



## **British BMX National Series – Rounds 7 & 8 Knightswood, Glasgow**

The latest rounds of this year's HSBC British national series saw the team crossing north over the border into Scotland, but instead of Cumbernauld this year's Scottish rounds would be in Glasgow.

The newly finished Clark and Kent track had only been completed and open to the public for a couple of weeks, so very few riders had the chance to ride it before the event. The track, home to Glasgow's Western Titans is another jewel in the crown of British BMX. Social media updates from those who'd ridden the track were foreboding, video clips and pictures of steep jumps, massive start hills and technical rhythm sections were sending the race public wild with speculation in the build up to the event.

The weather forecast was looking ominous too, so provisions for every conceivable eventuality would have to be packed for the event. Some of the team arrived Thursday for extra practice and were passing back messages that the hard-standing trackside wasn't fully finished yet, so welly boots and cleaning equipment for the bikes would be high on the list of things to take.

The track is in Knightswood, Glasgow, at a custom-built BMX facility costing hundreds of thousands of pounds, especially built for the Elite European Championships, an event coming up in August. Aside from the track itself there is a permanent brick office and reception, as well as a hugely popular pump track. There is ample hard standing around the track and in the immediate vicinity, so when fully finished the Titans will be able to host huge events, that could house portable medical rooms, offices, media trailers etc. Camping was limited to caravans, camper vans and motor homes, but when the area opposite the track is available accommodation for tents shouldn't be an issue, another boost for future events, as well as a huge overflow parking area.

The track itself is trademark Clark and Kent, very steep challenging jumps, deep rhythms and a monstrous start hill, all favouring the more fearless and skilful riders, especially those who can really jump. There are two start hills next to each other a 5-metre challenge hill and an 8-metre elite hill, but for this event only the 5-metre hill was used, mainly down to the weather conditions. The stairs at the back of the hill weren't as steep as those at Manchester Indoor, which was a relief to most, as Manchester's are nearly as tiring to walk up as the track is to ride. The hill is very steep, by any standards and covered in a man-made material that looked like laminate wood, especially when wet, but it has a rough surface strip for each rider that gripped well; it just gave the impression it would be slippery.

The first jump was a triple with a very steep take off, with riders hitting maximum speed by the take-off, so most younger rider opted to jump in and manual or pump out, the older heavier riders were preferring the manual option. Videos had come out in the build up to the event showing people jumping the whole thing in one, but this was not going to be a viable race option. Then came a roller to pump just before a huge step up/step down quad into the first berm. The berms were extremely steep and well-shaped, but it was possible to carry huge amounts of speed through them, providing you got the challenging straights before them correct. Your line out of the first berm had to be good, you had to cut back to the inside, if you didn't you ran the risk of being pushed out wide into the second straight pro section, somewhere you didn't want to be. The second straight was a triple out of the corner, too big to jump in one, so most of the faster riders were jumping the first part as a double then pumping the third, this was followed by a pump roller into a long low double, then time for a couple of cranks before a make or break, must jump step up into the second berm. The third straight was where it got really tricky though, many riders likening the first roller to a piece of Toblerone as it was so peaky, it helped if you could jump from it into the straight, using it as a double, then follows a deep technical rhythm of doubles, a roller to table and another double into the final berm. The last berm is as steep as the others with a big enough exit for the moves to come flying in from high lows. The final straight looked like the profile of a mountain stage from the Tour De France, a roller to step up double, two more rollers close in, then a long low double to roller across the line.

The team's gazebo set up for the weekend was in the thick of factory row, track side, half way down the first straight with a great view of the first half of the track, but due to the size of the jumps no one would get a perfect view of the whole track. There is talk of grandstands for future events to solve this problem. Things in the team area were muddy, the walk ways tight and all the teams were in close together, but Twisted towers, running the standard triple gazebo set up held tight and dry, with a maximum effort being made to keep bikes, riders and equipment clean, looking good and running as smoothly as possible in the conditions. The atmosphere in the team tent was as fun as ever, despite the rain the laughs and fun carried on throughout the weekend. We had loads of visitors coming by to check out the hardware, talk frames and hubs and generally see what we're about. Again, the Twisted gazebo was one of the places for the teenagers and young adults to pop by and be seen, hanging out with our team riders and seeing if any other big names had popped in for a chat.

The weather for the weekend was as forecast, heavy rain on the Saturday, making racing hard work, the track slowed slightly, as would be expected, but the quality of the build shone through and there weren't any soft spots or ruts to speak of. Sunday was an improvement on the weather, the sun shone through the clouds and track ran at full speed. This allowed GB squad rider Kyle Evans to show the crowd what the track was really designed for as he did a full demonstration lap off the 8-metre hill and jumped his way through the pro straights easily.

