

G 450 X as cool as ice!

Never let the cold or ice get in the way of a good motorcycle race – at least that’s what they say in Québec, Canada, where racer Francis Martin will be competing with a BMW G 450 X on an oval track ice race this weekend (Feb 21–22).



Francis Martin is actually one of the riders for BMW Motorrad Canada’s HP2 Sport Thunder Team – but he is pretty fast on the ice too, so a special bike has been prepared for him to compete in a special support race at the forthcoming Grand Prix Ski-Doo de Valcourt, which is Canada’s most popular motorsport winter event.

Held in the Québec town of Valcourt, about one-and-a-half hours away from Montréal, the event attracts top drivers from Canada, USA, Europe and Asia. The Grand Prix Ski-Doo de Valcourt consists of snowmobile racing, ‘Snocross’ racing and motorcycle ice racing, which was added to the programme in 2003.

Although there’s no shortage of snow in the area this year, the organisers actually use artificial snow because it is white, clean and improves the quality of the show. The Snocross course is like a motocross track and spectators will see top drivers reach speeds up to 170 km/h and jump up to seven metres high. The oval course, where the snowmobile and



motorcycle ice racing events will take place, is covered by ice that is nearly 40 centimetres thick. It is about 26 metres wide, with a three metre run-off areas around the outside for the safety of competitors.

For the last six years the motorcycle ice-racing event has been dominated by just two riders – four times champion Dominic Beaulac and double winner Andrew Ranger. Hoping to put an end to their supremacy is 35-year-old Francis Martin, who has been practising on the G 450 X in preparation for his title challenge.

“I’m really looking forward to racing the BMW G 450 X in this race,” said Francis, who is also a former double Canadian Superbike Champion. “For those who don’t live in cold climates, this is hard to imagine, but on ice you get more traction than anything because we use special screws in the tyres which are just incredible – you can lean the bike over just about as far as you want!”



At Valcourt, the race will take place on a flat oval, but there are other events in the calendar that take place on tracks that are more like road circuits, with left and right turns. In order to prepare the BMW for this kind of racing only a few modifications are necessary, such as softening up the suspension, increasing the power output, fixing front and rear guards and of course the ice screw tyres. The rest is down to rider skill and bravery, as Francis explains.

“There are plenty of opportunities for practising your craft, because tracks are opened on frozen lakes all across Canada and the north of the USA. On an ice surface, you have all the grip you want until there’s snow on the track and then it gets a bit interesting! The ice screw tyres give us the traction we need and also allow for good braking. The race will be a sprint of around 15 to 20 laps and there is always the threat of being hit by another bike, but that’s why we have guards on our machines for protection.”

For more information about this exciting event, please visit the <http://www.grandprixvalcourt.com> website, which is available in French and English language versions.