

## **Nürburgring Team Launch**

Jonathan Green introduces the occasion and welcomes everyone to the Paul Bird Motorsport Kawasaki World Superbike team presentation for 2011.

Moves onto the Q&A session

### **Steve Guttridge - Race Planning and Marketing from Kawasaki Motors Europe**

Q: You are the Race Planning Manager for KME. How did working with the Paul Bird Motorsport team in WSB come about?

At the end of 2008 it was clear that the factory were looking more and more at our World Superbike racing effort and our presence within it. For 2009 we needed to start 'afresh' and work with a team that we could have good and clear communication with. I knew the Paul Bird set-up from its high profile performances in its British Superbike Championship days and had watched their rookie season in 2008 in WSB with their lone rider finishing as top privateer that year. After speaking to a few possible candidate teams, about stepping in as our official factory team for 2009, it was clear that Paul Bird was the most enthusiastic and open to evolving his team structure in line with the ever increasing input from KHI.

Q: Is the set-up of working with a team like PBM the best way for a Factory team to advance in the current global climate?

Japan is a long way away and so the best way for us is to work closely with experts in their particular field and with a team within Europe on a day-to-day basis. Decisions can sometimes be made quicker and more in the direction relevant to their weekly situation, especially during the season. Be it setting up the race bikes to suit the race tyres on our current bike on the European circuits, or communicating to the press or riders the team's plans and direction on a daily basis, then it works better for us this way - working with a local (European) team. From a development point-of view many times we can have very high quality components for the race bike made by the teams close contacts, very quickly and at a good price and from a sponsorship perspective the team can also bring their close contacts into the team to help boost the overall funding of the project.

Q: This event the team is staging is a rare and unique opportunity to see the new Ninja ZX-10R for the very first time in Europe and already in its race livery! How did that come about?

The new race bike has been eagerly anticipated by everyone involved in the Superbike racing project for a while now. The PBM team have evolved and restructured continuously in order to be in a position to utilise the new bikes potential to the maximum next season. As you can imagine the Paul Bird team are ultra keen to get started with it and so who better than the team itself to help us show the first edition of the race version of it here in Nürburgring?

The initial race team bikes themselves will be full factory bikes, built and sent to us from KHI in Japan. Also we want to show the race bike in the same timing as we start the European testing of it. We are excited about it and the riders who will be on it so we want to show it off to all as early as possible! This is the only chance that the select few will get to see the bike close up before next month's Cologne show and so we want to build up the hype about it as soon as possible. From KHI we already introduced the first static and test pictures and Movies of the new Ninja ZX-10R on our dedicated website for our next Ninja on <http://www.kawasaki-challenge.com> and so it is clear how closely KHI are associating this bike with their global marketing plan already.

Q: What does racing an all-new machine in WSBK in 2011 mean for Kawasaki? The overall racing and marketing strategy?

To be honest it means everything to Kawasaki right now. Competing in World Superbike with the all-new Ninja ZX-10R will show and expose our brand at the highest level.

The rules of the championship mean that we start off with and stay within the concept of the production bike that is also available at your local Kawasaki dealership. Kawasaki is a racing company and our Ninja brand has a solid racing history and pedigree. The new machine should give us the possibility to revive our image as a successful racing company as we already show in so many other of motorcycle racing categories within which we compete today, just like we have turned it around in World Supersport these last two seasons.

Q: What are the immediate challenges for the project to meet and Initial targets to reach, on track and off?

Firstly we have to make sure that all things come together in the best way for its successful early testing and that testing itself goes to plan through out the winter

in the run up to next season. It is an all-new machine so there's going to be a lot of hard work to do from day one. The level of competition in World Superbike these days means that we can't honestly expect to arrive at the front immediately just because we have a new bike but we do want to see good results as soon as possible. With each test we want to see improvements in our understanding of the race machine and help the riders feel more and more comfortable on it. When we arrive next season we want to be competitive from the first race, moving forward on the grid in qualifications and of course always fighting for the podium at each round.

Q: What other racing plans do you have for the Ninja ZX-10R; what can we expect to see in 2011?

