



# GREEN IS FOR GO!

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He's a lone light for the green meanies in the New Zealand National Road Race scene and our man Glen Williams picks him as a contender for the 600cc Supersport title. We catch up and get the low-down on our very own BRM supported rider Nicholas (Nick) Cole in his new slimmed down and hungry form.



I don't mind admitting that I've always been a bit of a closet Kawasaki sports bike fan – it's a guttural thing and it's something to do with their signature lime green colour and the raucous air intake noise when on the gas. But having a liking for the character of a bike is very different to actually getting one into winning form on a race track and to be blunt this has not been a strong point in recent years for the green eyed monsters.

Nick Cole and his team have been loyal to the brand for more than seven years, and this year may well be their best year yet with Kawasaki releasing a brand new 2009 ZX6R model.....

### A babe in arms

Cole made his appearance at the race track younger than most – when

his road racing dad (Graeme) took him along to a meeting that he was competing at within a few days of him being born! Nick reckons that as a result the smell of the race pad-dock with its sweet wafts of Castrol 'R' race gas and hot tyres have been locked into his blood ever since – and he has never tired of it.

"Dad was racing pretty much full time when I came along – so it was a matter of course that I would get dragged to all the meetings and become a part of the team." His early years from age six did involve two wheels albeit in the form of a BMX bike, which he excelled at. "I got to race in Australia and finished in the top ten for the Oceania champs plus we finished second in the New Zealand leg of that championship." Rugby was also a big part of Nick's life back then and he played rep rugby up until he was 15.

### Puddle jumpers and classic bikes

He discovered motocross at age 12 and managed to finish third in the New Zealand Junior MX champs, but a big accident resulted in a severe concussion which took nearly five months to recover from. "I crashed hard and when I came back to the sport I was never really 100% and couldn't stop falling off," and so his motocross days and rugby career ended there.

The next surprise for Nick was being diagnosed with a form of arthritis at age 15. This condition still affects him today and you can sometimes see him get off the bike with a malformed hand cramped in the shape of the throttle grip with Nick unable to straighten his fingers out.

"I was told by the doctors that I had to keep as active as possible and try to not let this disease debilitate me too early on – so I pretty much tried to ignore it and get on with my sport." He was about 14 years old when he got the offer to ride a classic bike by a friend of his father's. "A mate of dad's gave me a ride on his race bike and I remember turning up to race against the likes of NZ road racer Sam Smith who was starting out in exactly the same way. So I learnt the basics on a leaky, oily, pretty average handling machine which taught me to quickly

appreciate the importance of maximising what you had to work." Next up was a brief foray on a 125GP bike which seized the first time he rode it, "but with some help from 125 guru Paul Cook we managed to get it going okay, but I was really too tall and heavy for these smaller machines. However this class did teach me a lot about race craft and maintaining corner speed."

### Red Devil goes Green

Fast forward to 2004 and dad Graeme decided to get serious at helping Nick establish himself by jumping in the deep end and purchasing a Kawasaki ZX6R production race bike. "Kawasaki NZ and Hamilton Motorcycle Centre were really keen to get behind someone at the time and we have pretty much stayed with them ever since," Graeme says. A new 2005 ZX6R followed this along with an offer from Shaun Harris to ride his kitted 810cc GSXR750 and 1000cc machine at selected nationals that year. "I had a big crash at the Wanganui street circuit in 2006 on my then new 600 which ended the Supersport nationals season for me, - but I did get to ride the GSX-R810 at Invercargill and then a GSX-R1000K5 at Ruapuna which I really enjoyed but also crashed." The team, whilst despondent, were enthused by the fact that Nick was

### QUICK FIRE STATS:

Age: 23  
Nickname: Nick  
Height/Weight: Height - 188cm  
Weight - it's a secret  
First Bike owned: Mongoose  
Freestyle Bike  
Home Town: Te Kowhai  
Marital Status: Married  
Occupation: Welder/Fabricator  
Other Hobbies: Doing choice bombs, dirt jumping, trail riding  
Favourite Movie: Nitro Circus  
Favourite Music: Rap  
Dream Broolly Dolly:  
My wife Rachel or Alicia Keys  
Favourite Track:  
NZ- Teretonga, Invercargill.  
World-Phillip Island Australia  
Most respected riders:  
A. Stroud, J. McKewen,  
C. Shirriffs (he's my hero!!)  
Best race advice ever given:  
Look where you want to go  
Best race advice to give:  
Have no fear

able to circulate within two seconds of Andrew Stroud's fastest Superbike lap time and also by the fact that Shaun Harris was pretty cool about the whole deal (even though his bike got bent up). "We couldn't thank Shaun enough at the time for giving me the opportunity to ride, and he was really great about it all and he just took it in his stride."



Day Wanganui Street Races with Nick and his little green grunter dominating proceedings in the 600 class and giving the big boys on their 1000cc machines a real run for their money – very impressive.

### A title contender?

Confidence is high for this year's national title hopes. "I'm looking to win the 600cc title this year and we are confident that we have the package to do it." Nick has been working out hard and watching his diet over the last winter season which has resulted in him carving almost 20kg from his body weight. The benefits of this in respective bike performance and personal endurance will no doubt pay dividends. Another key change this year is the team's switch to Dunlop tyres. "The Dunlops really reward a rider that works the front end hard into a corner, they gave me a big jump in confidence as soon as I switched to them and we saw an immediate improvement in lap times. It's also notable that these tyres work well across a wide range of track surfaces and conditions."

This combined with the team's close working relationship with Wellington based suspension expert Kerry Dukic has allowed them to fine-tune the bike's set-up and get it exactly how Nick wants. "With Dukic suspension attending most of our test days and all of our race meetings we

are able to dial in the bike for most tracks relatively quickly and seem to be able to find a set-up that gets us running close to lap record pace pretty quickly." Nick says it's been a real team effort this year and he is looking forward to rewarding the team's many long term sponsors. Swan Insurance, Auckland Steel Blasters and Just Fairings with a top result.

### Future prospects

The next step for Nick is to head overseas and he has recently confirmed that he is to go to the Isle of Man Manx GP this year. "I am heading to America and the UK before the Isle Of Man to give racing a try over there during their summer. This is a huge step in my racing career and an opportunity I think that many New Zealand road racers dream of doing. I am really excited to have this opportunity and any help that comes my way would be really appreciated as there are many costs involved. First priority though is to win a National title at home." Nick is still young and hungry enough at age 23 to make this happen.

If you're able to assist Nick Cole with his goals – he can be contacted through his race team web site [www.reddevilracing.co.nz](http://www.reddevilracing.co.nz)

At the time of going to print Nick won the F2 title at the Paeroa Street race, despite crashing on lap one of the first F2 race.

