

Bartram living the high life

By Moira K. Wiley
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Kenny Bartram doesn't worry about competing in a sport that has cost him numerous broken bones.

"Bones heal," the local daredevil said.

Known on the International Freestyle Motocross Association circuit as Kenny "The Cowboy" Bartram or, simply, Cowboy Kenny, high-flying Bartram has broken 17 bones, knocked out seven teeth and ruptured a blood vessel in his brain.

He is so dedicated he competed in the Phoenix IFMA event last season with a broken leg he suffered just three weeks prior.

"I was in the lead for the season," Bartram said, "and I wasn't about to give that up just because I had a broken leg. So, I rode on one leg basically, for last place, but it was still worth 55 points.

"You only get 100 points when you win and there's only a three point difference between first and second place. If you miss an event entirely, it really takes a lot of first place wins to catch back up."

Bartram suffered the leg injury at the 2002 Summer X-Games while attempting a back flip, one of the newest tricks on the circuit. He broke the tibia and fibula in his right leg.

Throughout the competition, he took off and landed one-footed, so he didn't add further to his injury. He went on to dominate the circuit.

Despite the injury, he finished first in the 2002 IFMA series. He wrapped up the championship by winning 25 events and taking the title by almost 100 points over his nearest rival.

"I went into the year with no hopes of the title," Bartram said, "but after winning the first seven events in a row, it seemed like it was possible. I am very glad to have won it, because one of my career goals is to win everything possible."

Along the way, he also won the Vans Triple Crown and was awarded the 2002 IFMA Promotions Award.

"The Triple Crown is six nights of competition beginning in March and running through October," Bartram said. "You compete in three events, both freestyle and motocross events. Each round includes two nights of competition. Last year the first round was in Indianapolis, Ind., the second in Tacoma, Wash., and the third in St. Louis."

Bartram was crowned the Vans Triple Crown champion after winning five of the six competitions, something that no other rider had done before. With sweeps in the Indianapolis and Tacoma competitions and a win the first night in St. Louis, Bartram was poised for a first ever complete sweep of the Triple Crown.

Unfortunately, fellow riders Ronnie Renner and Drake McElroy had other plans. Renner took first on the last night of the competition with 92.3 points, McElroy finished second with 92.2 and Bartram was third with 92.1.

The third place finish, however, was enough to wrap up the championship. For winning Bartram received the \$10,000 points fund and a new, red Ford Ranger FX4.

"I wanted beige," Bartram said, "but it would have taken eight weeks to get it after it was ordered, so I got red. I'm kind of an impatient person."

Bartram also has won two of the three medals from both the Gravity Games and X-Games.

"Hopefully this year at Gravity I can get a silver medal and a bronze from X Games, then I will have the complete collection," he said.

He won a gold medal in the Gravity Games Doubles Competition in 1999 with Travis Pastrana as his teammate and then a bronze medal on his own in 2000. In 2001, he added a gold medal at the Summer X-Games and a silver medal in 2002 at the Australian X-Games. He also won the IFMA Winter Series in 2000.

And, though Bartram's only injury during the 2002 season was the broken leg, it came at a bad time.

"I had been hired to do some work on the new Charlie's Angels movie, which wasn't supposed to start filming until November," he said. "But, they decided to move it back to September and I couldn't do the job because of the broken leg. I did get to hang out for a couple of days, but I didn't get to be in the movie."

Next up for Bartram is an IFMA competition in Oklahoma City at the State Fair Arena this Friday and Saturday. This will mark the third event for the 2003 season with about 80 competitions scheduled for the year.

"It's a long season," he said. "We'll have competitions every weekend from January through April and then again September through December, but we kind of get a break in the summer."

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