This weekend we were down a few riders, with school trips, injury and illness taking its toll on the team members, so it was down to the remaining crew to make an impact. We did however have a new rider trying out an SCR and looking at a possible move onto the Twisted factory team, Meeshaq Malone and he made a great impression. Meeshaq is Nathan Konggutong's Hackney club mate and training partner, and like Nathan he has an unbelievable level of skill and he's sure to be a big name outside of London (where he's already very popular on and off the track) very soon. On Saturday Meeshaq tried the poorly Rich Ayles' bike in a couple of motos after only riding it up and down the road a couple of times and seriously impressed us all by getting a couple of mid pack finishes in 17-24, on a bike he'd never taken on a track and that was too big for him. If things work out and we get Big Shaq on a custom-built bike fitted exactly for him, we think we can expect to see big things.

### **Ben Hallett (Cruiser, age 9-12 and Expert age 11)**

Having arrived in Glasgow on Friday lunchtime, Ben was keen to check out the track, immediately running up the stairway to the top of the start hill. Impressive, yet daunting at the same time, Ben's immediate thought was that it was similar to the Manchester indoor start hill, but the first jump seemed much closer to the base of the hill.

Ben has been concentrating on the Cruiser class this year, but after riding around the track a few times, he felt he would ride his 20" as well, so opted to compete on Saturday only for this class, while competing in the Cruiser class on both days.

Saturday was a cold, wet, blustery day. The rain varied between a light shower to torrential downpours throughout the day, followed by short intervals of sunshine. After morning practice, Ben was feeling apprehensive about his day. The wet and slippery conditions had unnerved him. In the Cruiser class, Ben had a couple of wet Motos, where the main aim was staying upright. Like many riders, the mud and soaking conditions made it hard to keep his feet on the pedals and he slipped his footing a number of times. Although Ben is 11, his small stature means he lacks power and he struggles to compete against some much larger opponents. Unfortunately Ben went out after the Moto stage, but has already been talking about how he can improve his strength and stamina.

As Ben lined up on the gate for his first 20" Moto, the skies opened and a torrential downpour started. Within minutes there was a river running down the start hill and the Organisers stopped all racing for 20 minutes, while we all waited for the rain to slow down. Fortunately, the start gate is under cover, but standing on the gate, getting cold in the torrential rain didn't help Ben's nerves at all. While some of his competitors made light of the occasion by flossing on the start gate, Ben stood at the side and looked overwhelmed. By the time the gate dropped, Ben was cold, wet and losing confidence. Unsurprisingly he went out in the Moto stages.

Sunday and the weather was slightly better. It rained during practice but dried up for the Moto stages. Ben was competing in Cruiser only and was feeling a little bit more confident. In his races, he was closer to his competitors and by Moto 3, he had a great battle with another rider, swapping positions a couple of times.

Overall, Ben's view of the track were that it was more difficult than he had first thought as it had some steep jumps and was, in Ben's view, very peaky. He felt it was difficult to keep his rhythm on the 3rd straight, because of the Toblerone-style roller. However, every race is a learning experience and Ben is already looking forward to the next round of the Midlands Regional Championship (at Huncote) and the next National at Telford.



### **Morgan Haslam (13-14 Girls)**

Arriving at the new track on Friday morning for a practice Morgan's first thought was how big everything was and after a roll out she realised it was definitely one of the toughest tracks she had ever ridden! Practice went well and she was confident jumping the first and second straight, she found herself actually quite excited to race!

Unfortunately, on Saturday the weather was against her and Morgan crashed out in practice, when her wheel washed out landing a jump on second straight. She was taken to the medics as she couldn't walk properly and had badly bruised her thigh and hip, having landed in a heap on her handle bars. The medics patched her up and she went back to the team area, even the walk back was a struggle, so she decided it was time to see if she could actually ride.

Even getting on her bike was a challenge and when it came to pedalling she couldn't even clip in, so Morgan thought there was no way she could race, she was gutted. Another injured rider Paul 'Ginge' Maidment from the BMX Talk team came over to see how she was and he got Morgan doing some stretches to ease the soreness and pain she was in. Surprisingly for Morgan she started to feel better and could move a little easier. Next the team set her bike up on rollers and supported her in trying to pedal, the more she moved the more the pain eased! With 10 minutes to go before racing started Morgan decided to try one moto. She said, "It was hard and painful, but adrenaline got me through. I had some good motos somehow managing to get 2nd, 1st, 1st with a 3rd in my semi and 5th in the final!"

Sunday was another tough day, feeling stiff and sporting some large purple bruises it wasn't easy, but the results were good! She got a clean rack of 1st place positions through the motos and in the semi. Unfortunately, she got boxed-in in the final and struggled to squash the jumps pumping down the third straight due to restricted movement in her leg. This caused her to lose momentum and she dropped into 4th place. She told us after the weekend "I am disappointed the injury affected my riding but that's a risk that comes with jumping... and I jumped in every single race so overall not a bad weekend! Although I'm definitely feeling that crash today!"

We think Morgan showed a huge amount of courage and determination to go out and grind the results out after a big off in practice, where many would have thrown in the towel, she was defiantly our team rider of the weekend.



### **Fin Clark (15 boys)**

Race day 1 of the weekend kicked off with some nerves for Fin as the last round didn't go to plan. We were going straight to Semis and we were dropping 16 straight away, A strong 3rd showed those nerves had been forgotten and it continued with a more impressive 1st and 1st in the following motos, so it was game on.

