

## *A Champion in the making – Sheridan Morais*

Champions are a breed of people that follow the dictum of life that says: “*all good things come to those who wait*”.

Well, Sheridan is in the process of wrapping up the 2008 Superbike Championship in style and it could not have come at a better time, since winning his first title in 2005 as an 18 year old. The year of 2008 will be well remembered after all the trials and tribulations that the team had had to endure in order to become the de facto racing team in South Africa.

After spending two very hard and difficult years meandering in Europe, Sheridan and his management decided to regroup back here in SA and set about rebuilding the confidence lost during his tenure in Europe (many people are unaware of the difficult times spent in Europe).

### **South Africa 2008**

The team was formed around November 2007 and was officially named Team EmTek Racing with Sheridan as its #1 rider. At the time no final contracts had been entered into with any manufacturers. However during the 2003 year Kawasaki had assisted Sheridan as a teenager, when they realized he had the potential to be a National star. Another factor that was brought into the team was the young rider that Ricky Morais had taken to the 2007 South African Supersport Championship – Christopher Leeson.

This support and dedication by the Kawasaki management was repaid when the team approached Kawasaki to represent the brand as the official Kawasaki racing team. The team was renamed “***Team EmTek Kawasaki Racing***”. This was all agreed to by December 2007, with one minor challenge – there were absolutely no 2008 models available anywhere in the world (with the exception of the World Superbike team).

However, all was not lost. The team under the guidance of Race Technician Ricky Morais decided to get in some major testing on the older Kawasaki’s so that the two riders could get race ready, irrespective of their bikes.

It was this single most important decision that has proven itself to be our measure of success.

From the very first race held at Kyalami both team mates have risen to the occasion. Sheridan stamped his authority on the first race with a double win and young Christopher managed an overall 11<sup>th</sup> (our expectations were a top 10 finish). By the next race Christopher achieved a 3<sup>rd</sup> overall for the day on only his second outing on the 1000cc untried and untested 2008 ZX10R.

During 2008, Sheridan was invited to contest a number of international rounds with his previous team.

Team Pedercini had switched from the extremely expensive Ducati bikes to the Kawasaki. It seems as if they had been monitoring his progress here in SA on the new bikes considering there was no success at any level for the new bikes with the exception of SA.

Sheridan took the team to its very first podium ever since its inception at Brands Hatch, UK on the 8<sup>th</sup> August with a hard fought **2<sup>nd</sup> place**.

Sheridan was then again invited to attend the Donington Park round which proved to be a bit more difficult than Brands Hatch. As is usual in the UK, the weather did not play its part and there was torrential rain from the Thursday right up until the end of Race 2 on the Sunday. By free practice session 3 there was a recorded 75 crashes which included 7 from the worlds best – Troy Corser. Unfortunately, Sheridan retired with mechanical failure.

There is an invitation to ride the final round at Portimao in Portugal with Team Pedercini, which has been accepted.

#### **What does 2009 hold?**

After a very successful year as a team, it has been decided to allow the riders to move on to greener pastures.

There are several offers on the table for Sheridan, one of which includes and opportunity to represent South Africa in the premier World Superbike Championship, on board the factory supplied Kawasaki ZX10R.

At the time of writing there has been no formal conclusions and the negotiations are ongoing.

So at the moment, the Team's focus is to win the Championship for Kawasaki.

The year of 2008 will go down in history as a watershed year for the team, which includes its riders, management, technicians and sponsors. It was difficult and had many ups and downs but at the end of the day the team has achieved its goals and objectives and that was for Sheridan to give Kawasaki their first outright Champion since 1983/84 with Rodney Grey (who interestingly enough won the "triple" for 750cc, Superbike and Formula 1) and give Christopher the support and knowledge of the country's leading race technician.

We will officially bid farewell to the members of the team at the last round of the Championship in Killarney, Cape Town.