This is the paddock that our bike belongs in and I've already said how closely we want the fans to see, that the bike they can buy is the bike they see here. To that end we are going to invest more time and money in helping our satellite teams and their up-and-coming riders in the FIM Superstock 1000 class fight it out in that class next year. Pedercini and Lorenzini teams will both field two stock riders in an attempt to regularly grace the top step of the podium next year!

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**Team Owner - Paul Bird**

Q: Tell us your hopes for this year after a couple of recent challenging seasons in WSB?

It's a really exciting time for the Team and we've been looking forward to the new bike for some time. When I signed with Kawasaki two years ago to run their Factory Team we always knew it was going to be a big challenge and we've had some ups and downs as you'd expect; not only with running a new bike, but also having to gather the data and information from each track on a new machine. If you look at the likes of other teams such as Ten Kate, Ducati etc who have had over 10 years' experience with the same manufacturer, we've not done such a bad job! We've made valuable progress and I feel we've done the best job we could have in a Championship that is super competitive.

Q: What are the strongest qualities of your team, the ones that got you into the position of being the official KRT squad?

I've had the same guys working for me for years and years so it makes a big difference to have a solid unit of people who understand each other and know

what I expect of them. We've obviously had a few additions as the team has grown and now we have a great mix of experienced personnel, all of whom seem to gel together really well. I like to run a team of people who are passionate but also get the job done right and enjoy themselves along the way. The boys know I will come down hard on them if things aren't what I expect and I can be a hard task master, but it's in the best interest of everyone as we all have the same goal and competitive spirit. What I like to see from my PBM team is 110% commitment and that's generally what they give to their jobs, the riders and the team as a whole.

Q: Although the base is in Britain, this is also one of the more cosmopolitan teams in the paddock, so how does this strengthen your overall performance? We have seven nationalities working in the team, which I think makes a good mix of personalities, experience and culture. Being a World Championship, it's obviously normal to have a mix of different nationalities but we also have a mix of people from different professional backgrounds in motorsport. We have guys with MotoGP experience, ex-riders working as engineers, ex-Formula One employees and even people from a Rally background. Most of the people I have in my team have to have a similar attitude - to do the best job we can - but we also have to stay down-to-earth and enjoy ourselves. Even on a bad day's racing we are one of the few teams who will have smiles on our faces at the end. We like to keep it 'real' and make sure we don't take our jobs, and the level of where we are, for granted.

Q: What has it meant to you and the whole team to be an official factory WSBK team, compared to your previous experience of high level national racing? I started my MX career with Kawasaki and have always held a very high regard for the manufacturer! It really was a dream come true for me when I was approached to run their Factory squad in WSB in 2008! I have been involved with racing most of my life but never have I had a manufacturer ask me to run their bikes at this level and with this much support. At the end of the day I'm just a chicken farmer from Cumbria; racing is my hobby and passion, so for me to look at where we are now and to imagine that I used to have only two permanent team members and we used to be run out of a barn in a field, it's amazing! I'm extremely proud of the position both the Team and myself are in and how far we've grown due to the Kawasaki involvement.

Q: How would you describe your working relationship with Kawasaki after two years as the official squad?

As with any new relationships it takes time to understand each other and to create a solid foundation but I think we have proved that we have a very good working relationship between PBM and Kawasaki. PBM obviously had to make a number of adjustments to ensure we are all working on the same page as we were so used to doing everything ourselves. Now that we have the support and backup of the likes of KHI it makes a remarkable difference to the Team and its development. In the past it's always just come down to 'me' to make the big decisions and even though at times I find it a bit hard, we now have quite a number of people to make the set decisions. But it is a big honour for the Team and I to have the support, influence and advice from Kawasaki to help us, especially in a championship that is just so competitive.

Q: What do you think of the new Ninja ZX-10R machine having seen it for the first time recently?

I am really excited to see this amazing machine in real life. It's been talked about since the beginning of the PBM and Kawasaki partnership and it will change the face of Kawasaki's racing persona in this Championship. Kawasaki has built a bike here that can win races and fight for the Championship again. We have all been working so hard to ensure we have the right package for this new baby so we're as ready as can be to see what she can do!

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### **Ichiro Yoda-san – Kawasaki Project Director**

Q: Can you tell us how much design and development of this new Ninja ZX-10R machine has been undertaken with racing in mind?

