

Motorcycling with John Savage

Morgan gets BMW for TT



Davy Morgan with some of his backroom crew. From left: Jim Sloan, Robert McKeag, Mark Harrison and Robert George. Deek McCoubrie/Foto 13

Saintfield's Davy Morgan is set to make his debut astride a new machine at the Isle of Man TT, after he acquired a BMW S1000RR during his recent visit to Horice road races in the Czech Republic.

The Darragh Cross man left for the Isle of Man today (Thursday), and plans to ride the BMW in the Superstock TT, while he will be astride his Suzuki GSX-R1000, backed by Trevor Mathison of Strangford Holiday Homes and Leisure Services, in the two Superbike races, and will be aboard his Yamaha R6, sponsored by Somerset-based Steve Caffyn, under the CSC Branson Racing banner, in the Supersport class — as always the bikes have been immaculately liveried by O1 Race FX.

Morgan has lapped at over 125mph at the TT and is looking forward to his return to the Glencrutchery Road grid.

He said: "I'm hoping I can improve my lap speeds, but not setting myself any specific targets — to improve my own speeds and best laps and finish my races is the most important thing."

Former Senior Manx Grand Prix winner Davy, who won the 250cc race at the North West 200 in 2005, had hoped to debut the BMW at last week's North West 200, however, the machine didn't arrive in the Portstewart paddock until 10.30pm last Wednesday, therefore, it wasn't ready to put through its paces in the final practice and qualifying sessions the following day.

Morgan sealed the deal to secure the bike the previous weekend at Horice, where, riding the Honda backed by his Supporters' Club, he finished runner-up in the 250cc race to a Czech rider, although it was a race he feels he should have won.

Davy shrugged: "I was leading and the race was stopped. The result was over aggregate times and I thought that staying on the other guy's back wheel would be enough to win it, but he took the win by 0.9 of a second."



Robert McKeag working on Davy Morgan's BMW in Davy's workshop in the North West 200 paddock last week. Deek McCoubrie/Foto 13



Stuart Easton in action during North West 200 practice last Tuesday night. Gordon Williams

'Tuck your bloody arms in...'



'I was quite relaxed about the whole thing.' On the grid before his first practice session last Tuesday evening. Gordon Williams



Putting on his race face in the Mar-Train garage before the off. R. P. Watkinson

Easton faces further surgery after horror crash

Popular Scots rider Stuart Easton will undergo further surgery this week, following the horrific crash during the opening lap of last Thursday morning's NW200 practice session, which left the 27 year old critically injured.

Easton, who is third in the British Superbike Championship standings after the first three rounds of the series, sustained multiple injuries when he collided with the back of his MSS Colchester Kawasaki team-mate Gary Mason's machine, between Mill Road roundabout and Station Corner, at around 145mph.

Although traumatised by the incident, NW200 newcomer Mason was uninjured, although he withdrew from the event, but will return to action in the fourth round of the British Superbike Championship at Thruxton in Hampshire this weekend.

Following the impact, witnesses described how Easton was thrown some distance along the road 'like a rag doll'.

He sustained a shattered pelvis, fractured femur, ruptured bowel and hand fractures, together with other internal injuries, although thankfully Easton escaped any head injuries.

After he was initially taken to the Causeway Hospital, near Coleraine, Stuart was transferred to Belfast's Royal Victoria Hospital, where he has since undergone several operations.

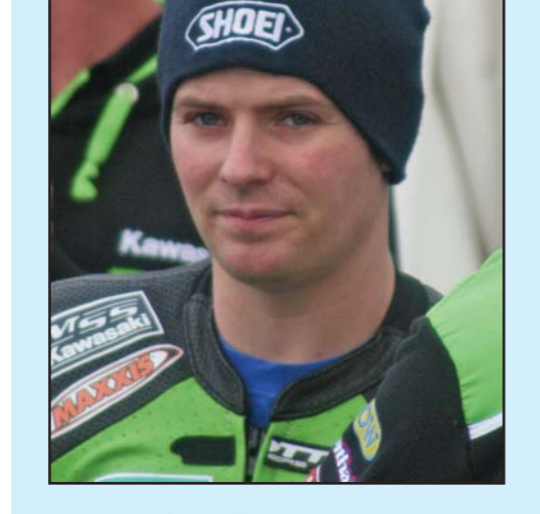
He is to undergo further surgery to his pelvis this week, and it is hoped it will soon be possible to release Stuart from the High Dependency Unit.

