

**IMAGOLIVE**

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**TEAM PROFILES FOR THE 2006 FOX MOTOCROSS OF NATIONS****TEAM USA**

For 2006 Team USA, winner of the 2005 FOX Motocross of Nations in Erneé with Ricky Carmichael, Kevin Windham and Ivan Tedesco, the lineup confirms Carmichael (1) and adds two new names with Ryan Villopoto (2) and James Stewart (3) both entering the MXoN for the first time. But one more rider will join the group, Ivan Tedesco, who will take Carmichael's spot in case 'Captain USA' will not be completely recovered from the recent shoulder injury in the last AMA MX round. The announcement of the MX1 team USA rider is expected before Friday's technical inspections.

26-year-old Ricky Carmichael from Havana (Florida) is the dominator in the last decade of AMA Motocross and Supercross series with 10 AMA Motocross titles and 5 AMA Supercross titles. In his last year of full-time racing Carmichael will be heading his RM-Z450 Suzuki in the MX1 class of the Motocross of Nations if his left shoulder, injured in the first moto of the Glen Helen AMA MX National, will be properly healed . If 'RC' will be able to race he will be surely starring the USA vs Europe battle challenging World Motocross Championship legend Stefan Everts, with both the American and the Belgian being at their last appearance in Motocross as racers.

Ryan Villopoto appears for the first time at the Motocross of Nations; the 18-year-old American will race the MX2 class on a KX 250 F Kawasaki after he completed a storming season in the 2006 AMA Supercross Lites and winning the 2006 AMA Motocross Lites Championship. After a successful amateur career he debuted in the Pro division in late 2005 by impressing the industry with an outstanding series of results and showing right away his immense talent and potential. Villopoto collected plenty of wins in his amateur career : he won the NMA 85cc Open in 2002; in 2003 he got 12 wins (2 Kawasaki Race of Champion races, 4 Winter Olympics SX races, 4 Winter Olympics MX Race, 2 Winter Olympics Olympiad races); in 2004 he won 3 races at Lake Whitney Spring National, 3 at the GNC Finals, 2 at Mammoth Motocross and 4 at the NMA Ponca City Grand National.

James "Bubba" Stewart is the first African American to win a major motor-sport Championship of any kind in the world. The 20-year-old phenomenon from Haines City, Florida, was the AMA rookie of the year in 2002, his first year as a professional rider, and won the 125cc AMA National Motocross Championship. In 2003 he won the 125cc AMA West Supercross Championship then in 2004, after winning the 125cc East Supercross title, the 125cc National Motocross Championship, he decided to move up to the 250cc class. He won 3 events in his debut which was interrupted by an arm injury in the Phoenix Supercross. He came back pretty strong in 2006 with 10 wins out of 18 rounds in the Supercross class on his factory KX 450 F Kawasaki. He is the man of the future in the US scene.

5-time Motocross World Champion in the 500cc class, Roger De Coster started travelling to America in the late 70s-early 80s when he raced and won 4 Trans AMA Titles. 'The Man' collected 6 strikes with the Belgian Team at the Motocross of Nations and since he moved permanently to US he got in charge of coaching the US Team for MXoN. His debut in the Olympics of Motocross was in 1969 and 37 years later he will be in Matterley Basin managing the Team USA one more time, giving his precious contribution to the new challenge for Team USA to get the 17th win at the event.

### ***TEAM FRANCE***

The French Team is on its way to France with Sebastien Pourcel (4), Christophe Pourcel (5) and Yves Demaria (6).

There will be Sebastien Pourcel in the MX1 class, which is the class he will move to next year. There will be a Kawasaki 450 for the young Frenchman: Sebastien was born the 11th of February 1985 in Martigues, France. "Seb" got 1 podium in 2006, in the demanding track of Namur, and made to finish in 10<sup>th</sup> place in the MX2 Motocross World Championship.

