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MINUTES WITH...

## Miguel Ramos

MEMORABILIA MAN

by BILLY URSIC

*Someone we've seen a lot of in the pits lately is Miguel Ramos, the founder of Sydney, Australia-based Autographed Collectables, a company that specializes in sports memorabilia. They offer signed photos of everyone from Ricky Carmichael to Valentino Rossi and even Muhammad Ali. Every piece Ramos sells is authentic and is signed personally by each athlete. We recently caught up with him to learn more.*

**Racer X: Miguel, we saw you around the pits last summer selling some cool autographed collectables, and coincidentally, that's the name of your company. Tell us where the idea came from for Autographed Collectables.**

Miguel Ramos: It actually started about ten years ago when I spent some time in the U.S. and bumped into the collectable industry, which at the time didn't really exist in Australia. Everyone Down Under is sports crazy, but the industry didn't exist at the time, so I thought it would be a great opportunity for a great business.

**Your head office is in Sydney, Australia, right?**

That's right. I was born and raised in Australia, and I've been in Sydney for about eleven years now. That's where we dispatch product all over the world from.

**What's your background in motorcycling, or are you just a fan?**

I definitely have been a longtime fan, and the initial reason I got into motorcycling was Mick Doohan, the Australian five-time 500cc world champion—I thought he'd be a perfect person to do a signing with. He's not only a huge name in Australia, but also recognized worldwide for his achievements in 500cc racing [now MotoGP].

**So all of the products you offer are autographed personally by the specific athlete?**

Yes, absolutely. I personally negotiate a merchandise contract with the riders and their management. So everyone is being paid for their time to sit down and sign the product, as well as the photographers who license their images to us. I personally attend every single signing and witness every signature. I really believe that's the only true way to offer your customers a

genuine guarantee that they're investing in an authentic autograph.

**That has to be quite a difficult process at times.**

We have worked with Valentino Rossi since 2000 and Nicky Hayden since 2003, among others; initially it was tough to get some of these guys on board, but from day one I always did the right thing and bided my time and I respected them for who they were, and I got a lot back from them by conducting myself in that professional manner. Also the product that was put in front of them to sign was always to the highest standards.

**How many pieces of merchandise will you have the athlete autograph at a time?**



It depends on the athlete, of course, but sometimes we can do a signing of only 100 photos, or sometimes we do 1,000 pieces. So it does fluctuate a lot, but some of the bigger signings can cost quite a bit of money by the time you pay the athlete and license and print the photos. It really adds up.

**Who has been the toughest athlete for you to obtain autographs from?**

Ricky Carmichael, I'd have to say. That did take me a year to negotiate, but possibly my initial offer wasn't where it should've been. I'm just really proud that Ricky agreed to sign product for Autographed Collectables, and I'm confident that we'll have a long-lasting, successful relationship and be able to produce quality products for his fans around the world.

**What other products do you offer aside from framed and autographed photos?**

With Ricky we released some race-issued shirts and helmets, which are basically identical to

what he has worn. They're fantastic pieces, because they're not normally available to purchase, but through Ricky and Greg Fox of Fox Racing's help, we've been able to release those special items.

**If you sell out of a certain product, do you usually restock that same item, or is that it?**

I definitely believe in working long-term with the athlete, so that does mean I go back to release further product after the initial release has sold out. But obviously, when we release a photo, it is produced in a limited run of 100 or 200, and once that specific image sells out it is no longer available. That helps the value increase and keeps the exclusivity of the product.

**How big of a staff does the company have?**

There's seven total, including myself. We have our own framing facility in Sydney, so we create and design and complete the product there. I'm working hard to open a facility here in the U.S. to service our customers here even better.

**Who is the next major athlete you have in mind to work with?**

I definitely want to expand with the motocross riders, so Ryan Villopoto and James Stewart, along with some of the retired racers like Jeremy McGrath. So we'll be working hard to release a great range of supercross and motocross products.

**It seems like you're having fun and you really enjoy this work.**

I'm really blessed. I have a fantastic job, and I wouldn't want to be doing anything else, that's for sure.

**If one of our readers want to purchase something, what's the best way?**

Definitely the best way is our website, which is [www.air23.com.au](http://www.air23.com.au). You can order online, and we ship all over the world with FedEx. We have had a great relationship with them over the last eight years—all items are insured and are safe and secure. I'm also very active here in the U.S. attending various trade shows and events. In 2008 we're working hard to attend every motocross round and have our product on display for the fans to see. You can also call our toll-free number in the U.S., which is 866-377-6774, and speak to someone if you have any questions. **X**