

Motorcycling with John Savage

Morgan teams up with Branson and Action Cancer



Davy Morgan (on bike) with members of his supporters' club, Kerry McCrea of Action Cancer and Mayor of Ards, Councillor Jim Fletcher.

Photo by Philip Campbell

Saintfield road racer Davy Morgan has teamed up with Action Cancer, with a pledge to raise £700 for the charity, to go towards their life saving breast screening services — if Davy raises the cash, it will provide mammograms for an additional ten women across the province.

Meanwhile, the former Senior Manx Grand Prix winner and 250cc North West 200 victor, has teamed up for a second year with former English racer Steve Caffyn's CSC Branson Racing, to contest the North West 200, Isle of Man TT, Southern 100 and Ulster Grand Prix, together with as many Irish national road races as finances permit, plus the Scarborough Gold Cup meeting. The team will provide Morgan with new Yamaha R1 Superstock and R6 Supersport machines, supplied by Paul Branson of top UK dealership Branson Yamaha. Additionally, Davy will race his own 250 Honda and will have his own Honda Fireblade CBR1000RR superbike as a back-up machine. At this summer's Isle of Man TT, Davy will ride a Yamaha R1 for Russell Benney's Phase One team, famed in World Endurance Championship racing, in both the Superbike and Senior races, while riding the CSC Branson bikes in the Supersport and Superstock races. Davy commences his season at this weekend's Cookstown 100 and his new Davy Morgan 71 Supporters' Club has been

instrumental in linking Davy with Action Cancer, with a charity challenge to raise £700 during the season for the charity, part of which includes purchasing badges with Davy's famous pink helmet and pink ribbon design — Davy will also display the Action Cancer logo on his bikes and racing leathers. Speaking of his new link with Action Cancer, Davy explained: "Most families have been touched by cancer in some way and I'm pleased to be able to give something back to a leading local cancer charity. Through my dedicated supporters' club, we have designed a new helmet shaped pin badge with Action Cancer's branding incorporated, which will be on sale at all the races to help us raise vital funds." Joanna Currie, consultant radiographer for Action Cancer, said: "It is fantastic to have the support of Davy Morgan, not only in terms of fundraising, but also in raising awareness of this service. Breast cancer continues to be the most common cancer in women here, but due to education and screening programmes, the survival rates continue to increase and Action Cancer is delighted to have played a part in that."

Rea and Laverty go Dutch

Jonathan Rea enjoys the sharp end of racing — the 'getting mucked in' part of the sport.

It's a timeless tradition that goes back to the days when Jonathan's late grandfather, John Rea, discovered a rare, raw, young talent, who subsequently became revered as William Joseph Dunlop, OBE, MBE.

Now Jonathan, together with his fellow 22 year old, Eugene Laverty, is Ireland's great hope to succeed the much lamented Dunlop as our next world champion.

After he finished runner-up to his Hannspree Ten Kate Honda team-mate, Australian Andrew Pitt, in last year's World Supersport Championship, a year after he finished second to Japanese factory Honda rider Ryuichi Kiyonari in the British Superbike Championship, Rea was elevated to the World Superbike Championship with the Dutch based Hannspree Ten Kate Honda equipe.

Despite travelling the world and his feted status as a 'works' rider, Jonathan takes as much time as he can to support and assist younger brother, Richard, and his dad, former multi-Irish champion Johnny, as Richard challenges for this season's Irish Superbike Cup Championship.

Young Richard is making a good fist of his first serious challenge for an Irish title and after the opening two rounds and eight races in the series — at Mondello Park, Bishopscourt and Kirkistown — he has scored

a brace of wins and trails Skerries rider Michael Sweeney by 22 points in the overall standings.

When he isn't in his kid brother's camp, and under his father's feet, Jonathan is leaning over the shoulder of Falkirk ace Keith Amor, who bases himself at Rea's Larne home during his regular forays to race this side of 'the pond'.

Amor dominated the Easter weekend racing at Bishopscourt and Kirkistown, and became the first Scots rider to win the prestigious Enkalan Trophy at Bishopscourt on Easter Saturday — a prized piece of silverware, upon which Jonathan's father Johnny's name was engraved on no less than three occasions: 1983, '87 and 1994.

