

Newsletter No. 2

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Interview

Interview with Jorge Viegas (FIM President)

QUESTION: A year ago, you were elected as president of the FIM, we would like to congratulate you on your election. What were the first three decisions you made in your new position?

ANSWER: *Thank you very much for your warm wishes! It is also a pleasure to answer your questions. First of all, some skilful people had to join FIM in order to create a strong team that could handle the future challenges. Then I had to strengthen again the role of the FIM committees. Lastly, I had to change the mindset of the FIM staff members. FIM role is to serve the clubs. Racing and motorcycling exist because of their daily effort around the world and they need/deserve the full support of FIM.*



QUESTION: Which are the main challenges that the FIM has in the coming years?

ANSWER: *Motorcycle racing is a part of a very competitive social environment. Our aim is to attract young people. We obviously have to compete other hobbies like computer games, virtual reality or other dynamic sports and motorsports. Our main racing discipline is the MotoGP and it is noticeable that year by year MotoGP becomes more attractive and more spectacular.*



QUESTION: You were a motorcycle racer. In fact, you were the 250cc champion of your country (Portugal) in 1977. What memories does that stage bring you?

ANSWER: *It brings me a lot of nice memories! We were amateurs, so we did everything without any monetary reward. We had to maintain the bikes ourselves, spending hours and hours on them. The positive thing of being the mechanic of your bike was the technical knowledge you gained and helped you to better understand the performance of the motorcycle. I was racing with a Yamaha TZ250, and many years after I sold it, I managed to buy it back again and stored it in my house since then.*

QUESTION: Now we will talk about more serious issues, more than 12 riders die every day on European roads and more than 100 are severely injured. Our "PIONEERS" Project is a European project that aims to achieve an improvement in the performance of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and On-Board Safety Systems. When you were a motorcycle racer (in the 1970s), what importance did you give to the PPE's you were wearing: Helmet, suit, etc.

ANSWER: *The old days riders were less safe. We cannot compare the past with the present of racing safety. At present a severe injured rider is an outcome of bad luck and unexpected events. And this is the reason why very few riders sustain complex injuries comparing to 40 years ago. FIM also pushed towards removing or protecting obstacles in racing events that were frequently the cause of injuries.*

QUESTION: 40 years later: Your point of view towards safety measures, has changed?

ANSWER: *Races are 100% safer than when we raced 40 years ago. The motorcycles are equipped with safety devices and the riders are using several protectors, up to airbags, and high standard helmets. All these features, that are available for an amateur racer nowadays, were not even existing for the world champions those days. An important aspect of GP racing is the fact that many safety innovations are tested throughout a racing season that become market products for the daily rider some years after.*

QUESTION: Our project is ambitious, and we want to contribute to reducing the fatalities by up to 25% in 2025. To achieve this goal, in addition to improving the performance of protection measures, we need to increase the rate of use of PPEs. To do this we will try to get the authorities to help us. How do you think FIM can also help us?

ANSWER: *FIM has the most extensive PTW network in the world. Our role can mainly focus on the dissemination of the results, taking into account that we are an associate and not a full project member. For example, we can disseminate the mid-term and final project results through our relevant web-pages and other communication channels.*

QUESTION: We have talked about two fundamental aspects to reduce accidents: The performance of PPE or On-Board Safety Systems and the usage of these measures. We need to talk about the third aspect: Driving. What do you think should be the measure to be applied in this area: More driving training to motorcyclist, more awareness of the riders or more awareness of the rest of the drivers on the road?

ANSWER: *All three aspects are equally important. First of all, you need a skilful and properly informed rider in order to operate the vehicle under most of the daily traffic*



conditions. He/she should also be capable to perceive, decide and react in unusual and dangerous situations. On the other hand, other vehicle users should realise the existence of VRUs and should be aware of the particularities of riding a motorcycle. Some years ago, we ran an awareness campaign targeted to other vehicle drivers in order they pay extra attention for motorcycle traffic by double checking the mirrors. We are also in close collaboration with organisations such as FIA for educating riders/drivers with the aim to create a safer traffic environment for all road users.