



INTERVIEW: COLBY CRAPO – THREE’S THE CHARM

By Wil De Clercq



After twice grabbing runner-up in the CSRA Pro Open Snowcross National Championship (2014 and 2016), Colby Crapo managed to take home the coveted title this season. In his third year of campaigning the series for Huber Motorsports, “three” proved to be the charm for the St. Anthony, Idaho native. On the way to the championship, which Crapo led from the first of eight rounds, he recorded in addition to numerous heat wins, six first-place mains, four second places and two third places. Out of 15 mains he only failed to climb the podium four times.

With the team enjoying full backing from Rockstar Energy/Polaris Racing/Piller’s presented by Huber Racing and OTSFF, expectations of Crapo were high. When the series went to Horseshoe Valley Resort in Barrie, ON for the final two rounds, only nine points separated Crapo from second place Dylan Hall. When all was said and done, the amicable American snared the championship with the same margin he held over Hall going into Barrie ... nine points!

In addition to the 2017 CSRA Pro Open Championship win, Crapo’s laurels include the 2009 MWR (Mountain West Racing) Pro High Points Championship in the U.S. He qualified four times for the Winter X Games, with a best place finish of eighth.

Wil De Clercq: Competition was exceptionally tough this season, with anyone of four drivers in contention for the championship. How would you describe the 2017 points chase?

Colby Crapo: It was definitely one of the tougher ones of my entire career and the toughest I’ve encountered in Canada.

WDC: How did things look from your perspective going into the season?

CC: I didn’t really think too much about the points going into the season or the fact that expectations of me were high. I knew I had very competitive equipment and a great team behind me. I realized I had a really good chance of winning the title and that it was up to me to accomplish that. The team crew would do their part, I had to do mine.

WDC: How did you deal with the pressure as the season progressed?

CC: When you race for a top team there is always pressure and expectations, but most of the pressure and expectations are those you put on yourself. You kind of have to put all that in the back of your mind, not up front. With every round that passes by, that gets harder and harder to do, but you have to deal with it and you just focus on the moment. You have to take it race by race and just give it your best shot.



WDC: You led the series from the get-go, up to a 16-point lead on second place after Round 5, but the DNF you encountered at Round 6 in Kitchener, after being taken out by another driver, knocked that back to only nine points. What was going on in your mind when you arrived in Barrie for the final rounds?

CC: On Friday I was a bit anxious, just wanting to get things underway. The waiting part in the paddock seems to be the hardest thing. Once I was on the track and concentrating on the racing end, I knew the points would kind of sort themselves out. I just had to race my race. My first heat I got third, which was okay, I didn't want to push it. I won my second heat and the main, which is where I needed to be. Saturday I used the same approach and the results were identical.

WDC: Did you feel you had the title in the bag at that point?

CC: Not exactly in the bag. I had the confidence, sure, but anything was still possible. The main thing was avoiding a crash or being taken out by another guy. I didn't have to go all out for the win to take the championship so I could drive conservatively. That took a lot of the pressure off me. I just had to finish ninth or better. Still, I wanted to end the season with a podium finish but I didn't want to take any unnecessary chances. Once I was in third place, after getting a fourth place start, I just put it on cruise control and looked at the big picture and settled for third.

WDC: How was the atmosphere in the paddock this season?

CC: It was really good. I've been on quite a few different teams and I would have to say I never enjoyed the kind of camaraderie before as I did with the Rockstar/Polaris/Piller's, Huber Motorsports/OTSFF team. That kind of thing starts at the top and trickles down. Gerhart [Huber] is such a great guy to work with, he doesn't give you the feeling you're working *for* him. When you're treated with respect by the team owner, regardless of what your position on the team is, then everybody has a good attitude.

WDC: I guess like anything else good team chemistry is conducive to good results in racing.

