

First of all, Troy. Thanks for giving me your time this afternoon. I really appreciate that. I know you're getting ready to head out very soon, so what I'd like to do, is to run through, especially for the benefit of the younger members of our forum, briefly review your career thus far and then spend some time looking at what's in store in the future.

You were born here in Wollongong, went to school locally, Kanahooka High School, I believe, so.

PH: What was your first interest in motorcycles?

TC: Well, obviously my parents were into bikes when I was younger and they were involved in WMCC, we're all Life Members now; did trials, enduro, a little bit of road, but not a lot, so, yeah, just started from there. We used to go away on weekends, just for fun and it just went from there, really. From social riding at Mt Kembla motocross track and eventually into road racing.

PH: Heroes, mentors?

TC: Obviously people like Mick Doohan and Wayne Gardner, because as I was racing motocross, before the road, they were at the top of the road racing, and local guys, so those two guys for sure.

PH: And did you have a particular mentor who encouraged you or was it mainly just your parents, your dad?

TC: No, well, like I said, for myself I didn't really choose it to be a career. My dad was pretty sure that I already had a career, and I had a trade. I'm a qualified refrigeration mechanic. As far as he was concerned, motorcycle racing was a dream job, I guess and out of our league because we weren't even thinking of that. But slowly and surely we got there and I think it was just my own drive, deciding that I was going to follow racing and not do a normal 9-5 job.

PH: Fair enough, too. I guess it's every young bloke's dream, isn't it?

TC: Well, I did the 9-5 job and I was racing at the time and it was getting harder and harder, and eventually I got the ultimatum from the boss. I had to either work or race so I said, "See ya later."

PH: I think Wayne had the same problem, didn't he?

TC: I believe he did; taking too much time off work to race.

PH: So your early road racing here was based around what?

TC: The local tracks, Oran Park, Amaroo Park. Local circuits, just club racing before I started doing any sort of championship racing which was in 1990 when I raced 250 Production. This was when we first decided to try and win a title or a championship.

PH: 1993, you win the ASB on the Honda RC30. (Here I showed Troy a picture of the bike from that year and also gave him details of its present whereabouts, in Texas

being used as a track bike.) And then in 1994 you went to America. How did that come about?

TC: It really came about that, whilst I was winning the Superbike Championship, or, had just won it, with Honda, my next request to them was if I could go and race in Europe,; I didn't want to stay in Australia. They basically said that there were no positions available. From when I first started my road racing career, my main influence into what I chose to do and when I chose to do it; what year, was from Barry Sheene, and he pretty much rang me up and said, "I think I can get you a ride in America on a Ducati." He said, "Leave it with me and I'll see if I can get a test ride for you." So, basically, Barry organized that ride in America for me. He was good friends with Eraldo Ferracci, in his racing days. Then he took me to Daytona. There were 6 riders there for a test ride on the same bike and the ride was for whoever was the fastest of the six guys after the two days of testing. I was the fastest guy so basically it just went from there. I just signed the contract before we left to come back. I was happy, they were happy and it was all thanks to Barry, really, he was the one who got me my big chance out of Australia.

PH: So you won the AMA Superbike Championship in 1994, the first non-American to do so and also, at the same time, you did a couple of wildcard rides in the WSBK in the same year.

TC: Well, that was pretty much again, from Barry. He basically pushed Ducati and said, "Look, let's get Troy over into Europe and give him a couple of guest rides over there." He pretty much organized it with the Castiglioni brothers who were in control of the whole thing then. It was a really good opportunity and I made the most of it. All that, and he introduced me to Sam, who's now my wife.

PH: And you finished 11<sup>th</sup> overall despite not having ridden the whole series, which is the reason why you choose to ride the #11 now. Is that correct?

TC: That's correct, plus I like #11 anyway. It's a good number.

PH: So then 1995 you rode for Ducati again and finished 2<sup>nd</sup> and then in 1996, you won the Championship. Were you surprised at how quickly that had happened, or was it that, for you, it seemed like it had taken forever?

TC: No, not a surprise, not that it seemed like it had taken forever. After the first season of racing I had learned all the circuits. The first year I was learning a lot of the tracks, although I won on a few tracks and had the fastest laps, I just didn't really know how to put the season together on the new circuits, so 2<sup>nd</sup> season was not easier, but at least I knew where I was going at each race track and had a bit of past knowledge. I was basically racing against the same guys and I just had to finish a little better, and that's really what I did.

