

Whatever Happened to Bobby Duncan?



Bobby (third left, back row) with the 1988 Stoke Potters

The sport's history is littered with promising youngsters who, for one reason or another, never fulfil their apparent potential. These tend to fall into three distinct categories, those that are unlucky with injuries (Paul Hurry), those that simply don't progress as much as expected (Justin Elkins) and those that disappear before they've had the chance to develop their potential. Lee Complin falls into the third category, he had the world at his feet when he quit the sport. He's now on the comeback trail and may still make an impression in the sport, though as a rider once tipped as a potential World Champion, the suspicion is always going to linger that he could have done better.

Another rider that retired with unexplored potential was Bobby Duncan. Bobby, now 36, was a much sought after teenage prospect and rejected overtures from Cradley Heath and Wolves to sign for Stoke Potters for the 1987 season. Although Bobby was born in England he considered himself Scottish as his parents both hailed from North of the border and he spent some of his early life there. He was a virtual ever-present for the Potters in his first year, appearing in 35 meetings for a 3.71 average.

His career came to a sudden end in May 1988, after just 41 meetings and a respectable 104 points for the Potters. At the time little was said about the reasons behind his retirement, 'pressures outside speedway' being the official line at the time.

Bobby got in touch with us recently trying to locate some videos of his racing career. We took the opportunity to find out why he disappeared so suddenly and what's happened in his life since 1988.

He was refreshingly honest and didn't seek to hide his regret about the way things worked out.

"I had to stop because a sponsor deal never paid up what they had promised to and I had bad engines. It left me in debt, it was a real pity as I had started 1988 with good

results away from Stoke! There isn't a day goes by that I don't wonder how far I could have gone and what it would be like to ride a speedway bike one more time."

Like many former riders, Bobby's career left him with some painful reminders of his time on the shale.

"I had a couple of back operations as a result of a crash at the end of 1987, we were at home against Peterborough."

He thinks that it's a little easier for kids to break into the sport days. There was no Conference League when Bobby was starting out, he had to sink or swim in the deep waters of the National League.

"These days I think people have more help with engines, with regards to the set ups and they get proper training which is good."

You won't have seen Bobby around the tracks in recent years, he's been too busy travelling the world.

"These days I live in Trondheim, Norway. It will soon be ten years since I left the UK. I'm now married with two kids, a girl and a boy. We came back from 16 months in Brisbane a year ago as my wife took a masters degree. There's no speedway here, but I follow the news of the Potters on the web and the GP on Swedish TV."

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