

This is the Ten Kate we all know and love. What you never see is what happens on Monday



Ten Kate has come a long way in the last decade. Ever since doing a mate a favour way back in 1993, tuning his race engine, it's never looked back. With a history knee deep in dirt, this foray into short circuit racing propelled the Dutch family-run team towards its first world title. Bigwig Gerrit Ten Kate's initial attempt at fettling a race motor saw his mate blitzing rivals on the straights. Business picked up fast and national titles fell his way as crucial race experience mounted. The new millennium saw the squad tentatively enter the hotly contested world supersport series full-time after a couple of season's gentle practice.

Pretty soon, its bikes were thumping the 'official' Honda backed Castrol squad, scoring a maiden title in 2002 through French mentalist Fabien Foret. Only last year, when Yamaha threw MotoGP electronics and Cal Crutchlow at an attempt to wrest the series from Ten Kate, did the Dutch concede for the first time in seven seasons. Ironically, it cost Yamaha so much to do so, it's since pulled out. Who's laughing now?

And one thing that's sure to drive anyone nuts, anyone who knows their racing, is when Ten Kate is referred to as a 'factory' team. It's received backing from Honda Europe for

Ten Kate's success at the track is thanks to hard work in the shop



yonks, but its bikes are not built by HRC. The fact that they like to go down their own route, rather than the race-kit one, shows that not only do they think out of the box, but they don't need direct support from HRC to win.

It's been well funded for a few years by companies like Hannspree, which is partly what leads to the 'factory' tag. But what it is, is the most successful private Honda team in WSB history. And they also run a shop.

Situated next to a canal in its home town, Ten Kate's headquarters stands proud first and foremost as a motorcycle dealer. It's a big place, and as we were there to lavish Rootsy's Fireblade with a bit of Ten Kate loving, it'd be daft to not give you lot the same guided tour we were treated to...



Ten Kate's WSB Champion's shop



In a single decade Ten Kate has burgeoned into one of the best teams in WSB. It's time to check out the Dutch master's pad





No, this is not Johnny Rea's wardrobe, but Ten Kate's clothing showroom

► Walk through the front door, and the place resembles most other large dealerships – neat and tidy, with a hefty load of machines for sale, smartly lined up in order of class. What you can't miss, however, is the homage to its race successes. Want a Ten Kate replica Honda? This is where to find the real deal. Move further in, and a large staircase obscures the parts department, where brightly lit metal and glass cases are crammed with bike porn. A quick hoof upstairs reveals a coffee shop (no, not the normal Dutch sort) and clothing section. A rather large, well-stocked clothing section as it goes. There's even a clearance area to pick up a bargain. When you're racing

for wins at world level, every Euro counts, no matter where it comes from. Hiding in the rafters, we discover, is a large collection of trophies from its various victories. The place exudes racing-sex; if you're a Ten Kate fan, what comes next is quite likely to render you completely blind.

Back downstairs, and to the left of 'parts', sits a little memorabilia celebration; a bike from every championship victory with Fabien Foret's CBR600 taking pride of place. There's also the endurance racer that Steve Plater piloted, equally as sexy as anything on display. The bike, that is, not Steve. Sorry, Steve, and get well soon.

Team manager Ronald Ten Kate makes a brief appearance, looking rather dapper, to say a quick hello before running off to a meeting. Our guide is TKR Products boss-man, Rutger Belt, happily showing off the shop before constant pestering persuades him into giving up the goods, and taking us behind the scenes.

