

The Man.... the Isle. Man vs. Man

The Man was born in Edinburgh Scotland Feb 21st 1964

The Man's first ride was a Honda CB50

The Man started racing at the Age of 43.

The Man's name is Alan Cunningham.

The Isle's name is Man.

The Isle is famous for the premiere street based motorcycle race in world history.

The Isle also hosts the Manx GP, which is the little bro of the TT.

The Isle loves motorcycle riders like no other place on the planet.

This is an interview of the Man who is taking on the Man.

by

Denny Kobza



Alan Cunningham first came to the USA on holiday in 1991 and then came back to stay in 1995. He started racing with the AFM and became a notable voice for them as well, bringing his classic accent to the microphone. That is where I first met Alan. As the Formula Pacific Sponsor I would head to the tower to watch the premiere class race and enjoy him and Vic providing great color commentary. Alan is a barf member as well and his handle is appropriate to his continent shift = scotinexcile.

When Alan started a thread saying he was going to race the Manx GP on the Isle of Man I was definitely subscribed and followed his journey. The Manx is a shorter race than the infamous Isle of Man TT, but it uses a good portion of the same street course. He has raced there twice now and added Pike's Peak to his race program in 2014 as well.

Here is our discussion on his journey and a bit on his future.



Alan at Braddan Bridge wicking it up.

On the Isle of Man (Manx)

DK: The course is pretty long do you have time to feel comfortable on it by just running practice??

AC: No way :) Driving or riding around the course helps a lot. The number of high quality Video laps made a HUGE difference to me this year. Last year I survived, this year I actually raced. Next year with a more powerful bike I hope to be higher up the order.

DK: Did you go drive or ride the course when it is not a race track? Yes, there is a van ride every morning, mainly for new comers but any racer can go on it if there is room. Even some spectators went on it. Great way to see the course, the driver is always a racer or x-racer.

DK: What kind of accommodations do you have when your there?

AC: We stay in a bed and breakfast with shared bathroom facilities and kitchen. Basic, but comfortable. The team has a motorhome in the paddock with a tent attached for the bikes and gear. Weather was good this year, but last year it rained a LOT.



Alan and Beth at Fairy Bridge

DK: What was the food like?

AC: Beth is Vegetarian so we worried about that, she had great meals with everyplace having a few veggie choices. Breakfast was mainly cereal and toast, lunch some fruit maybe a sandwich, dinner was later on practice days as it was after 9pm when we got out of the paddock.

DK: Your lovely lady seems pretty supportive with your racing. Are you guys digging the travel and race scene??

AC: Beth was blown away with the "intensity" at the Isle of Man. She really enjoys the racing and the people involved. She knows more about MotoGP and World Superbike than I do! The people are what make racing so enjoyable, something about shared risk. In the paddock almost everyone says hi and has a smile on their face. If you need help all you have to do is ask!

DK: Are there social events you attend during the event?? If so what are they??

AC: We mainly had team meetings in the "office" Sam Webbs pub in Douglas. There are events put on by the organizers, but honestly after practicing all you want to do is eat, have a beer and go to sleep.

DK: Let's talk about the racing. What exactly is the bike your running and how do you come by it??

AC: It was a SV650 "SuperTwin", stock 68HP motor, GSXR 1000 front end and stock rear shock. I met a guy named John Batty <https://www.facebook.com/JohnBattyRacing> last year. He really helped me out of a bad situation. He runs a team called Blue Bear racing and invited me to race for him this year. He is an ex-racer and has been involved in the ManxGP for many years as a racer and more recently a Rider Liaison Officer.

DK: I noticed in your on board vid you had the bike pinned fairly often. What is the top speed you are hitting?

AC: My GPS data said 138mph just after Crosby at the bottom of the hill.

DK: What is your favorite part of the course??

AC: Quarry Bends, it is like a piece of short course that you can "scratch"(drag knee) around.



Alan with Ramsey in the background. History lives at the Isle of Man.

DK: So between the AFM and the Manx you're a pretty happy racer?

AC: I just want to say that the AFM is a great racing family, 2014 turned into my best year ever. I flew back early from the Isle of Man to race the Sonoma round and it paid off with a Top 10 plate in 2014. I left Douglas on the Thursday, arrived in Reno late Friday, packed the bikes up and got to Sonoma Saturday, won my race on Sunday.

My Goal for ManxGP in 2015 is a Top 15 finish in SuperTwins with a Average laptime about 107mph

On the Pike Peak event:

DK: What did you ride for that race?

AC: I rode my SV500 which was prepared by Zoran as a SV400 import that was bored out.

Who went with you and did you have a crew or?? I drove there on my own and joined up with my friend Adam Bauer who was racing a SV650. We helped each other out for practice. For race day Beth flew out and helped me. Adam had a few family members and friends there who really helped us as well

Which part of the track is the most fun?? The bottom section is most fun, just like riding the "canyons" with a guarantee of no cars coming towards you and no cops

Which part of the track is the scariest...? I think the first time you climb above the tree line. You go through the check station, hairpin left then a sweeping right, then left. The next right climbs steeply to your right and there are no trees so all you see is Blue sky of to your left, very unnerving as you drift towards "the sky" on the throttle

Did you go to the official practice sessions before the actual event? I could not afford to go to the official practice before the event but I heard from racers who did saying they did not get much out of it

General stuff and the future:

DK: So 2014 provided a lot of adventure for you!

AC: This last year has been pretty packed with what I would call bucket list stuff. Am I right with that assumption or are you just doing what you want to do..? It is more a natural progression of my racing goals. Pikes Peak was the closest thing to road racing we have in the States. So I only raced it as preparation for the Isle of Man.

DK: Which race is the most challenging?

AC: ManxGP by far because the length of time you have to TOTALLY concentrate on riding. 4 laps at almost 20 minutes per lap is a LONG time. I challenge anyone to sit down and watch 4 laps back to back and notice how your concentration drifts while you watch.

DK: Which is the most fun??

AC: ManxGP with the highlight being the Tuesday night practice where I diced it up with another rider for 2 laps, best time I have ever had on two wheels!

DK: Are you planning on doing them again??

Maybe not Pikes Peak, as the organization left a LOT to be desired. My ManxGP plans are already underway. Trying to drag Jason Catching and Tom Wilbert along next year

Do you have other racing milestones to reach? Just to have a smile at the end of every race is enough for me, but a race at the TT would be the ultimate. My AFM top 10 plate last year was really cool surprise as well. We will see where this takes me.