



RACER ON RACER
AVALON BIDDLE



Schoolgirl Racer

It's always exciting to see new talent emerge on our road racing scene, and more exciting still when it happens to be a 16 year old girl taking the paddock by storm. Double F3 champion, Glen Williams bends the ear of Avalon Biddle in this 'racer-on-racer' interview.

PIC: DALLAS ALEXANDER

Avalon Biddle has been racing since she was just six years old in junior motocross, she's now taken up road racing and this season has lap records and national 125GP race wins to her name. A rising star and a PR dream come true for New Zealand road racing, this teenage school girl has the drive and ability to take on the world. We caught up with the Pinehurst School pupil to find out what drives her and what's giving her the advantage over the boys on the track.

What do your schoolmates think of you racing motorcycles?

They don't really understand it – but they know I have been into bikes with my motocross background.

Are your mum or dad into bikes?

Dad used to race speedway (side-cars), and then he got into racing buckets for a bit of fun. When I turned 13 I had a go at bucket racing as well and dad pretty much stopped racing and got in behind my race career. The buckets were really good for teaching me some race craft and also to be relaxed when you have lots of bikes close around you.

You went from there to 150 street stock?



PIC: TERRY STEVENSON

Yeah, we had a call from the Canterbury Club down south to come and have a ride on a bike that they had there for someone who wanted to have a go – so we went down and did that and I had a ball! Then I got a chance to ride in the 150 four-stroke class in Australia (called Junior 150) – the racing there is really aggressive and competitive – it taught me a lot about riding and racing from the

first corner. The four-stroke 150s felt really slow though.

How were your results in Australia?

I did most of the series in 2007 and finished fifth overall – I had a bad last round at Phillip Island where I had a huge crash when I ran into the back of a rider's bike that unexpectedly slowed down. It was a big crash – luckily we were able to rob a lot of spares from

another machine and get back out there. Phillip Island is very cool to ride on. I was lucky enough to be able to race in Queensland, Oran Park, Winton and Wakefield also. Trevor Manley has helped me out a lot when I was in Aussie; he has been really good to me

Were there any girls racing in Aussie?

No I didn't get to race against any other girls over there, there are a few



Dad, Keith push starts Avalon

PIC: GLEN WILLIAMS



more turning up in New Zealand to race though which is cool.

You've had a bit of a rough run with injuries in the last couple of years.

Yeah a bit – I broke my arm whilst racing in the Streetstock support class at the NZ nationals in 2007, and then I lost the tip of one of my fingers during the 2008 winter series. Plus I broke a couple of bones in my hand just three weeks prior to this year's NZ nationals starting and had to begin this series with a cast on my arm. Currently of course I am nursing a broken leg!

Have you found it tough psychologically to get back on the bike after crashing?

Actually it doesn't seem to bother me. I have even raced with a cast on my arm once and pretty much managed to go fast straight away - which is good!

How do you find the boys and men in the paddock treat a girl racer?

Most of them are pretty good, initially they didn't know what to expect, but when the helmets go on we all look the same and it's pretty much forgotten. I think they do (the boys) pick up their game a bit if they see me com-

ing up behind them – 'cos they don't want to get beaten by me!

You stepped up to the 125GP bike in 2008 – was it a big jump?

I started on the 125 in early 2008 and rode it at some club races and quite liked it, then when it came to racing against national level racers I realised that these guys were really fast and I didn't think I could ever lift my game to that level.

Do you do any spannering on the bike?

No I leave all that stuff to my dad and John Conner, especially the 125GP bike, which is a lot more specialised to tune and work on so I am really lucky to have them helping me.

Do you have any riding mentors?

I seem to get help from anyone I ask, but lately Karl Morgan has been very helpful and so have Dennis Charlett and Jason Easton. All of these guys have a lot of experience on 125s and it is great to use their knowledge

Are you learning how to set the 125GP bike up at different tracks?

Yes, both John Conner and Terry Manley are quite strict about me feeding them accurate information

on the bike's handling. It's something I am learning more and more about every time I go out on the track

You rode a Honda 125GP bike in this year's 2009 nationals – where did you finish up?

I finished fourth overall and that's with one DNF at Teretonga and missing all three races at Pukekohe after my crash coming over the hill.

Tell us about that last round Pukekohe crash

I was leading the race at the time and had just put in a really fast lap and had a small gap from second. I came out of the hairpin and went through the next left quicker than I had gone all weekend (according to the data logger), I tipped into the next right hander that comes over the hill and onto the front straight and it felt like I just lost the front. In fact a video showed that the rear had come around on me and then the front went – the bike came off real well in the crash as it hit the bales, whilst I sort of slipped beneath them and managed to break my leg.

How's your recovery going?

It's looking real good – they put a rod in my leg and I don't have any plaster or anything on it, they want me to keep the leg working slightly. So I am

QUICK FACTS

Age: 16
Weight/Height: 152cm/50kg
First bike: Peewee 50cc
Occupation: Student
Location: Auckland
Favourite track NZ: Teretonga
Favourite Band: Likes most things
Favourite movie: High School Musical – ha ha!
Other hobbies: Cycling, Dirt bikes
Favourite road racer: Craig Shirriffs, Johnny Rea
Dream 'Bloke' Brolly Holder: Dad, or maybe Rossi
Dream job: Motorcycle Racer
Best race advice given: The longer you are off the throttle – the more your lap time will suck!
Best race advice to give: You can achieve so much more than you will ever think possible

hobbling around on crutches. It's a real bonus at school 'cos everyone carries your books for you!

What are the plans for the coming season?

We are looking to get my leg all fixed up first, and then hopefully do a round or two of the Victoria Club's Winter Series. We might make it back to Australia and race a 125GP bike there, which would be cool as they race with the Australian Superbike series. Then it will be onto the 2010 NZ national road race series in the 125GP class.

We also have an invite to race in the Red Bull Cup in Europe later in the year and we are really looking forward to doing that!

Avalon Biddle definitely has something special about her. She is supremely confident in what she is doing and has a very positive and cheerful attitude on and off track. She is also stinking-quick on a motorcycle – which we have no doubt is going to stress out a few of the boys out there racing against her both locally and in the near future overseas. It's great to see fast, young, new talent on the scene – the fact that this particular talent is female is a huge bonus for our sport and its exposure to the public. Big respect must go to her family and all of her supporters for helping Avalon to get out there and achieve her goals. For more information check out her website at: www.avalonbiddle.com **BRM**



Avalon lines up on the Pukekohe grid

PIC: GLEN WILLIAMS