

# The Doctor Is In

Doug Dubach

Words: DRD Pics: Supplied

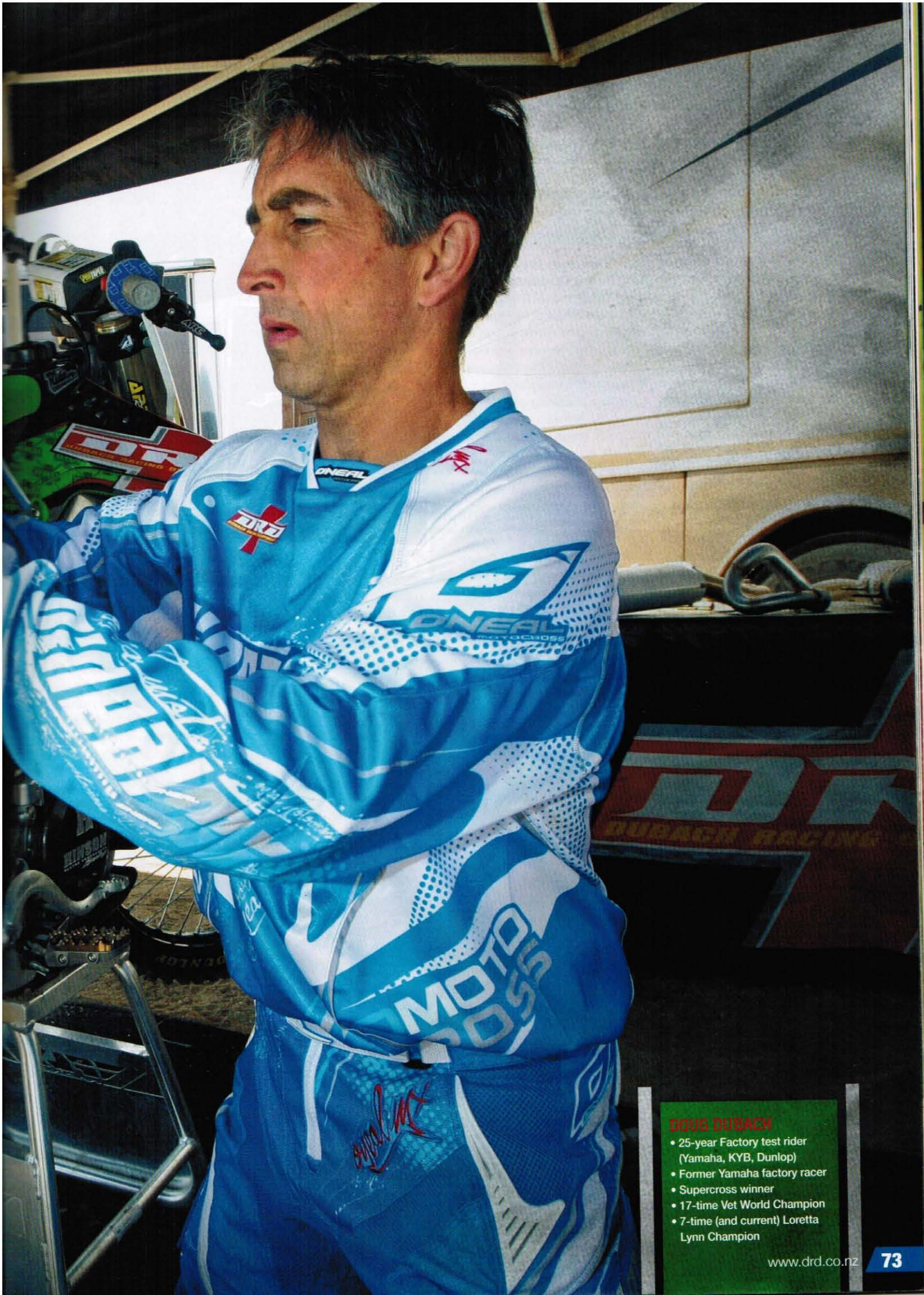
We catch up with Doug Dubach, USGP Vets winner, 17-time world Vet champ and creator of DR.D Exhaust systems.

**D**oug Dubach is not only the designer and owner of the DR.D exhaust systems company but the man behind the Yamahas you ride today. A 25-year Yamaha Factory test rider, he played a key

role in developing the four-stroke motocross bike. He's still a highly competitive rider though, so we started by asking him about his recent win at the USGP Veteran's World Cup at Glen Helen.

