



NATIONAL JUNIOR
CUP CHAMPION

MASON LAW

WORDS Andrew Pitt PICTURES Racing Line Photography

» Having just interviewed Kenan Sofuoglu after he snared his third World Title, catching up with a young talent like Mason Law is completely at the other end of the scale. But having made the switch from motocross to the black stuff, he most definitely has no fewer aspirations than Kenan when it comes to what he wants to achieve. Mason also ticked a major box, by banking his first championship at his first attempt - in what could be a career headed in Kenan's direction. Closing it out in a tough final round at Brands Hatch after being taken out in a big way in Saturday's race to rebound on Sunday pretty wounded shows the kid has a wise head on his shoulders and is made of some pretty stern stuff.



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A little background research on Mason reveals that, not surprisingly, he has come from a Motocross background and was all

set for an attack on the British Motocross Championship with support from Colchester Kawasaki, when another Essex boy got in his ear repeatedly and convinced him to have a crack on the road bike. Danny Buchan and his old man Big Jim always headed out to Spain pre-season to get lots of laps under the belt before a BSB season would start and, being family friends and business partners, the two fathers headed out to Spain; but Mason's testing was always of the motocross type. One of Danny's old bikes - an Aprilia 125 - was thrown in the van for Mason to see what he thought - and here we are one year later with the 250cc Ninja Cup trophy taking pride of place in the Law household.

I met Mason and his dad through The Buchan Machine and could see his

potential and got him on board with my team88 project to try help him out where I could with contacts and riding advice, but mainly to try and short cut the learning process and avoid a lot of the trial and error stuff that my Dad and I, and indeed most people, go through.

Here is what Mason thought of his transition and how it all went.

■ How was your switch to the tarmac?

From being pretty hesitant at the start and wondering if it was the right move or not, I found it great fun - but very different - especially the paddocks and the bigger scale of everything. The hardest thing was convincing myself to trust the tyres and be confident to actually roll through the turns with all that corner speed and lean angle. Particularly in the wet and what you can do with those wet tyres.

■ Why the Ninja Cup?

I was all set for an attack on the British Motocross Championship with a very well supported ride through Colchester Kawasaki and we had finally gotten to a point in Motocross where we had always dreamed of



being. We were invited down to an evening with Bemsee and then to the Bemsee open day where they convinced us to try the Ninja 250. We had the Buchans chipping away at us to give it a go and that is how it all started.

We took the standard bike still with the lights and all taped up to Spain with Danny but at that stage I still wasn't sure which way to go. Then we had the open test day at Brands and my times were good and we were in.

What did you honestly expect for this year and was the championship really something you thought about at the start.

The problem was I didn't know anyone and had no idea about my competitors but I did an Open meeting at Snetterton as my first race and got four 2nd places from four starts so then we started to think maybe I might be competitive. Honestly though, if I didn't think I could be competitive, I wouldn't have wasted our resources. I felt that I would work out how to go fast.

Colchester Kawasaki changed ownership and the deal we had in place for the motocross wasn't going to be a problem because the new owner preferred road racing and was happy for us to run in the Ninja cup under his banner.

First round of the championship comes and just to add to it all, it was run at the opening BSB round at Brands, but you handled it pretty well. I reckon you were pretty convinced after that weekend that you could go without the mud and pressure cleaner for a while?

Winning that first round at Brands blew Dad and I away and since then, that is all we have been living!

You got the Championship won so you can move onto the next step, content in having finished what you started in the Ninja cup. I know Kawasaki really rate you and are working to keep you and place you in a good setup next year for the 600 Superstock Championship.

We have met with Ross from Kawasaki and their idea is to get me into the setup with the Chris Walker Racing School that successfully took Lee Jackson to the title this year. We met with Chris the other day and he is really keen to have us there and there's the added bonus of doing plenty of practice with Chris at his race school days. I did a few days there this year and loved the extra everything of the 600.

So that's Mason's take, but what did Andrew make of his protégé's debut and the series he competed in – the National Junior Cup?

So Andrew, How did you get involved with Mason Law?

I met Mason and his Dad through the Buchan's and they really reminded me of my Dad and I trying to find our way in the road racing world after years on dirt bikes. I liked what I saw and most of all Mason really listened and wanted to learn.



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Sam says...

It has been great watching Mason Law this year on what looks to be the start of an incredible journey.

Having some fantastic Junior Cup Championships now is great for the sport. It gives young talent the opportunity to hone and develop their skills at a safe and appropriate level, whilst learning the ropes on and off the track preparing them for

their next step. Safety is paramount and it is great to see past Champions like Andrew, Chris Walker, Cal, Jonny Rea, my Troy etc, putting back into the Championships. The wealth of experience these guys have is an enormous help to any young rider and their contacts, judgement and advice are priceless. I often hear our Champions of today wishing they had some of these Championships when they started racing. Well done Mason and thanks Andrew for a great interview.

