

“They Are DEDICATED Fans...”

By Michael Gougis

It was Michael Jordan the basketball superstar, not Michael Jordan the motorcycle road racing entrepreneur, who got Miguel Ramos interested in the business of autographed sports memorabilia a little more than a decade ago.

Today, Autographed Collectables has offices in Sydney, Aus-

I was always a big Michael Jordan fan, and I wanted to meet Michael and get an autograph, and I quickly found out that was going to be very difficult.

“But a friend took me to this memorabilia show, and it hit me that this would be great to do back in Australia, because everyone’s sports fanatical.”

Today, Autographed Collec-



Autographed Collectables: Miguel Ramos, managing director of Autographed Collectables, with a framed, signed print of 2006 World Champion Nicky Hayden and a baggie of Ducati GP bike chain links. Photo by Michael Gougis.

tralia and in Anaheim, California, and has agents and clients worldwide for its sports memorabilia. It is a sheer coincidence that the basketball star would wind up involved in U.S. motorcycle road racing, just as it is coincidence that Ramos wound up in the business of sports and motorsports collectables.

“I literally bumped into the industry. I really didn’t know it existed,” says Ramos, managing director of the company. “I was in Michigan, visiting relatives, and

tables offers memorabilia from a wide variety of sports, from cricket to Formula 1. In the world of motorcycle road racing, Ramos has signed souvenirs from the best in the world: Valentino Rossi, Casey Stoner, Dani Pedrosa, Ben Spies, Nicky Hayden—the list goes on.

A tour of the company’s Anaheim facility is fascinating, not just for the finished pieces, but the unfinished stuff. A pair of Spies’ used knee

continued on page 88

LARRY PEGRAM
AMA SUPERBIKE

RELIABILITY ON BUDGET

- \$299 SINGLE TEMP | \$349 DUAL TEMP
- NEW FOR 2013 - NOMEX LINER
- FELTED CARBON INSULATION
- ORIGINAL DESIGN | NOT A CHINESE COPY!

www.TireWarmer.com 1.866.SUZUKA.1

A DIVISION OF CHICKEN HAWK RACING

(623) 444-5022

Motorcycle Stuff... Not Porn
KURVEYGIRL.COM

Lightweight (12g) Valve Stems

DZUS MOUNTING KITS

RESERVOIR BRACKET

brambo LEVERS, REPAIR KITS, BANJO BOLTS, PARTS & ACCESSORIES

WATERPROOF

USB CABLES

Vesrah Racing Brake Pads

SUPERIOR STOPPING POWER!

SRJL-SS: HIGH POWER + PROGRESSIVE FEEL

SRJL-XX : PROGRESSIVE FEEL

SRJL-17 : LINEAR FEEL, HIGH POWER

RJL: MORE BITE THAN HH+ PADS

Autographed Collectables

continued from page 81

sliders, autographed by Ben, sits under a bench. A pile of chain links in a plastic baggie seems like scrap metal, until Ramos tells you that they are links from the chain on a Ducati Desmosedici MotoGP race-bike ridden by Nicky Hayden.

Things like that make the memorabilia sold by Autographed Collectables so fascinating. In the world of sports memorabilia, there are two key challenges: Making the collectable unique, and verifying its authenticity. Framed posters of Hayden, signed by Hayden, are made even more unique by the inclusion of a part from one of the rarest motorcycles on the planet.

Verifying the authenticity of a collectable piece is an important part of this world. Collectables of dubious origin are a constant fear ("Dilbert" comic fans might recall the ever-scheming Dogbert trying to sell a football signed by Jesus and a baseball signed by Moses.)

Autographed Collectables has licensing agreements with the athletes and the companies they represent. The date and location of the signing of each run of posters or other memorabilia is documented and presented to the purchaser, along with a picture of the athlete with the memorabilia that has been signed. If, say, Hayden has agreed to sign 50 posters, he poses with the stack of posters and a photograph is taken. Each purchaser gets a copy of that photo.

And each piece is marked with a numbered holographic tag, detailing the number of pieces of the signing run and exactly which of those pieces it is. Bobblehead dolls (licensed but unsigned) start at \$25 Australian (about \$25.42 U.S.), framed, signed prints are in the \$300 range, and the rarer the piece, the dearer the price.

