

LETICIA CLINE SITS DOWN WITH VICKI GOLDEN

The Golden Girl



BY LETICIA CLINE - PHOTOS BY MATT WELLUMSON

After a few unsuccessful attempts, Vicki finally reached her goal at the final round in Las Vegas and became the first female rider to qualify for the night show at a Monster Energy AMA Supercross.



There are some of us who do things to prove a point, others who do it to prove a point wrong and some who do it because they know no other way. No matter what the reason for the drive, the fundamentals are the same: hard work and determination; though you may not succeed it's the hustle that separates the average from the great. I learned this even more when I got the chance to sit down with Vicki Golden, Supercross' new contender and women's new hope for making history (though she would disagree with both arguments)



VG: Everyone puts that pressure on me as being the only female out here as if that's supposed to define every single woman but I don't see it like that. I don't do things to be the first, I just do it because 1] this is the type of riding I love to do and 2] I want to do what everyone isn't doing, female or not. I'm just not happy doing what's trending and if it inspires even one person to do something they thought they couldn't then it means even more.

MXP: Vicki started riding at an early age thanks to her older brother who she looked up to and parents who recognized a talent and supported her love for it. They bought her an XR50 for Christmas when she was 7 and she never looked back. By 8 she was racing in local Pee Wee races in Verona Oaks, CA and by 9 she was winning them.

I always took it seriously but I just never thought of it as a job. I just thought, "Oh, I get to go to school on the dirt bike today." It was when I turned pro and realized I was making money at what I was doing that it hit me that this is a real thing.

The more I talk to Vicki the more I realize that this is the way her brain is wired. While others are thinking about what to wear or eat, she's focusing on hitting her marks and carrying the intensity in practice or at a race. Everything she seems to do is to better herself at a sport she loves or she doesn't do it at all. Riding a motorcycle is an extension of her body and mind, and her soul is the motor that drives them both.

Perhaps that's why she's won 3 consecutive gold medals in the X Games, a bronze in the best whip it, first and only lady to ride for the Metal Mulisha, first woman to complete Ricky Carmichael's Road to Supercross, first woman to compete in a Freestyle Moto X competition, nominated for an ESPY for best female Action Sport Athlete, Won TransWorld's Female Rookie of the Year, Loretta Lynn's Amateur Champion and now is racing against the guys in the 250 Monster Energy Supercross East coast series.

Winning 3 gold medals in a row is pretty cool but really there are just so many things I've been happy with. I definitely was

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pumped on placing with the best whip it contest with all the guys even though it was just a bronze. I think that was almost better than getting 3 golds. At least it felt like it.

Currently Vicki rides for Hanson's Racing but her road to supercross wasn't always an easy one.

In 2009 I just got a fill-in ride for Trey Canard on the Geico team. I went and did one race and then came home and was practicing with the team and had a crash that put me in the hospital and out for the rest of the year. I was devastated that I finally got a factory ride and only got to ride it once and then it all fell apart. I was hoping I would get to come back but it didn't end up working out. I rode outdoors two more years after that but quit because I just wasn't happy.

Throughout it all Vicki never lost her drive to keep moving and never focused on the negative. She takes a failure for what it is, a chance to learn and move on. When I asked her how she prepares for a race her response is simple:

Mentally I'm pretty easy going. I try to not get stressed, just focus on practice and think about what I need to do better after then I work towards it. I am always making sure I'm forever progressing in each practice rather than just standing still.

Never has that statement been more important than now. Vicki had just finished 3 rounds of Supercross in hopes to make it to the 250 main event. She came up short in Arlington and had a few mishaps in the two Atlanta rounds.

Everything that could go wrong did. I was just over it with everything going wrong so I just wasn't mentally ready, but we did the best that we could with those three rounds. The positive thing was that we got more track time so I started aiming for a learning experience. Riding Supercross is completely opposite than tracks back home. You get a sense of timing back home but the track you actually race on is completely different. Sure, that's what every racer out there deals with, but it makes it more intimidating when you really want to start pushing to triple in rhythm sections and things. For me, jumping isn't the issue, it's just getting through rhythms clean and fast is the hard part. After that it's just putting in the work and keeping the intensity up. Going weekend to weekend to a new and different track with limited practice time is challenging too. There's a lot to figure out in 30 minutes.

■
Vicki's speed and style has always fit in well at the X-Games





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■ Vicki celebrates one of her well earned X-Games gold medals

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With all of that and this sudden wave of media attention I wondered if it added any extra pressure to Vicki while riding.

I’m kind of use to all the pressure from others. I think I put more pressure on myself than really anyone outside that can apply to me. Sure media adds a little, but it has actually been a good thing for my sponsors and has helped with more track time. It just makes me feel crappy when something happens and no one gets what really is going on because of all the hype. I just try and shut it out because I will never win with the negative side of things. I’m just focused on technical stuff, hitting marks and carrying intensity. I get pissed off a lot because I ride 450 for everything else besides SX and AX but I’m riding a 250F for the races.... I think about that way too much.

Vicki is a “tell it like it is” kind of gal and she’s earned the right to be like that too. In this industry if you’re not direct then you’re just wasting time, and time is something that isn’t free for Vicki. When I asked her what she does when she’s not riding she responded quite frankly:

I don’t really have any spare time. What most people don’t realize is that in the winter I’m a racer and in the summer I’m doing jump shows for freestyle motocross. I don’t really have an off-season.

Just for fun I asked her if she could pick any other career, what would it be? She surprised me with her answer. This is a fighter, a girl whose entire life is

lived by teetering on the edge of death.

I would be a pro golfer or video gamer if I was super good at it. They make a lot of money and I enjoy doing both.

We laugh but there’s an undertone of knowing that a woman like Vicki would never be happy only swinging a club or tapping her thumbs. People like her don’t have words like “settling” and “sitting still” in their vocabulary.

At the time of this interview Vicki had one more shot to make history but by the time I typed the story that chance had faded away with the last round of Supercross in New Jersey. Vicki may not have made it into the 250 main event but she accompanied more than hundreds before and became an inspiration to hundreds after. When we focus on failure we miss out on the lesson learned. Great things have come from defeat, it’s the risk that is the greatest reward. It takes a certain type a person to put it all on the line and that’s a power that few hold, which more should value. I’m certain that Vicki is disappointed but she doesn’t let it slow her down any, and with talent like hers how could you?

I’m definitely my happiest when I’m hitting ramps, throwing whips and doing something just right on my bike. I’m doing more than just Supercross and I’ll be doing more than just Supercross after all is said and done. If anyone thinks I’ve failed then they can see that I won’t. **MXF**