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FUTURE IS BRIGHT FOR PIT BIKES

ONE of the success stories of the past few years has been the introduction of the IMC Pit Bike championship, and their efforts to promote the youth, and nurture future stars of our sport. We have seen our riders progress at International and World Championship level, and who knows what the future holds for our current crop of youth riders.

The foresight of one of the most experienced journalists and photographers in Irish racing Baylon McCaughey has seen him, and the IMC join forces for the second year running with their scholarship scheme, and they are already moving forward with their plans.

The IMC, now in its third year has attracted riders from all over Ireland. The close knit family like club has introduced, restructured and reclassified Youth Classes to form a clear, progressive and structured route for Junior competitors.

Its the Baylon McCaughey - IMC Scholarship, partnered with leading road race magazine, Road Racing Ireland, and new for the 2021 season, the Dualways/IMC Scholarship.

Former top competitors such as Seamus Elliot, Alan Glasgow, Alan Kenny, Nigel Kenny and Malcolm Robinson are just a few who compete in this growing series. Add in the sons of the likes of Paul Robinson, Sammy Dobson, Al McCrory, Pheilm Owens, Mark Wassell, Chris William Hara, Barry Davidson, but to name a few, all adding spice to the ever increasing IMC grids.

For 2021 the Dualways - IMC Scholarship in conjunction with the Irish Minibike Championship are proud to open applications, and the scholarship will include the use of the 10TEN 140R Machine for the 2021 season together with all entry fees for IMC Events. The Scholarship is aimed at providing opportunity for those currently competing within the Road Racing Ireland supported Junior Gearbox or the Carole Nash Irish Motorbike and Scooter Show supported Junior Elite to take the next step in their development.

Henry Maplethorpe from Dualways said: 'The IMC are building a Championship that is geared towards development of the youth. We are excited by the success of the BamBam Class, and we look forward to seeing it go from strength to strength in 2021. We are delighted to make provision for the continuation of youth development through the donation of a 10TEN 140R machine.'

IMC Chairman Mark Boyd added: 'Junior Members (9+) will avail use of the machine, free of charge, in preparation for and gauging readiness for the next step in their progression. Those who feel ready to move to the senior section of the youth classes, the Junior Elite, will be invited to apply for the Dualways - IMC Scholarship 2021. Applications will also be considered for those currently within the Junior Elite who wish to progress to the Senior Stock Class. The Scholarship will include the use of the 10TEN 140R Machine for the 2021 season together with all entry fees for IMC events. Given the current climate, we are aware of the financial strain on families whose children compete within the IMC Championship and we are proud to be in a position, thanks to Dualways, who will remove some of that financial burden.'

The Scholarship joins the list of Irish Minibike Championship 'firsts' which include the introduction, restructuring and re-classifying of youth classes to form a clear and progressive, structured route for Junior competitors. The introduction of The Baylon McCaughey - IMC Scholarship and the birth of the partnership with RRI.

'We would like to thank Dualways for their continuous support, and don't forget the application CLOSES on 1st November 2020. Online Applications can be found at www.irishminibike-championship.co.uk/imc-dualways.

The future is bright - the future is IMC. Keep 'er lit!



The success of Pit Bike racing is plain to see with full grids, and a great paddock atmosphere. Above, Finnan Wherity is one of the rising stars of the Pit Bike scene. Pictures: Baylon McCaughey



Road racing facing into a long winter of discontent

THERE is no doubt that we are in extraordinary times, but over the last few months our sport has been going through extraordinary turmoil, with the cancellation of all the southern road race season, and most of the off road branch, albeit with two meetings in Mondello.

There have been similar problems in the Ulster Centre, with the exception of the Cookstown 100, and the open short circuit meeting at Kirkistown, both held within a week of each other in September.

In the run up to Cookstown especially, there was controversy running rampant, with calls for the event to be cancelled, despite the Cookstown club working closely with the authorities in the North, and pre-selling race programmes as entry to the event, to keep the numbers to the allowed quota set down by the NI Executive.

John McClure was elected as the chairman of the Ulster Centre back in November 2019, and it was generally felt that the Belfast & District clubman, was one to lead the sport forward in the Ulster Centre, as he was a hard-working, dedicated, strict, but yet a fair man to bring the sport on. Little did he, or the world, know what the new year was going to bring down on the 7.8 billion population.