Predictably, it has been a baptism of fire for Rea in the World Superbike Championship, in which Jonathan has, so far, been somewhat overshadowed by former British Superbike Championship rival Leon Haslam (Stiggy Motorsport Honda).

The Derbyshire rider is currently fifth in the world standings, two places ahead of Rea, with Japanese hero Nori Haga (Xerox Ducati) leading the way by 40 points from double American Superbike champion Ben Spies (Aldstare Suzuki).

Jonathan made a respectable start in the curtain-raiser at Phillip Island in Australia, where he placed fifth and ninth in the two races, and followed that with 12th and eighth in Qatar. He was knocked off during the formative stages of the first race at Valencia in Spain and after a good

start slumped to 13th in race two.

This weekend, the pressure is on Rea and team-mate, former grands prix ace Spaniard Carlos Checa, as the Hannspree Ten Kate Honda team lines up for the fourth round of the World Superbike Championship on home tarmac at Assen in Holland.

The team has been working around the clock since Valencia, looking for ways to improve the power delivery of their Fireblades and Rea undertook a brief test session at an oval circuit close to the team's base and declared himself happy with the work undertaken and confident of an improvement in performance at Assen, which is just 50 km north of the Ten Kate squad's Nieuweleusen workshops.

Rea acknowledged: "After what has been a sluggish start to the season, we needed to look at making some changes to the bike for this weekend to improve the feeling. The guys have found some pretty positive developments back at base and I was able to try them out last week. The feeling with the throttle is much better now and that was the main area of concern."

"Assen is a great place, for a number of reasons, and I got my first podium with the team there last year [in the World Supersport Championship]. The circuit should suit the bike better than Valencia anyway, and we're all in a really positive frame of mind, so I'm really looking forward to the weekend."

Team manager Ronald ten Kate conceded: "In spite of a fourth place in Qatar, it has been clear that our results so far this season have not been what we would have expected, so we have been looking very closely at how we can improve the feeling with the throttle. We have made quite a big change to the bikes and this is both mechanical and in the electronics. We were able to test the changes last week and now we go to Assen feeling much more positive that we can improve things at our home race."

He continued: "We've been working very hard since Valencia to find a good feeling for the riders when they open the throttle. I think we now have a much better connection. We made a small test last week and Jonathan's reaction was really positive, so we'll take it to Assen with some confidence."

"To be honest, this is not a small step, it's quite a considerable change to the bike, both mechanically and electronically, but we're really positive that it will bring the results that seem to have eluded us so far this season."

World Supersport Championship
After two forgettable years in the 250cc world championship, aboard grossly uncompetitive machinery, and two 'wild card' rides with Yamaha during the closing stages of last year's World Supersport Championship, Toomebridge man Eugene Laverty scored his maiden world championship win in Valencia, Coventry's Cal Crutchlow (Yamaha Italia) and 2007 champion, Turk Kenan Sofuoglu (Hannspree Ten Kate Honda) lead the

podium again as the season progresses. He opened his account by finishing fifth in the first round in Australia, and his ninth place in Valencia should be measured by the fact that he was handicapped by a poor qualifying and after a sluggish start in mixed conditions he made rapid progress towards the end of the race.

Laverty's world title challenge remains well on course. After his debut World Supersport Championship win in Valencia, Coventry's Cal Crutchlow (Yamaha Italia) and 2007 champion, Turk Kenan Sofuoglu (Hannspree Ten Kate Honda) lead the

title chase by 11 points, with Laverty, defending champion Andrew Pitt (Hannspree Ten Kate Honda) and his fellow Aussie and MotoGP refugee Ant West (Stiggy Motorsport Honda) tied for second position.

Eugene enthused: "I'm really looking forward to this weekend. I've raced at Assen in 2007 and 2008, when I competed in the 250 GPs. We learned more about our chassis at Valencia and that will help our development and keep our speed advantage. We never stand still. The track suits me and I'm ready for the challenge. I want to go out there and win."

His team boss, Simon Buckmaster, added: "We are only 11 points off the championship lead and I know we have as good a chance as anyone to win. We had a tough one at Valencia, but that has to be our worst race of the year and now we move on full of confidence for Assen. As for Eugene, he is going all out for a win."

The Ten Kate Honda team has won the World Supersport race at Assen since 2004 and is keen to continue the tradition at its home track, and defending champion Pitt and his team-mate Sofuoglu, will start favourites on their Hannspree Ten Kate Honda CBR600RRs.

