

**THE
BUCKET
LIST**
MOTORCYCLING
MUST-DOS ✓

RIDE WITH A RACE LEGEND

Follow in the wheel tracks of Niall Mackenzie at one of MotoGP's fastest circuits

● **'Mackenzie clocked up seven podiums in 500GP'**



Not only is Niall a bona fide legend, he is a great bloke too



BY EMMA FRANKLIN
MCN's Consumer Editor
has ridden most race circuits in the UK

It was an era of legends; the late 1980s produced GP stars whose names still resonate in the hearts and minds of those who witnessed their talents live, and even those who didn't. Unforgiving and raw 500cc two-stroke prototypes and the demi-gods who tamed them: Kevin Schwantz, Eddie Lawson, Wayne Gardner – and a young man from rural Scotland called Niall.

As one of Britain's most successful grand prix riders, Niall Mackenzie clocked up seven podiums in 500GP, led numerous races, and even stuffed his red and white Marlboro Yamaha YZR500

under the elbows of Lawson, Rainey and Schwantz to take the lead in a British GP thriller at Donington in 1989. Four years later, he did the same to a certain Carl Fogarty to rob him of a podium place at the 1993 Brit GP.

The story didn't end there; in 1996 Mackenzie returned to Britain after nine years in GPs and not only won the inaugural race of the modern British Superbike Championship but also went on to win the title

three years in a row. The term legend is much bandied about when describing racers, but when it comes to Mackenzie, it's definitely legitimate.

So, it's with some trepidation that I approach the 'VIP garage' at Silverstone to sign on for the first

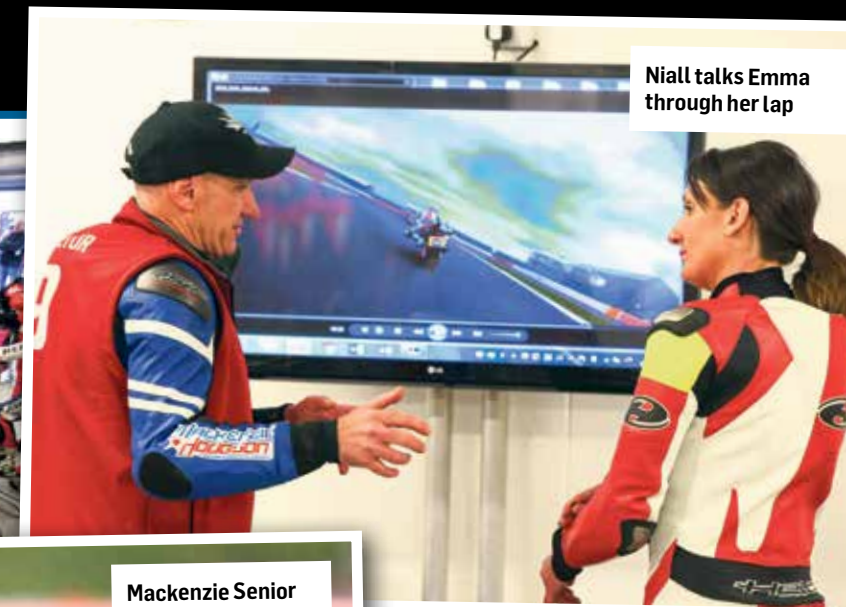
Yamaha Masterclass of the year. Taking place on one of the circuit's own trackdays, the Masterclass group sees Mackenzie and his two sons, Tarran and Taylor, give road

and trackday riders a performance riding experience like no other. It's a whole day of instruction tailored toward each individual, and once signed up you can pretty much call the shots with regard to when you ride, which is handy when it comes to learning all 3.66 miles and 18 corners of Silverstone's insanely fast asphalt.

Rubbing shoulders with legends isn't something I do very often, so I'll admit to having some nerves as I approach Mackenzie senior. A successful 500GP rider – a Scottish one at that – surely must be as fierce as they come. I couldn't have been more wrong. SuperMac

● **'Taking to the track I felt a mix of calm and nerves'**

greeted me with a smile: "Hello, Emma, nice to meet you. You're with me today. Have you ridden the circuit before? No? Don't worry, I'll lead you round for the first session



Niall talks Emma through her lap



Mackenzie Senior shares his wisdom at Silverstone



It's a masterclass with a true master



Emma prepares to head out with her hero

'I DID IT!'

'We were met by the Mackenzies and the team'

Steve Ingham, 58, Lancashire – Club racer
"My wife booked the day as a birthday treat! When the day came, we arrived early at Silverstone and were met by the Mackenzies and the team of instructors, who were brilliant. "We had breakfast and a briefing and then got changed for the main event. We took to the track on the sighting laps and I seriously began to wonder what the hell I'd let myself in for. The R1M is an unbelievable piece of kit compared to my TRX850. As soon as I returned to the garages the guys sensed how I was feeling and reassured me, giving me two pieces of initial advice: 1. Use the correct gear for each corner; 2. Use the correct line for each corner. I was sent out again and what a difference - my confidence grew and grew."



MCN reader Steve with Taz Mac

YOU CAN DO IT

Suitable for all levels, the Masterclass costs from £449 (International layout); £599 (Arena GP circuit) and includes 2:1 instructor ratio, more track time than you could possibly use, breakfast, lunch, tea/coffee and water, VIP pit garage area, USB of video footage, and a written assessment. Use your own bike or you can hire one of the circuit's R1Ms for £300. See www.silverstone.co.uk/track-days/bike-track-days

at Cadwell or Oulton I can't get my head around how people race superbikes around them. The sessions that follow see Niall shadow me with a camera bike then talk me through the footage back in the pits over a cup of tea. At the end of the day, I'm presented with a written assessment of my riding: "Some dry track time would've improved everything. Closing the throttle more will help hitting the apex on faster corners. Excellent body position. Well done!" And there it was, in black and white: a pat on the back from a GP legend about my riding on one of the world's finest GP circuits. **MCN**

and show you where it goes..." I felt a bizarre mix of calm and nerves. Whilst the 57-year-old has a very personable nature, it wasn't an entirely irrational thought to believe that I'd be out of my depth following in his tracks around the highly technical Arena circuit on one of the Masterclass's Yamaha R1M bikes... in the pouring rain. Wrong again. We tagged along in the novice group at first as Niall dragged me past scores of trackday newbies. Mesmerised by the name stitched into the seat of his leathers, I felt like Schwantz

attempting to hunt him down to retake the lead of that Donington ding-dong back in '89. For all the daydreaming and target fixation, as the first session ended I realised I hadn't been making a mental map of the track, so still didn't have a clue where it went. "Silverstone Arena is a brilliant layout – very challenging – it's one of the only places where a MotoGP bike can stretch its legs," says Niall as we gather around a track map to give me a few more pointers. "For a fast lap it's crucial to get through Woodcote with as much speed as

possible so that you can get the best drive down the straight, then you should hang out wide at Club so you can blast past the Wing. Why not get out there and cut a few laps on your own to get the hang of it, then I'll follow you for a bit." Even in the pouring rain, nowhere I've ridden comes close to Silverstone. It's breathtakingly fast and motorway wide. It encourages you to twist the throttle harder and faster than you would at any of the UK's more national-level circuits. Silverstone is pukka, world class, and although I love a trackday