Christophe Pourcel will be racing the MX2 class with the Kawasaki 250. It was the same bike Christophe used this year to grasp the first MX2 World Title of his career. The 18-year-old French rider from Marseille was the most consistent in the MX2 class during the 2006 season: he won twice, in Teutschenthal and in Lierop, but grasped other 8 podium finishes. He kept the red plate from the Grand Prix of Japan until the end of the Championship and among all MX2 riders Christophe was the only one who got points in each round of the season.

MX3 World Champion Yves Demaria will be competing in the Open class with the KTM 450. He is the oldest rider in the team with 34 years of age and in his records there is another MX3 World Title from 2004, a second place in the MX3 World Championship in 2005 and 15 French Titles.

Their Team Manager will be Olivier Robert. Former GP racer, Olivier Robert won the French Junior Championship in 1981 and has been working with the French Federation for more than 10 years. His main task is looking after young guns of French Motocross.

### ***TEAM BELGIUM***

Team Belgium squad will be made of the three best riders in the MX1 Motocross World Championship: Stefan Everts (7), Kevin Strijbos (8) and Steve Ramon (9).

10 Times World Champion "Stefun" Everts will be racing the MX1 class with the Yamaha 450; the 33-year-old Belgian will try to achieve another goal this season: after winning the 10<sup>th</sup> World Title and grasping 101 GP wins, Stefan will try to beat his American rival Ricky Carmichael. This will be also Stefan Everts' last season as a motocross professional rider.

MX1 World Championship runner up Kevin Strijbos will be entering the 2006 Motocross of Nations in the MX2 class with the Suzuki 250. The 21-year-old rider born in Geel will be on a smaller machine after he showed great consistency and improvements this year in MX1: Kevin grasped 6 podiums and clocked the pole position in the Grand Prix of Czech Republic.

Steve "The Bomb" Ramon, who is also Strijbos' team mate in the Motocross World Championship with both riders racing for the Suzuki World MX GP Team, will keep his Suzuki 450 and will race the Open category in the "Olympics" of Motocross. Poleman in the Grand Prix of Germany this year, the 26-year-old racer from Zerkegem was 8 times on the podium in 2006.

Team Belgium manager is a Champion from the past: Joel Robert. Joel was born in 1943 in Chatelet, Belgium, and won the first Title at the age of 20: at that time he was the youngest World Champion

in history. He won 6 World Titles and 50 GPs in his career, all of them in the 250cc class.

### ***TEAM NEW ZEALAND***

Riders defending New Zealand in 2006 FOX Motocross of Nations will be Joshua Coppins (10), Benjamin Townley (11) and Cody Cooper (12).

Josh "Lizzard" Coppins will stay in the MX1 class, the category in which he raced the Motocross World Championship with the Honda 450. After having missed the first 7 rounds because of an injury, the 29-year-old Kiwi from Motueka made to end the season in 7<sup>th</sup> place. Since he made his first appearance in the World Championship this season he continuously challenged World Champion Stefan Everts and made to snatch the win from him in Desertmartin: it was his only win of the season but just "Lizzard" and Everts made to win a Grand Prix in 2006.

21-year-old Benjamin Townley is definitely well known both in Europe and in the USA. Born in Taupo (New Zealand) and now residing in Tallahassee (Florida), "BT" raced his last World Motocross season in 2005, packed his things and the third place in the final Championship standings then moved to America to debut in the AMA series. Unfortunately two injuries kept him away from American racing tracks where he raced just 2 rounds (Red Bud and Glen Helen) but former MX2 World Champion will be at the Motocross of Nations with his Kawasaki 250 in the MX2 class.

22-year-old professional motocross rider Cody Cooper comes from Opotiki. In 2002 the former New Zealand junior champion blew away the opposition in the New Zealand junior 125cc ranks. In the same year he finished runner-up to Josh Coppins in the 250cc class at the New Zealand Champs and also finished runner-up to Luke Burkhart in the 125cc class. His senior breakthrough year was 2003 when he won the national 125cc (MX2) crown for the first time, beating Darryll King to the trophy. Riding for Honda Australia, Cody Cooper won the MX2 class title in Australia in 2004 then won the New Zealand 125cc class in 2005. He will be at the MXoN racing the Open class with the Honda 450.