The triple Macau Grand Prix winner and 2002 British Supersport champion made his NW200 debut in 2004 and last year he was officially recorded as the fastest man ever through the speed trap at a staggering 204.7mph.

Riding a Swan Honda, Easton, the father of one young child, finished runner-up to Carrickfergus man Alastair Seeley in the main Superbike race last May.

A protégé of the late NW200 and Isle of Man TT star Steve Hislop, who was also a native of Easton's home town of Hawick in the Scottish borders, as was Isle of Man TT legend Jimmy Simpson, Easton returned to action last year, following a serious leg injury.

Quietly spoken Easton is one of the truly nice guys in motorcycle racing, and the thoughts of all motorcycling enthusiasts are with Stuart and his family, team and friends at this traumatic time.



A pensive Stuart Easton before the start of practice. Gordon Williams

Having established his reputation as a top short circuit racer, both at home in Ireland and in Great Britain, 30 year old Ardsman Kirk Jamison made his North West 200 debut last week, following in the tyre tracks of his father Norman, who also competed at the Isle of Man TT and Ulster Grand Prix, together with other Irish national road races.

It wasn't exactly a leap into the unknown for Kirk, commercial manager with Belfast-based H&J Martin Ltd, who has been an enthusiastic spectator at the North West since the early 1990s, but it was the realisation of an ambition the Greyabbey man has harboured for several years.

This season, all the pegs neatly slotted into their appropriate holes to enable Jamison to make his NW200 debut aboard Tim Martin's Mar-Train Yamaha R6 Supersport machine, on which he finished runner-up to Newtwnaby youngster Glenn Irwin in last year's Irish Supersport Short Circuit Championship, and astride the ex-Keith Amor, Jim Angus Contracts BMW S1000RR Superstock machine, on which he has made a brilliant start to the season, leading the Irish and Ulster Superstock Short Circuit Championships, topping the Adelaide Mondello Masters Series standings, and running second overall to Australian Cameron Donald in the Irish and Ulster Superbike Championships.

This, courtesy of the man himself, is the inside line on Kirk Jamison's maiden North West 200...

'After 10 years of 'car park racing', I decided to join the big boys and fulfil my dream to compete at the North West. I had no real expectations to do well, although I did say I would love to notch up a top 20: the main thing though was to enjoy it and come home safe.'

'I have to say I was quite relaxed about the whole thing, proven from the word go, when I slept in and was late getting to the paddock on Tuesday for signing on!'

'My first taste in the newcomers' practice was tucked in behind instructor Mike Swann and I was immediately introduced to a new phenomenon. On my way to Metropole I thought someone had placed a sniper in a random garden, as the dirty track fired stones at me from Swanny's back wheel at 180mph. The result: massive bruises up and down my arms and my brand new fairing pebble dashed! Sympathy from team: 'Tuck your bloody arms in!'

'Still, it was a nice feeling to set out along the coast road and I didn't find it as intimidating as I thought I would have.'

'For the following two practice sessions there was slight rain at certain places and I just gradually felt my way round. I didn't want to follow anyone, so I just rode round on my own, like I was out for a Sunday run. The BMW was a bit hard to handle out the back, but the R6 was 100% just screaming its way down towards Coleraine — some craic and thumbs up so far.'

'Wednesday was spent just cleaning and relaxing, whilst my team prepped the bikes for Thursday's outings: it definitely beats working you know — I could get used to this!'

'Thursday's practice was again thankfully dry, but there couldn't have been a worse start, as I had to ride past the stricken Stuart Easton — not a pretty sight, but thankfully and miraculously he survived.'

