

T H E L A S T W O R D



{THE ART OF SELF MOTIVATION}

INTERVIEW & PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROB GRIST

J A M E S N O B L E

**Self-motivation: 'the ability to motivate oneself, to find a reason and the necessary strength to do something, without the need of being influenced to do so by another person. Working in a careful and consistent manner without giving up'.**

In these days of convenience and the throwaway society, sometimes it's difficult to remember the true values and reasons that make our lives run smoothly. We take so much for granted (I include myself in this bracket as well - it's nothing to be ashamed of, it's just life) but if we were all like this all of the time the world would surely be very different, for example who would be king or champion.

We are all different; some are blessed with more talent than others. But, as we know,

sometimes talent alone is not enough. You need something else to get to the top (or at least near it) - that's what separates the top ten from the rest, so to speak. You need a drive, a desire to be the best, a spirit from within which can only come from that person. In the world of motocross, it's as tough as it gets; a tough sport that separates the men from the boys and you need a lot of drive to be anywhere near the top.

It can be dangerous and is not for the faint hearted, you need to be as fit as a Premiership footballer to withstand the grueling strains it can put on your body. James Noble fits that category. In a career that has stretched 23 years, James has experienced all the ups and downs that motocross brings at the highest level, using self motivation as his biggest tool.

I recently met up with James where he gave us an insight into the world of motocross and how he overcame the hurdles put in his way.

**SPIKED: Tell us about the early days racing and when did you decide to make a career out of it?**

JN: I didn't really enjoy it to start with, but things started to progress and I got better, and as I got better I started to enjoy it more. My first proper race was in 1990. After riding club events to doing a national event was a big step and I remember racing against riders like Swordy (Steven Sword) and Phil Lawrence and they just smoked me and I was being lapped within about three or four laps. That was quite an eye opener for me and I guess it became a 'practice makes perfect' sort of situation after that,



so I just kept practising and trying to get better. I had a good year in 1998 on a 125 in the schoolboys and then I guess I always wanted to be on the bigger bikes because I've always been quite tall and bigish set, not problems with weight as such but always on the verge. When I got on the bigger bike, it all just seemed to click. In 2000, I had a good year on the 380 KTM and then moved onto the four stroke machine and started to get into Grand Prix.

**S: In the early days how did you motivate yourself or did you rely on those around you for motivation?**

JN: I think when you're younger you have natural motivation and if you haven't, it's pretty damn serious. When you're young, you have that hunger, that little less fear - because you haven't experienced it before you don't fear it, you just go at it. The first few years I just kept trying to better myself, I just took each race one at a time and tried to do better each time. In 2000, I got a fifth in the British championship, then I wanted a fourth, and that's how I motivated myself when I was younger.

I wanted to do Grand Prix so I had to go to Europe and race, and I knew if I did well over there that eventually I would get

picked for Grand Prix. That was the way you had to do it back then. Nowadays, money talks. Once I got into Grand Prix, you had to qualify for the main races - but all the time I was watching my results and then the next set of results and then set myself new goals and tried to reach them.

**S: For anyone in life there are always hurdles to overcome; do you use goals and targets to overcome these obstacles?**

JN: Not really, I just always wanted to better myself. When I practised, I always tried to go a little bit faster in corners and generally improve, then, at meetings



I would watch what the faster riders did then watch it back on TV to see where they were faster.

My Dad would be there as well, he was a thinker and would watch people ride and then he would pass on what he saw to me, although he hadn't ridden at that level himself he could see what other riders were doing and then we would talk and I would take it to the track.

For a long time we worked as a team, you can see a lot stood at the side of the track but it's sometimes difficult to take advice from your old man - especially when he's shouting and screaming and jumping up and down! Looking back now and with the experience I have now I can see where he was coming from and all he wanted was the best for me.

**S: How do you keep a positive attitude when you are recovering from injury?**

JN: Touchwood, I haven't had a lot of big injuries. I broke my leg when I was younger but I think at that age you kind of brush it off as such. As I have got older I have had a few niggling injuries but I'm a very old school sort of person, I tend to just get my head down and get on with it. That's how I was brought up really, if there's a problem you just get on with it, you don't mess about with silly excuses, if you can ride go out and give it the best you can, that's all you can do.

