



LIFE IN CIRCLES

JUNE UPDATE

This month's 'Life in Circles' is all about set-ups, what they are and why they are important to modern riders. Also I will draw comparisons with days gone by when set ups were not "the thing" plus I'll speak about my first practice session at Leicester.

Set ups, set ups, set ups. It's all we hear. So when we say set up, it means setting the bike up as best as possible for the track at that particular moment. There's lots of different factors including, size of the track, length of the straights, weather, track surface, what the starts are like and more but to me they're the main ones. So to begin I'll explain as best as I can, but simple so everyone will hopefully understand. The main and first thing that is ever normally considered is the back sprocket on the bike. A rider probably has many, for me example I've got 14. These all range in the amount of teeth on the back, so effectively the easiest way of looking at it is the bigger the track the smaller the sprocket and the smaller the track the bigger the sprocket.

But speedway is like nothing else. The sport is run on an ever changing track surface unlike something like MotoGP or F1 meaning no settings can be set in stone because there's never a consistent variable which doesn't change.



And the biggest thing in my opinion that sets Speedway apart from other forms of motorsport is wheelspin. The back wheel is braking traction and spinning so much more so if using data logging like Supercross, F1, MotoGP or any other motorsport we would not be able to have reliable data.

But back to the point, Speedway is and should always be such a simple sport and that's why I love it. 1 minute of getting round the track as fast as possible. Done! It's not complicated if you look at it like that. At the end of the day you can test, try different jets, alter the timing, change the bikes handling and experiment with different engines but if the rider is not the best, he will not win. Yes as you get to the Grand Prix's the level and consistency of skill is equal but we as riders are not robots and we, I still believe are the most important factor into being the quickest.

You often see mechanics busy away during the meetings and often the common things they'll be changing are the sprocket, making sure the bike has enough speed and revving good around the track. And then often after the first race, more fine tuning occurs like if the bikes spinning many riders will retard the engine therefore killing the power and in turn decreasing spin and finally jet changes which is how much fuel the carburettor is mixing with oxygen which changes the characteristics of the engine.

Also, I know when I went to Australia, Tai mentioned the fact about playing with lengths of the exhaust but personally I've never seen anyone doing that so far in British speedway but I just thought I'd put it in while we are on the subject of set ups.



But also you hear a lot of talk, that in days gone by setups were not the thing. Obviously with the points I'm making, I wasn't around to know from first hand experience what the older riders did but from being in and around the sport definitely the best gone by always paid close attention to their setups. For example and probably the greatest ever example is Ivan Mauger. From stories I've been told (and by the way this may not be the exact truth but I've heard it a lot when on this subject) he kept a book of everything. So that would include, gearing, jetting, timing, the temperature, track conditions, how he scored and any comments. So the way I always see it, if you're not tracking your guessing and this highlights that one of the sports most successful ever riders was so into that side of the sport. And he understood that by so he was gaining such an advantage on his rivals. So definitely of years gone by set up was

still crucial. But in addition to that the bikes have changed even now we always say they haven't. The engines have changed, no more Japs or Weslake's just either Jawa's or GM's and of that the engines changed because the tracks changed. When you look back the riders are getting the bike real low some either having to 2 wheel it round just to turn because the tracks were so deep, nowadays riders are able to rev the bikes out sliding and getting right off the back 'Zmarzlik style' to maximise grip and reduce spin. So if you look at it that way of course setups have changed too because the variables they're racing with have changed to in the track surfaces and engines.

So I think that's about it and I really hope you've enjoyed this because I actually really enjoyed writing this piece. Overall my personal opinion is it's still the rider at the end of the day who is the most important factor but everything has to work as one in order to be fast.



Back on track

It was great to be back on the bike at Leicester. They had all the distancing and hygiene necessary but it was just great to be back on my bike. Those bikes are quick. I had 7 sessions that day and the most important thing that day was just enjoying being on the bike again and I can still slide however many months on.

Till next time.

Again I hope you've enjoyed this Life in Circles, something different from the usual and again if you'd like me to answer any of your questions please send them through.

All the best,

Jason

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