

LIFE IN LOCKDOWN

MAY UPDATE

Another month has gone and whatever you say there has still been a lot happening. Most importantly I hope everyone is keeping safe and well! This month I'm doing something different and I hope you enjoy. Speedway I believe is a sport where the friendliness and openness is often, not always, but most the time, and therefore it creates a lot of interest and questions so this month I'm going to discuss certain topics, all my own opinion just to give an insight so let's start talking...

How'd you even get into Speedway?

So to begin, simple I know, but literally one of the most common questions we get asked. Everyone's answers are different but here's my story... My earliest memory of the sport was when I was little, sat staring at the TV, and seeing Jason Crump winning the world Championship. To be fair I've actually thought about why this could of interested me so much, due to how many people have asked me but it's just everything. The rawness, how simple it is, the speed and seeing someone achieve their dreams to me is so powerful and as a kid being able to sit there and be absolutely star struck is just indescribable. And in that moment I just said that's what I want to do! And since, that same feeling has stuck with me. Plus that person that inspired me was called Jason, so for a little kid to have the same name, have something simple to have in common I guess probably helped a lot? Maybe I guess? Possibly? Add into that, both sides of my family raced, not necessarily in speedway but it's all similar. My dad and his dad did motocross and grass track and my mums dad did grass track also so not being funny that helps too. So until I was like 10 I raced motocross only and then I finally got to ride speedway thanks to all the hard work put into the Hagon Shocks academy at Lakeside and then we've just gone from there!



Motocross Vs Speedway

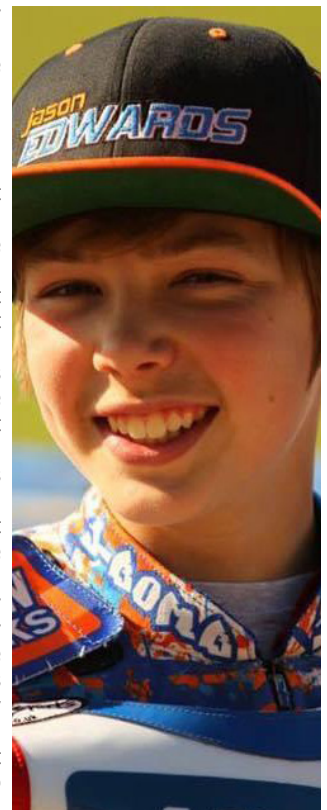
At the end of the day motocross and speedway are very different but they're more similar than you might of first thought, hence why maybe lots of motocross riders turn to speedway. So the biggest difference is the tracks and the bikes - We'll start with the tracks. Both dirt, have straights, have bends, and get raced on but that's probably as far as there similarities go. A speedway track is closer to an athletics track than an MX track, in the fact it's an oval and only left whereas motocross has jumps, right turns, berms, ruts and the tracks get more chewed up than a speedway track. In addition races at speedway only last a minute whereas MX races often last between 15-30 mins so different again.

The bikes are also hugely different, both have engines, carbs, wheels etc but the biggest difference really is the shape of the bike. In essence a speedway bike is more like a bmx bike with an engine bolted in and the brakes taken off in the simplest and least mechanical way of talking whereas an MX bike has proper suspension, brakes and a kickstart. But each to their own, they work the best for what they're for and are both the most fun ever.



Progression through the Sport

As with any sport, every individual or team aims for progression, in order to climb the ladder of success and reach the pinnacle of the chosen sport. In speedway the ladder to me is as follows...Youth Speedway-National League-Championship-Premiership-Sweden-Poland-European-World Championship. It looks simple hey, but between each step comes a lot of differences and challenges so I'm going to talk about what I've learnt and experienced so far. So at the start it's stepping up from youth speedway to the National League. So the biggest difference I found was your now working in a team environment. At youth level it's all individual, but as soon as you go into the national league you are part of a team. Team talks, team track walks, riding with a partner, having a team manager, talking to teammates discussing different aspects, riding with older and more experienced riders, and I know that all probably just sounds like what you all may know or think is the norm. But national league racing is the start, so everything is new and to me that was the biggest step of adjusting to the National League. And then comes my most recent step on the ladder and that's stepping to the Championship. It's all similar except I think the level has just been raised, your often racing against other international riders, who are quicker, have a greater level of support and are then therefore investing more money solely into racing. All that being said, those boys are quick, and they're quick at the start. Or even if they miss the start their elbows are up and they're pushy. I love it but it's just that next level that I've got to adjust too but over time it'll come and we can continue to push on.



Bike Washes

The most fun part of speedway...NOT! It's the part of speedway that's hidden to the average fan but that doesn't mean it's not done. I guess it's just the saying, "you ride it, you clean it," but it's all part of the sport, and keeping your bike as fast and as safe as possible. When you clean a bike you're not only doing the obvious which is keeping it looking pretty, the bike wash is the best time to check the bike over completely, looking for any cracks or damage and therefore if anything needs to be replaced. So for the purpose of this I'll give an example of what goes on during a bike wash I did a fair few times last year.... So we're at Eastbourne on a Saturday night and then I'm at Mildenhall for a 3 O'clock start the next day. It's all finished, we're loaded up and now we're on our way home. Eastbourne's 2 hours away so we'll get back at around midnight. Then I'll be up at about 7am to get the bike wash started, I've only ridden one bike so that means only one bike to clean plus kit. So first job is unload, I'll take my kit into the house and get everything that needs washing out of my bag, give my mum my Kevlars, which she'll luckily clean for me which I'm thankful for, and then I'll start stripping the bike. We take all the covers off, clutch plates out, carb and air filter off to be cleaned, all oily bits off which I'll clean in the oil bath. The bike wash takes normally about 45 minutes and after plenty of degreaser and soapy water it's clean along with everything else. Then everything is left to dry while the bike is blown off with the air line. The dirty parts are cleaned separately and blown off too then it's onto the plates which are all cleaned individually and then it's time to build the bike back up. After a little while, and plenty of grease everything is all set, ready to race and then we load up and the process is repeated. The bike wash process varies but it's normally about 2-3 hours so I just give myself a bit of time in case something ends replacing. So that's that - Bike wash complete and onto Mildenhall for another race day.



International Racing

And my last question I get asked a fair bit is what it's like to race abroad. I've been lucky enough to be selected to race in these events and at the end of the day it's different. The biggest difference is the tracks are often bigger, for example last year when I competed in the Under 19 European's, both the semi final and final were raced on 400m tracks a bit different to the UK where they are smaller. And they're also wider to and to me if the tracks are wider it creates a lot more room and therefore safer for closer racing because you can generate more speed and have more line choices. So heading abroad, I do feel like it is sometimes a different sport but that where we just need to practice.



So that's it, I hope I've answered a few of your questions and given a different insight into the sport. If you've got anymore questions please send them through to me or likewise if you enjoyed this let know and I can always answer more questions with possibly a different perspective to normal.

See you soon,

Jason

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