

The Chequered F1ag



A Formula One blog by Stephen English
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What next for Laverty?

IN the aftermath of two runner-up finishes in the British round of the World Superbike championship Irishman Eugene Laverty could have been excused for feeling rather pleased with himself.

If the Toombridge native did take stock of his progress in the WSBK championship this year the announcement last Monday that his Yamaha team will be pulling out of the championship would surely have taken the wind from his sails and the smile from his face.

Laverty has enjoyed a superb rookie season with an exceptionally well judged double victory at Monza the obvious highpoint from a year that has seen him cement his place as a world class rider. The 25 year old came into his rookie season keen to show that he could make the adjustment from a 600cc Super Sport machine to the 1000cc Superbike. With former MotoGP title runner-up Marco Melandri as his teammate there would be a proven yardstick with which to measure Laverty.

The consistency with which Laverty has developed through the year meant that most sage paddock figures had earmarked him as a genuine title contender next season and with four rounds to go he is expected to add to his win tally from Monza. The news that Yamaha will pull out of the championship at the end of the year surely came as a body blow to Laverty who now must shift his focus from racing to finding a new ride for 2012.

The main dominoes, as far as Laverty is concerned, will fall in the WSBK paddock. With just one years experience riding a Superbike it is crucial that he continues to learn and develop aboard the big bike. In the past Superbikes were about aggression rather than precision but with riders like reigning champion Max Biaggi, Carlos Checa and Melandri leading the championship it is clear that smoothness and understanding of the technical limits of the machinery has become the crucial factor in riding at the limit of these machines.

BMW and Honda rides will be sought after

Laverty has also excelled at this throughout his career and as a result the teams in WSBK will be looking at him as a championship challenger next season and while he will have to compete with Melandri for the top rides there are no doubt that he will find plenty of suitors for his services. With the WSBK season coming to a close, it is inevitable that the teams outside of title contention will start to assess their seasons and determine whether their current rider 'line-ups' are acceptable going forward. One team that will have a difficult decision to make is BMW. The team hired Leon Haslam as their lead rider at the start of the year and the Englishman has been impressive aboard the S1000RR and shown that it is capable of finishing on the podium.

Unfortunately for the German team Troy Corser no longer appears able to merit a top line machine in the championship. The former, double champion was integral in the early stages of the BMW effort but it is clear that his day is now past and that new blood is needed within the camp.

Laverty would be a suitable candidate for the ride with his blend of speed and technical ability surely a major attraction to the German marque. Laverty's friendship with Haslam would also ensure a harmonious garage but whether BMW would find enough marketing value from an Irishman and an Englishman as their riders remains to be seen.

A similar issue could afflict Laverty at another leading team. The Ten Kate run Castrol Honda squad already has fellow Northern Irishman Jonathon Rea under contract for 2012 and the Dutch run squad find themselves under pressure to hire a more diverse rider line-up than Rea and Laverty. Ten Kate though would be a perfect landing spot for Laverty and could give him a more direct link to the MotoGP paddock than any other squad in WSBK.

Rea's season has been tainted by a fractured wrist that has seen one of the pre-season title favourites sidelined for the last six races. Even so he is still 50 points ahead of his underachieving teammate, Ruben Xaus, who looks certain to get the chop at the end of the season.

Exciting opportunities could be presented

One final opportunity within WSBK could present itself and it is perhaps the most appealing and competitive prospect for Laverty. Even though no firm plans have been announced for next year it is clear that Ducati will have an increased presence on the grid. The fabled Italian firm will launch their new Superbike at the end of the year and as a result it is inevitable that it will be pressed into action next year.

A full factory return to the championship is still uncertain but a factory supported bid, presumably with Carlos Checa's Althea squad, is sure to be the minimum undertaking from Ducati. If there is any support from Ducati a second bike is inevitable and Laverty would be a genuine contender for this ride. He would once again be competing with Melandri for the ride but with the Italian having endured a miserable year with Ducati it would be far from certain that he would accept a ride with the team in WSBK.

This could leave the door open for Laverty to work with Ducati where if he impressed a move to MotoGP would be his reward. With Nicky Hayden and Valentino Rossi out of contract at the end of 2012 Laverty would be perfectly placed to move back into GP racing for 2013. There is however one intriguing prospect in relation to Ducati returning to WSBK.

Prior to their withdrawal from the championship they had struck up an agreement with Colin Edwards to race for them this season. The American was keen to return to WSBK but when his hopes were dashed he returned to Tech 3 in MotoGP. The former double WSBK champion knows that he has little chance of winning in MotoGP but Superbikes provide him an opportunity to end his career with another title.

