



I have always been interested in motorcycles and racing bikes. My dad, who is probably the most influential person in my life, had always had bikes and I knew that he used to race. I always wondered what it would be like to ride a 'big' bike, and couldn't see that I could realistically ever ride, or even own one myself.

When I was 16, a huge craze swept the nation. Mini motos. I remember a mate having one and thought this little bike was awesome. Eventually I saved up enough money from my part time job to buy a 49cc Chinese mini moto aka a 'CAG'. I rode it around car parks and industrial estates which wasn't practical, or legal. After a bit of searching and investigation I discovered that I could ride it at karting tracks, and found that Kartsport, Caxton, Cambridge, was the closest track to me. They ran a mini moto session every Thursday night, so I was able to go there after work providing I could persuade my dad to take me. I learned the technique of riding a mini moto, and after a few sessions became hooked. Every time I went to a session I was getting faster and faster lap times.

To raise money for a better bike I worked at Tescos on Monday and Tuesday nights, and all day Sunday, as well as working at Russ Williams Repairs, Downham Market on Saturdays. Any free periods I had from college were taken up by work. At one stage I even used to go to lessons in my overalls. Eventually I had earned enough to buy a brand new Blata Elite 14 for £800. This was the most money I had ever spent on one, so it was my pride and joy for a very long time! Lol.

I started racing with this bike in the South of England Mini moto Racing Club (SEMRC) ran by Phoenix Minimoto Racing www.phoenix-minimoto-racing.co.uk.

This was run over the year at several tracks throughout the country. Ellough Park, Beccles, Whilton Mill, Daventry, Stretton, Leicester, Lydd, Kent, and Red Lodge, Bury St Edmunds. These events were usually held over 2 days allowing for practice and racing on separate days. Even though I felt I was riding fast on the track at Caxton, it wasn't quick enough when racing, as I found out. But after a while I started to pick up the pace and get to the top at most meetings. This is how I realised that preparation is the key to a smooth running day.

After working at Russ Williams Repairs, I got more interested in the way vehicles worked and got a weekly job. Although I was still at college at the time, I did not feel it was helping me. Eventually I

decided college was not for me, so I got my AS Levels and left to work full time while looking for an apprenticeship. We came up with an apprenticeship scheme with the AA that I could attend, and still work at Russ Williams Repairs. I completed a 3 year course in 6 months.

Now that I was a fully qualified mechanic I had more time on my hands to do what I enjoy - which is racing bikes and felt I wanted to move up a step into club racing. I came to the conclusion that a 400cc bike was the way to go as it was not so quick that I would scare myself, but quick enough to learn the skills needed to race nation wide.

The next hurdle was getting a race license. This was where it became tricky because to get a race license you must be a member of a race club, but to become a member of a race club you need a race license. After a quick ACU course and an eye test, my license came through, and I was off buying a bike and van to transport it to each meeting.

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I brought a CBR400 that had been previously raced, so had a certain amount of engine work and other things already done to it - which was a good basis to go from. Most evenings after work I will be doing something else to the bike, and although it is now a race worthy machine - there is plenty of setting up to be done. It already has up rated suspension, brakes, a ported and gas flowed cylinder head with racing cams.

I am currently a member of the New Era Motorcycle Racing Club, www.neweramcc.org which I will be racing in this year. This club runs meetings all across the country at well known and established race tracks. I will be getting to all of these tracks using my van which I brought as an MOT failure and fixed up



myself (benefit of being a mechanic). All I want to do now is get out on the bike and get as much track time as possible. Before now, the fastest I had ever been on a bike was around 60mph - now I am doing up to 130mph and on the limit for as long as possible. That takes a lot to get your head round. As much as I love to ride - there is still the big issue of money. It is £115 per day just to enter, then there's the cost of transportation, fuel, tyres, spares, food, safety clothing (which I still need) and that's without crashing! So if I like this racing and feel I could be quick enough, the next step will be sponsorship. I am already fortunate enough to have loads of help at Russ Williams Repairs where Shaun Loveday has provided awesome help. And also the generosity of Wynn 3 who kindly gave me a lightweight premier helmet to use.

Now most weeks I'm in the garage setting up my bike for the next track I will be at, which is Cadwell park at the moment. It is only my second race meeting but I think I am already hooked because all I want to do is get there and get faster!

Well, just goes to show you what you can achieve if you are determined enough, and if any of you 'retired' racers out there could have a quick peek at your hung up leathers - if they are size UK42 (Euro 52) Michael would very much appreciate them - contact Michael via fastbike@supanet.com