

Bikeland.org would like to welcome our newest contributor, Jessica Lee. Jessica isn't old enough to post in the forums on the site just yet, but we welcome her contributions and hope all of you enjoy reading her interviews and articles. Even though she isn't that old, Jessica has already written for Motokids and Road Racer X magazines. Jessica's parents are both members of Bikeland.org, so we hope that you make them and Jessica proud with some kind comments for her!



My name is Jessica Lee and I'm 15 years old. I have been riding dirt bikes since I was 4 years old and I absolutely love everything about motorcycle racing. I am proud to say that I have grown up around road racing. I know quite a bit about road racing and motocross. My family and I travel to many races around the country and have the opportunity to see all of the action.

If you had the chance to get an exclusive interview with a champion like American Honda's Miguel Duhamel, what would you ask him? This is a question that kept popping up in my head the night before my big interview at Road Atlanta for Bikeland.org. Miguel is someone who I've always looked up to and now I would finally get the chance to talk to him.

It was the morning of my interview on Saturday September 2nd. My interview was scheduled for around 11:30 but rain had been causing changes in Saturday's schedule and I became worried if he would still have time. Thankfully everything worked out just fine and eventually I got the ok to go inside the American Honda Transporter and have a sit down with Miguel Duhamel!

Jessica: What was your first bike and when did you start riding?

Miguel: I started riding when I was about 3 years old, 3 ½ years old and I believe it was a little Indian motorcycle; a very small kid's motorcycle. I also had a Villa, which is an Italian motorcycle

and there you go! I started when I was about 3 ½!

Jessica: Why did you choose 17 as your race number?

Miguel: I didn't really know what number I wanted. My career is racing motocross and road racing and I figured I better get number 17, which was my father's number. My dad raced number 17 and made it world famous and it's a cool number... so maybe if he had number 78 I wouldn't have used it, but 17 holds a lot of good memories of my dad racing. When I won Daytona... you know, he was always trying to win it... so finally 17 did win Daytona!

Jessica: You said you raced motocross. What made you want go from motocross to road racing? Is it just because your dad road raced?

Miguel: No, motocross as a kid growing up I think is a more accessible sport when you're very young, so we did that. My parents probably wanted me to, or I know my mom wanted me to be a lawyer or something else other than a racer because it's really hard on the nerves and everything, but as a kid when I grew up racing motocross I really enjoyed it.

When I got older in Canada especially, I'm from Canada, there was not much of it like Ricky's (Carmichael) been doing here in America or Jeremy (McGrath) did before him and all those guys, so I figured maybe road racing would be a better way for me to get a career built around that. It was more professional in Canada and my

dad obviously road raced and my brother also had a really great career in the championships in Canada so I gave it a try.

Jessica: Do you have anything you do before a race? Are you superstitious about anything? Do you have to do something to get ready for a race?

Miguel: Not really, I am not superstitious because I think that's bad luck, but not too much. When you're growing up there are some occurrences that happen and you think, "well if I could remake those occurrences I'll win again" but if you race long enough sometimes you find out that doesn't stand to be true, so I just try to stay calm and be prepared before the race. I think every rider is a little superstitious but you can't let it get out of hand.

Jessica: I've know riders who will scratch their body work before they go out because they are worried about crashing with new body work. Do you guys do anything like that?

Miguel: No, you know that is a good observation! The biggest fear for me when I was road racing is that I had new leathers, and you got these raggedy beat up leathers as a privateer, and when you buy yourself some new leathers which are expensive and you go out with it in a session or two and you fall and you're like, "well that was kind of the jinx of the new leathers." So, I got over that too.

Same thing with the new body work on the bike, I think if you make a big fuss about it and then you could actually get yourself in that mode and make a mistake. But like I said over the years now, thankfully everything's ok and sometimes when we talk about stuff like that I'll touch wood somewhere just to be safe. You can never be too safe!

Jessica: So, to be calm before a race do you have a special play list on your iPod that you listen to?

Miguel: Nothing really in general. I like to listen to some comedy. I like comedy, but mostly good music like AC DC, Guns & Roses, new stuff and old stuff; Nickelback. It's a mix of a lot of different stuff actually. Sometimes more rock and roll, sometimes just a little bit of music, and sometimes it's nothing, like today. I'm just watching the T.V and relaxing. Right before the

race I like to put on something to kind of get me going.

Jessica: Have you ever wanted to race MotoGP?

