

Micra is a major for Steve and daughter

STEVE Johnson's tiny Nissan Micra is packing a massive punch on the track.

The Accrington driver and his 21-year-old daughter Hazel were both in splendid form at Wigan's 3 Sisters circuit, successfully driving their one litre Micra into a top five finish in the one litre class at the Association of North West Car Clubs event. "The conditions were some of the worst I've seen, heavy rain and standing water on the track, so it is a real challenge for both of us," said Steve.

"Hazel had problems on the first stage with her intercom, but she bounced back with a super time on the second stage.

"She was only three seconds behind me afterwards (second stage). Hazel's really driving well and getting used to the car."

Steve, who eventually finished behind Ryan Burns



IMPRESSIVE Steve Johnson

and Phil Sergeant, added: "By stage seven the track had started to dry out, and I was posting some really consistent times."

Founded by multiple rally and autotest champion Johnson, the North Western Car K11 Micra Challenge was created to bypass the escalating costs that are normally associated with stage rallying.

"We were racing on £30 Falken tyres, so it just goes to show that you can compete at a really good level without spending a fortune."

Steve, who is out in front in the K11 Challenge, added: "I'm leading so there's a lot to play for this year."

Falken Tyres is backing young talent in motorsport through a new sponsorship and support scheme that enables drivers access to subsidised and free tyres.

The Japanese manufacturer is providing tyres for the Association of North Western Car Clubs K11 Micra Challenge and the Under-17 Motor Auto Solo Championship for Standard Cars.

In addition to the K11 Micra Challenge, Falken is also supporting the under 17 Motor Club which provides opportunities for 14 to 17 year olds to gain experience in vehicle handling in a controlled environment away from the public highway.

Ivan's a winner after 20 years away from sport and now he's ...

Speeding back to track glory



By TONY DEWHURST Sports reporter

DARWEN track ace Ivan Howarth has ridden off with one of speedway's top amateur prizes – 20 years after quitting the sport.

Ivan's father Ged rode for the famous Belle Vue club in the 1960s and he was there to see Ivan, 35, crowned amateur novice Winter Series champ at Scunthorpe's Eddie Wright Raceway.

Ivan, from Huddlesden, said: "Dad's experience has been invaluable, he has helped me so much in my life.

"He bought me an old Italian children's motorbike when I was three, it had a little sidecar attached to it, and I used to ride it on the waste ground at the back of the house.

"We'd go to speedway together at Belle Vue, when the old Hyde Road track

was considered to be the best in the world.

"My dream would be to open a speedway track in Blackburn, maybe with a couple more sports involved and run it as a sports academy."

Ivan was christened after New Zealand speedway legend Ivan Mauger – the greatest rider in the history of the sport.

It's a slim chance of going pro but I'd love it to happen

Ivan Howarth

He added: "Ivan Mauger was the best, and in 1977, the year I was born, he was champion of the world, and he also rode for dad's old club Belle Vue.

"It is a nice to be named after a legend of speedway."

The bike star has only recently returned to the rough and tumble of the



track though after quitting the track as a rookie rider.

"I was quite good as a kid, and Chris Morton, the professional rider, organised a ride at Buxton Speedway for up and coming young talent, but I was overcome by the occasion and I didn't enjoy it."

Now older and wiser, he is back in the saddle and a place in the professional

ranks remains a possibility. "I missed the buzz of riding, so two and a half years ago I got into speedway riding again," said Ivan.

"It is a slim chance of going pro at my age, but I would love it to happen.

"They're setting up a semi-professional league in the Midlands, and some of the guys are 30 plus so it might be possible."

On form Carne is a racing cert

HASLINGDEN ace Tom Carne is riding his way to stardom as he bids to follow in the footsteps of Lancashire Superbike legends Neil Hodgson and Carl Fogarty.

Carne has powered his way through to the final of the Triumph Young Gun competition, beating hundreds of other hopefuls to claim one of the top 10 places up for grabs.

Carne will now undergo intensive training and assessment sessions, with the overall winner handed a factory place supported in the 2014 Triumph Triple Challenge Series.

That will be worth thousands of pounds to the winner and could provide a springboard to future honours in the sport as Carne's reputation on the track continues to grow. "It is a really exciting

thing to happen and this is another big challenge for me to try and overcome this year," said the former Haslingden High School pupil.

It caps a splendid week for Carne who claimed his second class victory in the first three races of the British Motostar Championship – a feeder series for the British Superbikes Championship this year.

Carne, racing under his own team name of TC Racing, is competing in the series along with Burnley teams FPW Racing and RCD Motorsport.

Carne, who believes he can challenge for the title this year, clinched the 125GP class in the first race of the season at Brands Hatch before taking second place in his category at Thruxton.



But he returned to the top step of the podium at Oulton Park earlier this month, winning his class and taking fourth overall.

"I have never been so focused and determined as I feel this season," added Carne.

"Hopefully it is my turn to win the 2013 championship with this great opportunity."

Carne, meanwhile, will be a special guest at Stubbylee Park, Bacup, College Open Open Day this Saturday.

He will be at the Motorcycle engineering workshop from 9am to 2pm. Carne's bike will be on show and the rider will be signing posters, with guests able to watch his races on a big screen.

ISLE OF MAN TT

Big two set for electric dream race

MOTOCZYSZ, the dominant force in clean emissions racing, and Japanese powerhouse Mugen are gearing up for another battle in the 2013 SES TT Zero Race.

Last year both teams shattered the 100mph lap mark – a feat it took internal combustion engine machines 50 years to achieve – with all three podium placed riders posting times in excess of the magic ton.

Michael Rutter won in 2011 for MotoCzysz and defended his title in 2012 but he was chased all the way by John McGuinness on the eye-catching Mugen Shinden.

McGuinness, making his electric bike debut, finished just 23 seconds behind.

MANX STAGES



Stone speeds in to second

BLACKBURN rally ace John Stone finished second in class at the Manx National Stages at the weekend.

"I missed the buzz of riding, so two and a half years ago I got into speedway riding again," said Ivan. Stone and co-driver Lee Carter took 10th place overall in their Skoda Fabia WRC, but Withnell's Paula Swinscoe did not make it to the finish co-driving for Matt Beebe following an accident during the fifth stage.

In the National B event, Malcolm Mawdsley was first in class and sixth overall with co-driver Matti Heikkinen.

Billington's Ross Miller and fellow Clitheroe and District Motor Club member Steve Butler were forced to retire.

HILL CLIMB

Willis takes Barbon climb

REIGNING British Hillclimb Championship king Trevor Willis won his first race of the 2013 season at Barbon Manor.

Following on from the opening two championship rounds at Prescott, where triple-champion, Scott Moran, took two wins from two, current title holder Willis was keen to return to the top step at Barbon Manor – the shortest venue on the BHC calendar.

Willis's nearest challenger was Wallace Menzies, whose effort saw him finish just over six tenths of a second behind.