The first room we see is a big store, carrying small parts along a sea of racks. Very dull. But then we're through and past one of the dyno-rooms in the building. Then there's a nice touch as we see a Honda 'crosser being



Ten Kate's heritage is everywhere, from men to machines



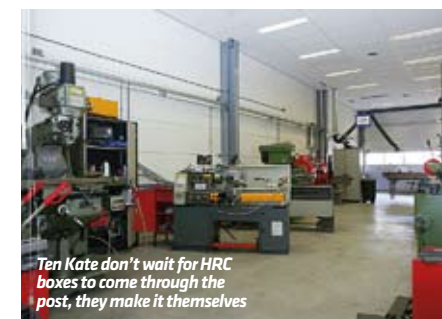
It's one of those designer outlet stores – but for blokes, not birds



At the end of the day, Ten Kate sell Hondas. And lots of 'em



"Can you see that two headed dragon on the CBR600RR over there?" The boys sample some of the local produce



Ten Kate don't wait for HRC boxes to come through the post, they make it themselves



Pull for power. Ten Kate's dyno room produces some pretty magical figures



TO THE LEFT OF PARTS SITS A LITTLE MEMORABILIA CELEBRATION – A BIKE FROM EVERY CHAMPIONSHIP VICTORY



These aren't race replicas, these are race realicas. Except for the team scooter

wheeled in to a small work space for some attention. Ten Kate's dirty past is long distant, yet it's nice to see nonetheless.

Immediately to the right is the general workshop, where servicing is being carried out on both CBRs and Goldwings alike. Punters can even watch from the sidelines, until the pull of the showroom and a hot cuppa becomes too much to resist. So far, so normal fare, but the next set of double doors leads to Nirvana. And rules. Rutger clearly defines the limits of our invitation; what we can and can't touch, in essence. Fair enough, we're now in the inner sanctum and one of the first modules we visit is where Rootsy's bike will be worked

on. It's where they prepare customer bikes for race series all over the globe. And to the left of that, is the engine building unit – the first place we're denied entry to. Across the way is a machine shop, with CNC machines and lathe's up the ying-yang. All of the delicious home-brewed TKR aftermarket parts are brought to life right here. And scattered around are race bikes, mostly old ones including the third JT machine we've seen so far. Atop the sides sit box after box of new Hondas, and enough flight cases to accommodate even the most modest girl's shoe collection. Staring back at those are a billion tyres, or what looks like, aside a huge

TEN KATE TIMELINE

1993 Long-standing motorcycle dealer, Gerrit Ten Kate, enters road-racing for the first time as a tuner

1994 Ten Kate enters the Dutch supersport series

1995 First full season in Dutch supersport and European supersport

1996 Enters Thunderbikes running with Grand Prix, Iain MacPherson wins one race

1997 First foray into world supersport

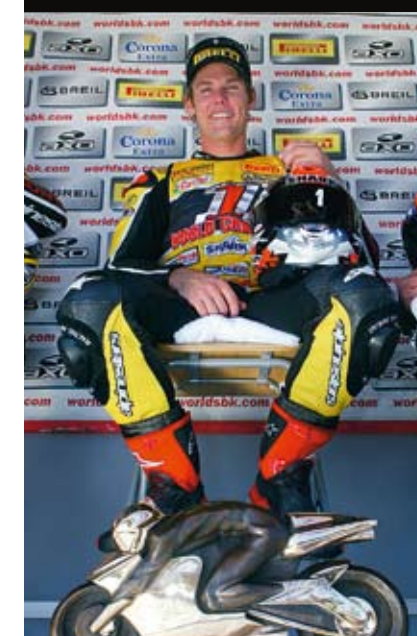
1998 Dutch supersport champions with Torleif Hartleman

