

Motorcycling with John Savage

# New 250 mini road race championship confirmed

The welcome resurgence of the 250cc class, including its re-introduction to the Isle of Man TT schedule, albeit on the Billown circuit at Castletown, not the 37.73 miles Mountain Course, means quarter-litre riders will have their own separate race at this year's Ulster Grand Prix, counting towards a new mini road race championship.

The Belfast Telegraph Ulster Grand Prix Bike Week will run from Monday—Saturday, August 11—16, climaxing with the Ulster Grand Prix on the Saturday, when roads will close on the Dundrod circuit at

9.30am. There will be a Bike Rideout from the paddock on Monday 11th; Mini Moto racing in the paddock the following evening; practice for the Dundrod 150 national road races on Wednesday 13th, with roads closing at 1.30pm; Ulster GP practice and the Dundrod 150 races on Thursday 14th, with roads closing at 10.30am; and a 'Meet the riders' paddock open day on Friday 15th.

Last year's Ulster Grand Prix was curtailed by torrential rain, however, that has not dampened the spirits of the promoters, Dundrod and District Motorcycle Club, and this year's events was launched at the Adelaide Insurance/IAM Irish Motorcycle Festival, in the RUAS Members' Rooms, at the King's Hall in Belfast, last Friday evening.

The 250cc race will be sponsored by Rea Estates—originally from the Dundrod area, managing director William Rea is a motorcycling enthusiast, who runs a highly

successful estate agency business in Northern Ireland and in England.

UGP Clerk of the Course Noel Johnston announced that following discussions with Isle of Man TT co-ordinator Paul Phillips and North West 200 supremo Mervyn Whyte, the 250cc races at all three events will count towards a new 'King of the 250s Mini Championship', with an overall prize fund.

Noel explained: "It has been agreed on principle. The finer details still have to be ironed out, so it is definitely going to happen."

This year's Ulster Grand Prix again has the Belfast Telegraph as its title sponsor, with the Ulster Grand Prix Supporters' Club again the chief backers, in addition to valuable assistance from Lisburn City Council, which was represented by Mayor of Lisburn, Councillor James Tinsley, at the launch, also attended by Sports Minister, Edwin Poots.

Mr Poots, who recently

announced a £35,000 allocation from his Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure towards Ulster motor cycle sport, commented: "Motor sport is a key driver in positioning Northern Ireland as a world class venue for sporting events."

"The Ulster Grand Prix continues to be one of the most popular motor sporting events in Northern Ireland and I hope that, with the right support, from both private and public sector, this event will continue to grow in strength and secure its future in the longer term."

Noel Johnston was equally positive in his outlook: "Despite the 2007 event nearly being washed out, we have bounced back with optimism, and more financial backing, in making the 2008 Ulster Grand Prix the best yet."

Since its formation by Des Jardin in 1963, the Ulster Grand Prix Supporters' Club has pumped a staggering £800,000 into the event. Without their support, the Ulster GP

would have disappeared from the calendar years ago, and their 2008 recruiting campaign was also launched at last weekend's Motorcycle Festival.

For the first time in 14 years, Ballymoney veteran Robert Dunlop returns to the 250cc class this season, aboard the Roy Hanna Motors Honda—Robert's last 250cc race at Dundrod was in 1993, when he finished runner-up to Phillip McCallen, prior to his horrific Isle of Man TT crash the following June, which restricted him to racing 125cc machines.

In addition to Robert, the 250cc entry will include his sons William—last year's 250cc victor—and Michael, plus John McGuinness and Ian Lougher.

The designated charity for this year's Ulster Grand Prix is Ireland Air Ambulance, a new charity which hopes to get a vital Air Ambulance service off the ground in Northern Ireland.

# NICOLE UNVEILS HER NEW COLOURS



North Antrim MLA Ian Paisley jnr and his son were on hand to help Nicole McAleer launch her 2008 racing campaign at the King's Hall in Belfast last Saturday. Photo by Philip Campbell

With North Antrim MLA Ian Paisley jnr and his son giving a helping hand, Omagh schoolgirl Nicole McAleer launched her 2008 British 125cc Championship campaign at the Motorcycle Festival in Belfast's King's Hall last Saturday.