PH: Then, in 1997, you got tempted to go into MotoGP/500cc. And it was a disaster, wasn't it?

TC: Yes, it was actually. It was unfortunate because, at the time there were lots of new teams and sponsors coming into GP and out of GP and stuff because of the finances involved in it and I was just unfortunate that the team that I went with and their sponsor just ran out of money and they couldn't pay for the equipment. And they

couldn't pay me so I said, "Look, I'm not going to race. If we can't afford to do it, let's not do it." It was a bit hard to do because I felt like I was just at the height of my career as it was starting to go forward, but it was the best thing to do.

PH: You would have felt like this was a backward step?

TC: No, not really. I learned a lot from it so it wasn't a backward step at all.

PH: What is known as a "character-building exercise"?

TC: Pretty much, yeah. But, like I said, I was then fortunate enough that I was able to go back to Ducati in 1998 after that, after walking away from them and not running the #1 plate and defending my title. I know they were a bit disappointed about it, but, at the end of the day it was what I wanted to do and they weren't prepared to offer me what I wanted to stay there at the time.

PH: So, 1998 it was back to Ducati again, finished 2<sup>nd</sup> in the championship and 3<sup>rd</sup> in 1999, both times to Carl Fogarty.

TC: Yep. The '98 one, I really should have won that championship. I crashed at the last race of the season in Japan and ruptured my spleen. Sunday morning (rolls eyes) and all I would have had to have done was finish and I'd have won it. It happens, but, you know, it was the same, racing the same guys. I actually swapped from Virginio Ferrari's team with Frankie Chili to the Davide Tardozzi team with Foggy, between those two years and it didn't seem to make that much difference. We were just racing against the same people on the track. Started to have a few crashes I think around that sort of time. I mean, up until that time I hadn't had a lot of crashes in races, and those seasons I probably had a few more little crashes, maybe a few small injuries (not major ones, just small ones)

PH: Os, then in 2000 and 2001 you left Ducati again and went to Aprilia. What was that like?

TC: It was great, actually. The bike and the team had some experience, obviously from Grand Prix days, 250's and 125's and that was their big chance to move into Superbikes. They had run on the circuit the previous season with Peter Goddard riding.

PH: Great development rider.

TC: He was great and the bike definitely looked like it had potential so I was really keen to get up there and try and win the championship for them, straight out of the box. But we just had some small problems that held us back at important times, but, when the bike ran, we got great results. But I think I had one or two costly crashes where I probably would have picked up some good points. Really, what it comes down to is that you have to be consistent to end up in the ranks and

PH: You can't win a championship without being consistent. The competition is so fierce.

TC: Yeah, you know, after '96 when I won the Championship, from that point on, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> wasn't rally good enough. It was, but it wasn't. I wasn't happy when I wasn't

winning because I knew I COULD win. Up until that time I was just racing every race and trying to win every race. That made a change a little bit.

PH: So, once you'd tasted victory anything less was..

TC: Well, yes, for sure. Obviously not always. If you're in a good battle and you end up 2<sup>nd</sup> then that's OK, but, if you're just not on the pace or whatever, and you're struggling, that's not where you want to be  
Or if something lets you down, tyres or something.

PH: So the Aprilia thing was OK, but it didn't really do it for you?

TC: Yeah, well, unfortunately, Aprilia was having financial problems themselves in the company and that really held them back and I think it took their focus off racing. They seemed to have a few more problems in the company to worry about rather than racing bikes.

PH: There's a consistent theme that goes through that with Italian manufacturers. They go bankrupt and someone buys them out, then THEY go bankrupt, etc.

TC: Yeah! Pretty much. That had been the 3<sup>rd</sup> time for them I think.

PH: So, 2002-2004 back with Carl, teaming with him, but with him as your boss rather than as your team-mate. What was that like?

TC: Yeah, it was OK, you know. Like I said, It wasn't really what I wanted to be doing, because I wanted to be racing for the championship more so than developing a bike, but this is how it all eventuated. I ended up being basically dropped by Aprilia: pretty last-minute really. They decided that they weren't going to race in Superbikes any more, they wanted to do GP. All the rides were gone by then and I was considering taking a year out really, because there were no decent rides, but, when I heard about Carl's project, he ended up contacting me and we spoke about what our goals were, what we wanted to get out of it and we both wanted the same. We wanted to get this bike on the track and be competitive.

Unfortunately we lost the whole of that first 12 months just waiting for the equipment to turn up.