Kirk explained: "I had to ride the two day Bishopscourt meeting with no steering damper on the superbike. It really didn't slow me down, but caused a lot of arm pump and eventually



Expect Eugene Laverty to be at full stretch at Assen in Holland for this weekend's World Supersport Championship race.

Photo by Parkalgar Honda team

Cookstown gets road racing season underway

The Cookstown 100 gets the Irish road racing season underway this weekend, with a packed 16 race programme.

Roads close for practice tomorrow (Friday) from 2.30pm and on Saturday roads close at 10am.

In addition to Irish Championship rounds in all classes, the meeting hosts the opening rounds of the resurrected Ulster Road Race Championships.

The entry reads like a 'Who's Who' of road racing, with all the top Irish riders entered, together with Scotsman Keith Amor and Lincolnshire's Gary Johnson.

For the first time, Cookstown Motor Cycle Club will be erecting barriers at each road leading to the circuit, at which spectators will be asked to pay £5, plus £3 for car parking, unless they have purchased an official £10 programme. The barriers will become effective from 7am on Saturday morning.

A spokesperson for the club explained: "It is long overdue. The fact is



Milton Thom, with Councillor Trevor Wilson, Chair of Cookstown District Council, and Milton's grandson Alan Thom.

Photo by Norman Bell

that Irish road racing has been the greatest free show on earth. Due to the financial situation, if there isn't enough revenue generated by the public this year, it could well mean the deathknell for the Cookstown 100.

"The costs are phenomenal and are rising each year. It isn't fair to be asking riders to pay to entertain, so we will be charging spectators a fee this year to safeguard the future of the Cookstown 100."

The club's move to 'charge' admission to

spectators is one which I applaud and I wish them well in their endeavours.

Cookstown man Milton Thom, proprietor of the Royal Hotel in the Co Tyrone town, who was critically injured while spectating at last July's Skerries 100 road races in north Dublin, is synonymous with the Cookstown 100.

15 members of Milton's family will join thousands of others to participate in next month's Belfast Marathon in an 'Appreciation Run' to raise funds for the burns units at St James

Hospital in Dublin, Belfast's Royal Victoria Hospital, and the Motor Cycle Union of Ireland Medical Team, all of whom have treated Milton since the horrific Skerries accident, in which he was severely burned after the petrol tank of Gary Johnson's Honda exploded following a crash and doused Milton in burning fuel.

Thankfully, after a long period of hospitalisation, both north and south of the border, Milton is back home recuperating, and he was well enough to attend the launch of the Cookstown 100, at which he received a tumultuous welcome.

A member of the Thom family explained: "The Thom family is deeply indebted to the race paramedics and staff at both the Dublin and Belfast hospitals for their unflinching attention."

Anyone wishing to sponsor the Thom's family in their relay Appreciation Run can do so by contacting the Royal Hotel, Cookstown, or any member of the family.

Briggs fifth in Supersport Cup

Bangorman Kevin Briggs is fifth in the Irish Supersport Cup Championship, following a string of useful results at Bishopscourt and Kirkistown over the Easter holiday weekend.

After he finished third in the 2007 Irish Clubmans' Supersport Championship, last season was Kevin's rookie year in the Irish National Supersport Short Circuit Championship, backed by Millisle-based Steve Baker Motorcycles for the first time, with a Suzuki GSX-R600.

Briggs was disappointed with his qualifying performance at Bishopscourt on Good Friday, where he finished eighth in the first Supersport Cup race, and he improved one place on that in race two and replicated that result in his third and final race.

Kevin is now fifth in the Supersport Cup Championship standings, ahead of the next round at Mondello Park in Co Kildare on May 23/24.

Lorna Baker has put together a fundraising evening for Kevin in Bangor's Imperial Bar, on Saturday, May 30, when the



Dunadry rider Jonny Buckley has returned to racing with a vengeance and produced some tremendous results at Bishopscourt on Good Friday/Easter Saturday and at Kirkistown on Easter Monday. His two wins in the Irish Supersport Cup Championship races at Bishopscourt, combined with a second place, earned him the Steve Baker Motorcycles Irish Supersport Cup 'Rider of the Meeting' trophy, together with a £50 bonus. Jonny received his award from Steve and Lorna Baker, sponsors of Supersport Cup Championship challenger, Kevin Briggs, from Bangor. Buckley is currently second in the Supersport Cup Championship, just three points behind Skerries man Michael Sweeney and 40 points ahead of rising Newtownabbey starlet Glenn Irwin.