Semi Final time, the gate dropped, and Finn was 2nd into the first berm, it was looking like happy days, but this was short lived, (now the dust has settled he had what could be described as a racing incident) and he found himself in the Pro Section. He dives back in, colliding with others, only to end up on the floor, wounded. That was a sure spot in another well-earned A final gone. Oh well he had to focus on the B final and gain some good points. He did just that, boom, a 1st, and it was happy days in the end.

Race day 2 started with the confidence of day 1, he came 3rd in the first moto and continued with a 2nd and 2nd. Semi Finals time, not as good a start as the Saturday, but a more sensible berm move found him sitting in 5th, with that all important 4th place in sight. It didn't take long before he was in 4th and heading for the Main. It wasn't all plain sailing though, with Edward Pole pushing him all the way to the line. A Final time and as always, these guys battle to the limits, and Finn was in the middle of the pack narrowly missing a rider as they slid out. Fin was holding a strong 5th until he was past with metres to go, so a 6th. He said, 'A great weekends racing, earning some very valuable points...Thank you again to Twisted Concepts SCR BMX'.



### **Martin 'Smiley' Brown (17-29 Cruiser)**

I think we can safely say that Smiley loved Glasgow, it's the kind of track that suits the countries raddest cruiser rider down to a T. Luckily, Smiley behaved himself this weekend and didn't go for any rebel runs though pro-sections, to prove how easy they are, as he's been known to do on occasion. We asked Smiley what he thought of his performance and what went down, he told us: 'What an amazing weekend! After 8 hours driving I arrived at 10pm, to what can only be described as an awesome venue!!! Big pump track. Changing facilities and one hell of a track!!!'

"Saturday morning, with 4 laps of practice I got every line that I wanted/needed. The Motos looked stacked, I got a 5th, 4th, then a 1st! A 3rd in the semi and 7th in the main.

Sunday, I woke up ready and pumped. I got 2nd, 1st and 2nd in the motos, then a 3rd in the semi. In the final I managed another 7th. All weekend the bike felt good, so I felt good!

Massive well done to all the team. You rock!!!

Can't wait to head back up there again soon!!!'



## Spencer Cremin (Vets)

The big man decided to concentrate his efforts on one bike, his SCR 20" XXXL, leaving the cruiser back at home.

Spencer thought the new track, and especially the start hill building was impressive. He said 'all the riders in Vets at Friday night gate session had trouble with the 5-metre hill and hitting the triple at the bottom, but by the end of the evening, and after getting advice from other good riders about getting down the first straight I then felt comfortable with it. Basically, ditch the manual, jump in was the way forward.'

After the motos on Saturday Spencer was enjoying the first two straights and he hadn't managed to knock over Clark & Kent's new masterpiece, but the third and fourth straights would need a lot more time for him to find a faster line.

Racing on the Saturday went well placing 2nd, 2nd and 2nd he had 3rd pick in the A final and finished 6th.

Sunday, Spencer battered out a 3rd, 3rd and 3rd in the motos and another A final 6th place, great placings all weekend.

He found the conditions hard, with rain on the Saturday and it being such a new track it was tough, but the team pushed him through all weekend and he enjoyed it. Spencer thinks with a lot more track time and a few adjustments after the Euro games it will be a great national track and a very elite looking place.



## **Nathan Konggutong (17-24 men)**

Nathan found the track challenging over the weekend, he actually said his favourite bit was the pump track! He had the lines and the skill to get quickly through the hardest sections, like the super technical third straight, but possibly lacked some power and speed on the first straight.

On race day 1 he got through his moto in arguably the hardest class there is, a class stacked with former Elite, soon to be Elite and World ranked riders. The quarter was tough though, he got shut down on the first straight and couldn't pick his way through as the race drew on as everyone was absolutely flat out and no mistakes were being made.

Race day 2 and it all started off well with a 4th place, but he was going to need to carry on with the momentum and 4th or better in the next two motos to get into the quarters again, but it wasn't to be, the following motos ran out in a similar scenario to the previous day's quarter, he was shut down and couldn't slip through, so out in the motos. Nathan said he enjoyed himself and had a great weekend with the team, even if the weather and results weren't to his liking.



Twisted Concepts should be back to full force with a complete squad for Telford, so please pop by and say hello.

Check out our new gloves from FIST, they're super comfy and available in Twisted orange and pink. We'll have our custom 3G weave carbon rims on display, as well as an amazing array of Onyx hubs. We are also the European service and warranty centre for Onyx, we only use Onyx ceramic bearings and the same Teflon grease used in the Onyx factory, so your hubs will literally come back like new. Remember if you order hubs from us we can do them in nearly any conceivable colour combination and custom laser etching is complementary.

We now have SCR frames in all sizes, disc specific or V brake, and if you're looking for a special colour and decal combination we can sort that out no problem at all, with our custom painters and special relationship with ENV Graphics.

We would like to thank our sponsors and team partners Onyx racing products Crankbrothers, Powers Bikes Shop, Lead Racewear, Custom Racing, Tangent and ODI Grips.

Words: Miles Kirby

Photos: BMX Widow and Smithy's