PH: And that wasn't really in Carl's hands or your hands.

TC: No, well it was just circumstances; getting stuff sent, getting stuff paid for, getting paid and really doing it the opposite way, you know. They didn't start with a bike, they started with a piece of paper and that's a really difficult thing to do but, like I said, hats off to them, they got the bike built and it ran. They had a few teething problems and we were expecting that any way, but, I was happy with what I got out of it for what I had put in to the bike. I got it a couple of podiums, a couple of SuperPoles, but, in the end, I was happy to walk away from it because I really felt that those 3 years were really my best years and I lost them whereas if I'd have been on something more competitive I definitely would have been up the front of the championship, or near the front anyway. But it wasn't there, the chance just wasn't there to do it.

PH: So, you wouldn't say they were wasted years, just lost.

TC: Definitely not wasted, just lost. Lost, because I learned a lot. Jumping off one bike onto another and trying so many different things on the bike, it actually helps you when you get on any bike. My feeling on the bike's always been pretty good; my feedback to the mechanics, it definitely worked there. The chassis was the strongest part of the Petronas bike.

PH: It had to be, didn't it?

TC: Yeah, absolutely, so I was happy with what I'd achieved out of it but it was time to move on from there, really. It was time to get up to the pointy end again.

PH: So, how did the Suzuki ride come about?

TC: Actually, during those whole three years of the Petronas thing, obviously, I'd been in the paddock for long enough so that I know everybody, the Team Managers, and everybody, hospitality, etc, I got to know the Batta's, Francis and Patricia, they run the Alstare Team. I'd become good friends with them, just friends, in the paddock, you know, stop in and have a beer with them on a Sunday night after the weekend, they're just really nice people.

And we'd always said that one day, we'd like to work with each other. They wanted me as a rider and I liked the show, the attitude and the family feeling the team always showed at the race track. But in almost 10 years, the time was never right; either I was in a contract or they had existing contracts with riders so it just overlapped, so it never happened.

Until It was, like, "I'm not going to continue here." And the chance came up and we both jumped at it really.

PH: Now 2005 was an amazing year because you won 7 races on the trot, didn't you, at the start of the season and just basically laid the cards down and said, "OK, this is what I've done, now chase me." That must have been very satisfying for you.

TC: It was, because there were a lot of people who doubted that I could actually get off a bike that wasn't competitive and still have the pace to run at the front. AND, still have the determination to put in to win a title, which is a big difference between just being out there riding around in 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> position just trying to bring the bike home for two years. To now be up the front racing up against guys that I hadn't seen for a couple of years, a couple of seasons.

I still knew I could so it was good to have doubters for me because it made me a bit more determined.

PH: But then 2006 wasn't a great defence of your Championship. What went wrong?

TC: Yeh, you know, well nothing in particular went wrong really, we just had a few small issues with the gearbox actually on the bike. I kept hitting a few neutrals going back from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> gear. It'd go into first and then it would jump back out. It was a change. There was a difference between the '05 and the '06 gearbox in the Suzuki due to regulations. We had to run different insides and I just seemed to struggle with it; I

just couldn't get it to get into gear every time I went for first gear and that cost me a few crashes, 4 or 5 crashes because of that. Other than that, everything was good. I won races, finished on the podium, all that sort of stuff, but it was just unfortunate, really.

I was disappointed in myself that I couldn't get the bike to work, the gearbox to work.

PH: So that was very much a case of, "When you're hot, you're hot, and when you're not, you're not."

TC: The racing's that close now that you only need one little thing to hold you back. 2 or 3 tenths, and over 20 laps, that's 3 seconds. Our lap times are that consistent now. Say with a 2 minute lap time, we can do a 2:00.2, a 2:00.1, a 2:00.2. If you can do that on a bike and you're losing a couple of tenths of a second each lap, you just can't make that up anywhere, and that's how it's become because of the tyre rules. It's really brought everyone together because everybody's on the same quality of tyre and quantity of tyre..

PH: I'm going to ask you about the control tyre in a minute.

TC: It also has a lot to do with what we can use and when we can use it at the race track.

PH: Would it be fair to say that your best years were with Ducati?

TC: My most successful years were with Ducati, for sure. I think my best years that I've actually enjoyed the most, when I had fun, was '05 and '06 with the Alstare team. Just because of the different feeling in the team. It was a very mutual feeling of respect from everybody, whereas, with Ducati it was, "You're the rider, you do your job." And if you didn't do your job, they weren't happy. Suzuki were happy if I finished the race, that was their first goal, and it just made a big difference for myself as a rider. Alstare themselves were very happy with our collaboration.

