

## Coming back for more...

Having achieved just about everything there is to achieve in off-road motorcycle sport, David Knight is returning to the World Enduro Championship with new ambitions, renewed motivation and is looking forwards to what he describes as one of the most exciting and challenging seasons of his career so far. In an exclusive interview, he tells BMW Motorrad why he is fully focused on winning the brand its first ever WEC title and explains why the opening round of the 2009 World Enduro Championship on March 14 in Portugal can't come soon enough

***BMW: What keeps you motivated when you've 'been there, done that' in your career?***

DK: I guess I still love riding and racing bikes as much as I always have. I know that I'm lucky to do what I do for a living so I just try and enjoy it as much as I can. Coming back to the World Enduro Championship gives me fresh motivation. The reason I decided to race for BMW this season was to give myself a new challenge. I've won WEC titles, and cross-country championships in the States, so returning to a championship I know well, but competing on new machinery, means I have a new goal to achieve.

***BMW: Which of your many achievements are you most proud of – and why?***

DK: Winning my first WEC title, and then defending it were special moments. In winning my first title I proved that I could win. And when I defended it I showed that I wasn't a 'one-hit wonder'. Winning the ISDE outright was also special to me because it's an event I used to read about when I was younger, before I started racing. Also winning indoor enduro championships in both Europe and the US is always special – and of course winning and then defending my US GNCC championships. It's really hard to pick just one because there are so many.

***BMW: How refreshing was it to be offered this challenge with BMW?***

DK: As I've said, competing for BMW gives me the opportunity to return to Europe and the WEC but at the same time it'll be fresh. I was looking for a new challenge and that's exactly what I have. I want to prove myself on the BMW – just as I did on the KTM.

***BMW: Are you looking forwards to working alongside Marko and Juha?***

DK: Yes, I am. I've known and competed against both of them for many years and I have a lot of respect for them both. Juha, Marko and I all like our bikes set-up different to one another so there's only so much we can help each other. Being in a team with some familiar faces is always a good thing. I know that everyone is looking forward to the start of the world championship.



***BMW: Can you see just how important this motorsport project is to the BMW employees?***

DK: I can certainly see how important it is to those I've had contact with. What I like about being a part of the team is that although BMW is obviously a huge company the motorsport team is a relatively small group of people. Everyone is working hard so that when the championship starts we are ready.



***BMW: Does this make you feel under any pressure, to see how much it means to them?***

DK: To be honest I feel under less pressure than I have in a long time. I'm not sure why exactly, maybe because I know the team are 100 per cent behind me and because I know what I can achieve now. I really don't feel like I'm under any pressure, other than the pressure I put on myself.

***BMW: How different is life for you now from when you were a privateer?***

DK: In some ways it's the same – I'm still trying to be the best, just like I was when I first started. But obviously I make my living from racing bikes now, which means life is very different. I'm able to focus 100 per cent on everything to do with racing. I still don't get much free time because with full-time racing comes more commitments.

***BMW: How important has your mental strength and self-belief been in your journey to the top?***

DK: I can remember back to two years before I won my first world championship. I had a bad season because of the bike I was racing, but a lot of people thought the problem was that I just wasn't good enough to make the jump to the very top level. I knew I could still do it, and two years later I did it and won my first world title. Self-belief is really important, as is having a good team around you.

***BMW: Who are your most respected rivals – and why?***

DK: I think you have to respect all of your rivals and not focus on any one of them too much. There are some really great riders in the Enduro 3 class this year, so I know I'm going to have to work hard.



***BMW: Does BMW Motorrad have a different approach to motorsport from, say KTM, as they are still relatively new to this world?***

DK: The goal is the same, as both companies – like all companies – want to win. BMW's approach is a little different, but that's just because every company does things differently. The race team is smaller and more personal, which I like. The approach to racing is serious and professional, as you'd expect.

***BMW: How you done enough testing on the bike, or do you feel you need more time?***

DK: I'm really happy with the bike, but I know that I probably won't be 100 per cent happy until later in the year. With a new bike – any new bike – you learn how to get the best from it all the time. You never stop improving it. I'm really happy with it now, but I think mid-season will be when I'm really at home on it.

***BMW: What are your plans for now until the first round of the WEC?***

DK: Riding, training, testing and racing. I'm riding the bike five days a week now and that will continue right up until the first WEC race. We have had some really good tests in different countries, so it's just a case of keeping things moving forward.

***BMW: Will you use base settings on the G 450 X from 2008 or go completely your own way and develop things from there?***

DK: The team had a test in Spain in November of last year where we all worked out a base setting that we liked. We've just had another test in Spain to try different suspension and tyres. The bikes have come on a lot during the winter as the team has been busy coming up with new stuff.

***BMW: Who do you think will be the main men to beat in 2009?***

DK: Like I said, I try not to worry too much about any one rider. I know that last year's E3 world champion Samuli Aro will be strong, as will his team-mate Ivan Cervantes. Marko Tarkkala, my team-mate, will also be fast, as will French riders Seb Guillaume and Christophe Nambotin. It's going to be a tough class.

***BMW: What other events, apart from WEC, do you plan to contest in 2009?***

DK: I'll do some races in the UK, possibly an early round of the Spanish Enduro Championship, some GNCC races in the States, as well as some one-off events. At the moment I'm just focusing on the WEC. My plan is to get back into the indoor enduro scene at the end of the outdoor season.

***BMW: How do you relax in-between races?***

DK: I don't, I'm always on the go. No, I just try and spend some time at home relaxing, but that doesn't happen that much.

***BMW: What's the best thing about living on the Isle of Man?***

DK: It's home. I have lots of great places to ride, I have my family and friends there, and I can get away from some of the stresses that coming with travelling and racing. It's a great place.

***BMW: Thanks David, and good luck for 2009.***