Team manager Russel Burling is a 50-year-old Auckland based man with a passion for motocross. He was a GP motocross mechanic for the Suzuki factory team in the 70s and now is the managing director of SsangYong New Zealand, a Korean motor vehicle manufacturer that sponsors bike racing in New Zealand. He spent 3 years in Europe as Craig Coleman's mechanic and knows people like Harry Everts, Sylvain Geboers and Roger de Coster very well.

### ***TEAM GREAT BRITAIN***

Great Britain's squad will put together 3 MX2 World Championship racers; Billy Mackenzie (13) will be in MX1, young gun Tommy Searle (14) will be in MX2 while Carl Nunn (15) will race in the Open class.

Scottish Billy Mackenzie was born in Edinburgh the 7<sup>th</sup> of April 1984. Mac was in the Great Britain Motocross of Nations Team already in 2004 and 2005; 2006 will be his third year in the "Olympics" of Motocross after Billy ended the World Motocross MX2 season in 9<sup>th</sup> place. Young Billy will be on a Yamaha 450 and will race the MX1 class; next year he race the Motocross World Championship in the same class with factory Kawasaki MX1 Team headed by Jan de Groot.

17-year-old Tommy Searle just completed his first full time season in the Motocross World Championship. The promising young British rider from Kent ended the adventure in the MX2 class with Team Molson Kawasaki; his final position was 8<sup>th</sup>, highlighted by 2 podium results in Great Britain and Sweden. Searle missed the British Championship by just 2 points and finished second; this year he will make his first appearance in Team Great Britain racing the MX2 with the Kawasaki 250.

In 2006 27-year-old Carl Nunn from Kent made to defend his British Championship Title from youngster Tommy Searle's attacks and grasped the second British Championship in the last round of the National series. Having started with the Grand Prix of Spain in 1996, ten years later in the MX2 World Championship Carl raced with Team KTM Champ and finished the season with 6<sup>th</sup> place. In the 2006 FOX Motocross of Nations he will race the Open class with the KTM 450.

Team Manager will be former Motocross National Champion and Grand Prix winner Rob Herring.

### ***TEAM ESTONIA***

Team Estonia is almost a family meeting with cousins Tanel (16) and Aigar (17) Leok racing together with Juss Laansoo (18).

Team Kawasaki de Groot Tanel Leok will be entering the Motocross of Nations with his Kawasaki 450 to race the MX1 class. In the same class but in the Motocross World Championship Tanel started a promising 2006 season with 3 podiums out of the first 4 races and clinched a 5<sup>th</sup> place as final result. The 21-year-old from Voru moved to the FIM Motocross World Championship after he was 1<sup>st</sup> in the Junior 125cc Motocross World Championship in 2001.

In the MX2 class there will be Tanel's cousin Aigar. 21-year-old Estonian started with motocross when he was 4 years old and just completed the 2006 MX2 season in the FIM Motocross World Championship with 15<sup>th</sup> place. In his career Aigar was European Champion in the 85cc class and won many Estonian National Championships; he first entered the FIM Motocross World Championship 5 years ago and grasped his best result in 2005: it was a third place finish in the Grand Prix of Ireland. 2006 will be the fourth time at the Motocross of Nations for Aigar.

Youngster Juss Laansoo was born in 1983, in the city of Tallinn. Currently he lives in Chatsworth, California, to race the AMA series; in 2006 "Juice" is 30<sup>th</sup> overall in the AMA Motocross class and in 2005 he was 14<sup>th</sup> in the same division, becoming also the AMA Rookie of the year. He will be taking part to the Motocross of Nations in the Open class with the 450cc Honda.

Team Manager Marc Lajal is a 41-year-old sportsman from Tallinn who practiced both off-road and road racing in his career.

### ***TEAM NETHERLANDS***

Dutch Team in the 2006 Motocross of Nations will be a mixture made of Marc de Reuver (19), George Strik (20) and Bas Verhoeven (21).

