

IRIS KRAMER

CHANGING PLACES

THE FIM WOMEN'S TRIAL WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP CELEBRATES ITS ELEVENTH EDITION THIS YEAR, AND CAN BE PROUD OF THE STATUS IT NOW HOLDS AFTER A DECADE OF DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT. TO ASSIST WITH THIS ONGOING PROCESS THE FIM HAS ADDED EX FIM TRIAL WORLD TITLE HOLDER IRIS KRAMER TO ITS TEAM TO ENSURE THAT THE SERIES CONTINUES TO MOVE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.



After nine years competing in the ladies World Tour, Iris joins the FIM to assist with the Women's series as from 2010.///

Although Laia Sanz – Repsol Montesa continues to top the world order ten years on, there is so much more to this female campaigner than just one multi world champion, as Iris explains over the following pages.

At just twenty-nine years old ex FIM Women's Trial World Champion Iris Kramer has had to quit the top level of the sport due to injury, but can now focus her attention on occupying a different role within the sport. Kramer from Darmstadt in Germany remains the only rider to have ever defeated the dominant Laia Sanz in the ten-year history of the World female series, with Iris clinching the title in 2007 after six years of being the bridesmaid to her Spanish rival.

This year when the 2010 FIM Women's Trial World Championship kicked off in the small French town of St Michele de Maurienne close to the Italian border, Kramer was absent from the entry list. Although missing from the starting line up, Iris was very much present as the tenth edition of the championship got underway, however instead of wearing her normal riding clothing, this time Kramer was sporting the FIM uniform.

Since announcing her retirement from the World Championship at the end of last year, FIM Trial Commission (CTR) Vice President Anders Minken was quick to engage the outgoing German rider in discussions about her perhaps joining the FIM to assist with the Women's series. Minken who has core responsibility of developing the ladies championship since the outset was not about to miss this great opportunity, and soon Iris had been appointed as an advisor for the FIM Women's Trial World Championship, working alongside the CTR.

Throughout her riding career Iris was always a popular and charismatic individual as well as being an extremely talented rider in her own right, so the appointment seemed more than obvious. Normally Kramer would have looked to have continued her decade long battle with Sanz, but ongoing issues with her elbow, which date back to 2004, finally forced her to realise the time had come to change places.

Iris was introduced to Trial, like so many, by her father who was and remains a keen national level rider. However unlike other

riders who began very young, Kramer did not start to ride until the age of twelve and it was not until the following year that she competed in her first local competition. Her first bike was hardly a real Trial bike, with her Mecatecno 50 having tyres more suitable to tarmac rather than mud and rocks.

From those early days, Iris began to grow both in confidence and skill and rode a whole range of different capacity Gas Gas machines over the next seven years before making her debut at the FIM Women's Trial World Championship in 2000. The now nineteen year old made an instant impact on the inaugural series by finishing runner up to Sanz the first time out. This was a tale that was to constantly repeat itself over the coming months and years as Iris shadowed Laia's every move.

Despite Kramer's best efforts Sanz was to maintain the upper hand, with the German rider finishing runner up to her now Spanish friend on no less than six occasions prior to 2007. Then it finally happened one day during September 2007, on the Isle of Man Iris at long last defeated Laia and in doing so clinched her one and only FIM Women's Trial World Championship. Understandably



As an ex-rider, Iris assists the female riders at many different levels. She supports them and also helps the organisers to create sections adapted for women.///

it was an emotional moment for the then twenty-six year old and especially for her father who had supported her every inch of the way.

During her nine years on the ladies World tour Iris competed in a total of seventeen Grand Prix events, and only once missed out on a podium placing as she scored points at every single round she rode in. Her points tally stands at an impressive two hundred and eighty and is only second to that of Sanz. Whilst Kramer will be sadly missed from the series as a top-level rider, her new presence as part of the FIM has been universally welcomed by all those connected to the championship.

With Iris installed in her new role, we took the opportunity on the close of the opening round of the 2010 FIM Women's Trial World Championship to get her views on a range of topics.

FIM: So how did it feel this weekend to be at the 2010 FIM Women's Trial World Championship, but not as a rider?