For our Island, we are unique in a way, as our road racing heritage is rare in the world of motorcycling, but for clubs and the governing body, it was going to be a challenge.

Lockdown saw events being cancelled or postponed both north and south of the border, with MCI cancelling all events for the foreseeable future, and the early road races of Cookstown, Tandragee and the North West being postponed, with the hope of running later in the year.

Cookstown were planning to run on the traditional weekend of the original East Coast (12/13th September), as East Coast had applied for a date in August. Both Tandragee and the North West were later cancelled.

I have documented the Cookstown clubs proposals in this column for many weeks running up to the event, but there was trouble afoot in the Ulster Centre, with letters coming from the MCUI and MCI, declaring that the event shouldn't run. The day after the MCUI letter went public in a Belfast paper, Ulster Centre Chairman John McClure took to social media, to distance himself from this letter. And so the fun began.

After Cookstown the club chairman John Dillon took to social media, to have a go at his own governing body, and



John McClure (centre with sign) in his normal position during the Tandragee 100 road races. Photo: Jack Corry

thanked the few from within the centre who helped him, and he also had a dig at the Southern Centre.

Since Cookstown, John McClure has also taken to social media to vent his frustration. 'I've stayed quiet for months but no more, and I'll be brief as I could say a lot more. Since I took the Chair of the Ulster Centre back in November I have been dealing with lies, secrets, back stabbing... the list goes on.'

'My only aim was to get our sport - tarmac and trials - and governing body moving into the 21st century. I decided at the start that I wouldn't use my personal Facebook to comment as chairman of the local governing body as my family and friends see it, which I hope is understandable. Over the months there have been personal attacks on myself on social media and to be honest I've had enough.'

'I've made it clear there are issues within the governing body which appear to have been going on for years to which I feel I've only scratched the surface. I've been told I'm only the chair and have no opinion or vote. A lot of good people are involved in the sport and I thank them for their support over my time in the chair.'

'The people in the sport who know me, know I am if nothing else fair honest, enjoy a laugh and want what's best for the sport. We did manage to get 1 short circuit

and 1 road race this year and I'm proud to have helped achieved with these, despite the best efforts of people to sabotage these events. My family life has suffered during this more than difficult year and I am now putting them first. I have a lot of friends in the sport and I hope they will stay as such. I respect everyone in the sport, whether or not I agree with them is irrelevant. I treat people how I expect to be treated. Unfortunately it's clear the MCUI as a whole north and south is no longer fit for purpose and I will not be standing for a second term.'

I have to say that I was shocked, but not surprised to see this, and when I contacted John about his comments, he was adamant that he still has nothing but the sport as his interest, and from my knowledge of John, I know that he is speaking the truth.

I contacted Sean Bissett, President of MCI for his views on his input into the controversy surrounding Cookstown and I asked him: 'What do you think of John McClure's comments on the MCUI not being fit for purpose?' He said: 'Does he mean the MCUI or MCI and UC.'

I then said that John won't be standing for a second term and Sean said: 'Sure he resigned before'.

I again put it to Sean about the MCUI not being fit for the purpose and he replied: 'He

doesn't mention MCI, and he has no connection with us, sure he doesn't even know us.'

I then asked Sean was it a wise move to go on BBC radio and get involved in Ulster Centre business prior to Cookstown, to which he replied: 'Cookstown should never have been run, and all events are run under the jurisdiction of the MCUI, and the change of date was never clarified, as they never went to the commission.'

I said that the date was proposed by the Cookstown club as far back as April, and it was well known that they were planning to run it. He replied: 'The change would have to go through a committee in the Ulster Centre and a commission, and that never happened. They never even got the approval from their own centre, sure there was a press release sent out that the Ulster Centre didn't approve of the event.'

So it looks very much like there will be a long winter of discontent ahead of us in the sport, and while the COVID situation is bad enough in its own right, what is going to happen within our governing body?

Is John McClure right; are they fit for the purpose of running the sport? Will either centre be able to hold their AGM via Zoom? Will we even have an Inter Centre Conference via Zoom? Will we have racing in 2021? The plot thickens!