PH: There's some pointed questions here which you can choose not to answer if you wish.

TC: Sure, what are you going to ask me??

PH: I was going to ask you, do you think the Japanese factories favour the Japanese riders?

TC: I wouldn't say they favour them, but they always leave a position vacant for a Japanese rider in any class. At the end of the day, the ideal thing for them would be a Japanese bike winning with a Japanese rider; they've never had a Japanese World Champion (*in WSBK*, my insertion) I don't think, in the history, so for a manufacturer it's the honour, I guess that they always have one, two or three riders that they use as test riders and they give them opportunities. I have nothing against that, you know. I think that's good, because it's an honour thing. They do a good job of work for them, they get the opportunity to race and it'd be nice if other manufacturers did that too, but they don't, with their test riders.

They use them as a test rider, and, when it's all good, they up and give the ride to someone who can use it, which is great, but I don't think they show (*appreciation* my insertion) for the work that goes behind it. The Japanese guys do a lot of work and I think the Italians are realizing that and are starting to catch up on that now.

PH: So, is it the "Kiss of Death" for a Japanese rider to ride for a Japanese team?

TC: No, I think it's also good because you've then got, what's the word?, direct communication with the factory through the Japanese rider. He speaks the language with them and he's there because they've put him there so they're actually using him to find out what's going on. That's why it worked really well with me and Yukio, because we actually got on really well just as people, away from the track, and on the track. We'd just done our own race, always shared information, always asked questions. If he needed any answers, I'd answer them and if I needed any information, I could look at his bike and get it and it helped so much, so I'm hoping that's the case again this year with Haga.

PH: So, let's move on to this year. So far, in the testing that you've done, you've been faster than Nori all the time. Is that a good feeling going into the season? Or, can you tell me why that is. Is there some reason why you're faster than him? You're testing different parts than he's testing, or...

TC: Being faster than Nori really doesn't worry me because I'm not trying to beat Nori. Nori hasn't won the title last year, Troy (Bayliss) has, so we're looking at other people. I've never really been one to, "The first person I want to beat is my team-mate." Never been like that, because, at the end of the day, if my team-mate beats me, he's got a better result for the TEAM than I have, or for the manufacturer, and he's beaten me on the same bike. But getting your bike than somebody else on the track and another rider's a bit different.

The reason why I've been quicker than Nori is because I'm prepared to try different stuff because I'm on something completely new which I've never tried before, whereas Nori's been down that path, different times with different models, trying stuff to fix it and I think he might just get a bit set in his ways. Sometimes he just doesn't want to try stuff; new suspension and stuff because he's happy with what he's got. But I'm, like, well, "This could be better, but." And I think this is probably why, because I've tried just newer components and...

PH: SO, Nori's a bit conservative in terms of his setup and stuff?

TC: His setup, no. Because he knows his stuff and he's very particular and he knows and says what he wants so that's good, but he's not a test rider, as in, go out there and go fast, riding round for two days testing. Race days, yes. He's a racer and he just wants to race. But to ride around and practice and set up a bike, for him it's not important to set up the bike because he rides the bike as good as he gets it, if you know what I mean. Whereas, if I go and test somewhere, I'm trying to fine tune it to improve it, not just here, but for somewhere else as well. I think that's been the difference.

It's been good and it's been bad being quicker than Nori. It's been good because it shows I can ride the bike and the bike's got potential, but, at the same time, it's sort of

shot Nori down a little bit where he's feeling a bit under pressure and that's not what I want to do because I want to work with him..

PH: You just want to get the best result for your team.

TC: Yes, and Yamaha understand that because that's what I've told them. I said, "Look, don't use these test times as any this or that." I said, "I just want to get this bike right for the first race of the year and..."

PH: The important time is when the points are being counted. The new Yamaha, it's using the new 4-valve engine rather than the old 5-valve motor. Is it also using the variable intake length that features in the road bike?

TC: Ah, 4-valve engine, yes. It's definitely better than the existing 5-valve. We've tested both, obviously, and it's definitely an easier engine to ride and to manage, I guess, for the electronics. VI? I don't actually think we run it on race bikes. That's really more for low-speed and mid, which for us, we're not really using low-speed and mid for any more than a couple of corners so it's not really a factor to try.

PH: So, how much more is in the bike?

