

Racerhead #1

It's a chamber-of-commerce afternoon out here in Southern California. The sky is blue and relatively smog-free after steady rains around Christmas and New Year's flushed the sky of all the yucky stuff. Beyond Angel Stadium, where the Anaheim Supercross will kick off the 2006 Amp'd Mobile AMA Supercross Series, one can see the white caps of the mountains miles and miles away. It's a much different day than this time last year, when torrential rains nearly caused the cancellation of the Anaheim opener.

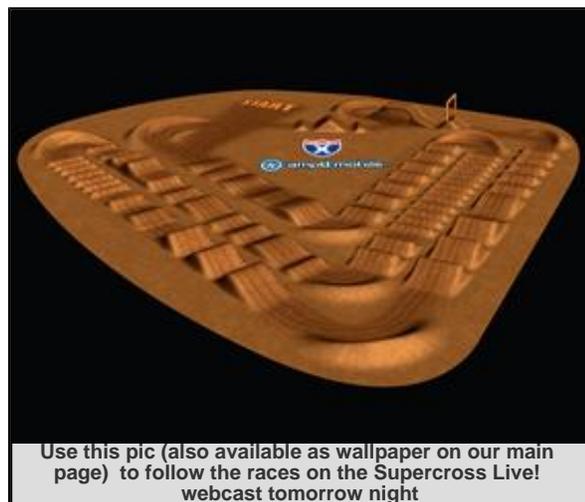
It's also much different in the sense of anticipation for this race. The place is sold out, and the mags and websites have talked up the match-ups and all that to death—you know who's here, and you know which three guys are pretty much expected to be battling for the win. But what surprises might occur here tomorrow night when the '06 season kicks off?

First, a reminder that you can listen to the Supercross Live! webcast tomorrow night, beginning about 9:30 EST, at www.supercross.cc.com. You can also watch next-day coverage of the race on CBS Sports at 12:30 p.m. EST. (SX Lites will air next Saturday on Speed TV at 6 p.m. EST)

And the guys at Twenty20 will be doing helmet-cam footage with **Ryan Clark** of Team Solitaire, so stay tuned Monday for the release and a link to see just what Anaheim 1 looked like for the riders!

Anyway, the possible surprise that I'm hearing people mention out here is how the King of Supercross himself, **Jeremy "Showtime" McGrath**, might do in what's long been considered Jeremy's house. MC looks thin and fit, he's liking his last-of-the-breed CR250R Honda race bike, and he has little pressure on him to perform. He said as much in yesterday's big (though bland) press conference behind home plate. Some experts (and myself) picture him battling somewhere between fourth and eighth with the likes of Makita Suzuki's **Ivan Tedesco**, BooKoo Honda's **David Vuillemin**, Honda teammates **Ernesto Fonseca** and **Travis Preston**, and Team Kawasaki's **Michael Byrne**.

MC talked to **Eric Johnson** after yesterday's press conference, as did Team Yamaha's **Chad Reed**, Kawasaki's **Michael Byrne**, the injured **Kevin Windham** and Makita Suzuki manager **Roger DeCoster**. If you missed them, [check it out](#).



Use this pic (also available as wallpaper on our main page) to follow the races on the Supercross Live! webcast tomorrow night



DeCoster had the best tip in those interviews: Tedesco, the top newcomer in the 250 class, has been suffering from the flu this weekend. His results may suffer, but DeCoster says Ivan's the complete package and will be a formidable presence once he settles into the class. The Man also said that they have been working non-stop on the bike, and the word in the pits is that Carmichael was testing a special new lower triple clamp as late as this morning. That led to this week's Ricky-got-hurt rumor—a broken foot this time. (Last week he hit a bird in midair and suffered a broken "wing," according to the internet.)

As for Jeremy's plans beyond the first six races of the season, he said there's no way he's riding more than six, but it sure would be cool to see him back east for a round or two so his fans on that side of the country can see him one more time.

MC also thinks **James Stewart** handled himself very well in yesterday's press conference. If James can remain as calm and collected as he did in Canada, well, it might be a long season for everyone else...

