

# Ben Barker

"It's a difficult lifestyle being on the road. But we are just trying to stick to simple food. Instead of having a doner kebab, I'll just have chargrilled chicken instead in a wrap.

"I like nothing more than having a Nando's with a big garlic bread and peri peri chicken but that doesn't help with my job. So it's best just to have the rice with chicken breast."

One thing you do know you'll get from Barker is 100 per cent. He is a throwback of the good ol' days, proper old school full throttle merchant. He will race until the tank runs dry.

He laughs at me when I suggest that now at the age of 34, he might just slow down a bit.

He added: "The day I stop putting it all on the line, the day I lose that spark is the day I hang up the kevlars for good and that will be the end.

"I don't think I'll lose it, I'm an absolute born racer and people don't like me for it because I'll make moves.

"But I'm there to win races, I'm an entertainer. Paying public come to watch me do what I do. You've got to put a show on, you've got to get stuck in.

"Everything with me right now is going in the right direction. That's so important for me in my head. I'm so fresh mentally, my bikes are going right, I'm feeling right. I just need to make a few extra improvements with my weight."

Barker has already got his eye on returning to Belle Vue on August 1 for that British Final.

After those four finals, he only has two bronze medals to show for it and nowhere near the trophies his efforts have deserved over the years.

Crucially he still believes that can all change, adding: "I still feel that there's a British title in me. I feel if I can ride like I did at Belle Vue last Monday, I can beat anyone. I had ignition problems in two rides. But if my bikes can work like that, I will be in the final at the British Final. If I get in front, no one will catch me.

"I've no doubt in my ability. I used to doubt myself but I don't anymore. I'm so confident at the moment.

"If I can make that final at Belle Vue, everybody knows I won't leave anything in the pits, everything I have got will be left on the track.

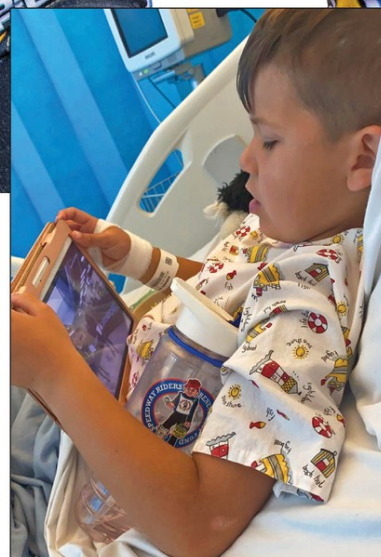
"I want to win that British title for my kids. I don't even want to win it for myself. I want to win it for the kids and they can tell everyone that their dad is a British Champion.

"I've made four finals but I've been so close over the years yet I've not got the medals or trophies to show for it.

"That's why the big thing for me now is to knuckle down. I've never spent this much money on my equipment ever in my life.



• Bradley watching dad Ben on Eurosport in hospital last Monday night



Everything I earn either goes on my kids or my equipment.

"I don't see a reason why I can't win a British Final and then be in the Great Britain team for the return of the World Cup next season.

"I'm going to have to ride my way into the team, I know that. But I'm willing to do that and I'm not frightened of working hard to make it happen.

"I just have in my mind that it would be so good for the kids to see me pick up the big trophy. That would make all the ups and downs and injuries of my career worthwhile."

On that note and with a cheeky grin, Barker shuffles back off into the pits. Next time in the National Speedway Stadium, he might just walk off with the big trophy.

# THE FUTURE

Interview: PHIL LANNING • Pictures: TAYLOR LANNING

June 18, 2022 **speedway star** 3