CC: It definitely helps. When there's a good overall team vibe, as a driver you take that out onto the track with you. I couldn't have asked for a better team than the one I was on this year. It was like the proverbial "dream team". Everybody carried their weight and that's what put RJ and me on the podium weekend after weekend.

WDC: How would you compare the tracks on the Canadian snowcross circuit to the ones in the States?

CC: In Canada the tracks are a ton different than what I'm used to racing on. Personally I like the big, rough tracks, and that's what we get to race on mostly in the States. In Canada the tracks are smaller and tighter and seem to have a lot of corners and stuff. When you come from the States, the tracks in Canada are going to be

your biggest struggle and challenge to overcome. It takes some getting used to. You have to totally rethink what you're doing and how you approach the racing. Not just the tracks are different, but the sleds setup is significantly different.



WDC: How about the competition? Wouldn't you say the bar is lower here than in the U.S?

CC: (Laughs) Yeah, that's what I thought when I was first asked if I wanted to come and race in Canada. I thought, sure, that sounds like fun. Should be a walk in the park. I'll go up there and smoke everybody and come home with the championship. My first year was a reality check. I got my eyes opened wide and was surprised by the level of competition. Even though I finished second in the championship, I didn't exactly ride off into the sunset with the crown as I naively expected to. It took me three seasons to kind of figure out everything. And the competition got stronger along the way. It's not for nothing that the

points remained tight all season long. Dylan [Hall], Dave [Joanis] and Corey [Watkinson] wanted that title just as badly as I did.

WDC: What does winning a Canadian snowcross championship mean to you?

CC: It's an achievement I'll have the rest of my life to look back upon. It's an awesome feeling. As a snowcross driver it's just as prestigious winning a title in Canada as it is in the States or anywhere else. The place you win it is incidental. You have to work for it. You have to earn it and you have to do it on the terms of the people you're racing against, not your own. The harder you have to work for the championship the more gratifying it is to win it. It's nice if you can win it by a landslide, too, but then everybody thinks you won because the competition was weak.

WDC: What's the most difficult aspect of racing in Canada for you?

CC: It's taxing being away from home and your family for four months. It can be easy to get stuck in a rut and ask yourself, what am I doing here? ... Why am I here? You have to keep the long-term goal in mind and not let things get to you. That being said, the Huber family embraced me as one of their own, providing me with a home away from home. Actually, the whole team had a family quality to it.

WDC: What do you do during the off season?

CC: A lot of hard work running my 300-acre farm. That's like my real job, growing potatoes and also some wheat. For fun I'll ride my dirt bike to keep my racing blood flowing, but there isn't too much time for that.



Come late October everything's pretty well done and in early November we start getting snow. We live in some of the best mountain riding terrain you can imagine. Snowmobile riding is a family thing, actually. We work hard all year but in winter we play hard and snowmobiles are a big part of that. We're all into snowmobiling recreationally. That's what led me to racing them.

WDC: You're not the only Crapo family member, though, who took up snowmobile racing.

CC: Some of my cousins preceded me into the sport. Jeremy, Kurtis and Shaun all raced professionally and did well for themselves. Michael raced too, but he wasn't as serious about it and only raced for a while. But they were all an inspiration for me. I wanted to carry on the family tradition. It was just a natural thing to do.

WDC: Are you coming back to defend your title next season?

CC: I would like to do that, for sure.

WDC: Thank you for your time, Colby. Any last words?

CC: I just want to thank everybody on the team who made this season the best ever for me, and what will no doubt remain the most memorable one of my career. I want to especially thank Huber Motorsports' Gerhart and Christian Huber, and crew chief Stu Robinson, for their unwavering support, encouragement, and believing in me. A shout also to Rockstar Energy, Polaris Racing, Piller's, OTSFF, and the companies who sponsored the team. When a championship is won people only see and talk about the people who won it, because they are the ones in the limelight. But the winning of a championship is always a team effort. Without the people behind the scenes there is nobody in the limelight.