It's fascinating stuff. Ramos says the typical buyer is in their mid-30s and male (but he says an increasing number of women are buying pieces for their significant others). The customers are motorsports nuts, and the collectables are tactile ways those fans can remember their favorite athletes or favorite moments. Life is a process of collecting stories, and this is one way a fan makes sure they never forget those moments that move them deeply.

"They are dedicated fans, the real motorsports enthusiasts," Ramos says. "These pieces are something the average person never will have a chance to get on their own." **RW**

inside info

By David Swarts

continued from page 14

Roadracing World is sponsoring a new award in the 2013 GEICO Motorcycle AMA Pro Road Racing series—the *Roadracing World* Young Gun Of The Year. The award is "based on *Roadracing World's* 17 consecutive years of recognizing the best young road racers in North America" via its annual Young Guns feature, according to a press release issued by AMA Pro Racing. To be eligible for the award, riders must have been no older than 18 at the start of the 2013 AMA Pro season. The award will go to the rider who earns the most overall points in either the Motorcycle-Superstore.com SuperSport or GoPro Daytona Sport-Bike classes. For more information, go to www.amaproracing.com/competition.

Milestones



Racer Dave Stanton (53) at Sonoma Raceway.

Racer **Dave Stanton** suffered spinal and other internal injuries when he crashed during an AFM Series race June 2 at Thunderhill Raceway Park, in Willows, California. Stanton, a former overall AFM Champion, multi-time overall WERA National Endurance Champion, AMA Pro and Formula USA racer, was riding his RCR Performance Yamaha YZF-R1 on the first lap of the AFM Open Superbike race when he high-sided near the front of the field. Another rider was unable to take avoiding action, hit Stanton and also crashed. A website has been established at www.stanton53support.com, to receive donations to go toward Stanton's medical care, recovery and rehabilitation.

MOB Racing Team Co-Owner **Dennis Espinosa** and wife **Lauren** had a son, **Ryder Jaxson Espinosa**, June 8 in Denville, New Jersey.

AHRMA road racer **Mike Profit**, age 61, died as the result of injuries sustained in a single-bike crash on June 9 during an AHRMA Vintage event at Road America. **RW**

.....club racing.....

Clint Russell

By Michael Gougis

Clint Russell grew up watching his brothers ride motorcycles, but the riding bug didn't bite him until he was well into his teens. And they were riding on the dirt, which also didn't appeal to him much.

But Russell is making up for lost time—rapidly. The 25-year-old from West Palm Beach is dominating the Amateur ranks in CCS Florida, leading the overall Amateur Championship with nearly four times the points of his closest competitor, taking multiple race wins every weekend—and even beating his brother on the track.

"I like to ride and see how I can get faster. That's what I've been getting out of it," Russell says.

from the streets, and he was going to the track with his brother and father. Track days appealed to him, so he started saving money and looking for a good track-day bike.

"I started doing track days first," Russell says. "I got myself a cheap track bike—a 2000 Suzuki GSX-R750—because the price was right, and started doing it about mid-2010. I've been going to races with my father and my brother forever, and I finally got enough money together to try it."

After doing that for a couple of years, Russell got a Suzuki GSX-R600 and entered his first race in June of last year with CCS Florida. He did not get off to an encouraging start.



(Above) Clint Russell (157) at Jennings GP. (Opposite Page) Clint Russell (right) with brother Kyle on a CCS podium at Homestead-Miami Speedway. Photos by Lisa Theobald.

Russell started riding late in life for a motorcycle road racer. "My brothers were into motocross and dirt bikes, but I never was into that. One day, I told my dad that I want to ride on the street. I was probably about 17. He went out and got me one of those Suzuki DR650s to learn on," Russell says.

Ironically, even though a dual-sport bike is ideal for a new rider who's likely to tip over as they learn, "I never fell on the street," Russell says. "I enjoyed it more than I ever thought I would."

After a few years, though, Russell says that he started to shy away

"What was my first race like? Not good," Russell says. "Practice went good, but in the first race of the day, I got about three or four laps into it and I wound up putting it down and injured my shoulder. That put me out for a few months."

Actually, Russell was out of commission only for about a month, but he wasn't up to full condition and he knew that his results didn't reflect his capabilities. "I was on the bike four weeks after that, and when we rode again, we were at Palm Beach, and we managed to get some top 10s, but the shoulder wasn't where it needed to be," Russell says.