'Again we used no pit boards and I didn't try to follow anyone. I just went for a jolly and enjoyed myself. The BMW was out first, but I really struggled with it. My team had changed the suspension settings, so it was now handling properly, but the shoulder I injured at Mondello Park a couple of weeks earlier was giving me lots of grief and I was struggling through the fast turns.'

'By the end of the session I was wrecked and headed back to the lorry for a drink — non-alcoholic of course!'

'Unfortunately I was straight out in Supersport qualifying and I got a phone call from Tim Martin shouting that the grid was being cleared and my Mar-Train R6 was sitting on it with no rider

— oops! So, helmet on and run through the paddock, out onto the grid just in time to jump on and let the clutch out: drama queen!'

'The R6 was again simply great fun and I experienced the madness of slip streaming, when Ryan Farquhar passed me and I was able to tuck in and almost ride at half throttle, tagging onto the back of him. I got held up at the roundabout on that lap, but it was still my best one and put me 16th on the grid, well chuffed! In fact I lapped at 111mph, only 4mph off pole, a full 16 seconds quicker than I went on Tuesday. I also clocked 167mph through the speed trap, compared to the quickest time of 172mph, not bad.'

'I was disappointed with 27th on the Jim Angus Contracts BMW, but knew I could have gone a lot quicker without the shoulder injury. I still trimmed 10 seconds off from Tuesday, lapping 6mph off pole at 113mph and 4mph down on the quickest speed trap time at 186mph — she wasn't hanging about.'

'Saturday, as everyone knows, was a disaster, although I did get one race. Despite getting a great start I throttled off and sat at the back of the group until I was happy with the conditions, then I started to pick guys off.'

'Unfortunately that lost me the tow on the main group for a top 10, but I was able to pull Dan Kneen in and we had a great wee scrap. I ended up 17th, lapping at 102mph in the wet, something I knew I could improve on in race two, but never got the chance.'

'It's a strange sensation to finish a race knowing you could have rode a lot harder. I rode well within myself, which is not something I do at the circuits, but something I promised myself I would do last week.'

'The experience, as a whole, was superb. I got to ride a bike on a public road at 186mph without even my mum shouting at me, never mind the police; I did lots of interviews and got amazing coverage for my sponsors; and, of course, I had a laugh throughout.'

'I went to the north coast to tick a box, but feel like I have only half ticked it, due to Saturday's anti-climax. Something tells me I can't leave it half ticked, but only time will tell.'

'There were some moments I'll never forget, like getting mobbed by 100 school children looking at autographs at one point — they were so keen they were even knocking chairs over in my awning to get to me.'