Also, I got a note from DV12 himself, BooKoo Honda's Vuillemin, on last week's Racerhead, where Ping was questioning who was a privateer and who was not: "Just read Racerhead and it says I am getting stuff from Factory Honda. We DO NOT receive anything from Honda. We get stock bikes and stock parts; for the rest, everything on my bike is aftermarket, from suspension to ignition. The suspension and engines are tuned in-house. I just want people to think I have a factory bike when I don't.

"I am a privateer with a factory rider salary," Vuillemin added. "I don't mind not getting the privateer money and I am not pissed for not getting the money. I don't really need it." In a classy move, Vuillemin prefers the money go to privateers who do need the bonus money.

In the 125, er, 250F ... okay, the Supercross Lites class, at least three young stars will be

The Man says that Ivan has been under the weather

photo: Simon Cudby



James is a new man on the KX450F, even faster than ever

photo: Simon Cudby

riding in their first AMA Supercross (Lites) race: Monster Energy/Pro Circuit Kawasaki's **Ryan Villopoto**, Rockstar Suzuki's **Jason Lawrence**, and either **Jeff** or **Mike Alessi** of the Red Bull KTM team. Even today, it's not completely sure which coast older brother Mike will ride: When I asked **Tony Alessi** yesterday, he told me, "Oh, he's west...." Then after a moment added, "Maybe." Both boys were out riding during press day, but it looks 99 percent sure it will be Mike out here and Jeff in the East.

But the obvious favorites are Honda's **Andrew Short**, Red Bull KTM's **Nathan Ramsey**, and last year's 125 East Champion, **Grant Langston**—all veterans of the class, more or less. There's also WBR Suzuki's **Ryan Sipes**, who could have a hand in all of this with a good start.

And Yamaha of Troy is primed to make a comeback after an admittedly lackluster 2005. The team leader out west is **Brett Metcalfe**, winner of the U.S. Open, plus fellow Australian **Andrew McFarlane**, number two in the world in MX2 last year. The team has some additional riders under the tent for at least this round: Japan's **Akira Narita** and Canadian **Marco Dube** are riding YZ250Fs for the first few rounds.

According to YoT team manager **Dave Osterman**, Yamaha of Japan asked the team to help Narita, which was no problem at all. As for Dube, he's friends with Frenchie, the team's motor guy, and has ridden Pirellis for a long time in Canada, so he knows the new tires the team is running. Osterman said he also helps out a great deal with testing, so there's no problem making room for him under the tent.

There was a good write-up about Amp'd Mobile Supercross today in the San Diego *Tribune*: "No athlete is currently more dominant in his sport than Ricky Carmichael is in Supercross/motocross. Last season, Carmichael swept both ends of the Supercross/motocross season for the fourth time in five years, won the U.S. Open then capped the year by leading the United States to victory in the Motocross des Nations. So at the prime age of 26, Carmichael should be expected to continue his assault on the once apparently insurmountable Supercross records amassed by Jeremy McGrath. But there are two twists to the 2006 season – which opens Saturday night at Angels Stadium in Anaheim – to threaten Carmichael's reign. First, most Supercross riders will be switching from the traditional two-stroke 250cc bikes to 450cc four-stroke machines this season. And could this be the season that James 'Bubba' Stewart indeed breaks through?"

It's always refreshing to see the amount of mainstream press that supercross gets out here in Southern California, and much of that has to be attributed to sports-reporting legend **Shav Glick**, who is retiring soon from the Los Angeles *Times*. Shav has always pushed hard for our sport, and he earned a Special Recognition Award yesterday from Live Nation and **Jeremy McGrath**, who presented a framed jersey to Shav. We'll all miss having Mr. Glick around; the sport owes a great debt to him.

The majority of the fans who voted so far on our Troy Lee Designs Poll on who will win Anaheim still believe in RC, by the way. If you haven't voted, check it out [right here](#) and tell us who's going to win Anaheim.

And speaking of Shav Glick and mainstream sports, just a quick nod here to those who bet me on the Sugar Bowl game, where the West Virginia Mountaineers ran wild over the Georgia Bulldogs, including Maxxis girl **Kristen Cheatwood**, who had a good time making fun of my fellow Mountaineers in Atlanta-area malls right up until kickoff. Then WVU scored 28 points on its first four possessions.... Nice betting with you, Kristen!