TC: At PI, in the chassis, I reckon we're probably about 80% ready and the engine, probably about the same. This test that we're having at Qatar (*this weekend*) we're basically going to have it 100%. What we're going to turn up with at the following weekend, or two weekends in between. That's what we'll turn up with out of the box on race day and for PI for that matter. Because it's all one trip. They'll do there and just send it all out here.

PH: How different is the Yamaha to the Suzuki?

TC: It's actually very different to sit on. It feels a bit more Grand Prix-style, a bit more "race-bikey" You sit on top of the bike a little bit more; smaller tank..The Suzuki always sorta had a big feeling to it around the fuel tank area and the handlebars. This feels a bit more narrow-feeling. And the engine's completely different, I guess as any engine is. One engine to another, it's all different.

The fly-by-wire throttle, that's a little bit different to get used to. The Suzuki didn't have that, that was a normal cable throttle, so we're still learning all that too, it's as well as me having to operate the throttle right, my telemetry guys have to set it up so that I can use it right, which has been another big learning thing for me this year, to get working with all these new people again, people I've never worked with. They have to understand me when I say stuff and vice-versa.

PH: Now, tyres. What about the "control" tyre?

TC: I'm actually in favour of a control tyre, one make, because there is a big difference in tyre manufacturers, in experience and quality and so on, so I think it's a good variable to take out because, at the end of the day, you want to see who's got the best machine and the best rider, not so much as who has the best tyre.

When you have the option that everyone's got the chance for it then you, yes, well. It was getting a little bit..well, even when I raced '95 and '96 on Ducati with Michelin,

there was better tyres and there was other tyres and they only had so many of the good ones. You didn't have just one rider getting them, you had 2 or 3, and everybody else had the rest..

PH: Yeah, that was pretty noticeable at the time.

TC: That's not good, they actually created the problem themselves by doing that, Michelin did, so I'm all for it. Whether it's good to be on Pirellis, it's sort of, it's not because of, well, it hasn't been in the past, because the lap times were so much off the pace, and it just make the development of the bike so much harder because you're not being able to use the power and the chassis because you haven't got grip. But, to be honest, now they're not too bad, the Pirellis; they've actually got grip. Now they have to work out how to get endurance out of them. They've got grip, endurance is the next thing for them which they need us going around the track for them to be able to do. Test them for it.

But, as for being the one tyre, yeah, I think it's good, because I've never been one that wanted to have something that's better than the next guy. If we've got the same stuff, then we'll race, that was one good thing, and I think a lot of riders feel that way now.

PH: A lot of commentators said in the early stages that the control tyre limited upward progress; that, while the bikes were very competitive amongst themselves, compared to the lap times they were doing at tracks where the MotoGP bikes were competing, there was a vast gap between the top WSBK riders and the MotoGP riders and that the control tyre had a lot to do with that.

TC: Yeah, when it first started that was for sure, but, for example, Bayliss's lap time that we did at the last test, only one or two of the GP guys went quicker than what Troy actually did around there on a Pirelli tyre. And they're running around on Michelins which we know are "special" Every rider wants to ride on a Michelin because they know that they are such a great tyre.

But, as I said, now it'd be good to see that Pirelli's actually put in a bit more effort and that they're not that far away and maybe they could become a serious contender in GP's because, in SuperSport, they're actually the best tyre on a 600, Pirelli, compared to a Michelin or a Dunlop, Pirellis are good so it's just a fundamental thing that they've gotta get right so...and the expense, it's a huge expense and I think that's what they're trying to gear themselves up for. So that they're in a position where they can maybe be like Bridgestone. They were never in there but now they've got the push in some areas and they've got the opportunity to be up there competing and that IS going to bring on big development.

PH: Political question, Troy. WSBK. Is it a step up to MotoGP or is it a career step down from MotoGP? Lots of talk about that.

TC: At the moment I wouldn't say it's a step up or down, maybe it's a sideways step. It's really the same machine, but, to get the chance to get into GP, you've basically got to be "requested" and, obviously, sometimes sponsors and money sometimes decide which rider gets chosen out of a list of 3 and, like I said, an Australian nationality, an Australian passport isn't necessarily the best one to have. A Spanish or an Italian seems to be, if you're a good rider and you're Spanish or Italian, you'd get picked up

before a fast Aussie guy. That is, in GP. In Superbike, no, not necessarily. It often has a lot to do with the commercial side of things.

