



## INTERVIEW: RJ ROY –BACK-TO-BACK PRO LITE CHAMPION

Interview by Wil De Clercq

Twenty-two-year-old RJ Roy has been racing snowcross for the past five years. Before focusing on snowcross, he raced motocross from the time he was seven years old and still does some dirt bike racing and riding for fun and to keep in shape.

Roy's breakthrough season came in 2016 when he won the CSRA Pro-Lite Championship as a Polaris riding privateer with some support from Huber Motorsports. In a hotly contested season, the Timmins, Ontario native collected the championship with a 42points margin over runner-up Jake Weir. Proving he was just a flash in the pan, Roy followed that up with a Pro Lite title repeat this year for Rockstar Energy/Polaris Racing/Piller's presented by Huber Motorsports and OTSFF.

This time out Roy reigned supreme, capping the season with a 129 pointsadvantage over archrival Weir, who again claimed the runner-up slot. On the way to snaring the 2017 Pro Lite title, Roy recorded an impressive seven wins in the mains, five second place finishes and one third. He only finished off the podium on two occasions, recording noteworthy fourth place both times.

*Wil De Clercq:* I don't think anybody would argue the point that you didn't dominate the Pro Lite class this year or that you weren't the most consistent driver on the track. Did you worry at any time that you would lose your edge as the season progressed?



*RJ Roy:* I didn't think about it. You don't want to overthink things when you're leading a championship. Although I am prone to overthink things in general. It's kind of my nature. I know you can never get overconfident, you have to remain just confident enough to do what you have to do to get on the podium. When you have great equipment and a solid support system behind you that helps. The Polaris 600R is a confidence builder because it's very competitive and reliable. The team staff were incredible. With a combination like that you're more able to keep your goals in focus.

*WDC:* In the pre-season, you raced in the States for the first time. What was that like for you?

*RJR:* Racing the first two rounds of the ISOC series with the team in Duluth and Coloradogave me a boost in confidence. It was a real eye-opener for me, a big wake-up call. It brought out an entirely new rider in me. In

Duluth I didn't make the main, but in Fraser I did on the first day and finished fourth. I was quite happy with that.

*WDC:* In what way was it an eye-opener and wake-up call ... the competition, the tracks?



*RJR:* Both those things. Definitely. But I expected that, so I wasn't really surprised by what I was up against. It was more about being on a top team. I was a bit nervous the first time out. Like what do I do and how do I deal with this whole thing? But everyone put me at ease right away. I didn't feel like I was the new kid on the block. I was taken seriously and treated with respect. I felt I belonged.

*WDC:* Being on the Rockstar Energy/Polaris Racing/Piller's presented by Huber Motorsports and OTSFF team must have been like a dream come true?

*RJR:* Absolutely. Before this season it was just me and my dad in the trailer, doing everything ourselves on the sled and then I'd have to go race it. Being on a professional team I realized that everything was pretty well done for me. That my job was to just focus on racing and give feedback on the sled. I didn't have to worry about getting the

sled ready and stuff like that. It took a bit getting used at first but not too much.

*WDC:* Did you feel extra pressure on you, going from privateer to a major racing team?

*RJR:* In some ways, but not much more than if I still was a privateer. I had won a championship the year before and now I had to prove that I could do it again. That's what it was really about. In many ways, I felt less pressure on me because I had the full support of a team behind me. If I could win a championship with just me and my dad in the trailer, I figured I should be able to do it having a crew chief, mechanic, and a seasoned pro like Colby in the trailer.

*WDC:* When I interviewed Colby and crew chief Stu Robinson, they both mentioned how great the team spirit and camaraderie was this season. Did you feel that too?

*RJR:* For sure. Unlike them I don't have the background of having raced or worked for various teams, so I don't really have anything to compare it to, but yeah, the whole atmosphere in the trailer was just amazing. It was more of a family atmosphere than a team. Gerhart [Huber] treated me and Colby like sons. Having a guy like Stucoordinating everything was bonus.

*WDC:* You had a sizeable points lead going into the final two rounds in Barrie. At what point did you feel you had the title secured?

*RJR:* I knew I needed to get through the first two days and I just went for the points I needed to keep my advantage. Anything was still possible and I didn't want to be in a position on Sunday where it came down to the final. Although my starts weren't great, I managed to win my heats and got a second place in the main on Friday. Saturday I got second in the heats and again in the final. Although I was in a position to cruise



on Sunday, I wanted to end the season, and my last race in the Pro Lite, with a win in the final, which I managed to do.

*WDC:* What would you consider was your weakest link this year?

*RJR:* My starts. Except for a good one here and there they were really bad. I know I have to get better starts, especially next year in Pro Open. Good starts are more important there than in the Lite. But I look at it this way, all my bad starts this year forced me to push myself harder to make passes. It's nice to get the holeshot, pull away and lead every lap, but that doesn't really help you become a better racer. You have to know how to make passes, use different lines and things.

*WDC:* What do you have planned for the off season?

*RJR:* I'm going to train all summer, riding my dirt bike, and do some motocross, in particular the MotoPark Cup series at Motopark in Chatsworth. I'd like to ride the final round of the CMRC Nationals in Barrie, too, just to kind of see where I am at condition wise. If I can hang in with the MX2 guys for thirty minutes, then I'll know I'm on the right track for the new snowcross series. For me the off season is really about counting down the months till I can get back to racing snowmobiles. I'm already looking forward to going back to Duluth to get the season underway.

*WDC:* What do you do besides racing snowmobiles?

*RJR:* I'm a heavy equipment operator. That works out well for me, because like snowcross it's mainly a seasonal thing. So my summers are pretty busy, working long hours and on weekends riding my bike as much as I can.

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

*RJR:* Last but not least I want to thank everybody on the team, especially Gerhart for giving me the opportunity to race for his team. I give all the credit to him and the crew for providing me with the best equipment to go out and win a championship. I also want to thank our sponsors, from Rockstar and Polaris to Walker Evans, Fly, Rox, Studboy, WPS, C&A Pro, Triple9, Clean Media, 139 Designs, Howey Brothers and Crapo Trucking. I think I got them all. Thanks for the interview.