Iris Kramer: I suppose it felt a little strange to begin with, but I came here only thinking about my new role and not about riding

at all. I have been given a big responsibility and a great opportunity and I really want to make a success of what I am trying to do. I had hoped to go practicing with the girls, but in reality there was no time to do this as my schedule has been really hectic this weekend, especially with it being my first round in this new job.

FIM: So have you completely stopped riding now?

I.K.: Absolutely not, I still love to ride and will continue to ride as long as possible. It is only because of my injury that I took the decision to stop riding at the top level. I am still riding some small competitions in Germany and I am still practicing whenever I can. The only difference now is I stop immediately I have some pain in my arm, where before I knew I just had to continue.

FIM: Please can you explain the nature of your injury?

I.K.: The problem started back in 2004 when I broke my elbow in five places. This was a very complicated fracture, so I was lucky to have ridden again after such a serious injury. Since then I have undergone six operations in an attempt to repair the joint fully. The problem is my body is trying

to repair itself and is creating bone, which is causing a number of problems. I have now lost the movement of two of my fingers, which makes it difficult to ride. Normally the best thing would have been to stop riding after the initial accident, but that was never an option for me.

FIM: So how do you feel about having now retired from the FIM Women's Trial World Championship?

I.K.: Obviously I will miss it in some ways, but in other ways it is actually a relief not to have to deal with the pressure anymore. During the last few seasons I felt really nervous about having to finish on the podium each time I rode. My own expectations were high, so I constantly put pressure on myself. Also it was becoming more and more difficult to stay in the top three with the new younger riders now arriving in the championship. I had many good years, so I am happy to have had that opportunity.

FIM: So how has this affected your life on a day-to-day basis?

I.K.: Overall my life is much less stressful. It was hard to be a professional rider as well as having a normal job. I think Laia is the only full time professional in the FIM

Women's Trial World Championship, but hopefully that will change in the future. I was working all the day and then was trying to go practicing in the evening when I was already tired. It was an impossible schedule and was always full of stress.

FIM: Your father has always been a big part of your career, how is he spending his weekends now that you have retired?

I.K.: Yes I really need to thank my father and my family for their support, as without them none of it would have been possible.

I think my father is proud of what I have achieved and I am just glad he was a part of me becoming World Champion. Now he is riding more than ever, as when he was following me he had no time. He is riding in a lot of national competitions and is really enjoying making up for all those years he missed when he was minding for me.

FIM: Please can you explain about your new role working for the FIM?

I.K.: Yes I was invited to be an advisor to the FIM Trial Commission about all aspects of the Women's Trial World Championship.

My overall objective is to strengthen the championship and to make it appealing to more and more riders. As I am an ex rider I can assist the girls on many different levels. I really want to support them, I want to help make them more professional and to be aware that it is important to promote themselves and the series in the right way. Also perhaps the most important job is to help the organisers to create the right type and severity of sections. We need sections that will be challenging for the top riders, as after all it is the World Championship, but at the same time we want sections that will encourage younger riders to come and be part of the series. My goal is to get more female competitors to take part in the series by making it a more interesting proposition for all levels of riders. We need to communicate to the national federations, that this is a championship for their female riders and one where the sections have been designed for the majority of riders and not just the top few. This is very difficult work, but something I feel strongly about.

FIM: How do you see the national federations helping with this process?

I.K.: I would like to see the national federations arranging training camps for their female riders, again this training should be designed for all levels of riders and not just the top few in that country. We are always doing this in Germany and it is working really well. The FIM is already arranging some female training camps, but the FIM should not be expected to do this alone.

FIM: How is your relationship with Laia Sanz?

I.K.: After so many years we have grown to become good friends as well as rivals. You cannot be friends during the competition as you are always fighting to be the best, but after the Trial it is good to spend time with each other. Although we live in different countries and do not see each other that much, we do keep in touch by phone and by the computer too. We have a lot of respect for each other, so I know Laia will be an important person in helping me achieve my goals in my new role.

FIM: Please tell us about the introduction of the Women's Trial Rookie of the Year Award?

I.K.: We wanted to offer something to encourage new young riders to the championship. So I spoke to UNIVEGA who is a German bicycle company and a personal friend of mine and they agreed to



donate a really good bicycle for the winner. The winner will be the best rider who is new to the series and who competes in all three rounds. It's a great prize and one that has been well received by the young riders.