Mr Paisley, a keen motorcycling enthusiast, was delighted to be amongst the first people to see Nicole's newly liveried RS125 Honda, bedecked in the traditional pale blue colour scheme which has become synonymous with her new sponsor, former 125cc World Championship grands prix rider Steve Patrickson, who himself was a teenage racing prodigy.

As reported last week, Nicole has signed to ride in this season's British 125cc series for the West Yorkshire-based team which won the corresponding title last year, when young English rider Luke Jones took the crown for Shipley-based SP125Racing, owned by Patrickson.

Daughter of former road racer Paul McAleer (I got it right this week), 15 year old Nicole began competing as an eight year old in the Irish Mini Moto Championship in 2000, before progressing to the British Mini Moto Championship in 2002.

She made her short circuit racing debut in the Irish 125cc Clubmans' Championship in 2005 and contested half of the Irish 125cc National Championship the following year, before she concentrated on the British 125cc Championship for the remainder of that season.

Nicole made history during 2006, when she became the first Irish female to score points in a

British short circuit championship event, when she finished 15th in the British 125cc Championship race at Snetterton in Norfolk, and she subsequently topped that with an excellent tenth position in the British 125cc Championship race at Knockhill in Scotland.

That year, she was also awarded the prestigious Irish Racer Magazine Short Circuit Merit Award.

Known as 'Bratface', and a diminutive 5ft 4in and 58kg—wearing leathers, helmet, boots and gloves—Nicole had a disappointing 2007 British 125cc Championship season aboard her Splash Racing Honda, largely due to mechanical gremlins, and at the end of last year she qualified for the Red Bull Rookies selection finals at the Paul Ricard circuit in France, but failed to gain a Red Bull Rookies scholarship.

Already in training for the forthcoming season—cycling, riding a moto cross bike and kick boxing—the GCSE student enthused: "I am really looking forward to riding for Steve Patrickson. The experience that Steve can pass on will be very valuable to me in my racing career. I cannot wait 'til the season starts, as having a bad year in '07 has made me twice as determined as before."

Nicole joins Matthew Hoyle—who she dubs her most respected rival—together with Ben Barrett, Jordan Malton and Luke Hinton in the SP125Racing team, with 16 year old Hoyle to concentrate on contesting the Red Bull MotoGP Rookies Cup, which will be staged at seven European MotoGP venues—a series in which Ballinamallard youngster Josh Elliott will also compete.

Nicole will get to grips with her new 125cc Honda for the first time during pre-season testing in Spain at the end of next month.

## Shots from the Show



David Hailwood, son of the late Mike Hailwood, displayed a number of exotic replica machines at last weekend's Motorcycle Festival in Belfast, including this MV Agusta and Honda, representative of the machines raced in his heyday by his late father, and (in background) a replica Bob McIntyre Honda. Photo by Philip Campbell



Jonathan Rea has his sights firmly set on this year's World Supersport Championship, but the Larne man—who celebrated his 21st birthday last weekend—felt quiet at home aboard Omagh schoolgirl Nicole McAleer's RS125 Honda, at last weekend's Motorcycle Festival in Belfast. Photo by Philip Campbell



For the forthcoming season, Castlerock's Marty Nutt is switching from the British Superbike Cup series to the British Supersport Championship, and he also hopes to contest the new Yamaha R1 Cup. Marty had his new Yamaha YZF-R6 at the Adelaide Insurance/IAM Motorcycle Festival in Belfast last weekend—a show organised by his father Billy, Marty—who is marrying his fiancée today (Thursday)—is backed this year by NuttTravel.com, T&G and Dawn International. After a two week honeymoon, Marty returns home before heading off for pre-season testing in Spain. Photo by Philip Campbell



George McCann conducted a number of chat shows during last weekend's Motorcycle Festival in Belfast. Here the Killinchy man chats to, from left: Isle of Man TT kingpin John McGuinness; British Superbike Championship runner Karl Harris; and Castlerock's Marty Nutt, who this year will contest the British Supersport Championship and hopefully the new Yamaha R1 Cup series. Photo by Philip Campbell

## Superteen deal for Ulster riders

The list of riders who began their racing careers in the British Aprilia Superteen Challenge series reads like a 'Who's Who' of current top racers, and the organisers have come up with a special deal for Ulster riders who wish to contest this year's Superteen Championship.

