

IMAGOLIVE

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Kärcher Grand Prix of Flanders
 April 2nd, 2006 - Circuit Zolder



A few hours before the opening round of the 2006 FIM Motocross World Championship, we talked a few minutes with Giuseppe Luongo.

Giuseppe, we saw in February during the Organizer's meeting that there is now a great cooperation with them?

During the Organizer's seminar in February we saw that there was a great atmosphere with them, they believe in what we've done to increase the level of the championships. Now we want to stabilize the calendar, to work every year with the same people and to create a family. I'm really happy about that and we will do excellent work together.

There will be fifteen events this season in the calendar, but it could be more?

Our job is to try to find a balance between the parties involved, and it's not always easy. For sure it would be better for us to have eighteen Grand Prix, and we could do it as we have a lot of requests now. But the wish of the teams is to have fifteen events so we are going in this direction. I think sixteen would be the best... we'll have to see with the teams.

Normally we'll have three new venues next season, Valkenswaard, another GP in England and may be Thailand. The Japanese manufacturers are pushing really hard to go there, so if we keep fifteen we'll have to manage the situation.

If Thailand is in the calendar that mean's that we'll not go to South Africa or Japan? The team's request was to have only two overseas events?

We have long-term agreement with Japan and South Africa. If we go to Thailand we will have to obtain strong support for the teams from the manufacturers. We agree with the manufacturers that we must go worldwide, but they must strongly support their teams otherwise we won't go.



Three years ago you wrote an open letter to the Motocross community. If you had to write another today, what would you put on paper?

Ah... You know in life you don't need to take any revenge, it's not nice. Today I don't want to say that I was right, but our political moves and our choices were right.

Today we have "peace" in the paddock, we have "peace" on the circuit, we have a huge media coverage – I don't want to say only television because newspapers, magazines and web sites are also doing a lot for our sport – and if you compare Motocross to what it was three years ago I think everybody will agree that we have made a huge step. I also think that most of the people who were against us three years ago now understand our job, and see the results. I'm convinced that it was necessary to do what we did. When I see the salaries of the top riders today and compare to what it was three years ago I'm pleased for them.

I'm also happy with the quality of the circuits now - remember the critics about the tracks a few years ago, compare that with last year!

If I was to write an open letter now, I would say "Thank you to all the people who believe in us and

support us” and I would add for the others “I don’t want any revenge, we are here to work together and our door will always be open”.

The television coverage has increased every year, will it continue this season?

It’s enormous. When I started to be involved in Motocross World Championship ten years ago I already had a great relationship with Eurosport... now they have created ‘Eurosport World’ and cover Australia, New Zealand and Asia (excluding China and Japan). They will broadcast all the Motocross and Supermoto GP’s live - we have now a great coverage worldwide. At least 75 countries receive the live coverage, and about 120 countries broadcast the 52’ Highlights.

In our hearts our sport is the biggest in the world, but in reality we are a ‘middle sport’ for the televisions companies - compared to Football, Formula One and Moto GP where the business is much bigger – but even-so, we have one of the best treatments for a ‘middle sport’.

2005 was a successful season with two great championships and an incredible Motocross of Nations. What are you expecting from 2006?

I think that we’ve reached a really good level for the Motocross World Championship. Now we have to fine-tune and work on the details to perfect the quality of our GPs. We have a good and strong base and we’ll continue to increase this year.

When you first received the television rights from the FIM ten years ago, what were you expecting ten years later?

Since I was 20 I had always wanted to bring Motocross to a high level – even when I had other possibilities a few years ago, I returned quickly to Motocross. My personal goal was always to lift Motocross to the highest level possible.

10 years ago my ideas were not as clear as they are now even if I had experience with the Masters of Motocross when I first started working closely with TV and Media. The Masters were easier to promote because everything was done by us.... But when I came to the GP we started to touch some ‘private gardens’ and we disturbed some peoples’ little businesses. It was also not so easy with the promoters because the quality of the circuits seemed not to be the main priority. The minds of organizers have changed and now they are not only interested in counting the money at the end of the event but they are also working hard to develop the tracks, they talk with the political authorities to obtain financial support, they make long term projects... The mentality has evolved and you can easily see the difference of 10 years ago.

2006 will be the last season of Stefan Everts, who was one of your riders in the 80’s. It will be a special year for you too?

We were lucky that Stefan was racing in our period, because he is really the man of the history of our sport. I’m happy and proud also to be the first to give him an official contract with a salary, a mechanic and a team when I created the Bieffe Suzuki Team. From this time (even if there were a few times we didn’t agree on certain things) I have always had a huge respect for Stefan. He has brought a lot of good to our sport, and I’m sure that he will continue even when he retires. For sure it will be a special year and it would be great if he could achieve his career with a tenth World title.

I hope that we can find a way to work together in the future



For the first time since many years a main “outside” sponsor is involved in the GP’s: Karcher. It’s another step for Motocross?

It’s great. When an outside sponsor comes it means that we have opened a door - for us as well as teams and riders.... it means that they have interest in our sport, and that we must continue to work in this direction.

Last question about Motocross, when will you announce the location of the 2007 Motocross of Nations in the United States?

We are waiting the official press release from the FIM, but I can tell you that we are close to sign the agreement with Budds Creek.

The situation is always more difficult with SuperMoto. The Championship will start at the end of the month in Italy, how is the situation?

Our main goal at the moment is to stabilize the calendar. I'm really happy to have France back as it's an important country for us. With Italy, France, Germany, Austria and Greece we have a good base, and we're working hard to return to Spain. I believe in this sport of course, and even if there is a lot of work we will succeed.

We had to take a difficult decision with a single tyres manufacturer, but it was necessary. The difference was too big between the tyre products and the budget (just for tyres) was increasing too much... even for the factories! It was absurd to see some riders using 25 tyres per race, now limit is 10. Thanks to Dunlop, for their belief and support in this sport, we are able to continue the live TV coverage of the GP's.

