

# ERIK RISS

THE BIG INTERVIEW BY RYAN NASSAU



PHOTO: COLIN POOLE

Hi Erik, I hope you are doing well and staying safe back home in Germany.

**Q:** With the current situation not being an ideal one for anyone, what are you doing to keep yourself in peak condition for when the call comes to start the 2020 season and what are the restrictions on exercise in Germany?

**A:** I live on the country side in Germany and there's quite a lot I can do here. I can ride motocross and speedway in the backyard. Apart from that, running, cycling and skipping

**Q:** As we know last season you only started in the top division in England with the Kings Lynn Stars, why did you ultimately decide to double up with the Agila Bears and do you think you improved as a rider as the 2019 season went on?

**A:** Honestly, the motivation in the first place was money. Due to commitments in Sweden and Germany and therefore having a fulltime mechanic I had a lot of expenses. Additionally, I wasn't getting paid regularly by my Swedish club and doing one league in the UK was simply not enough to cover my costs. So that was the initial reason, although it turned out to be a decision that didn't just help me financially it also gave me more racing which in the end has made me a better rider. It turned out to be a decision that brought me happiness as I have really enjoyed riding for Redcar and I was then able to pay my expenses.

**Q:** In recent years the bears have had quite the upturn in fortunes, from being wooden spoon specialists to genuine title contenders and KO cup winners, just how impressed are you with the upturn and how much of the recent success is owed to the promotion that persuaded you to come to the Media Prima Arena?

**A:** Well I remember riding for Edinburgh in the past and Redcar was most of the time a club that people hadn't seen as title contenders. When I joined Redcar they had already been quite far up the top of the table so when I came into the team I didn't really feel much of the change, but as I said thinking back to recent years, the club went from being a underdog in the league to serious titles contenders. It all comes down to the promotion, as they put the team together. The promotion is responsible for getting sponsors and the financial foundation to be able to sign good riders and if you are able to sign good riders you will have a strong team that are capable of success.

**Q:** Many sides overhaul their septets throughout the year and during the off season but will having exactly the same, strong top 5 along with 2 new and exciting young reserves help the bears start the season strongly thus hopefully stealing a march on their SGB championship rivals?

**A:** Our top 5 was working really well last year. Having 2 new young reserves is good for us. They are hungry to win and hungry to learn and we have experienced guys in the team who the reserves can profit from. I think our reserves will get better and better throughout the season. We know our top 5 are strong. If they do their job and our reserves keep improving, I think we will become one of the top contenders for the title.

**Q:** Loyalty is unfortunately in the modern day a rare occurrence in speedway but you have signed in England for the same 2 sides in the Bears and the Stars, does having this continuity help you improve as

a speedway rider and do you think teams should have a limit on how many changes they are permitted to make during the season excluding injuries to help retain that continuity?

**A:** Not really. I improve no matter where I ride. It doesn't matter to me what track I ride, I will always improve with every meeting, every start. I make it's natural, if you have the desire to get better. You become better by practice and it doesn't matter to me what track that is. But, having said that I am happy to be back at these clubs. Even though I feel I would improve anyway it still plays a part if you feel comfortable at a club and I have really enjoy riding for Redcar and Kings Lynn. Ultimately, that's why it was a no brainer for me to come back. It's also important to me to enjoy my riding and Redcar and Kings Lynn gives me a perfect foundation to enjoy my riding and improve as a rider.

**No I think, there should be no limit. I think there should be 2 transfer windows during the season where clubs can make changes. But I would not limit it to 2 changes like they did this year. I think that's boring. Personally, I feel that if you don't perform it's your own responsibility and therefore you cannot be surprised if you get dropped from a team. I think there should be as many changes allowed as anyone wants. If I ride well enough I won't get dropped. If I don't perform, then I have to live with the consequences. I find it exciting, if clubs can make changes during the season and possibly strengthen the team. Also from a riders perspective it is exciting to me because there's more pressure of getting dropped and that adds pressure on the riders and I like that pressure.**

**Q:** Last year you represented Germany in the Speedway of Nations Finals in Russia amassing a total of 10 points over the two legged final. Unfortunately, the team finished 6th overall, what are the aims for you and the national team in the next couple of years?