"The USGP race was a battle

in both motos," explains Doug. "The track was really nice, had a good flow to it with several big jumps, but it was not a runaway win for me by any means. In the first moto, I got the holeshot and I was able to pull a small lead ➤



**DOUG DUBACH**

- 25-year Factory test rider (Yamaha, KYB, Dunlop)
- Former Yamaha factory racer
- Supercross winner
- 17-time Vet World Champion
- 7-time (and current) Loretta Lynn Champion

right away as I was jumping the big step up from the first lap and that helped give me a cushion. Then on about lap four or five, DK started jumping it and I started hitting lapped traffic – that combination really made the race interesting. On the white flag Darryll was leading and was riding all the fast lines. There was one long downhill, just a few corners from the finish, so I knew that would be my last chance to get by. I moved all the way against the fence on the right side and was able to squeeze by. We crossed the finish only a couple feet apart.

"In the second moto I was third on the start, behind both Mats and Darryll. Darryll and I traded positions for the first several corners but then unfortunately he hit an over-watered section of the track and went down. I battled with Mats for the next couple of laps and I actually fell in a wet part of the track too, but was able to keep my bike running and quickly got going. Once I saw Darryll move into second, I knew I had to put in my best lap and was able to keep about five seconds between us to the chequers. I went on to take the win and had a blast bench racing with both Darryll and Nils before the trophy presentation."

**DRD: You had a lot to do with the development of the YZ400F bike as its primary test rider, can you tell us about that?**

Doug: In 1996 the Yamaha Testing Department and Yamaha Japan were working on a secret project. Yamaha testing

manager Ed Scheidler recommended to Yamaha that I would be great addition to this newly formed development team. I signed sheets of documents about testing a secret YZ before I ever knew what the secret YZ would be.

When the YZ400F was introduced it immediately outperformed current two-strokes. The bike just flat out worked.

**DRD: What made you start Dubach Racing Development?**

Doug: We started DR.D in January 2001 at the behest of my wife. I was still racing competitively, though not at the AMA Pro level, and the current aftermarket items available to four-stroke owners were just not acceptable at a racing level. After making my own equipment for my race bikes, I began to build one-off exhausts, hot starts and other small items. I'll never forget the day when Gina looked me right in the eye and just said, "Why don't you just start your own business!"

**DRD: What makes the DR.D pipe unique? Does it only help a bike produce more horsepower or is there more to it than that?**

Doug: We concentrate on making our systems produce 'usable' horsepower. Dynos and peak horsepower can be extremely misleading as often



at times they do not dictate how a bike actually performs on the track. I remember testing with Jeremy McGrath during his championship years with Yamaha and we had outfitted his YZ with all types of sensors. The pipes that looked great on the dyno, he hated. The pipes we thought

were going to be slow he loved. Why? When we looked at the data from the sensors, we were all shocked to see that he was never really wide open, it was all quick bursts of power, smooth and tractable that made the best impact. We don't build a single production pipe until we are positive it beats a stock system. ➤





**DRD: Do you think there's still a lot more to learn about exhaust pipe technology?**

Doug: I think there is still tremendous opportunity for advancement in pipe technology. We study not only current MX conditions but also all other forms of racing as well, be it MotoGP, Formula One, NASCAR, etc. We are consistently pushing ourselves to develop systems that not only are quieter and lighter, but of course, perform even better

**DRD: Twenty or so years ago did you think you would still be competing?**

Doug: Yes, I was never a naturally talented rider like so many of my team-mates or competitors. I just absolutely loved to put on a helmet, throw a leg over a bike and race. When I was a factory rider, every 'off' weekend I'd find some local race to attend. When many of my competitors were off at the river or going on vacation, I just wanted to ride and race. I did have a feeling back then that I would never stop riding. And though I'm not as fast and often I cut my practice days short to be at the office or attending one of my kids' games, I can't see myself stopping.

**DRD: Tell us a little about how you got started and your early racing career?**

Doug: I was the typical broke kid who worked 20 different jobs to pay for my hobby. It all started in 1971 – my father and I headed out to the grocery store to grab some last minute items for my Mom's family gathering. Somehow, we ended up bringing home my first mini-bike instead of the salad dressing!

Eventually the poor bike succumbed to the pounding of jumping wood ramps in the hills near our home. By working odd jobs and with some help from pops, I saved enough money to purchase my first real motorcycle, a 1978 YZ80 for \$400.

A month shy of my 15th birthday, I entered my first race, and somehow, had success from the drop of the gate. I entered the 80 Novice class and went 1-1, taking home the most beautiful (\$2) trophy in the world!

By October 1979 I was entering my first pro race. Like any wise rookie, I left all my gear at home! After riding practice in Levis and a sweatshirt, my dad drove to the track to deliver my gear. The gate for my first moto dropped as I was buckling my boots. Starting a half lap down, I raced to third. I won the second moto, secured the overall win, and knew the passion for racing would not fade.

