

Road Race  
Newsflash

## Tom Sykes: The Best Is Yet To Come

**In 2012 there were no prizes for guessing the most improved combination on track in the Superbike World Championship. Tom Sykes and the Kawasaki Racing Team Ninja ZX-10R.**

At the start of 2012 the ambitions of the new-look Kawasaki Racing Team were high. But, maybe, the intense and increasing level of competition in this class held those ambitions back from the ultimate aim of fighting for the championship win itself. Maybe it was still a year too early? As time was to tell, however, for Tom Sykes, his almost entirely new crew of backup staff and a rejuvenated SBK specification Kawasaki Ninja ZX-10R, the championship title was to elude their combined challenge by a mere half point.

This astonishing turn-around from Sykes finishing outside the top ten the year before was due to the efforts of all involved... The back-room staff and development engineers back at KHI headquarters in Japan, Kawasaki Europe's race management structure, the Provec Racing team in Spain, who took over the running of a full Superbike team for the first time in '12, all of KRT's partners and sponsors, and the people who worked on the bikes themselves – race meeting after race meeting, test after test. Finally, of course, the 27-year-old Sykes took on the ultimate responsibility.

The potent end user of all the effort that took Kawasaki to within a sliver of outright success was Sykes. When it comes to the business of taking results, the rider is always the final link in the chain. And after proving himself unbreakable despite the increasing pressure to perform as the season progressed, in 2012 Sykes almost left the final round gold-plated from head to foot. It is no exaggeration to say that in 2012 Tom went from the status of being respected by most to being revered by many.

Tom's cool head and hot pace were a welcome combination, and so close to a winning one that maybe some people think Sykes' best chance of the championship win may have passed? Knowing what he knows, having learned what he has learned, Sykes could not disagree more. "I have heard some comments from people that there was my chance gone, but I do not look at it like that. We have done a good job this year and worked hard, found ourselves in a good position. I speak with my crew chief Marcel a lot, and if we had known back in Australia what we know now, I think we would have had an even stronger season."

Sykes continued to explain why he feels 2013 will be an even better year again. "Looking to 2013 I am more than happy now, and really excited and relaxed that I have, first and foremost, continuity," said Tom. "I am still with a great manufacturer in Kawasaki. Everybody has seen how much effort they have put in. Also, all of the team, all the guys working with me, we have a great understanding, and fortunately we are continuing with some great sponsors that are helping all the time. It is all a massive team effort. We have really gelled and it is working well."

After some great showings in testing post-season as well, Sykes knows that development is still moving forward. But he also feels that all he learned in 2012 will be an asset for the next challenge. "Next year there is going to be a lot of expectations and I feel I can manage myself in a good way," said Sykes. "For example, Magny-Cours, the final round of 2012, I was second in the championship when I arrived there, with a lot of pressure to perform. All things being said, I handled the pressure very well. We had some limitations in the wet there so I took the maximum points in race one that I felt it was safe to achieve, which was third. In the second race, the championship deciding race, I won that one, so I was quietly proud of that."

For Sykes the big prize to aim for is the Championship in 2013. As it stands, in his career he has now started 106 SBK races, has won five, has taken 15 podiums, 17 front row starts, set four fastest laps and has 11 Superpole successes in qualifying. The vast majority of those high points have come along on the 2012 season.

With Kawasaki and all in the KRT squad working as hard as ever for success, few riders can feel better placed right now than Tom Sykes, arguably the most individual rider in the SBK paddock, and certainly one of the best.

High resolution images are free to download at [press.kawasaki.eu](http://press.kawasaki.eu).