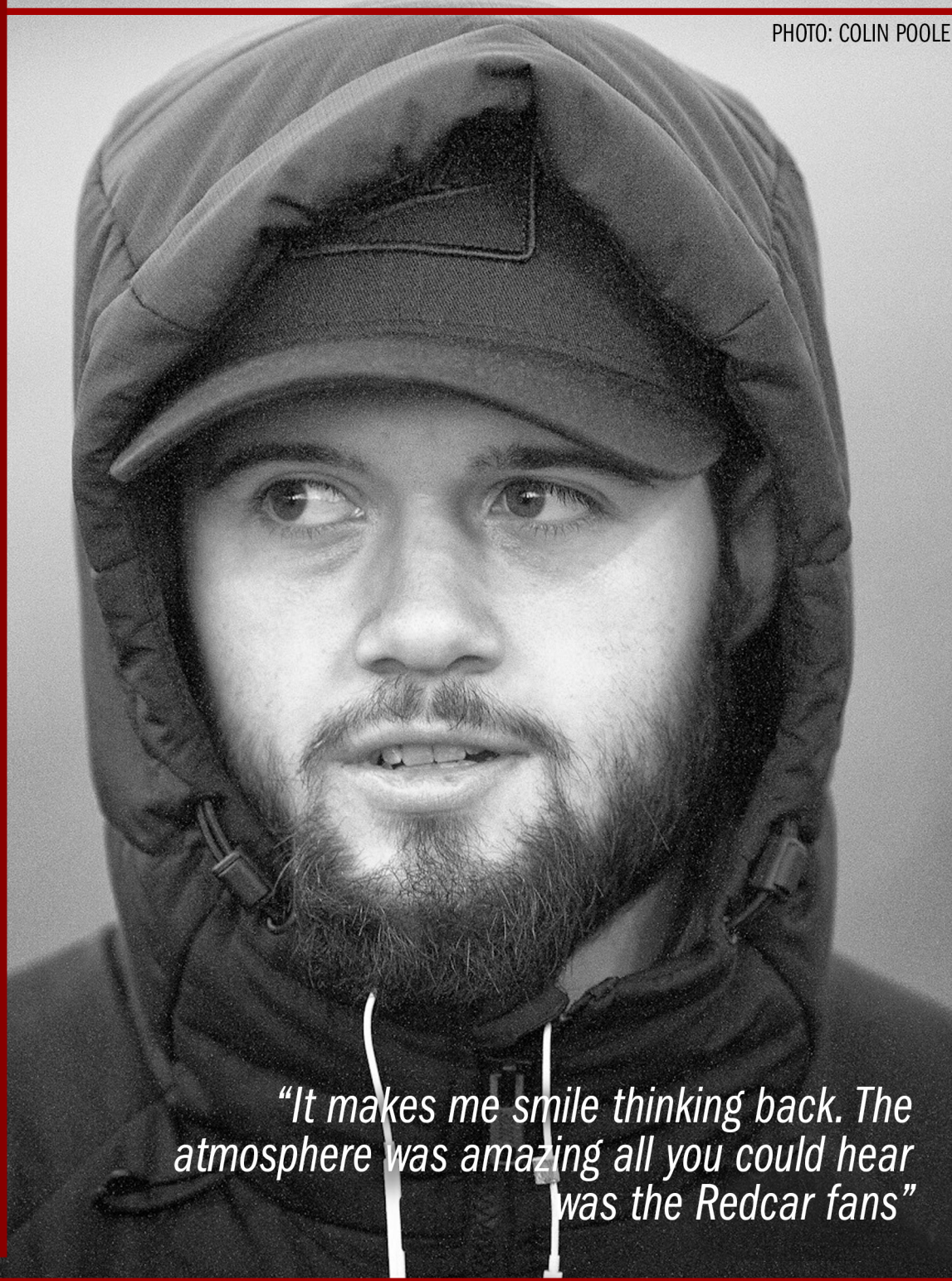
**A:** I would like to represent Germany in a national competition again but that depends on my league performances. If I get picked or not isn't up to me. But it is definitely a goal to be part of another final and finish better than 6th.

**Q:** Last season finished in the best possible way with a huge KO cup final win away at our closest rivals Newcastle in which you were instrumental, just how special was the atmosphere the bears fans created and how much did that help the side cross the finish line after the Diamonds levelled it up after heat 12?

**A:** It was awesome. It makes me smile thinking back. The atmosphere was amazing all you could hear was the redcar fans. They certainly played a part in succeeding. It was special to win the trophy for the club especially because we were knocked out of the League in the semi's so that was a great way to bounce back!

**Q:** You have publicly stated in the past you really enjoy riding the Media Prima Arena and the Adrian Flux Arena, just how important is it for you to ride at tracks that you know will be in perfect condition and how much of a part does this play when deciding to sign for a club?

**A:** It is important for my happiness. Knowing that the tracks are always well prepared is one less thing to worry about and it makes riding the bike enjoyable. We ride 500cc bikes without brakes and every time I go onto the track I know I am risking my life. Knowing that the tracks are well prepared makes the fear go away. It plays a big part for me, as I want to enjoy my job and it's hard to enjoy riding a speedway bike on a rough track as you would be focused on staying on rather than racing the track.



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