

'Alec Wright wanted me at Kawasaki no matter what, and I said there were two things I wanted. The first was that I wanted my mechanic Harry Nolte to come with me, and that I also wanted Jan de Groot as the engine tuner. Back then, Jan was the king; I always struggled with my starts on the Suzuki and Greg was always getting holeshots or much better starts than me and that changed when I got on the Kawasaki.'

The bottom end was standard but it was Jan de Groot's tuning of the cylinder and cylinder head and the marrying up of all the other internal parts, such as piston, carburettor and jetting, and countless hours



NO FEAR

Team

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Silkolene

Jhk

NGK

DUNLOP

KYTE

D.V.

JSPES

DUNLOP BRAKING

Kawasaki
TECNOSEL

Silkolene

Jhk

DUNLOP

KYTE

D.V.

JSPES

BRESAN

RACING FUEL
TVE SPORT



testing SPES exhaust pipes and silencers that really made this bike tick. The only thing that Everts had to get used to was the frame; back then Kawasaki was using a perimeter frame where the fuel tank between sat between two square 'arms' whereas the Suzuki still had the fuel tank perched on the single tube frame, 'but actually it wasn't too difficult to get used to it.'

Perhaps one of the biggest advantages though was the freedom for Stefan to test and develop whatever he wanted, something he wasn't really able to do with Suzuki. Everts' former mechanic from '94, Harry Nolte, recalled that 'Jan had a dyno at that time and that made a big difference because with Suzuki, we just had to rely on the factory, so whatever came from Japan we had to use it. No discussions. We never knew the numbers, whereas Jan was more open; he was really into the tuning and setting up the bike and talking to the rider. I think also you needed that at that time because we had no electronics, no data or anything, so you had to talk to the rider and get the feeling together about how things should be.'

The rest of the bike came with bigger radiators for better cooling efficiency, factory KYB suspension and factory triple clamps. The swingarm was standard and the linkage was modified, but the wheels and hubs were also factory, the main benefits being that they were stronger and also lighter. Stopping power came courtesy of standard Nissin brakes, but the brake discs were provided by Braking; the front being larger than standard. The clutch cover was Magnesium and the bike was littered with Titanium nuts and bolts, and as already mentioned, SPES provided the pipes and silencers.

Chasing The Win

After the British GP at Foxhill, Everts led his teammate Vohland by 11 points and this gap was reduced to just 6 a week later in Ireland, but after Everts went 1-1 at Kester in Belgium and Vohland collided with a tree, the Belgian found himself with a 39 point lead; he just needed to manage



the situation. In the final third of the season, the threat came from fellow Belgian, Marnicq Bervoets and despite the gap being reduced to less than 20 points, Everts remained in control and the title was clinched in the first race of a muddy final round in France at Chateau du Loir:

'I won the title in the first race at the final GP in France. It rained all day Saturday and the track was very muddy on Sunday. 15th place was good enough to take the title. I made a bad start and actually, the race was almost finished for me after the first 5 metres when another rider came completely across me. I didn't crash but I made a really bad start. At that moment, I thought 'not again ... another title lost' but I was able to make a lot of passes and scored a point. Marnicq also had a bad race and I don't think he scored points so that was also good for me.'

Finally, after three years of devastating ups and downs, Stefan Everts was world champion for a second time, and the first to win on a Kawasaki; the weight of expectation and disappointment around his neck was gone:

'Winning the championship was such a big relief for me after 3 years of bad luck and disappointment. It proved also that first title in 1991 was not a fluke. My dad was more on the side for 1994 and 1995. I wanted to make more my own decisions, but the hug at the end of the race between me and him was full of emotion. It was also nice to be the first rider to win the world championship for Kawasaki.'

On the way to the title, one of Stefan's standout moments came at his home GP in Belgium at Kester:

'Kester was the best moment of the year for me, maybe the best moment of my career actually. I beat Marnicq in the first race and in the second we were having

another really close race. There were more than 20,000 fans on the hillside and the atmosphere was incredible. Then I did a tactic I'd never done before; I let Marnicq pass me for the lead. It was a big risk (because if he won, he would win the GP) but I felt so good that day, so strong and confident. After he led for maybe two or three laps, I passed him back; not on the last lap but I think four or five laps from the end. It was such a good race.'

Photos: P. Haudiquert

The Year in Numbers

JHK Silkolene Kawasaki

Championship Position: Everts (1st), Vohland (3rd)

Race Wins: 10 – Everts (8), Vohland (2)

Top 3 Race Finishes: 31 – Everts (19), Vohland (12)

GP Wins: 6 – Everts (5), Vohland (1)

Podiums: 15 – Everts (8), Vohland (7)

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Robin

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MXGP

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Alfie

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Hi Alfie, yes we do! You can check out our monthly MXGP Magazine at the link HERE: <https://issuu.com/mxgpmag>
Regards
MXGP

“ Is there anywhere to watch some MXGP races for free?

Ivan

Dear Ivan ,
You can watch some replays of MXGP races exclusively on our MXGP-TV YouTube channel (Here is the link: <https://www.youtube.com/user/mxgptv>)
Best Regards
MXGP

“ Hi I missed the Studio Show with Antonio Cairoli, is there anywhere to watch the replay?

Joe

Hi Joe
sure! You can watch our Studio Show with Antonio Cairoli HERE: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MjiRe_cjMCU.
Thanks
MXGP

“

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Sally

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