



Rapid rise

Steven Nickerson on the fast track to success

A Story and photos by Don Empey
 t the ripe old age of 13, Steven Nickerson is already a veteran dirt-tracker and is starting out in a career of road-racing. After getting his first bike as a four-year-old, Nickerson spent time moving up through the 50cc, 65cc and 85cc dirt track ranks before making the switch to road racing on a Honda RS125 last season.

Nickerson's considerable talents caught the attention of Go Big Racing, who took the youngster under its wing last season as he competed in the RACE SuperSeries at Shannonville Motorsport Park. Nickerson was victorious in his first outing in the Amateur 125 class and ended the season fourth in points despite only running in four events.

At the end of the season Nickerson was invited to try out for a place in the Red Bull AMA U.S. Rookies Cup at Barber Motorsports Park in Alabama, but failed to make the cut.

Nevertheless, the youngster remains one of Canada's up-and-coming racing talents.

So far in his career he's scored 104 podium finishes that include 41 firsts, 33 seconds and 30 third place finishes.

How did you get started riding?

My life dream of becoming a motorcycle racer started in 1998 when I was growing up as a kid at the age of four, on Christmas morning as I was walking slowly towards the Christmas Tree feeling very excited to see what presents I had. Before I even saw my whole family standing there, I was drawn to a small Yamaha PW50. I was so excited to jump on it and I was so stunned when my father said it was all mine, to have and to ride.

In the coming months I waited to ride that mean machine. Finally, one day in May, my dad said that I could try the motorcycle. As my dad was starting the motorcycle I had strange tickles in my stomach that I have never felt before. I approached the motorcycle feeling more than a little scared. I jumped onto the seat and gave the throttle a little twist just to hear the roar the engine. My dad told me to slowly twist the throttle

and lift my feet. As I listened to my bike rev, I yelled, "I'm doing it dad!" I started to gain some speed, but I did not know where the brakes were and I ran into a fence. I remember bursting into tears saying to my father that I will never ride this thing again.

What got you into racing?

I kept practicing and a few years later my father asked me "Do you want to race?" I yelled "yeah!" in excitement. I started racing flat track at the Welland County Speedway, where to my surprise I dominated the 50cc class. I made some great friends in the 50cc class, but most of them did not move up to the 65cc class, as I did.

I was doing really well in the 65cc class, getting a few first places but mostly seconds and thirds. I met many new friends in the 65cc class that I still keep in touch with today. I spent one more year racing in the 65cc class and did extremely well. One day near the end of that season, my father came to pick me up after school, and was introduced to a big green Kawasaki 85cc motorcycle. That fall I was racing the 85cc Kawi as well as my 65cc in the U.S.

I raced hard all season, finishing top three in almost every race.

What steered you toward road racing?



One day after the race season my father asked me what I wanted to do. He asked if I want to do flat track or try road racing. I decided I wanted to try road racing. Around October my Dad asked "do you want to race pocket bikes indoors during the winter?" I agreed and my father let me race pocket bikes indoors to keep me race ready all year long.

That Christmas I got an RS125. I was stunned, happy and excited. I could not wait for the next race season so I could try my new motorcycle.

Last April I went to the race school to get my license so I could race in the summer.

Tell us about your first race event.

I did two track days before I raced my first road race in June at Shannonville. I was scared to see what the race day would hold in store for me. On Sunday I was feeling as good as I've ever felt walking in the pits hearing the roars of the motorcycles. As I was getting my gloves on I was thinking of my game plan, all the great advice and the track conditions. I started to get that strange feeling again. Feeling scared, yet excited.

I won my Amateur 125 class. I also competed in the Middleweight class but on last lap I lowsided, ending my day on a bad

note. I was fine, just a little shaken up but I learned a lot that day. The next two regional 125 class races I came in third place.

I couldn't make it to the last regional round at Shannonville because I was invited to the Red Bull AMA U.S. Rookies Cup try outs in Alabama to try to qualify for the Red Bull championship.

What was the Red Bull Rookies Cup experience like?

While I was down there I had an amazing experience. I saw some of my flat track friends, but sadly I did not make the final cut.

What sort of help have you had from Go Big Racing?

Ross Millson and Paul Glenn from Go Big Racing helped me with my technique on the new bike and gave me some great advice on road racing. I also spent some time at

the Toronto Motorcycle Show in December in the Mosport booth with them. The people from Mosport were so nice because they brought a cake to celebrate my 13th birthday.

What are you up to this winter?

I'm now preparing for next season, concentrating on school then training for the 2008 racing season. Thanks to all my sponsors who have helped get me this far. **MM**



Already successful on dirt tracks 13-year-old Nickerson made a seemingly effortless switch to pavement, winning first time out in the Amateur 125 class at Shannonville.