1999 Competes in world supersport (WSS) and British supersport, with FB scribes Rob Frost and Shakey Byrne

2000 Ten Kate finishes fifth in WSS, with Karl 'Muggs' Muggeridge taking its first win

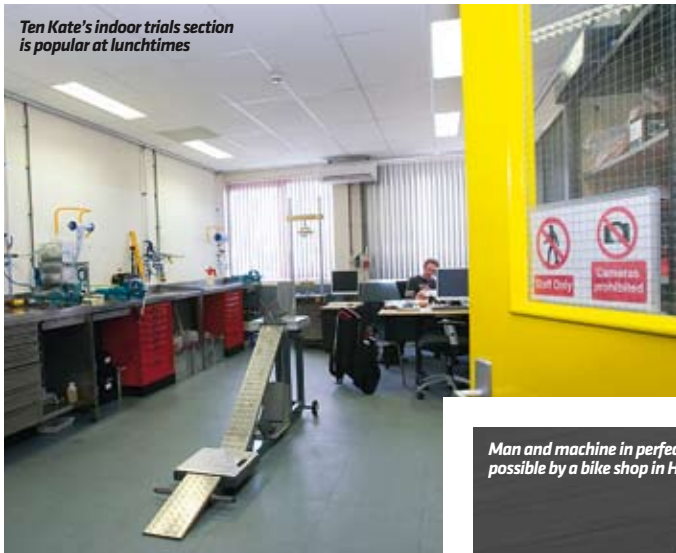
2001 Ten Kate finishes eighth and sixth in world supersport

2002 First world supersport title win with Fabien Foret



He's no mug, Muggers scored Ten Kate's first WSS win in 2001 and went on to win the title for them in 2004

Ten Kate's indoor trials section is popular at lunchtimes



James Toseland won Ten Kate's first world superbike crown



Man and machine in perfect harmony – all made possible by a bike shop in Holland



2003 Worlds supersport champions with Chris Vermeulen

2004 WSS champions with Karl Muggeridge, enters WSB with Vermeulen, finishes fourth overall. Winston Tobacco sponsors Ten Kate

2005 World supersport champions with Sebastien Charpentier

2006 WSS champions with Charpentier, first man to retain the WSS title

2007 Double world champions; James Toseland wins WSB and Kenan Sofuoglu takes the WSS title, for new sponsors Hannspree

2008 WSS champions with Andrew Pitt, Johnny Rea makes it a Ten Kate one-two

2009 Ten Kate loses the WSS title to Yamaha, Johnny Rea takes his first wins in WSB

2010 Johnny Rea and Max Neukirchner tackle WSB with Sofuoglu and Michel Pirro in WSS

► collection of parts, fairings and anything else deemed fit to dwell there. Drinking in the sheer glut of awesomeness on display, Rutger shows us the newest part of the building, where the race team is housed.

The space is vast, really vast. To the right is the first of the four huge race trucks that service the team. Even with all four behemoths in residence, there's still enough space to fit a couple more, if they ever felt the need. The trucks are in the process of being restocked for the next long drive; spare engines lined up in the side-compartments, and pasta pots topped up in the galley. And again, more retired race bikes line up in view, a pair of JT's 'Blades in the collection this time. On the left sits another dyno-room, then the suspension shop and set-up area.

Understandably, we're allowed nowhere sensitive. As if to emphasise the point, getting too close to the team office windows while a post-Aspen debrief takes place, is quickly ended by a finger wagged in our direction. No problemo, we're just happy to be here. Past the office are the race bike workshops and within, Johnny Rea's race winning bikes are under autopsy, being prepared for Monza. Directly opposite sit Sofuoglu and Pirro's Hannspree CBR600s, also being dissected to doubtless figure out an edge that can be gained on Eugene Laverty's currently dominant Parkalgar Honda. Ten Kate want that title



World championship winning machines litter Ten Kate's HQ. So do grinning idiots

back, and considering its previous form, being the underdog for a change sits well on their shoulders. Above the workshops is another stupidly vast storage space with, you got it, yet another JT machine standing guard. And sorry, lads, we only saw the 'Do Not Sit' stickers after that fact, ahem.

Further offices sit at the rear of the building, compounding the impression of how large an operation Ten Kate has grown into, and just how many souls are involved. There's a constant stream of shop employees, mechanics and race team members flitting here and there, attending to their own small part of Ten Kate's ongoing success. It's almost overwhelming, and certainly impressive.

These guys are the reason HRC don't need their own team in WSB, and it all stems from right here. Long may that continue. ☐