18 year old Scott Kelly from Comber cut his racing teeth in the Superteen series, before he moved up to the Yamaha R6 Cup, Irish Clubmans' Supersport 600 Championship, and most recently the Irish Superbike Championship.

This year, Scott will be concentrating on the newly introduced British Thundersport Championships, contesting the Powerbike class astride his Honda Fireblade CBR1000RR, together with the Irish Superbike Championship—the Thundersport Championships replace the now defunct MRO Championships, and highlights will be screened by Motors TV.

Scott has two Fireblades at his disposal this year—his 2007 ex-John Donnan superbike and a second machine ridden last term by Ulster-based Welshman Ian Lougher.

Others who have gone on to much greater things after serving their apprenticeship in the Superteen series are: MotoGP World Champion Casey Stoner, double World Superbike champion James Toseland, AMA Superbike and grands prix privateer Chaz Davies, current BSB front-runners Cal Crutchlow, Leon Camier and Karl Harris, and rising World 125cc Championship star Bradley Smith, amongst many others.

Australian Stoner travelled halfway around the world to start his tarmac racing career in the Aprilia Superteen Challenge and fondly remembers the series.

He said: "This fantastic one make series gave me the perfect grounding in race skills and set me on the road to success in a way that no other series could have. I would urge any aspiring young racer to take up the Superteen Challenge, if they really want to find out just how much potential they have."

## Kirk Jamison RSC pub quiz



Following the tremendous success of the pub quiz held last November, the first fundraiser of this year for the Kirk Jamison Racing Supporters' Club will be another pub quiz in The Wildflower Inn, Greyabbey, on Saturday, February 9.

The quiz and craic will get underway at 8pm and teams of up to five people are welcome, with an entry fee of £10. All local clubs and organisations are invited to enter, although teams can also be made up and entered on the night, when a light supper will be provided for all participants.

The next club meeting will be at 8pm tonight (Thursday) in The Wildflower Inn—the club meets in The Wildflower on the first Thursday of each month, and new members are always welcome.

Further details about the club or the quiz can be obtained from Alison on 4278 8447 or Alan on 07710 010065. Information on club activities can also be found at www.kjamisonracing.com or www.nicebikepaintshop.co.uk

## ISB riders set out their stall



Some of Ulster's top Irish Superbike Championship riders set out their stall at the Adelaide Insurance/IAM Irish Motorcycle Festival in Belfast's King's Hall last weekend, when promoter Billy Nutt offered the riders a stand at the show to promote the forthcoming Irish Superbike Championship. From left: defending Irish Superbike champion Michael Pearson, from Moneyreagh, Newtownards rider Kirk Jamison, and Scott Kelly from Comber. The Irish Superbike Championship kickstarts with an Easter holiday weekend double header at Bishopscourt and Kirkintown. Photo by Roy Adams, Mid Antrim Media

## Armoy Club fundraiser

Armoy Motorcycle Road Racing Club, which recently gained affiliation to the Ulster Centre of the Motor Cycle Union of Ireland, is forging ahead with plans to run the inaugural Armoy road races next year.

The club has a number of fundraising initiatives in the pipeline, the first of which will be a 'Night of Film and Craic', in association with the James Brothers, in the Manor Hotel, Ballymoney, on Thursday, February 21, at 8pm.

Everyone is welcome to the screening of the James Brothers classic road racing films, 'Charge of the Bike Brigade' and 'Greasy Rider'. There will be raffles and prize giveaways and admission will be just £3, payable at the door.

## New title sponsor for Kells road races

This summer's Kells Road Race Festival was officially launched at last weekend's Adelaide Insurance/IAM Irish Motorcycle Festival in Belfast's King's Hall, to announce Adelaide Insurance as the new title sponsor.

Newtownards man Lester Ferguson and his wife Aileen are two of the chief organisers of the highly popular Kells meeting, and are delighted to welcome Adelaide Insurance on board.

The Kells Road Race Festival will take place from Friday—Sunday, July 18—20, beginning with a Charity Classic Run on the Friday, with practising and two races on Saturday, culminating in a 12 race programme on Sunday, which is sure to attract the usual top class entry.

Further information can be obtained from kellsroadraces@hotmail.com www.kellsroadraces.com or race secretary Aileen Ferguson on 00353 4692 40972 or 00353 8722 89958.