Marc "Calimero" de Reuver will have a KTM 450 machine and will be in the MX1 class. It is his new class for 2007, when Marc will be racing in Team Yamaha factory together with Coppins. De Reuver concluded his 2006 Motocross season in the MX2 class with 5<sup>th</sup> place after a 2 podiums in a row start to the year. In 2005 and 2004 Marc was injured and finished both seasons outside of the top ten (2005: 20<sup>th</sup>; 2004: 14<sup>th</sup>); in 2003 he was 7<sup>th</sup> in the 125cc class where he was 9<sup>th</sup> in 2002. In the latter year and also in 2001 Marc was Dutch Motocross Champion.

33-year-old George Strik from Mill will be racing the MX2 class with the KTM 250; he planned to stop his career at the end of the season but finally he decided to go on for longer. A push to that decision may have been the results of 2006, with Strik leading the MX2 Dutch Championship and having good chances to grasp the National Title for the first time in his career.

Bas Verhoeven was born in Best. For the 2006 MX1 Motocross season he stood in for injured

Stephen Sword in Team Kawasaki de Groot and conquered 24<sup>th</sup> in the final standings. He will be racing in the Open class of the FOX Motocross of Nations with the Kawasaki 450cc; in his record book there is a Dutch Title in MX1 from 2004.

Team Manager John van den Berk. 2 times Motocross World Champion from Oss is now a member of KNMV and a motocross trainer.

### ***TEAM PORTUGAL***

The Portuguese racing squad heading to the 2006 FOX Motocross of Nations will be made of Paulo Goncalves (22), Rui Goncalves (23) and Henrique Venda (24).

Paulo Goncalves was chosen to race in the MX1 class with the Honda 450cc. The 27-year-old from Esposende raced Motocross and also Enduro winning several National Titles; he dominated the National Enduro Championship from 2002 to 2005 and won many National Motocross Championships.

21-years-old Rui Goncalves just finished his best season in the Motocross World Championship thanks to his 7<sup>th</sup> place in MX2 standings. He will try to keep up the good work in the MX2 class at the Motocross of Nation where he will be on a KTM 250; former Portuguese Motocross and Supercross Champion, Rui's book of records in the Motocross World Championship is made of the following results: 10<sup>th</sup> place of 2005, 16<sup>th</sup> place of 2004 (both in the MX2 class), 18<sup>th</sup> of 2003 where he was in the 125cc class and 24<sup>th</sup> of 2002, in the same class.

Henrique Venda will be facing the "Olympics" of Motocross with an Open class point of view; the 21-year-old Portuguese from Portimao will have a Suzuki 450cc. Henrique is on a motorbike since 1990 and was the Under 21 125cc National Champion in 2005; the following year, 2006, he won the Supercross SX2 National Championship.

There will be Paulo Rodrigues heading the Portuguese guys as their Team Manager at the event. He started racing when he was very young and now is a Member of FNM (Portuguese Federation) for Motocross and Supercross.

### ***TEAM SOUTH AFRICA***

From South Africa there will be other 3 riders joining the Motocross of Nations club: Neville Bradshaw (25), Tyla Rattray (26) and Wyatt Avis (27).

Neville Bradshaw will race the MX1 class with the Suzuki 450. Neville was born the 19<sup>th</sup> of September 1983 in Johannesburg and stepped into professional Motocross racing in 2000, when he became South African Champion in the 125cc class. He raced the MX2 South African Championship in 2001 and finished 3<sup>rd</sup>; in 2002 and 2003 he did both MX1 and MX2 classes of the South African Championship grasping third in MX2 and second in MX1 for both years. From 2004 he races the British Championship where he was 7<sup>th</sup> in 2004 (MX2 class), 6<sup>th</sup> in 2005 (MX1) and also in 2006 (MX1).

Tyla Rattray had a storming start to the 2006 MX2 Motocross season winning the first 3 rounds in a row and was 4<sup>th</sup> in the final standings. The 20-year-old from Durban moved to Europe for Motocross when he was a teenager; he will race the Motocross of Nations in the MX2 class with the KTM 250. "Styla" was injured in 2005 and finished the season in 15<sup>th</sup> place; his potential was much more evident in 2004 when he ended as Ben Townley's runner up. The year before, 2003, Rattray was Dutch Champion.

