

Motorcycling with John Savage

BSB blasts off at Brands

The British Superbike Championship blasts off over the tight Brands Hatch Indy circuit in Kent on Monday and once again there is much Irish and Ulster interest in what is widely acknowledged as the world's most competitive domestic series.

Watanabe. They will be joined by Waterford's Brian McCormack, who rides a MAR Kawasaki for former BSB privateer Malcolm Ashley's team. The reigning Irish Superbike champion will be chasing the Superbike Cup title, won last year by Laverty — the series for privateer riders which runs concurrently within the main championship.

glory will be Omagh's B. J. Toal, who switches from the British Supersport Championship to the Superstock series with a Relentless TAS Suzuki GSX-R1000, and Portadown's Marshall Neill, who has stood on top of the BSB Superstock podium in the past.

Nikki Coates from Newtownabbey, another 19 year old, partners 18 year old Athlone student Cody Nally in the MAP Raceways Yamaha Junior team, while last year's British Suzuki GZX-R Trophy champion, 25 year old Ballymoney electrician Stanley Gamble, also makes his debut in the Junior Superstock series.



John Laverty putting the Buildbase Hawk Kawasaki ZX10-R through its paces at Brands Hatch.

Southern riders dominate Clubmans' races



Josh Cunningham, who scored a hat-trick at Mondello Park last weekend, has won the opening five rounds of the 125GP Newcomers' Clubmans' Championship.

Southern Irish riders dominated the second round of the Irish Clubmans' Championships at Mondello Park last weekend.

There was a much smaller than usual Ulster contingent, but a bumper 'home' entry, as the Irish Sidecar and Motorcycle Racing Supporters' Club slickly staged one race for each class last Saturday, followed by two races in each category on Sunday, as a Clubmans' Championship meeting was staged for the first time over the 1.8km Co Kildare national circuit.

Results Open National (non-championship), 1st race: 1, P Byrne; 2, P Barron; 3, R. Clarke; 4, J. Walsh; 5, D. Mulleady; 6, R. Lanigan; 7, R. Shanahan; 8, C. Nally; 9, T. Bradley; 10, B. Smith. 2nd race: 1, Barron; 2, Byrne; 3, Clarke; 4, Mulleady; 5, Walsh; 6, Lanigan; 7, Shanahan; 8, E. Hughes; 9, Smith; 10, M. Weldon. 3rd race: 1, Barron; 2, Byrne; 3, Clarke; 4, Walsh; 5, Mulleady; 6, Hughes; 7, Smith; 8, Shanahan; 9, M. Fitzpatrick; 10, Lanigan.



Alastair Seeley rounds Melbourne Loop during the MotoSix Nations Championship at Donington Park, in which he scored three magnificent wins and a second place for the triumphant Northern Ireland team. This weekend he begins his campaign in the British National Superstock 1000 Championship at Brands Hatch.

Golf with Ian Alexander

Hoey and McLroy set the agenda

THIS week's headlines are dominated by two players. One for what he did last Sunday and the other for what he may do next Sunday. For Michael Hoey Sunday's victory in the Portugal Open was the glorious climax to a long and often disheartening apprenticeship as a tour professional while this Sunday Rory McLroy will hope his effortless climb up the rankings will continue in this week's Masters. Is thought of victory too outlandish?

card for the next two seasons and can expect to play in all the top events. A final round 5 under par, best of the day 66, added to his earlier rounds of 66, 76 & 69 tied him with Gonzalo Fernandez-Castano. The Spaniard has a reputation for winning play-offs; his three European Tour wins came by that route, but on this occasion he was foiled. Hoey showed quite amazing coolness in getting up and down twice, from four feet and five feet to keep himself alive, and then clinched the title with another up and down, this time from eight feet.

What's clear, McLroy is unfazed by the furore he has created. He's completely confident of his ability, knows how to handle the occasion and is level-headed about his chances. As he says: 'I've played well to get here and now that I'm here I might as well enjoy it and see how far I can get. I'm expecting to play well and hopefully I'll be in the mix come the weekend.'

third on the Race to Dubai with 885,041 euro. Michael Hoey's victory in Portugal hoisted him to 25th in the Race with 275,226 euro and Gareth Maybin is 39th with 213,536 euro. Graeme McDowell at 50th has won 168,907 euro and Darren Clarke languishes in 112th place with 62,547 euro.

Over on the Ava John McAuley, 44 points, won the Fred Miller Salver. Trailing him were Richard Glasgow, 43 points, Adair Rutledge, 43 points, and Alfie Magill, 42 points. The stableford was won by Stephen Burnside, 43 points. He pipped Trevor Potter on the back nine with Dennis Quinn and Paul Sheridan next on 42 points.