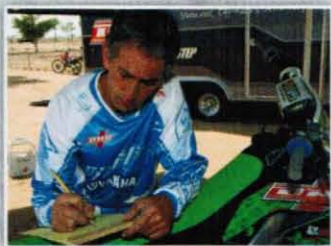
I raced my first AMA National in 1982 and was in 10th place when Jeff

Ward (seven-time National Champs winner) came up behind me. Rather than battle, I was so caught up in the moment that he passed me with ease. I stayed on his tail, just looking at the name WARD on his jersey thinking, 'that's Jeff Ward!'

I continued racing each weekend while working full-time until I was laid off in the spring of 1984. A good friend was headed to Gainesville, Florida for the first round of the 1984 125 Nationals and, since I was now without a job, I decided to tag along. Despite my very well worn 125 and no mechanic to help prep the bike, I still entered the National and raced to a 5-12 for 10th overall. I made a little money and decided to stay on the road and race the entire National series. The rest of the year was more of the same; I'd do really well in one moto and crash or breakdown in the other. At the end of the season, I ended up 10th overall.

A few more years and with my results improving I began to get factory attention. I raced the 1987 season as a Yamaha-backed rider, getting a small per diem, a bonus programme and a few race bikes. They also got me to help test some race parts. We all have highlights in our lives and this was probably the defining moment in my career.

By 1988, I was starting to finish in the top ten in the 250cc class, ▶



several times in the top five. In 1989, I raced three different series, finishing the 250cc Supercross series in sixth place, the 250cc Nationals in sixth and fourth in the 500cc National series.

I was called to the Yamaha US headquarters in Cypress, California, walked to an upstairs boardroom and met with Keith McCarty, a lawyer, a three-page contract, and a pen. I excitedly signed before they could change their minds - I had just become a full-blown Yamaha factory racer! I garnered a factory ride later than most former and current racers. I was team-mates with Damon Bradshaw and Jeff Emig who, by comparison, were huge stars and also quite a bit younger than me.

The light shined my way one magical night in San Jose, California. That evening at the San Jose 1991 Supercross I rode my heart out against Damon Bradshaw who had come from deep in the pack to rub my rear tyre. I held off Damon and crossed the finish line for my first 250cc Supercross win. Jeff Emig had won the 125 race earlier on his Yamaha and with Damon and me going 1-2 the Yamaha team was ecstatic. The true highlight from that evening, and to this day my most treasured racing memory, was eating at Denny's later that night with Emig and Bradshaw. Bradshaw was on the phone with his parents yelling, "Doug Dubach

won tonight, can you believe it? Doug won!" We had a great team and that was one of those nights that everything just clicked. Twenty-eight years old and a first time Supercross winner compared to my buddy Bradshaw who was 16 years of age for his first 250 SX win.

**DRD: How did you get your nickname 'The Doctor'?**

Doug: Jim O'Neal of O'Neal Racing Products takes credit for the name; he always said my riding style was calculated and precise - a surgeon working on a patient. But when I met my wife later in my career she thought the nickname was derived from my all injuries!

**DRD: Your family really is Team Dubach.**

Doug: Toward the end of my 1993 racing season, I had a photo shoot for one of my sponsors. The best part of a shoot is when it's over! It's nice when the photo or ad makes it into a magazine but hitting the same jump a hundred times or ralling the same berm for hours can be a little annoying when the entire track is calling your name. This photo shoot was altogether different; it was the best I ever attended. A beautiful blonde was the photographer and her attitude, looks, and demeanour had me revved up from the second she stepped out of her car. She was working for a news-



paper, not familiar with motocross, so I told her we needed more shots just so I could hang out with her for an extended time period. She was stunning.

When the shoot unfortunately ended I, like all moto guys, took off my gear in the back of the truck. She was not at all impressed that I was 'taking off my clothes' in front of her and she basically drove away thinking I was weird.

I called her later to explain, apologise and, yes of course, ask her out. She agreed and the rest is history. We have three children; two girls and boy, Rylee, Avere, and Carter and without them I couldn't function. Gina was the driving force behind the idea to launch Dubach Racing Development and continues to play a major role in the day-to-day business activities while raising our growing family. We came up with the name Dubach Racing



**DRD: Finally, have you met or have any thoughts on New Zealand Supercross riders currently competing in the USA?**

Doug: I think the riders from New Zealand bring such a cool attitude to our sport, they are hard working and determined yet understand that life is good and seem to enjoy each day. I had a chance to spend time with Ben Townley before the USGP at an autograph session and was just really impressed with his demeanour. I was pulling for him at that race but he ran into some bad luck in the first moto and it hurt him overall.

DRD