It's starting to get a little that way in Superbike now too because it's costing so much money to go racing now so, at the end of the day, I think the days of people going road racing for fun and the glory, it's a bit of a business now and you gotta make enough money to survive and I think that's only going to get worse.

PH: Back to 1996 for just a minute. The BBC commentators, Julian Ryder and Keith Huewen always used to say that you would often "go to sleep" in the middle of a race, then "wake up" again near the end and rush into the lead. What was that all about? It always used to puzzle me.

TC: Sometimes, yes. I mean, sometimes you go out in a race and you know you've got to be in front from the start and there's no chance of letting someone get in front of you because then you've got to get back past them, but there's other times, when, if you've got everything right, you feel pretty confident that you can have a bit of a race with them and conserve your tyres if you have to. A lot of the time that's what it was, you know, I was really conserving my tyre for a few laps. Instead of trying to do 25 fast laps, I'd do 16, but the 6 in the middle, I'd just have a slow piece just to try and get the temperature down and it sorta worked, you know ...

PH: Because they'd burned their tyres and, when it was time to go, you still had plenty of tyre left.

TC: And, even 2005 was a bit like that. New tyre, everyone was struggling with grip, there was a lot of sliding, but, you really had to learn how to conserve your tyre, or use your tyre during a race and it was the same back then in 1996 with the Michelin.

PH: Family commitments, the media and privacy. It's a lot different for you now, obviously, than it was when you started out racing, how do you juggle that?

TC: It's not too bad, you know. I'm enjoying the racing and the travelling so to do it is not a hassle for me. I really enjoy going to different places, and, fortunately my wife was brought up around racing, round bikes as a little child, being in the pits back with Sheene and stuff with all them guys racing, so she knows what's necessary. She's seen it all before and she knows when I need to do stuff or not do stuff and that definitely is a big help for me, because there is a lot of stuff to do by yourself and, if you've got to do it by yourself, and I off-load a lot of my work onto Sam, only because I know that she knows how to do it. And that gives me then time to do these things. I know that she's on the phone to Europe doing business instead of me having to do it. And the kids travel with us 80% of the time, to most races.

There's a few races we don't take them to; there's nothing there for kids, no facilities, per se. I know they enjoy the race track because there's quite a few kids in the paddock now in Superbike, because there's another good thing about Superbike; it's a bit of a family thing. There's lots of motorhomes with two or three kids under 10 years old in the paddock where dad, or the boyfriend or the husband's out riding and mum's sitting there out the back having a few drinks with the other wives around the paddock and that's why it's been so easy. It's not difficult to take them with me.

PH: You base yourself in Monaco when you're racing in Europe. What's it like living there? Well, "stay there" perhaps, because you don't really "live" there because you're on the move all the time.

TC: Well, we are off travelling a lot, but it's really easy to get in and out of Monaco. Nice airport is only 20 minutes away from our place so we can get on a plane and fly anywhere, pretty much in 2 hours and the weather's fantastic. 90% it's sunny and hot, but, and I enjoy being near the water. Obviously, coming from Australia, the beach and water life has been a big part of my life, water skiing and jet-skiing and so on.

We spend a bit of time in the UK as well with Sam's family. All her family is over there; mum and dad, her brothers, and nan and pop, but it just gets a bit cold over there. It makes it a bit difficult to train and stuff like that. It's just not the same as being able to jump on a bike and go for a pedal in the sunshine instead of out in the pouring rain.

PH: What else excites your interest apart from racing?

TC: I'm into anything with a motor in it, you know? Go-karts, jet-skis, race cars, you know? I enjoy anything that's motorised, anything that's a bit of skill, I guess you'd say. But I play golf. As much as I can. I enjoy that. It's actually a bit of a good slow-down because the pace of life is so fast, it's nice to go and have a walk around, hit the ball around and take your time, so I enjoy doing that. And now, it's just hanging out with the kids really, being fortunate enough that we CAN spend as much time with them, and watch them grow up and all that. People always said, it will go fast and with what we do and the travelling, Kalani's almost 4 now and it doesn't seem like 4 years ago we were taking him to the track like this...

PH: You do value that time, though, don't you? It's so precious.

TC: Oh sure. Kelisa was born in 2005 in the middle of the Championship and it worked out just fine. Maybe she was my lucky charm.

PH: Can you beat Troy?

