

# MXA INTERVIEW

## MXA INTERVIEW: Kevin Maret & Team Hooters/Moto XXX

By: Zap



Kevin Maret is the team manager for the Hooters Racing squad that is home to 450 riders Antonio Balbi, Eric Sorby and 250 class riders; Vernon McKiddie and Mitch Dougherty. The team's 2008 highlight was at the muddy Daytona Supercross where the Brazilian rider Balbi won his heat and went on to finish fifth in the main with the Frenchman Sorby coming in at ninth. Besides the Pro effort, the Hooters team is also running a nice hospitality rig on the Amateur circuit as well.

### **MXA: What is your history with teams?**

**Kevin:** "I have been in MX a long time. I raced from 1981 through 1994 and then got heavily involved in the bicycle industry, as you know, with Tamer Bicycle Components. I own 2 patents on bicycle suspension seatposts. I manufactured and marketed this product for 14 years and then I sold the patents to EKO Sport of Grand Junction, CO. While doing the bicycle gig, I invented the starting devices for the front forks and in 2002, I started a Arenacross team with Justin Brayton and Brandon Bartz as my riders."

### **MXA: The Tamer and Moto XXX teams combined this year, how is that working?**

**Kevin:** "The Tamer Moto XXX deal is great for Allan and I both. It has relieved a lot of pressure financially. Allan has a lot of knowledge regarding motors and making them perform. We both have our own teams still, we just make decisions together. The finances are completely separate from each other. It is a unique program that really works well for us both. Today's race efforts require everyone to wear many hats and this effort will allow each person to focus on less tasks with better end results. Allan is very experienced on the technical side of the racing while my tasks are better suited towards managing and by combining both our strengths, it will make for an excellent program and having an in-house motor program with Moto XXX Performance is an advantage in itself."

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**MXA: What is the basis for the Hooters deal - you said a one year pilot program than it moves bigger for 2009/10?**

**Kevin:** "The basis of the deal is to get Hooters involved and see what they think. As you know, this is a tough proposal to sell and there are so many people out there that think 'how hard can it be?', but it is one of the toughest jobs I have ever held so, as the team manager, I have to do my part and keep Hooters happy and continue forward with them for 2009 and 2010."

**MXA: As is so often the case, it often seems that there's always one key person within a big organization who used to race or just knows the sport that makes it happen - was that true for Hooters?**

**Kevin:** "Yes. I have been approaching Hooters Inc. for many years now trying to get them involved and I finally met the correct people and contacts and we made it happen. You are right, so much of this is who you know."

**MXA: What's your impression of what Hooters thinks about MX?**

**Kevin:** "It is really hard to tell at this point in the relationship. This all started with the Mock family and Texas Wings Inc. (a Hooters Franchise) and their interest in motocross. Now corporate is involved in the beginning stages and all I can do is make sure my team does our part to convince Hooters Inc. that Supercross is a viable marketing tool for them and I believe we have the talent in our organization to do that."

**MXA: We heard you had a big rig at the Oak Hill amateur race, is that another race team?**

**Kevin:** "Yes the amateur rig was in Texas, but the program is a marketing program, not a race team. We are marketing companies who are supporting our Supercross effort in addition to our Supercross and Nationals program. The idea is to give a few of our sponsors more bang for their buck."

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**MXA:** Is it true that you were the original holeshot device guy?

**Kevin:** "Yes it is true. I started the deal a long time ago and I now have the patent. It took a long time to get it. I have other patents and this one took the longest and was the most expensive. We have now developed a plan of action against the others on the market. All I want is what is fair. I have some good financial support behind me to back up any naysayer's or those that don't want to follow the rules. I approached everyone the nice way and most have chosen to ignore me so now we have to move to the next step. It should be real interesting."



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**MXA:** What are your thoughts on the state of the sport today?

**Kevin:** “Wow, this could take a while, so feel free to edit! I have been successful in bringing outside sponsorship into this sport. First with Caterpillar, then with Maestrocad and now with Hooters, Cumberland and Perfex - all three outside of industry sponsors. I really like what Live Nation does and respect what they do. Unfortunately, right now this sport eats its young. By that, I mean industry companies sell motorcycle parts to the consumer. They take their sales from the consumer and sponsor a race team. Then, we ask the industry for their money, so we are in a vicious circle where no one is profiting in a huge way. This is the major reason so many race team deals come together so late in the year as industry money is tight and they wait as long as possible to make their decisions to get the best bang for their buck and this puts everything last minute. My thoughts, let outside sponsors pay the teams big money. As a team, I can go to Wiseco, Pirelli, O’Neal and ask them what they will sell me product for. They will be more than happy to give me a price and set-up our deal that day, which could be in June. I then go to Hooters and ask them for my budget. I then buy the items I need to go racing. The industry is much healthier, my program is complete much earlier reducing the stress of everyone involved. BUT, here is the glitch: In order to get enough money from Hooters, Hooters wants to market themselves big time. Hooters wants a hospitality rig, a merchandise rig and to be able to come to a SX and have one hell of a time while fully promoting their company. THEN, Live Nation throws in their rules and everything is squashed like a bug forcing us back to the current system we have now and borrowing from Peter to pay Paul. It has to change. As teams, we need to develop a plan with Live Nation that allows everyone to market their sponsors while keeping Live Nation profitable. I’m not against anyone making a profit and if we can work with Live Nation and not against them, everyone will be better off 100%. In the end, nothing has changed. Instead of the industry giving me the money to run my team, a major outside sponsor pays the bill, I then buy the items I need and the industry makes money. It is a win-win situation, but Live Nation needs to work closely with the teams and it will grow. Bottom line, we have to be able to market our sponsors or teams will continue to come and go. The hand writing is on the wall.”