Wyatt Avis who just completed his best Motocross World Championship season finishing 18<sup>th</sup> will race the Open class with the KTM 450. The 22-year-old from Durban moved to Europe in 2000 after he won several South African Junior Championships; his first year in the World series was 2002 when Wyatt grasped 27<sup>th</sup>.

South African Team Manager is Greg Albertyn. Greg was born in Johannesburg 33 years ago and like his riders at the Motocross of Nations he moved to Europe in his teens to compete in the Motocross World Championship. He won the 125cc World Title in 1991 then moved up to 250cc class and clinched the Title twice: 1993 and 1994. Afterwards he moved to America where he made to grasp one AMA 250cc Motocross Title in 1999 despite the many injuries he suffered in the US.

### ***TEAM SPAIN***

Spain will join the 2006 FIM Motocross of Nations with Jonathan Barragan (28), Carlos Campano (29) and Alvaro Lozano (30).

Youngster Jonathan Barragan will race the MX1 class on the KTM 450 with which he grasped 6<sup>th</sup> place in the 2006 FIM Motocross World Championship. Barragan was born the 19<sup>th</sup> of July 1985 in Madrid and started riding when he was 8; 2002, 2003 and 2004 Spanish 125cc Motocross Champion, Jonathan was 22<sup>nd</sup> in the World MX2 Championship in 2004. In 2005 he moved up to the MX1 class and clinched 7<sup>th</sup> place as final result.

Carlos Campano is a 21-year-old rider from Sevilla and will race the MX2 class in the Motocross of Nations; he started with motocross when he was 7 years old but entered the World Championship series just 4 years ago. He is now leading the Spanish Championship in the 250cc class while last year, 2005, he was 2<sup>nd</sup> in the same Championship but with the 125cc. Carlos raced the Spanish Championship also in 2004 with the 125cc and finished the season with third. In the MX2 World Championship Campano just finished the season with 24<sup>th</sup>.

The Spaniard racing the Open class is Alvaro Lozano; he will turn 26 years old on the 24<sup>th</sup> of September, exactly when the FOX Motocross of Nations heats will be on. Alvaro is involved at high level in the Spanish National Championships and entered some races of the FIM Motocross World Championship in 2003, 2005 and 2006 when he scored points in Bellpuig. This year's results are a 5<sup>th</sup> place in the Spanish SX Championship and current 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the Spanish MX1 Championship, with still 3 rounds left before the end.

Team Spain coach will be Rafael Valle.

### ***TEAM FINLAND***

The Finnish Team chose 2 riders competing the Motocross World Championship, Antti Pyrhonen (31) and Matti Seistola (32), who will be joined by Jussi-Pekka Vehvilainen (33).

The Finn who will be riding the MX1 class will be 28-year-old Antti Pyrhonen with the TM 450; Antti raced the MX1 class in the World Championship and finished with 14<sup>th</sup> place in 2006 while he finished 15<sup>th</sup> the year before. Last year's best race was the Portuguese GP when Pyrhonen scored 21 points and the Finn's best memory is the European Motocross Championship Title he won in 2000.

In MX2 there will be Matti Seistola riding for Finland. Matti completed the MX2 season in the World Championship with 17<sup>th</sup> place and was 24<sup>th</sup> at the end of last year. The 23-year-old born in Tampere was the 2004 European Motocross Champion.

Jussi-Pekka Vehvilainen will turn 29 in December and had an unlucky 2006 season with many injuries hiding his real potential. In 2005 he was 21<sup>st</sup> in the MX1 World Championship but he missed 10 rounds; in that season he did his best race in Portugal, grasping 31 points and a 3<sup>rd</sup> place podium finish. In 2004 Jussi-Pekka was in the MX2 class and finished 25<sup>th</sup> after he completed only 4 rounds. He was injured in both seasons.

Finnish Team Manager Sauli Makela was a 360 degrees sportsman, having practiced many sports in his life. At the moment he is 62 years old and seems to stick to Motocross as Team Manager in many Motocross of Nations races.