If Ducati came calling there is a real chance that he would jump at the prospect and thus leaves his Yamaha MotoGP ride available for next year. With Yamaha clearly impressed by Laverty's form in WSBK he would surely be a favourite for the MotoGP ride.

EQUESTRIAN Ravensdale Lodge

Great turn out for dressage league

WEEK five of Ravensdale Lodge's grass dressage league continued on Tuesday, August 2 with a great turn out for the competition which started in bright sunshine and continued until near dark.

There were four grandstand tickets on offer for Friday's Nations Cup (Aga Khan Trophy) at the RDS in Dublin courtesy of Longlines.

A draw for the tickets was held after each class with young rider Kelly Smith from Mullaghban Newry winning the ticket for Class 1 (Intro A), Dundalk rider Mary Cosgrove was drawn out of the hat for the ticket for Class 2 (Prelim 12) while another local rider, Eithne O' Hanrahan picked up the ticket for Class 3 (Prelim 14) and the final ticket of the evening went to Newry rider Clare Toal for class 4 (Novice 28).

It was a very even and fair spread with two tickets going north of the boarder and two tickets staying south which is a fair reflection of the support for the league at Ravensdale Lodge which nestles the boarder.

The competition on the evening was fierce as usual with class three, the prelim 14 class being particularly close with five of the nine entries getting a score of in excess of 70% and only being separated by a couple of percentage points.

Young rider Sophie Buller from Scarvagh came out on top in the class on a great score of 77.08% which was the highest score on the night, winner of Class 2, Karina Mc Veigh from Holywood Co. Down was second in the class on a score of 75.83% while third place went to Claire Martin who finished up with 75.41%.

Full results below.

Class 1: Intro A. # 1 Jill Hobson's Ludovik (J. Hobson) 70.86%, # 2 Clare Toal's Copper (E. Garvey) 66.08%, # 3 Grainne Bennett's Toddy (G. Bennett) 65.65%, # 4 Cairlinn Carroll's Indi (C. Carroll) 65.21%, # 5 Sandra Lyttle's Abbey (S. Lyttle) 60%, # 6 Mary Cosgrove's Rio (M. Cosgrove) 59.13%.

Class 2: Prelim 12. # 1 Karina Mc Veigh's Midnight Reflection (K Mc Veigh) 73.60%, # 2 Jan Dewhurst's Podge (J Dewhurst) 70%, # 3 Sharon Mc Keever's Cosmic Rolo (S Mc Keever) 67.60%, # 4 Liz

Curran's Pure Bliss (L. Curran) 64.80%, # 5 Marina Hope's Trinity Life (M. Hope) 62.80%, # 6 Lauren Allport's Boo (L Allport) 62.80%.

Class 3: Prelim 14. # 1 Sophie Buller's Abba (S Buller) 77.08%, # 2 Karina Mc Veigh's Midnight Reflection (K Mc Veigh) 75.83%, # 3 Claire Martin's Bewitched (C Martin) 75.41%, # 4 Jill Hobson's Ludovik (J Hobson) 74.16%, # 5 Jan Dewhurst's Podge (J Dewhurst) 71.66%, # 6 Eithne O' Hanrahan's Jo Jo (E O' Hanrahan) 67.08%.

Class 4: Novice 28. # 1 Claire Martin's Bewitched (C Martin) 75%, # 2 Clare Toal's Copper (C Toal) 69.57%, # 3 Emilia Mc Shane's Holly Berry (E Mc Shane) 67.50%, # 4 Emma Andrew's The Elf (E Andrew's) 67.03%.

Ravensdale Lodge grass dressage league continues Tuesday, August 16 and 30, start time 6pm.

Horse and Pony training results, Friday, July 29.

80cm Class: Divided between, Saoirse Murphy's Corballa Belle (S Murphy), Bonnie Bray's Jigsaw (B Bray) and Ciara Cornyn's Lorados Daughter (C Cornyn).

90cm Class: Divided between, Noleen Sexton's Jessica (N Sexton) and Kevin O'Callaghan's Magic (K O' Callaghan).

Congratulations to Noleen Sexton, winner of two grandstand tickets for the Nations Cup (Aga Khan Trophy) on Friday, August 5 at the RDS.

Week five cross jump league, kindly sponsored by Baileys Horse Feeds, Sunday, July 31.

Class 1, 1m (3'3"): Divided between, Eimear Mc Ateer's Patch (E Mc Ateer) and Terry Smyth's Daisy (T Smyth).