We have started development this bike with slick tire and racing spec engine. This is quite different procedure than previous models. Normally we started with production tyres before.

Also we know easy to go in the corner and also easy to open the throttle are most important factors for racing.

According long experience of super sports bike technology and MotoGP bike, when going in the corner, how you manage engine braking is key.

We decided to create quite a positive engine brake situation with the basic engine configuration to minimize the input of control devices.

Also, to go out of corners easily we considered better usage of rear suspension and the same philosophy of MotoGP traction control.

Q: Can you explain what each element of the overall team is responsible for - KHI, KME, Paul Bird Motorsport, technology partners and so on?

KHI: supply machine and parts, make decision for next direction of development.  
KME and Paul Bird racing: running racing team through activities within budget and managing racing riders.

Q: Will there be even more direct KHI technical and personnel input at the early races of the 2011 season than normal?

We have already started racing bike tune up in Japan Autopolis, Suzuka and European circuit. It is much earlier than previous years. Also we are considering how to manage Japanese championship, because we need direct feedback from development.

Maybe we would like to work little more closely with Pirelli tyres to develop in Japan quickly.

Q: When will we get the chance to see the race machine on track, in an open test or an official IMS test?

The earliest case will be the test after the last race at Magny Cours.

Q: How tough is the challenge in contemporary WSBK racing compared to other forms of racing?

It is quite easy to understand how tough this championship is; from top to 20th position lap time is often only one second. It is quite tight and we have to try hard to improve lap times.

Q: What are your hopes for the first year of this machine's involvement in WSB?  
Our target is in the top six for next year.

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### **Team Manager - Paul Risbridger**

Q: You started working for the team last year, how has your time in the WSBK paddock been so far?

The WSB paddock is fantastic right now with very professional teams, most of the major manufacturers and an incredible rider line up. The competition is intense and I am looking forward to being part of the team effort that will take Kawasaki to the front in 2011.

Q: How have the team and the working relationship with Kawasaki developed in your time there?

The changes I have seen in the last 10 months have been wide ranging and have a purpose and momentum that has given the whole team confidence in the future. The increased involvement in the development has been an obvious help but the key is the way in which we are working together, building relationships and blending the different characters and skills.

Q: What were your initial impressions of the 2011 Ninja's ZX-10R's suitability for WSBK racing when you saw the first pictures of it?

The bike is clearly a completely new design and looked ready to match the new breed of superbikes. The racing DNA is clear to see and matched our expectations from the start.

Q: So you have managed to test the new bike already?

Yes, we had our first opportunity at Almeria last week and had a very productive two days despite the very high track temperatures.

Q: First test impressions?

Excellent, the chassis is nimble and already it holds a good line. The engine is an early specification but has a really smooth power delivery and corner speeds are already positive. This bike has great potential and we have six months to turn potential into track performance

Q: What are your further expectations for your 2011 build up, test and race schedule – is 2011 going to be the busiest season ever for the staff?

We are extremely busy, no August break for us this year! As far as I am concerned 2011 has already started and we will be flat out through to the first race in February. This will not only apply to the technical team but we have to gear up for the launch and press activities, review the team image, and if necessary make adjustments to our structure and personnel as the test programme and rider details are confirmed.

Q: So can you announce your rider line-up for 2011 now?

We are unable to confirm final details at this stage. This is due in part to the uncertainty of when riders may be fully fit and we are constantly reviewing the plans with Kawasaki and if necessary adjusting test plans to suit this situation. We are very comfortable with the options available but intend to confirm details at a later date. For now we intend to concentrate on the test and development of the new bike to provide our riders with the tools they will need in 2011.

- (announce and introduce if them, if not explain their situations to recovery)
- Bring riders in (if they are there).
- Let Mr Yoda and Paul Bird unveil the new bike with riders around it.
- Time for press pictures

Jonathan Green to summarise the conference and ask audience to enjoy the drinks and buffet and to make the most of taking pictures of the new bike as this is the one and only unique opportunity before next month's Cologne show that will stage the official unveiling of the all-new Ninja ZX-10R production model. Also feel free to talk to the riders and staff. ENDS