TC: Absolutely, nobody's unbeatable, really. On some days, yes. I've been in that position. I KNOW I've been in that position, on some tracks where I knew I was unbeatable, and that really just comes down to your full package. Testing now's just so critical. You've got to use up all the time you can because you don't get that much track time, really, at the circuit, and, because the bikes are changing, pretty dramatically now, from year to year, horsepower, chassis, frame strength, swingarm thickness, that sort of thing, that you can play with now. Because of the technology, all this stuff we're learning, it's really important that you're ready to be on the track by Saturday.

PH: You hold the Pole Position 4 times at PI and Valencia which is a WSBK record. 13 wins at Misano, 11 at Laguna Seca and PI, and 10 at Donnington Park. That's pretty good.

TC: Yes, in the years that I have raced, I've had pretty good averages on most circuits

PH: So, when you say that there are tracks where you KNOW you can be right on the pace straight away..

TC: Yeah. There's some circuits that I don't really enjoy riding at because of the safety side of things or the layout and stuff. For example, Brands Hatch, I go reasonably well there, but it's not a track that I race 100% at because, there's a few places where, if you crash (and there are a few places where you can crash) injury is pretty high, so I don't push on those tracks. There's other tracks, PI, Donington Park, Laguna Seca even, I don't class as a dangerous track because I like the layout; it wasn't dangerous for me. I think everybody's got that, everybody's like that.

BUT, Troy only seems to have one or two. He's a rider who doesn't mind the fast ones and he doesn't mind the slow ones either, or the dangerous ones.

PH: Well, that's probably a little to do with your and his background racing on some of the dreadful tracks that you had to race on here.

TC: Yes, and it's probably easier for Troy because he did BSB on some of the most dangerous tracks in the world, on Superbikes, and HAD to ride fast, and I didn't have to do that. You know, America was the tracks that I probably rode on the most. Not dangerous, but not motorcycle race tracks; more car-orientated, armcos, and tyre walls on the outside of corners but that was just for one year, then I've been on Grand Prix tracks ever since, so

PH: What do you think about Ducati wanting to have the capacity limit for twins raised to 1200cc?

TC: Depending on how the new rules are for them, because, obviously if they go to 1200cc there will be different regulations they have to run under. They can't change the crank which they can now. Pretty much at the moment, they've got a Grand Prix engine. They're allowed to change pretty much everything in the engine, a few bits and pieces, but, as far as I believe, they won't be able to do that. Increasing the capacity doesn't always mean that you're going to go faster. But, for them to continue in the Superbikes, the cost that they must be incurring at the moment, to stay where they are very huge. A lot of money. They put a new motor in every session pretty much, or every race.

Last year we ran each engine 1000kms before we touched them and 2000kms before they had a major tear-down and rebuild, so it may help them, but it might not.

PH: Riders to watch?

TC: The usuals, Troy, Me, Toseland, Nori and, of course, Max (Biaggi).

PH: On the subject of Biaggi, do you resent him getting "your" seat at Suzuki?

TC: No, I don't resent it. Losing me is Suzuki's loss.

PH: Because it seemed that, from halfway through the season or so this speculation started about who was going to lose the ride, you or Yukio. Is that what it seemed like?

TC: There was a lot of stuff happening in the background. It's a big coup for Suzuki to get Max because he's so popular in Italy and he's a Roman and they really wanted a Roman in WSBK. It's good for Italy to have Max, but it's my feeling that the decision was made very early in the year and that it was bubbling along under the surface there for a long time. Max is really "fired up"

PH: What about young Aussie riders, Troy? Are there any prospects that we should look out for?

TC: Not at the moment, it's so expensive to get a ride these days. Most riders have to bring some kind of money to the table. But I'm involved in trying to get some promising young Aussie riders some test rides overseas. Australian riders have great reputations in Europe, not just because they're good riders, but because they have good attitudes. They work hard and they don't get emotional, like some riders do.

I'm working with some of the local people here, trying to get involved with the junior racing program here in Australia. I'm talking to them now, because that's the future of the sport. With me it was different (my insertion *and with Troy too, he was 26 when he had the wildcard ride on the Suzuki 250 at PI*). These days the factories are looking for young riders. It wouldn't matter how talented you are now as an Aussie, if you're over 20, you're really going to struggle. They want 25 and 16 year olds. They can train them up the way they'd like them to be.

PH: Do you have any regrets about 500cc/MotoGp?

TC: No regrets, really. I'm glad I had the opportunity to ride 500's. I just wish it had been with a well-funded team. MotoGp? Well, in my opinion, they should have changed to 4 strokes earlier. That was always going to be the future and I think they took too long deciding about it. I'd like to at least have the opportunity to test a MotoGp bike!