Also, **Todd Lentz** of EVS let me have Texas in the Rose Bowl and, well, that was amazing. But Todd still broke even—he had Texas and **Travis Pastrana** took USC in a different bet. Congrats to all you Longhorns out there. That was the single best football game I have ever seen (better than even that Miami Dolphins/San Diego Chargers OT playoff game from way back when).



Andrew looks ramped up and ready

photo: Simon Cudby

Pastrana, by the way, is out here, but he's not racing this weekend. I have heard that he's hoping to do some races maybe starting with Daytona, but that remains to be seen. He was with us last night at the Racer X Go-Kart Get-Together at the very nice and incredibly fun Pole Position Raceway in Corona, which is owned in part by former *Dirt Rider* editor **Ken Faught** and friends like Jeremy, **Greg Albertyn**, **Steve Hatch** and more.

Five-time hillclimb champion **Kerry Petersen** won the new Fender guitar that Racer X publisher **Scott Wallenberg** was offering up as the prize for the fastest time in the Celebrity class. Following him on the podium were "Cowboy" **Kenny Bartram** and Red Bull KTM rider **Josh Hansen**. **Nick Wey** was fourth and *Racer X*'s own **David Pingree** finished fifth.

Among the rest of the celebrity drivers on hand were Pastrana, Team Makita Suzuki's **Broc Hepler**, FMX whipmaster **Ronnie Renner**, Team Honda's **Davi Millsaps**, GNCCer **Steve Hatch**, WMA stars **Tarah Gieger** and **Sarah Whitmore**, 125 SX champ-turned-TV analyst **Denny Stephenson**, plus a bunch of industry friends like **Victor Sheldon** from Thor, **Sheri Ridenour** and **Bob Weber** from Troy Lee Designs, Parts Unlimited's **Jeff Fox**, Asterisk's **Dave Castillo**, **DVS Dano**, **Matt Chapman** from Etnies, Fox Racing's **Matt Story**, Live Nation's **Todd Jendro**, **Little Donnie Emler** and many, many more.

If you're ever out in California, you MUST check this place out. Pole Position Raceway is part go-karts, part-moto museum, and just a whole lot of fun. For directions and all that, check out the website: www.racep2r.com.



Fastest celeb Kerry Peterson won this guitar from the boss and Fender
photo: Simon Cudby



Shav Glick is signing off
photo: Simon Cudby

As you probably know, there's no more Friday practices at these races. This morning, I walked in to have breakfast at the Doubletree and Team Subway/Coca-Cola Honda's **Jeff Gibson** was in there doing likewise. The always-friendly charger told me that not having Friday practice was kind of strange. "I've been out here all week, and now I'm just sort of sitting here twiddling my thumbs," he explained. "I'm not really sure what to do!"

A lot of the riders talked about going out and finding a place to just ride and stretch out today, though that's easier if you're a factory guy or someone established out here in California. Otherwise, today is sort of a waiting game.

When I walked across the street to a crowded Starbucks to write this, I ran into a pair of brothers from Connecticut named **Danny** and **Johnny**, and they were already revved up for the race. Last night, the brothers went to Pole Position and were just blown away. Tonight, it's Dave & Buster's at the Block for the annual Mototalk get-together.

Let me turn this over to Ping for a few notes....

This week in California started with a rain delay. After three days of steady downpour, the test tracks were flooded and riders were heading for the hills. We rounded up one of the most diverse groups ever to hit Beaumont and took **Simon Cudby** with us to capture some of the better jumps we found. The group included Metal Mulisha troops **Brian Deegan**, **Ronnie Faisst** and **Twitch** as well as motocross stars like **Nick Wey**, **Andrew Short**, **Ryan Villopoto**, **Nate Adams**, **Josh Hansen**, **Ryan Morais**, **Ryan Sipes**, **Jeff Northrop** and **Justin Brayton**. We even had a few top amateurs like **Ben Lamay**, **Josh LaFontaine** and trainer **Randy Lawrence** with a few of his guys. The dirt was chocolate-brown and perfect, the jumps were huge, and Simon captured some pretty amazing stuff. Check this week's **Racer X Wallpapers** for a sneak peek.

Rockstar Energy/Bill's Pipes Suzuki rider **Sean Hamblin**, who was originally planning on riding the West Coast rounds on a 450, has decided to wait until the East Coast Lites Series gets going in February to start racing. After a big crash last week that left him with a sore hip, Hambone thought it would be



Sarah stands between Cowboy Kenny and #199

photo: Simon Cudby

anyone in the industry. Ha-hah-ha, in your face, guys! Oh, wait a minute. Her lap time was faster than mine, too. Crap.