### ***TEAM JAPAN***

The Japanese Team will fly to Europe with Narita Akira (34), youngster Kojima Yohei (35) and with more experienced Atsuta Yoshitaka (36).

Narita Akira will be taking part to the FOX Motocross of Nations in the MX1 class where he will be squeezing his 450cc Yamaha machine; he turned into a Yamaha factory rider this year, after coming back from America where he spent the 2005 season. The 26-year-old from Aomori is second in the 2006 Japanese MX1 Championship with 2 races left; he won the MX1 Japanese Title 3 times: 2002, 2003 and 2004. The 2006 edition will be Narita Akira's fifth Motocross of Nations with Team Japan.

Young Kojima Yohei will face his second appearance at the "Olympics" of Motocross with Team Japan after his debut in Ernée 2005. The 21-year-old Japanese from Mie will enter the MX2 class on the Suzuki 250. In the Japanese Motocross Championship Yohei was 3<sup>rd</sup> last year and 13<sup>th</sup> in 2004; he started the 2006 season as a Suzuki factory rider with the goal of clinching the MX2 Japanese Title.

The Open class will be Atsuta Yoshitaka's business; the 28-year-old Japanese from Miyagi is leading the MX1 Japanese Championship from Narita Akira with 2 races to go. Atsuta is a well known face in Europe: after he won the Japanese Championship in 2002 he moved up to the World Championship with Team CAS Honda (2003 and 2004) and then Motovision Suzuki. In 2003 he completed the MX1 series with 23<sup>rd</sup>; in 2004 he was 10<sup>th</sup> in the same class and grasped 4<sup>th</sup> in the British Championship; in 2005 he finished his last MX1 World Championship season with 14<sup>th</sup> and got another 4<sup>th</sup> place in the British Championship.

The Team Manager will be 48-year-old former Japanese Champion Mitsuyasu Tetsumi; "Iron Man" of Japanese Motocross started his career with the National series in the early 70s and stopped in 1997. He also raced the Motocross World Championship, grasping 5<sup>th</sup> in 1980, and AMA Supercross. Since 2005 he is the supervisor of the factory Yamaha Motocross Team.

### ***TEAM ITALY***

The "Latin" squad will be made of Motocross racers coming from the FIM Motocross World Championships: David Philippaerts (37), Antonio Cairoli (38) and Cristian Beggi (39).

The MX1 Italian rider is 22-year-old David Philippaerts, who is Italian but with Belgian roots. KTM factory rider in the MX2 class of the FIM Motocross World Championship, David finished the 2006 season with 3<sup>rd</sup> place and will start 2007 with a MX1 KTM machine. Philippaerts' experience in Motocross started in 1992 with local Championships and he encountered the Motocross World Championship for the first time in 2001 at Roggenburg (125cc class). The year after, 2002, David finished with 45<sup>th</sup> place in the final standings but improved in 2003 getting 22<sup>nd</sup>; 2004 gifted him

with 19<sup>th</sup> place but 2005 was much better for the Italian, finishing 4<sup>th</sup> with 2 Grand Prix wins.

Antonio Cairoli was the 2005 MX2 World Champion: in 2006 he finished as Christophe Pourcel's runner up and he will race the FOX Motocross of Nations in the MX2 class. Antonio will turn 21 years old the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September, right before starting the race for his home country; he is from Sicily, where he first jumped on a bike in 1992. After many successful years in the Italian scene, Cairoli grasped third place in the MX2 Motocross World Championship in 2004, one year before becoming World Champion.

Open class rider for Team Italy Cristian Beggi is 27 years old and spent the 2006 season in the MX3 class of the FIM Motocross World Championship. He was third in the final standings, making up for 2005 when he was 15<sup>th</sup> in the same Championship. 2004 was Beggi's breakthrough year: he clinched second place in the MX3 Motocross World Championship.

Italian Team Manager is Andrea Bartolini. Former 500cc World Champion, the 37-year-old Italian won the Motocross of Nations in 1999 with Team Italy.

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