Irish National Pre-97 Championship, 1st race: 1, C. Traynor; 2, K. Greaney; 3, A. Fitzpatrick; 4, P. Drennan; 5, L. Kavanagh; 6, A. Kenny; 7, P. O'Donoghue; 8, S. Meally; 9, R. Kerrigan; 10, G. Lyons. 2nd race: 1, Greaney; 2, Kenny; 3, Drennan; 4, Fitzpatrick; 4, O'Donoghue; 6, Meally; 7, Kavanagh; 8, J. McCann; 9, E. O'Donnell; 10, T. Griffin. 3rd race: 1, Drennan; 2, O'Donoghue; 3, Greaney; 4, Kavanagh; 5, Traynor; 6, Meally; 7, R. Whitmore; 8, L. Croty; 9, McCann; 10, T. Whitmore.

Unlike McLroy, Michael Hoey's progress to a first win on the European Tour has been long drawn out and most of his supporters must have concluded was unlikely to happen. Indeed there must have been times since he turned professional in 2002 when he asked himself if he was good enough. Was he destined to be another top amateur (he won both the Irish Amateur Open and British Amateur) who could not hack it as a professional?

Each time he seemed to get a beautifully smooth roll on the ball, never betraying the nerves he had got to be feeling. It was the display of a winner. Now he will build on that. PS: I must apologise to Michael. Last week I re-christened him Brian Hoey. That's the name of his dad whom I watched on many occasions winning championships and helping Shandon Park duff up local clubs. Clearly the experience has left a bigger impression on my subconscious than I realised. Still, one consolation: a mistake provides that instant confirmation that somebody actually reads the column.

Pauline Ringland - honorary secretary, Patsy Allen - honorary treasurer and Ann Fallon - honorary handicap secretary were all re-elected. CLUB RESULTS Mark Cheevers 81 (16) 65 won the John Nelson Trophy at Donaghadee on Saturday. Roger Dorrian 78 (12) 66 won the low section from Stewart Boal 76 (5) 71. The middle section went to Sam Carlisle 83 (13) 70, well clear of Colin Fleming 87 (14) 73, and in the high section Philip Pulford 90 (22) 68 won from Philip Baron 90 (20) 70. Neil Boyd, 72, won the gross with Darren Whiteside, 76, runner-up.

Glenn Watterson, 41 points, won the stableford at Bangor on Saturday. Alex Stewart, 34 points, won the gross. Roger Corry, 38 points, won the low section from J Graham and Graham Yarr; both 37 points. Stephen Douds, 39 points, won the middle section, pipping both Martin McGrugan and Pat O'Doherty on countback. The high section went to Reid Armstrong, 41 points, from John Rea, 40 points, and Ian Graham, 38 points.

Thundersport at Cadwell

The King of the Mountain meeting will be staged over the Lincolnshire circuit on Sunday and Monday, and Ulster entrants include Comber's Scott Kelly in the premier GP1 class, Newry pair Clifly Hamilton and Peter Newell in Formula 600 and Marty Lennon from Banbridge.

North Dublin Motorcycles RS125 Aprilia Championship, 1st race: 1, D. Murphy; 2, L. Johnston; 3, J. Lynn; 4, J. Chawke; 5, A. McDonnell; 6, T. Elliott; 7, D. Brady; 8, N. McLeery; 9, J. Pearson. 2nd race: 1, Murphy; 2, Lynn; 3, C. Parkhill; 4, J. Chawke; 5, Elliott; 6, Brady; 7, McLeery; 8, L. Chawke. 3rd race: 1, Murphy; 2, Parkhill; 3, Johnston; 4, Brady; 5, J. Chawke; 6, McDonnell; 7, Elliott; 8, L. Chawke; 9, Pearson.

Racing mags out now

The April editions of Irish Racer Magazine and Road Racing Ireland are now in the shops. Irish Racer, which has now been confirmed as sponsor of the Irish Superbike Championship, boasts interviews with John Laverty, Ian Gilpin, John Anderton, Geoff McMullan and Jill McWilliams — the much more attractive 'other half' of Jeremy — plus the regular monthly columns by big hitters Cameron Donald, Jonathan Rea, Eugene Laverty, Guy Martin and Alastair Seeley.

Easter bonanza at Bishopscourt and Kirkistown

The Irish Superbike Championship resumes over the Easter holiday weekend, with two of the biggest Ulster short circuit fixtures of the season, at Bishopscourt and Kirkistown. It has now been confirmed that this year's Irish Superbike Championship will be sponsored by Ireland's leading motorcycle publication, Irish Racer Magazine. The Enkalon Trophy ISB meeting at Bishopscourt is again jointly promoted by Killinchy and District Motor Cycle Club and the Motor Cycle Road Racing Club of Ireland, and for the first time it will be a two day meeting, with practice, qualifying and one race per class tomorrow (Friday), followed by a full race programme on Saturday, when the 33rd Enkalon Trophy race will be staged for the fastest 24 qualifiers, plus six invited riders.



Three riders to watch out for over the Easter weekend. From left, Scott Thompson from Cloughey, a newcomer to the Super Twins class; Newtownards man Kirk Jamison, who should be a front-runner in the Superbike and Supersport races; and Ballymoney's Gerard Kinghan, leader of the Irish Superbike Championship, after the opening round at Mondello Park a couple of weeks ago. Happy birthday to Scott, who got the key to his motorcycle on Tuesday, when he celebrated his 21st birthday.