Well, even a blind squirrel finds a nut every now and then. Good Job, Sheri. There was a celebrity/racer event that was dominated by **Kerry Peterson**, who is part owner of the complex. I think it's obvious that there was some cheating going on, especially since I finished all the way back in fifth. Anyhoo, it was a great time and we want to say thank you to **Ken Faught** and Pole Position Raceway for the hospitality. Special thanks to Moto Brew for providing the refreshments and thanks to everyone that showed up and made it a lot of fun.

Speaking of **Moto Brew**, don't forget about the free tasting tonight at BevMo in Irvine. For all the details, check out www.moto-brew.com.

And if you're at Anaheim this weekend please check out the MarkReynoldsFund.com booth where, at various times, pro motocrosser Troy Adams, and FMXers **Kenny Bartram** and **Jeremy Stenberg** will be signing autographs. **Mark Reynolds** is the man who was killed by a mountain lion while riding bicycles near Anaheim two years ago. One of the best things about this very good man was that he always tried to help unfortunate kids out by doing things like giving them bicycles to start riding. That's what his fund is about, and that's why we should all check it out.

And save a prayer for **Lutie Walker**, the mother of **Kevin Walker** and a Loretta Lynn's institution in her own right. She's been battling a serious illness, going in and out the hospital for much of the fall. Get well soon, Lutie, we've already got your spot saved at Loretta Lynn's!

In some arenacross news, **Mike Kidd** has purchased the new BookKoo Arenacross Series he founded from Advanstar, which will give him a chance to maybe start fresh and make something happen there. The series is a hit with the riders, but it's had woeful attendance to this point. Maybe this move will change things for the better.

I saw Yamaha Western Region Sales Manager **Kevin Foley** at the press conference yesterday, then saw this note from Throttle Jockey's **Robert Davis**: "Will the real Kevin Foley please stand up?" <http://www.apple.com/pro/photo/foley/>

The Foley we all know is a nine-time AMA Amateur National Champion at Loretta Lynn's, by the way.

On a sad note, just as our football team was realizing its wonderful future in the Sugar Bowl, West Virginia's coal-mining past dragged our spirits back down with the mine explosion in Upshur County, 90 minutes below Morgantown, that left 12 miners dead. The whole episode was just surreal—from the news of the explosion right before the game to the false reports that they all survived, it was just an emotional roller-coaster for a lot of people. When I got on the airplane early Wednesday morning in Pittsburgh to fly out here, the cover of the *USA Today* that I bought in the airport read "Miners Found Alive." But by the time I landed in Los Angeles, there was a new headline on the West Coast editions of the paper: The 12 miners were dead. What a tragic turn of events for everyone....

We also spotted this from **Donn Maeda** on Mototalk: "**Darin Motoda's** services will be held next Wednesday, January 11th (1:00 p.m.). Because of his involvement within the motocross industry, services were delayed until after the hectic Anaheim 1 series opener so that more people could attend."

Journey of Faith Christian Church

best to focus on his primary class instead of trying to do both.

Another rider that took a last minute beating is WBR Suzuki rider **Ryan Sipes**. In a final test session last week, Ryan ejected at the end of a whoop section and rang his bell. After a few days off, Sipes was back on the bike and looked as great as ever. He is going to impress people this year, so keep your eyes on the youngster from Kentucky.

At the Racer X Go-Kart Get-Together last night at the P2R carting track in Corona, industry folks and some factory riders showed up to celebrate the start of a new year and to see who had some driving skills. **Sheri Ridenour** from Troy Lee Designs turned the fastest lap time of



Langers was in the 98th percentile at P2R while his office back home was being turned into a garage

photo: Chris Jonnum



While you were in Cali.... Langers' office gets it again.

photo: Jim Jenkins

1243 Artesia Blvd.
Manhattan Beach, CA 90266

Check back Sunday morning for more on the race—but don't worry, if you're waiting to watch the race on TV, we won't give it away in the headline!

Thanks for reading Racerhead—see you at the races.



Steve Hatch and family

photo: Chris Jonnum



photo: Chris Jonnum



photo: Chris Jonnum