Class 85cm (2'9"): Divided between, Niall Smyth's Wild About Oscar (N Smyth), Alex Lee Simpson's Summerville Her Masters Voice (A L Simpson), Sharon Cowan's Cailin King (S Cowan), Bree Price's Sycamore Rose (B Price), Laura Robinson's Millie (L Robinson), Rachel Conn's Garnfach Lynn (R Conn) and Martin O' Brien's Sea breeze (M O' Brien).

Class 3 70cm (2'3"): Divided between, Rachel Muldoon's Popcorn (R Muldoon), Sarah



TOP: Hanna lockhart and Nancy Myles competing in Class Two cross jump league at Ravensdale Lodge. ABOVE: Mary Cosgrove is presented with her RDS ticket by Lauren Allport. INSET: Kelly Smyth is presented with her RDS ticket by Mary Cosgrove at Ravensdale Lodge

Richardson's Red Square 8 (S Richardson) and Jane Richardson's Zanadoo (J Richardson).

Cross jump league continues Sunday, August 14 28, September 4 and 18 and October 2. Classes 1m (3'3") at 10am, 85cm (2'9") at 12pm and 70cm (2'3") at 2pm.

Ravensdale Lodge offers world class facilities at unbeatable

value for money for further information on these or any forthcoming events, lessons, tuition treks, facility hire, advertising or sponsorship opportunities please contact Ravensdale Lodge on + 353 (0) 42 9371034, + 353 (0) 87 2306603, email info@ravensdalelodge.com or log on to www.ravensdalelodge.com

GREYHOUNDS Dundalk Stadium

Cracking Man has just one more serious question to answer

By Joe Carroll

CRACKING Man was asked another serious question in the semi-finals of the Bar-One Racing Irish Sprint Cup at Dowdallshill last Saturday night, and as was the case in each of his previous visits to the venue he had the answer.

So, too, had Yes Boss, in the second semi.

This most consistent of performers, who is now requiring more attention than ever before in his brilliant career because of a recurring wrist problem, chalked up his first win in this renewal of the Classic, leading throughout. His time, 21.39, matched Cracking Man's.

As he bid to bring his winning sequence to seven, the Graham Holland-trained Crackling Man wasn't too well away from five, and had two in front of him going to the bend, the fast-starting Shoemakers Lad and that outstanding veteran, Carlows

Pride.

Bunching, as so often happens at the first, put paid to the chances of Carlows Pride making the decider for the second year running, but showing experience beyond his age, Cracking Man steered clear, and was perfectly poised to mount a home straight challenge on the lead Shoemakers Lad had poached by keeping the inside line.

The Thomas Harte-trained Shoemakers Lad made a bold bid, but couldn't match the finishing kick of Cracking Man.

A length-and-a-half divided them at the line, with Hi There Rocky making up late ground to take the third qualifying spot, three lengths off Shoemakers Lad.

There was a huge local interest in the second semi-final, Drumcove Lad running for Newry's Aidan McAteer, and Gilford Driver aiming to enhance the fine record which the Jones brothers, Brian and Laurence, have in this competition. Both

are still standing.

Gilford Lad, housed at Laurence Jones' kennel in Corduff, just outside Carrickmacross, was second behind the fast-breaking Yes Boss at the bend, with Drumcove Lad in close proximity.

When Gilford got checked, pushing him back into the bunch, his chances of emulating two others trained at his kennel, Wayovertheodds and Black Arizona, by making the final looked remote.

But on straightening up Gilford got going again, and in trying to make ground on Yes Boss and Drumcove Lad, found his way into third. Distances were two-and-a-half lengths and just under a length.

Cracking Man, whose record reads tens wins and two seconds from twelve outings, and a fastest 21.13 in this competition, is sure to go off favourite in Sunday's final.

No only is the only unbeaten finalist, he has drawn the

preferred trap 4. He got an initial quote of 4/5 from the sponsors.

But connections of none of the others are without hope.

Gilford Lad (4/1) has also landed a plumb draw in three, and what a magnificent triumph it would be for his joint-owners if he were to succeed.

The line-up for the final is: 1 Drumcove Lad (Newry), 2 Shoemaker's Lad (Birr), 3 Gilford Lad (Carrickmacross), 4 Cracking Man (England), 5 Yes Boss (Naas), 6 Hi There Rocky (Roscrea).

The Sprint Cup will be one of the highlights on a wonderful day's sport at Dowdallshill.

In the afternoon, a top-class horse meeting takes place.

The first race is at 3.05, and in addition to the racing, there'll be all the fun of the fair for children, bouncy castles, face-painting, balloon modelling, etc.

The dogs go to traps for the first race at 7.30, and supporting the Classic final will be other deciders over a variety of distances.