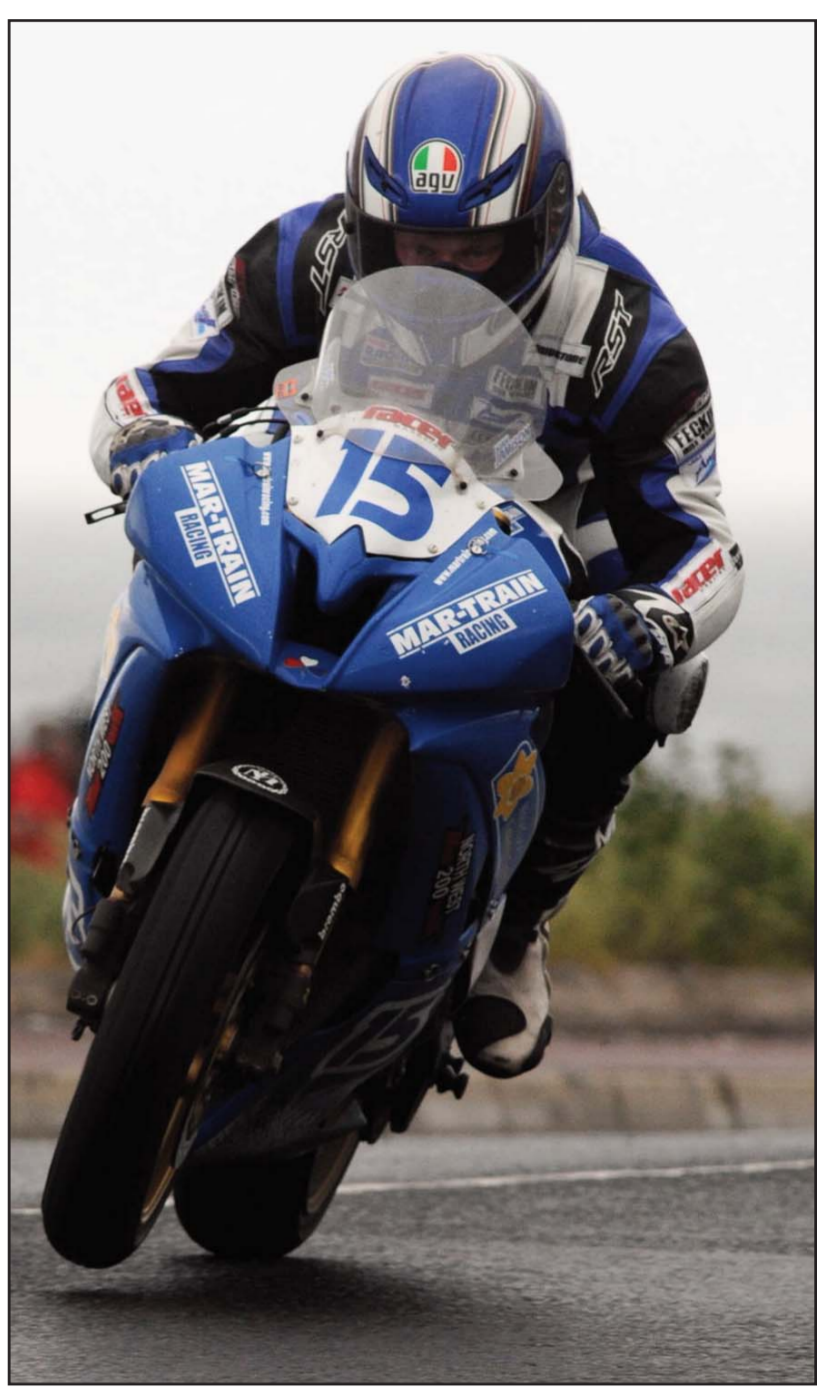
'Over the years I have had to deal with some people's attitude that road racers are gods and people like me are only big jinnys who couldn't lace their boots. I hope that my performance during practice at least may have gone some way to proving that we can actually ride bikes and have sizeable, emm, 'bravery' ourselves.'

'The biggest thing that will stick in my mind though is the unrivalled support I have from my team and supporters. The number of people who took a week off to work tirelessly for my enjoyment is touching to say the least and I hope they all know how appreciative I am. I could barely get a bike out of the van without them and my attentions now turn to simply cleaning up back at the 'car parks' and lifting as many as a possible five titles for them this year.'

Jamison used Bridgestone's new BATTMAX Racing R10 tyres on both the Marie Curie liveried Mar-Train Yamaha R6 and the Jim Angus Contracts BMW and he was full of praise for the rubber.'

Over the past few months, Kirk has worked closely with former 250cc World Championship Grand Prix winner, Jeremy McWilliams from Ballyclare, on set-up, and Kirk was full of praise for the tyres.'

Jamison said: "Bridgestone's R10 tyres worked faultlessly on both my Supersport



Jamison's performance in wet conditions in the Supersport race attracted unanimous praise, 'after 10 years of car park racing'. R. P. Watkinson



All smiles before his NW200 debut, astride Tim Martin's Mar-Train Yamaha in the Supersport race. R. P. Watkinson



In action for the first time over 'The Triangle', during Tuesday evening practice on the Mar-Train Yamaha. Philip Campbell

Yamaha and Superstock BMW. "The North West 200 circuit and its high speed nature can be notoriously hard on tyres, and while other brands were tearing up and chunking, the R10 tyres worked just as well as they have done for me this season on the short circuit scene."