**S: You have ridden at the highest level in motocross; how difficult is it to maintain a hunger for racing at that level?**

JN: I think it's just so competitive, there's always someone who will go faster than you, and I just felt that every time I went out I had to find that bit more speed. I would go to a Grand Prix one week and not do very well. I went to Italy in 2002 and just qualified in 28th, so when I came home I just thought I've got to do better than this, and then the following week I went to Austria and I just thought, 'you're not just going to be granted a result, you have to work for this,' and I got a fifth place and was second in all the practice races. Confidence is a massive plus,



## PRO FILE

**Name:** James Noble.  
**Birthdate:** 11/02/81  
**Hometown:** Whitby  
**Years riding:** 23  
**Fave food:** Italian  
**Fave Music:** The radio  
**Biggest influence:** Dad, he always made me earn it

### Career highlights:

#### World Championship

- ➔ 10th (2002)
- ➔ 10th (2005)
- ➔ 10th (2006)
- ➔ 11th (2007)

#### British Championship

- ➔ Runner up (2003, 2006, 2007)

#### Represented Great Britain in MX DES Nations.

- ➔ 2003
- ➔ 2005
- ➔ 2007

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**“IT’S SO COMPETITIVE NOW AND THE LINE IS SO FINE TO MAKE IT TO THE TOP, BUT AS I SAID THE MAIN THING IS TO MAKE SURE YOU’RE ENJOYING IT.”**

when you have it you are on top of the world and you need to stay on that crest of a wave as long as you can because once you drop off the wave it’s really tough getting yourself back up there. It’s like doing a jigsaw and just getting all the pieces together.

**S: So the teams you rode for, did they have the motivational skills to keep you on top of your game?**

JN: Yeah, definitely. We tested a lot at the beginning of the year which helped with confidence. RWJ (RWJ Honda mx team) were great for the first few years and then it all went a bit sour towards the end of my time there with money issues and stuff. Then, it was hard to get motivated, that’s probably the hardest thing when

you’re not getting paid to ride, I think if you can get through that and ride well, you will ride well no matter what.

Then I rode for Multitek Honda. It was just a small outfit but they did everything they could for me. I think I rode my best when I was there. We tested all the time and if we liked it we kept it and if we didn’t we tried something else. I got a few top fives and was regularly in the top ten during this period.

**S: When the season ends, you obviously have to maintain a level of fitness through the off season. How do you motivate yourself to get out of bed on those cold wet Yorkshire mornings for a run or ride?**

JN: It’s just a case of having to. Like I said before, I was brought up in an old school fashion. My Dad worked hard to build up a successful business on very little sleep; he had to motivate himself to do that. I guess he pushed that ethic into me as well, I guess my self motivation comes from him, I’ve never really found it difficult to do it, sometimes if I have a niggling injury or I come back from a real tough weekend it can be hard. But, I think as I’ve got older, I listen to my body more and know what type of training to do and when to do it.

When I’m racing and I feel tired towards the end of the race it can be dangerous as that’s the time you will pick up injuries. To be fair, that was at the beginning of my career when I made the transition to the bigger bikes. All in all, I’ve managed to avoid the big injuries as a result of being fit. The way the races are set up now are as short and sharp races. I find I don’t need to train as much as I did.

**S: Tell us about the sacrifices you have had to make over the years.**

JN: It can be hard. For example, the school I went to was a big rugby school but my Dad wasn’t keen for me to play in case I got injured. I was asked to play in the under-19s at the age of 16, so there were some big lads there. During the week I would make friends and then at the weekend I had to go off and ride motocross; it was a big sacrifice to make. My mates would be off partying and stuff (which if I’m honest I was never really into) and I met my wife when I was fifteen and I wanted kids at a young age as well so I got what I wanted really.

I was lucky when I met Natalie (Mrs Noble) as her brother rode, so she understood the motocross thing, but you still have to sacrifice all your weekends, although you can be flexible with your training during the week. With the Grand Prix racing, you would leave the UK early on a Friday and if you were lucky you be home by three o’clock on the following Monday morning, then you get up late Monday and go for a light bike ride, then Tuesday I would ride, Wednesday train all day, ride again on the Thursday and then I was away again

on the Friday. Don’t get me wrong, it’s a fantastic job, but it’s not easy and it isn’t as glamorous as people think.

**S: When you look back at your career, do you feel you’ve been true to yourself and given it your best shot?**

JN: Yeah, I can look back and say I did the best I could do. Some people come up to me and say it looks easy for you and you could push more, it doesn’t look like you’re trying. Well, believe me; I am trying behind those goggles. I’ve had my sketchy moments that could have turned

nasty when the back end has started to go, but my style has always been smooth and precise, but when I finish riding I will look back and say I’ve given it all I’ve got and that was the best I could do. I finished tenth in the world a couple of times and I’m proud of that. Fair enough, not everyone can be world champion and battle for titles but I can look back and say that on my day I ran with the best in the world and that’s good enough for me.

**S: What do you think you can pass on to riders of the future about staying**

**hungry and motivated?**

JN: Just enjoy it and make sure you always have a smile on your face; it’s so much easier when you’re smiling. If you’re down, just remember there is always someone worse off than you. Try not to set your goals too high, just be the best that you can. Keep practising, it’s so competitive now and the line is so fine to make it to the top, but as I said the main thing is to make sure you’re enjoying it. 