FIM: Which young riders do you feel could eventually defeat Laia in the future?

I.K.: I think the two young riders who have made the biggest improvement are Joanne Coles and Hannah Styles. Both of these young British riders are riding at a really good level. Joanne could perhaps be Laia's biggest rival this year. Perhaps she cannot beat Laia this year, but in the future she could be the new champion.

FIM: As well as working for the FIM, you are working for Eurosport too?

I.K.: Yes I am doing the Eurosport commentary in German both for the Trial and Enduro programmes. It is a different kind of work and is quite challenging, but I am really enjoying it. I now have a small

studio in my house, so I do not even have to leave home to do this work. The strange thing is that this work came about quite by chance.

I was watching the Women's FIM Trial des Nations on Eurosport and the guy who was making the commentary was making a real mess of it. He did not know who was who and thought my sister was me. I was so angry that I called to the Eurosport office in Paris and told them what I thought. The guy who I was speaking to said if I thought I could do a better job then I should give it a try and that's actually what happened. They got me in to do a live commentary for an indoor Trial and they were happy with how I did, so they gave me a job.

FIM: Finally, what plans do you have for the future?

I.K.: My main aim is to do a good job for the FIM and to achieve the goals we have set out. It will be difficult, however it is a

challenge I am really looking forward to. Other than that, yes I would like to get married and to have children, but that will not stop me working in the Trial.

FIM: Sorry, but that leads to one last question. If you have a daughter will she follow in your tyre marks?

I.K.: That could be a long time in the future so I have not totally thought about that properly yet. I am sure my father would encourage his grand daughter to follow the same path as me and to ride Trial, but maybe I would have some other ideas. Perhaps she should play golf or tennis, these are a lot cleaner sports and also here she could earn a lot more money. Maybe she should just marry a footballer, then she would have a lot of money. No honestly Trial is my passion, and I would support my daughter, but only if she chooses to follow this path. She will not have pressure from me, and will be free to choose her own direction and sport.

LAIA SANZ TALKS ABOUT IRIS KRAMER AND JOANNE COLES

As Laia Sanz goes for a record breaking tenth FIM Women's Trial World Championship, we thought it would be a good moment to get her opinion about a couple of topical subjects.

LAIA ABOUT IRIS

When Iris told me towards the end of last season that she was going to retire I was sad. Maybe I should have been happy as she has been one of my biggest rivals for many years, but no I was sad as she is also my friend. Like me, Iris has been in the championship right from the beginning, so it was also a sad moment for the championship too as it was losing one of its most established and most successful riders.

At the start Iris and I did not know each other, and although we rode in the same competitions we did not really communicate with each other. Then as my English became better we started to talk and soon became good friends. Each year Iris and I would fight to be champions, but after each Trial we would spend time together as friends.

I was happy to hear that Iris was going to work for the FIM, as she has great experience and her involvement can be very positive for Women's Trial. Already we have spoken together and she knows I will help her in any way that I can. The championship is about more than one rider, so I know she will speak and work with all the riders to find the best solutions, not just for me, but for the series as a whole.

Although I always want to win, I also want to help the other riders and to see the championship grow. With Iris we have the best person to do this job, she will work hard like she did with her riding, and I am sure the FIM will see the difference she will make.



LAIA ABOUT JOANNE

When you are the champion you are always looking at which riders you think may be the biggest threat to you. Over many years my biggest rival was Iris Kramer and then more recently it has been Becky Cook, but now I think it will be Joanne Coles.

I was really surprised and very impressed with the level she has this year. She must have made a lot of hard training over the winter as she is really riding very well. What is so incredible is that she is so young and also she is only riding a 125cc bike.

She has really good technique and is riding her bike to the limit. It will be interesting to see how she develops when she moves up to a bigger bike. I may have been the champion for many years, but in the future there is sure to be a new champion, and that could be Joanne.

It is always good to see new young riders, both for the sport and also for my motivation. If the Trial is difficult I am always confident that I can win, but when it is easy it can give the opportunity to other riders too. If there are any easy competitions then Joanne will have her chance, even this year.

by Jake Miller