

Eugene Laverty looks to 2014

"If I can keep doing what I've been doing and getting the results hopefully the right door will open."

{Words & Images Stephen English}

Interview

OUR MAN IN THE PADDOCK TALKS TO OUR MAN IN THE PADDOCK.

Tell me about your season?

The first half of the year was a bit of a disaster. The speed was there but, what more can I say, we had five DNFs and that's something that you can't really afford when you're challenging for the championship.

It was almost like you'd win one race and retire from the next.

Yeah, it was like that and when I look at the rest of the year the last nine races I was on the podium. When I finished a race I think only two of them weren't on the podium. We had two engines go, the suspension broke in one crash, electronic glitch in another and it was just that everything seemed to go wrong in the races and put me in the gravel trap. That was disappointing but we did what we could in the second half of the year but it was too late.

Did you find it hard at any point to keep motivated when you looked at the championship? At one point you were 50 points behind Sykes.

I don't understand when people say they're struggling for motivation, it doesn't make much sense to me. We're racing motorbikes for a living so why wouldn't you want to go faster! What's the point in riding around slow? The fun part is pushing the limit and trying to win. I don't think that I could ever lose motivation after the two years that I was here in GPs and battling for a point in 250's. I had something like five points in two years here so I could never struggle for motivation when I'm fighting for a world title.

For next year is the Suzuki deal confirmed?

It's not confirmed but we're close with it. It looks like a really strong option now but it's been going on for weeks and I really want to get something signed and be secure. It's already November so I want to know what I'm doing next year. We'll get something sorted soon.

Has a 2016 MotoGP ride been included in your talks with them?

Not on paper but that's the intention. We've had talks about that as well and had contact with Japan so that's the intention. I want to come back to MotoGP but only if it's right. I want to stay patient. There was an opportunity to come back this year and just about every year in the last handful of years. I knocked them back because when I come here it has to be right. I don't want to just be part of the show, I did that before and there's no fun in that. The fun is winning and doing your best and unless I feel like I can come here and be competitive I'll wait.

Do you look at that after the two years here on uncompetitive machinery that you can't afford to come back on a machine that wouldn't be capable of letting you show your potential?

That's exactly it. When I come back it has to be 100% right. We were close with this Ducati deal and things were starting to look good but it not all in place. Maybe another rider would have taken the chance but I've been here before and been burned once so I know that all the boxes have to be ticked. You're riding against the best riders in the world with the best machinery so how can you beat them if you don't have the same kit? Everything has to be right so I'll keep plugging away and if I can keep doing what I've been doing and getting the results hopefully the right door will open.

For the Pramac deal I was told it would have been a Production Ducati (spec ECU, softer tyres, an extra four litres of fuel) is that right?

Yeah, that was the plan and I was interested in a sense because at one stage it looked as though it would be a development package. In the end it didn't look to be the best option that I had. I think that Ducati have a lot of work to do but Gigi will help. He's the right man to have spearheading the project and lead them back to the front.

How much will Gigi leaving hurt Aprilia?

It will hurt them because Gigi is the leader and he has been Aprilia Racing for so many years. It will be interesting to see Aprilia with the engine limit next year and I'm not sure how good that restriction will be for them. It will be tough for them but it's going to be tough for a lot of manufacturers.

Marco [Melandri] is coming into Aprilia and replacing you, what is the state of the current grid?

Marco is a hell of a rider on his day. When he's on his day he's very fast but on an off day it's a real off day. There's a lot of good riders in Superbikes at the minute with Sykes on the Kawasaki and plenty of great riders on lesser machinery. Superbikes is in a healthy state for riders next year but just needs to bolster a few other things.

Now that the Suzuki deal is confirmed what do you think is realistically possible with that bike next year?

"I'm delighted to join Crescent Suzuki for the 2014 season. I will try the GSX-R1000 for the first time at the end of November to better understand our potential, and I am really excited to see what I can do with the bike. Thank you to Paul Denning and his team, and to Suzuki, for pushing so hard for this deal and for believing in me. I will give everything I possibly can to bring Suzuki to the top of the podium again!"

In 2009 you were fighting Cal [Crutchlow] for the World Supersport championship. Do you think can you come in here and replicate what he's done?

I know from racing with Cal what he's capable of and I know what I'm capable. Cal has helped a lot of us [Superbike riders] to show that it is possible. Cal will tell you that it hasn't been easy and he's put in the hard graft to get where he is. My plan would be to come and for him to a gauge for us to know what we can get to. But it would take time if I came here, you're not going to be fast right away.

Looking at Michael's season what have you thought of his performance?

It's been a rough one for him. It started so well and positive but then things didn't really come together. There was a lot of learning but I think that with the right package underneath him he could definitely be strong and I know how good he is. I think that these bikes on these Bridgestone tyres suit his riding style really well so I hope that he can stay for a second season and show everyone what he's capable of. I don't think that we've seen the best of him by a long shot yet.