PH: How many years do you think you have left in the sport?

TC: Two, I reckon. 1 to win the title again, although that will be a big ask in my first season with Yamaha, but, if not this year, then next year. That way I can retire as the only rider to win the Championship on three different bikes. I also want to push the envelope some more by winning a lot more races and setting a lot more poles so that, when I leave, I'll have created a lot of records that other riders will take a long time to beat, if they can at all. I want to push really hard for the next two seasons and finish on a "high". But, mainly, I just want to WIN!

PH: We've sort of covered this already, but why do so many Aussies succeed overseas when Europe is filled with so much talent and enthusiasm?

TC: I don't know if our riders are better, I think they're just different. They have better attitudes, especially when things go wrong. They don't scream and throw things and get mad with the mechanics; they're just more laid-back and the team managers and the mechanics like that. They are hard-working and easy to get along with. They have to sacrifice a lot to go racing overseas, it's not on their doorstep, so the riders who make it are more determined and more motivated.

PH: Do you ride a road bike? And, if so, what?

TC: In Monaco, a scooter. It makes it so much easier to get around, and the weather's great for riding. When I'm back here I ride my Harley. Seems like a funny choice, but I like to ride slowly. Having the Harley makes me ride slow and I get to appreciate the ride more. I ride around here and people know my bike, and sometimes some of the young blokes try to race me, but I don't. It slows me down and that's good when I'm home here taking a break from racing.

PH: Any advice for me on how I can beat my mates up and down Macquarie Pass?

TC: Yeah. Let them go in front of you!! Seriously, I get guys try to race me when I'm on the Harley and I just let them go by. If you WANT to race, go to the track.

PH: Yeah, flippant question, but good advice.

PH: Advice to young blokes starting out?

TC: Wear your helmet. Make sure you wear your gear, but especially your helmet. Even if it's just BMX; I see these kids riding round on little dirt bikes and pocket bikes and things with no helmet, it's crazy. The other bit of advice is that, if you want to race, join a motorcycle club and go race on the track.

PH: I wonder if I can ask you a very personal question. Illawarra Riders has an active support of the Angel Flight children's charity, as we believe that we can use our collective strength to put something back into the community. Do you use your position in the world of motorcycling for any charitable purposes?

TC: Yes, I do. I've been a supporter of Riders for Health, a children's charity that was set up a long time ago, originally inspired by Randy Mamola. I've been a supporter of theirs for over 12 years now and we raise money to help fund projects that really save lives. They use motorcycles in their whole programme so now we have health workers in Africa nipping around on well-maintained bikes.

I will always try to help needy and sick kids. There is an association called "Burnin' to Learn" who hold days where I guess you'd call them "troubled" or un-motivated kids are invited along to the meetings and are our guests in the paddock. They love it and it's a great way to help. They educate these kids about all the possibilities ahead of them if they take the high road and not the low road. Show them just how many exciting jobs there are out there. We have auctions where auction off items of clothing, gloves, helmets, etc, and donate the proceeds to "Riders for Health".

As well as that, I donate all the stuff that I can that I don't need any more to various local groups here and they do the same thing; auction them off and put the money to good use. I try to help the aerial patrol, the local schools, the wheelchair basketballers, you name it. I also support a few kids football clubs and so forth here too any time I can. We're trying to get kids from schools involved too.

PH: Life after racing, Troy. What does it hold for you?

TC: I'll always be involved in the sport. Forever. I'm setting up quite a few business ventures that will keep me involved and that's going to require me to live at least part

of every year in Europe even after I stop riding. I need to do that anyway so that Sam can keep touch with her parents in the UK. And Europe is such a big market anyway.

Car Racing: I've been offered several test drives in V8's, Porsche Cup, Lamborghini, etc, so it's possible that I'll keep my hand in doing some of that once I retire also. But mainly it will be watching the kids grow up and trying to grow my business ventures.

PH: Settle back in Wollongong eventually?

TC: As I said, I'll need to spend some time in Europe because of my commitments there, but I'll always have my home here and I love to come back here. But travelling still gives me a buzz so I'm going to keep on doing that.

PH: Troy, thank you very much.

*NOTE: Since writing this, Troy has given Yamaha their first pole position on his first outing on the bike! And set a blistering new lap record at our own Phillip Island track.*

*Write him off? I don't think so...*