Miguel: Oh Yeah, that's always been my goal. I always wanted to be in GP. In '92 I had one year in GP which was great because I think I was rookie of the year and it went well. It was not a very well supported team. It wasn't like a top team and by everyone's conscience including Kenny Roberts Sr., I should have stayed there but there was no money, or something was missing.

I couldn't stay in the GP so I came back to America and to this day I'd love to at least do one race in MotoGP. I'd like to do a whole season but we'll see. It's not quite over yet! Hopefully there will still be a chance where I at least get to ride those bikes because I obviously know I can still do the job. That's why I'm still racing.

Jessica: So since you are very familiar with MotoGP and since you both ride for Honda, are you friends with Nicky Hayden?

Miguel: Never heard of that name! No, Nicky and I are pretty good friends and we were teammates here in America for a while and we raced together. Every time he comes out to Laguna Seca I go and see him and he still remembers me.

So everything is good on that side with Nicky and surprisingly when I met Valentino Rossi for the first time last year I went over and introduced myself and said "Hi" and I was really taken back that he knew a lot about my career, he knew who I was, what I had done, and all the racing that I've done. So I was like, "wow that's pretty surprising!" that he was like, "Oh yes, yes I know you. You race the superbikes, the 600." It was pretty cool to have Rossi interested in following my career.

Jessica: What kind of hobbies do you do outside of racing?

Miguel: I like golf. Which you can see the comparison between racing motorcycles and playing golf! I like golf, I like bicycling a lot. Actually to train I like to go out and go for a bicycle ride. I'm a big fan of the Tour de France,

of course and I watch it every year. Any sport like that.

I would love to do more motocross riding or trail riding. I'm kind of limited where I can go. I'm the kind of person where if a group of people get together and go I'll go but just by myself it's hard to get myself going, so I limit myself pretty much to cycling and training and playing some golf.

Jessica: Do you have any advice for up and coming racers?

Miguel: It's a hard road when you start. It's great to have goals that you want to race and win and become a factory star but those odds are pretty small. Your odds are better if you study really hard in school; you could become a lawyer or a CPA or something like that or something else with more access to it.

You have to know that to start with and you can't let that slow you down and not try, and if you have a desire you *have* to do it. You have to get deals together with sponsors and local sponsors like V Star, with tires and with oil companies and try to get little deals everywhere so it doesn't cost you too much money. You don't want to put yourself in a hole for the rest of your life if you don't become successful.

But with that being said, don't put too much pressure on yourself. Just go out there and race. It's got to be fun. When you go there you have to show up looking forward to doing it. If you're being pushed or for whatever the reason you know that you're there and you're like, "what am I doing here" then maybe you need to take a break.

For me I know what was a real turning point is I went to get a real job between the motocross and the road racing and I worked a couple little odd jobs here and there, but really didn't like it so I gave road racing a really big push and it became good for me.

Some people like to have 9 to 5 jobs and there's nothing wrong with that. You're at the same pace as everyone else. Everyone else gets off work at the same time as you, has the same vacation schedules that you have, you're all friends and that's wonderful. That's a normal life.

I love the sport and I love what I do and it's kind of hard to find people that are on the same

schedule as me because my weekdays are pretty much open so I do my training and it's somewhat of an individual thing. Everybody gets tired by the weekend and I'm like, "well the weekend for me is racing!" The weekdays are really similar to the weekends. But as far as that's concerned just do the best you can, and don't get hurt! I was always try not to get hurt, and also try not to over-ride and have fun with it! Don't worry about getting a factory ride. People that know a lot about racing always seem to make it.

Jessica: Have you thought about doing a school to help the new great talent out there?

Miguel: That's probably something, I could pick out some talent. It's required of me from Honda. I always give them my suggestion about what I think is a good rider. In the future maybe I'll open a school.

I like to do one thing at a time. Like, I eat my peas and then I eat my carrots and then I'll eat my steak and all that, so I'm not really a multitasking kind of person in that area but that is something I've thought of - having a school.

Freddie Spencer's got one now in Las Vegas. It would probably be something where I would be working with Honda on every race weekend and really getting into the racing aspect of those guys and see if I could really help them obtain their goals. If I can help the rider obtain their goals then I can help Honda obtain their goal of winning championships.

Right now I'm trying to do that with me! We'll see about later on, but I think I'm a good team player so I think that's why Honda keeps me around for so long.

Jessica: Thank You!

Miguel: No problem!

I had a wonderful time interviewing Miguel. He is so nice and anytime you see him around the paddock just stop and say hi to him!

Thanks again Miguel for the interview!