What kind of advice did he need?

Initially the first time I saw him ride was at Donington and because I was with Danny under the same awning I listened to what his issues were and tried to help him with the lines around Donington, even little things like getting the tyre pressures right, gearing, set up, how to plan your race and where to overtake at Donington.

His Dad Graeme was really supportive but also learning as he went and by race time we were all out on the wall hanging over the pit wall cheering him on. I was hooked.

I have been to a couple of race meetings with team Law and tried to get Mason on track

with his diet and training - and introduce him to as many contacts, team managers and potential sponsors in the industry as possible. Making a few calls to my old sponsors - particularly Jonny Towers at Moto Direct to get him into the right gear from the start and to start developing relationships and loyalties. As a result all the guys at Moto Direct know Mason now and follow him and help him out at the meetings and really like what he's doing and how he conducts himself.

As the season came down to crunch time and there was a championship to close out I just tried to keep him focused and think session to session, race to race and not



worry about the points too much. I tried to make him understand that he just needed to do enough at the end to finish with more points than the next guy. Mason has a very cool head on his shoulders for a young guy and he really showed character at the last round when he had a healthy lead only to be taken out in a big way in the third to last race on Saturday afternoon before Sunday's final two races. It was the first big crash he had ever had and in those situations it can go either way. He could have imploded and it all could have come apart - but he came from the back of the grid to finish third on Sunday's first race and then he only needed a 7th to tidy things up in the final race. Fifth place and job done - sitting just behind the chaos all race.

■ What was the level of competition like in the NJC?

There was one guy with lots of experience from Sweden and a guy from Scotland who had raced a bit, but mostly the competitors were young chargers all trying to beat each other. The prize was a new ZX6R 600 so let's say that was pretty popular and everyone wanted to win.

■ Did that change over the season?

I think everyone's level increased because they were all young guys growing in confidence and experience every weekend. Cal Crutchlow was helping another young guy who was really coming on strong at the end of the season.

■ What did you reckon to the bike?

I think it is a great bike to start out on because there isn't much power and they are all the same and the tyres are the same. It teaches them race craft and how to get the most out of a bike.

■ What did Mason reckon to the bike?

He always complained the bike was too slow, especially after he had ridden Chris Walkers ZX6's at the race school a few times.

He did love the look of his bike though and the riding position, and always kept it looking immaculate.

■ Did you expect Mason to win?

He seemed to understand everything I told him and put it into practice and he definitely knows how to ride a motorbike so yeah, I did expect him to win!

■ How easily did he win?

He didn't take huge risks because that is not his style and I think he could have gone even quicker if he really was pushed and he probably doesn't know where his limit is yet, but as the years go by he will work that out.

■ What is next for Mason?

I would have really liked to throw him straight in the deep end and get him into the European Superstock 600 and although it wouldn't have been easy he would have worked it out and surprised people. I even spoke to a few teams but the way winning the ZX6 through Kawasaki UK worked out and the support for the British series he will receive next year that makes more sense now.

■ What have you learned from this year?

I really enjoyed watching him soak everything up and seeing him succeed. I also liked seeing an old pair of my Sidi race boots at the front of a race again!

■ What are your thoughts on the NJC? How would you improve it? Will the 300cc bike they are competing on next year make a big difference?

I think it is a great Championship and although I think they get great exposure when they compete at the BSB rounds, what they need mostly now is track time and that is hard at the BSB rounds with so many bloody classes! So I think the mix they have now with some races at BSB at some at Bemsee is perfect. The four races per weekend is great too. I think the riders will like the faster 300, but power is not what they really need now. If Kawasaki sell the 300 and support the series, then race the new bike for sure. *racers*

For 2013 the National Junior Cup will use the new Kawasaki Ninja 300R twin 4-stroke machine, with a full race package obtainable through Kawasaki UK. The machine will be fully prepared and ready to race at cost price to riders and teams. Details on pricing and spec are available now...the price for the basic package is £3999 + VAT for the machine, ready to race. A range of optional extras are also available.

Options are also available for a second hand bike from this season's Series. Here the Ninja 250R used in 2012 has had a full engine refresh, with a new crank to improve its output to match the dyno performance of the new 300. The Series will run the two bikes alongside each other. These bikes are available now for sale.

The ACU has approved the 300 package to be made available to riders aged from 13 to 18 on Novice licences in 2013. The Series will run over eight rounds with appearances at BSB and BMCRC meetings and the season will kick-off at the end of March with a non-Championship set-up meeting with BMCRC on the Snetterton 300 circuit.

See www.bemsee.net for details.