Photo by James Gray

special guest will be Tim McGarry, best known as 'Da' from the popular tv series 'The Hole in the Wall Gang' and 'Give My Head Peace'.

There will be lots of entertainment, including a raffle with some of the prizes donated by: Midland Jeweller, Newtownards; Road Racing Ireland magazine; The Cabin, Donaghadee; Lubecare, Tandragee; Steve Baker Motorcycles; and Lorna Baker Web Design, Millisle.

Kirk counts on Abacus

There can't be many accountants who depend on an abacus to make numbers add up, but Ardsman Kirk Jamison can lay claim to being an exception to the rule.

Kirk, commercial manager with Belfast based HJ Martin, has renewed his sponsorship with Newtownards company Abacus Print, and the 29 year old is over the moon with their continued backing, particularly in the current economic climate.

The Greyyabey based rider explained: "Abacus have been helping me out for a number of years. They are responsible for all my artwork and printing. The quality of the portfolio they produce for me has undoubtedly been a factor in my acquisition of new sponsors over recent years. This help alone has been invaluable, but last year they stepped into full sponsorship as well and have now continued that through to 2009."

He added: "Colin Wilson and Mervyn Mackey are fantastic to work with and simply couldn't do enough for me." Jamison has also been analysing his mixed fortunes over the Easter holiday weekend racing at Bishopscourt and Kirkistown.

The weekend began well at Bishopscourt on Good Friday, when Kirk finished third aboard the Jim Angus Contracts Honda Fireblade CBR1000RR in the first Irish Superbike Championship race, behind Scotsman Keith Amor and Lincolnshire's Gary Johnson.

In Sunday's opening ISB race, Jamison placed fourth, as Amor and Johnson again posted a one/two, with in-form Lisburn man Davy Haire third, while Kirk recorded a brace of top ten finishes in the Irish Supersport Championship races.

Kirk, who last month captained the Northern Ireland team to victory in the inaugural MotoSix Nations Championship at Donington Park in Leicestershire, against teams representing England, Isle of Man, Republic of Ireland, Scotland and Wales, described the Easter weekend as 'both positive and frustrating'.

He reflected: "It proved to me that both me and the bikes are quick enough to challenge for Supersport and Superbike honours this year, but we were dogged with niggling problems throughout."

Kirk explained: "I had to ride the two day Bishopscourt meeting with no steering damper on the superbike. It really didn't slow me down, but caused a lot of arm pump and eventually

aggravated an old shoulder injury.

"We changed the front suspension on my 600 for qualifying, to rectify a problem we were having, and whilst it fixed that problem, I couldn't turn the bike and ended up qualifying 16th, making good points in the races very hard to get."

His results at Kirkistown on Easter Monday weren't exactly what Jamison was looking for, as his best superbike position was eighth, while astride the Jim Angus Contracts Yamaha FZ-R6 he notched a fourth and a sixth place.

Kirk recounted: "With a steering damper fitted to the superbike and the front of the 600 fixed, I was looking forward to Monday. Qualifying went well and I ran near the front of every race for a while. For some reason though, we started boiling brake fluid in both bikes and while my 600 had major brake fade, my superbike decided to have no brakes whatsoever at random intervals."

"I ended up running straight on a number of times, losing any chance of podium places. Once I arrived at the hairpin on the superbike flat out in sixth gear to find I had no front brake and had only the back brake to get stopped."

The Irish Superbike Championship, in association with Irish Racer Magazine, resumes at Mondello Park in Co Kildare on May 23/24, when Jamison will be in action in both the Superbike and Supersport races, although he hopes to slot in a couple of non-championship races closer to home before then.



The Kirk Jamison Racing Supporters' Club is staging a fundraising evening in Ards Rangers Football Club, Portaferry Road, Newtownards, on Friday, May 8.

The evening will begin at 8pm, admission will be just £2 and there will be camel races and music. Everyone is welcome.



Kirk Jamison with Abacus Print directors Colin Wilson and Mervyn Mackey.

Photo by Bob Torrens B5/26-3-09