



In the spotlight:

BENCE

SZVOBODA

multiple motocross champion



THE HUNGARIAN

BULLDOG:

BENCE

SZVOBODA

Interview

By Maja Tiborszky



This month we feel very lucky as we had the possibility to have an exclusive interview with the motocross athlete behind the number 521: **the Hungarian Bulldog**, aka **Bence Szvoboda** Motocross racer. Besides being a 9 x Hungarian motocross champion, Bence is also an Austrian MX2 Junior Champion, Czech MX2 Champion, MX2 World Championship points scorer, 3 x member of the Team Hungary and a top 3 finisher in the European Motocross Championship (EMX300).

VIBES: FIRST OF ALL LET ME CONGRATULATE YOU ON YOUR INCREDIBLE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RESULTS AND SUCCESS. TELL US A BIT ABOUT THE BEGINNING. HOW DID IT ALL START?

BENCE: I started as most other motorcyclists; my Dad was involved in racing, and he thought it would be a good idea to buy me a little motorbike. They say I was quiet and introverted as a kid, and that's how my Dad was trying to help me. I think he succeeded. During my career I had to overcome many obstacles, which played an important role in my personal development.

VIBES: CAN YOU STILL REMEMBER YOUR FIRST MOTORBIKE? AND WHAT ABOUT YOUR FIRST RACE?



BENCE: It all started in the back yard of our house in Balatonberény, where I got on my small automatic Malaguti for the first time. I was just indefatigable as I kept doing the rounds in the orchard slaloming between the fruit trees for hours. They just couldn't get me off of my bike. When I think about it, I have never done so many laps during my whole career as I did in our back yard in Berény. I will never forget my first race, which was held in a place called Lipótfa. I was in the lead for the whole duration of the competition, but in the final lap I gave too much throttle just a few meters before the finish-line and I fell off my motorcycle. I was 9 years old.

VIBES: THE RIDING SEASON IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER. ARE YOU READY FOR THE 2018 SEASON?

BENCE: The best way to boost your stamina is to combine running and biking workouts. I'm doing a rigorous personalized training plan which is based on my heart-rate zones.

I also have a special core-strength training to improve body strength, to fortify those muscle groups that were not trained properly due to previous injuries and to reinforce weak points located last year. Now that is also not what I would call training aimed at pumping your beach body muscles. During

motorcycling, we are improving riding techniques and we are aiming at strengthening the nervous system because the right pace can only be achieved with a nervous system that is accustomed to good technique and velocity. Training abroad is essential in motocross racing; focusing on self-development it's crucial to train with others as well, you can't just always train alone; the experience gained abroad helps me to get used to international expectations. Motocross tracks are also more challenging abroad than in Hungary. The best option for me is Italy; I've already been practicing there for two weeks during this winter. I have the feeling that I'm in a good shape right now.

VIBES: WHAT'S THE SECRET BEHIND THE NUMBER 521?

BENCE: To tell you the truth that

number found me somehow. In 2014 I invented for myself the start number 221. 2 is one of my favorite numbers, I used it during races for a long time, and also my role model Ryan Villopoto who is a multi-time supercross and motocross champion used to race with the same number. But I had to invent something else because at foreign competitions they always give the single digit numbers to the locals. Number 21 symbolizes a change in my life; ever since I turned 21 I have a much more tenacious attitude towards racing. Unfortunately at the ADAC German Motocross Championship the number 221 was already taken so they gave me the next available number with 21 at the end: it was number 521. I somehow got attached to it, and as it was available in every country during subsequent races it kinda' grew on me. Actually I haven't really seen any other racer who rides with 521. The guy with 521 is me :)



VIBES: THERE IS A REALLY SERIOUS WORK BEHIND YOUR RESULTS. WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGE?

BENCE: My greatest challenge has always been to be a professional sportsman in Hungary. As a motorbike racer I'm not really being spoiled by sponsors like Olympians; many people do not even consider it as a real sport. They often say: "You just sit on the bike and pull the accelerator," ignoring the fact that motocross racing requires an incredible strong stamina. In terms of body strain we are pretty much in the same league as triathletes.

Breaking out from Hungary into the international top ranks is not an easy job. Motocross racing is an expensive sport; a massive financial investment is required straight from the beginning. I feel lucky as I managed to achieve a reputation and they know my name abroad, but it took me and my family a lot of work, compromises and sacrifices.

VIBES: WHICH HAS BEEN YOUR MOST CHERISHED VICTORY?

Last year I won the Czech Championship and until now this is probably the sweetest victory of them all. I was fighting for this title for 6 long years but somehow something always went wrong at the crucial moment and I never managed to win. In 2017 everything fell into place; I had a very intense battle with my rival during the whole competition. It's a special feeling to best a worthy opponent. It's hard to explain how or what I exactly felt when I saw the checkered flag waving.

VIBES: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE WHO IS CONSIDERING BECOMING A PROFESSIONAL MOTORCROSS RACER?

BENCE: I do not want to talk out anyone of this sport, but motocross racing is one of the cruelest sports in the world.

You might be talented but talent by itself is not sufficient. You must be extremely persistent, you have to possess a high pain tolerance, and you have to be prepared to say goodbye to an easy and carefree childhood.

You need to grow up fast and take responsibility for yourself because on the bike you can pay a heavy price for every single mistake.



Victories and championship titles do not guarantee anything in themselves. At each race you have to get the best out of yourself because otherwise they will quickly write you off. Actually, there are no rational arguments in favor of this sport, it's simply a love affair. It is an unbeatable feeling of freedom when you fly over the spectators.

VIBES: WHAT ARE YOU DOING WHEN YOU ARE NOT RIDING YOUR MOTORBIKE?

BENCE: This sport requires a whole person; I don't have much free time. Everything has to be subordinated to trainings and competitions. After finishing the season last year I got 3 weeks from my coaches for a bit of "sweet idleness". Since November I have at least one training session each day. When I can get rid of my obligations for a short while I'm like any other guy who's my age: I like spending time with my girlfriend, my dogs and my friends.

VIBES: WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO TRY YOURSELF ON 4 WHEELS?

BENCE: In my sport there are plenty of people who switched from 2 to four-wheels but that's a totally different world. I do not think that I would be prepared to do it as a professional racer. I also believe that it's too late to make such a change.

VIBES: LAST YEAR YOU HAD A FANTASTIC YEAR. WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS AND EXPECTATIONS IN 2018?

BENCE: We always want a little bit more than what we achieved the year before. It's not going to be easy since 2017 has been the most successful season in my career. On top of all that I will be

promoted to the "King Category" in the Czech Republic from this year on which means that there will be more experienced opponents waiting for me. In the Czech Republic I would like to fight for the championship title once again and in Germany I want to make it to the top ten by the end of the year. At the Hungarian home race of the European Championship my goal is yet another victory, and I really hope that the fiscal circumstances will enable me to participate in a few other World Championship Grand Prix races elsewhere as well. As far as this latter objective is concerned we are still in the process of negotiating with potential sponsors.

VIBES: WHICH 3 WORDS WOULD DESCRIBE YOU THE BEST?

BENCE: Persistent, determined, sensitive

VIBES: WHERE CAN WE SEE YOU NEXT TIME?

BENCE: My season is scheduled to start on the 1st of April in the Czech Republic.

VIBES: *Thank you!*

