

INTERVIEW: IVAN CERVANTES

IVAN CERVANTES IS A LEGEND OF THE ENDURO WORLD, HAVING WON MULTIPLE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS AND COMPETED IN THE DAKAR RALLY ACROSS HIS 10-YEAR CAREER. IN 2023, HE SWAPPED HIS DIRT BIKE FOR A TRIUMPH TIGER 1200 GT AND BROKE THE RECORD FOR TRAVELLING THE LONGEST DISTANCE ON A MOTORCYCLE IN 24 HOURS. IVAN SAT DOWN WITH **ANNA SMITH** TO TALK ABOUT HIS INCREDIBLE CAREER ON TWO WHEELS

ABR: Hi Ivan, congratulations on setting the record for the longest distance travelled on a motorbike in 24 hours (2,493.28 miles or 4,012.53km). What inspired you to take on the challenge?

Ivan Cervantes: It came from Triumph. It's interesting because they called me one morning and said, 'Hey, I have a big challenge for you but it's completely different from anything you've done in your life. 24 hours, one bike, one man, one oval track, you need to break the world record.'

I said, 'Yeah OK, but how many kilometres?' I was thinking in 24 hours, maybe 1,000 or 2,000, maximum. No, the record was 3,406km (2,116 miles). I asked if they were saying it was 300km not 3,000km because sometimes my English isn't perfect. Yes, it was 3,000.

I asked if it was even possible and Triumph said it would be a big challenge, and if I wanted to do it, they would call me the next week. I spent all weekend thinking about it. In my life, I've always taken on big challenges, and this certainly was a big challenge. It didn't matter that it was a completely different bike to what I use normally. That's how it started, just two months before the attempt.

ABR: You reached the top of the enduro world, raced in the Dakar, and managed all of the pressure and expectation that came with it. How different was it to prepare for this attempt?

IC: More than physically, it's mentally difficult. A good mentality for this is very, very important because it is 24 hours non-stop. I only stopped for small rests, three or four minutes to put a little petrol in my bike and eat some energy bars.

It's tough to prepare for, but in two months I tried to get my helmet on at night and ride. I have the Tiger 1200 at home. Of course, it wasn't 24 hours when I practised, but I got to know the feel of the bike at night. In the day everything is easier. When the darkness comes, it becomes so difficult.

ABR: Because it's harder to concentrate?

IC: Of course. If you are on a normal track, you have left corners, right corners, difficult sections, it's easier to focus. On an oval, it's very easy to lose concentration. I don't need to be thinking about turning left or right or doing something difficult. It's always full gas, one lap, two laps, three laps.

I started at 7am in the morning to do the attempt, and four or five hours later I thought 'this is a very tough because the time is not flying, everything is going very slowly'. The speed was very fast but the time was going slow. But I was there to fulfill this dream. When you have one goal, it is your dream to do it perfectly.

ABR: Did you manage to settle into it? How were you feeling after 12 or 13 hours?

IC: After 12 hours my stomach started to ache really bad. I'd only had a big breakfast two hours before the start of the attempt. After that, people recommended that I not eat too much, so I was eating energy bars, a lot of water with electrolytes, and coffee in the pit tops, but not too much.

After 12 hours my stomach said 'Hey, give me some solid food or I'll make a disaster'. I asked the people at the track, 'We are in Italy, I need some good pasta' and so they prepared me some pasta.

ABR: You broke the record after hour 18, but you carried on riding anyway. How did it feel when you finally got off the bike?

IC: Wow. The feeling was amazing. When you have a goal and you achieve it, it is an amazing feeling. I remember it perfectly like it was yesterday. It was an amazing experience. Then the people from Triumph, said 'Maybe you can do a hundred kilometres more and that's enough.' And I said, 'I am here now. I don't want to stop.'

I tried to sleep when I broke the record. I wanted to sleep for 10, 15, 20 minutes. I closed my eyes but couldn't. Cramps started in my muscles. My mind said I

didn't have to ride anymore, I could relax and recover, but my body said no. So, I had one more coffee and carried on to the end. Before we started, I said I could ride 4,000km (2,485 miles) in 24 hours and I did it.

ABR: Rewinding a few years, how did you get into biking to begin with?

IC: I started when I was four years old for fun with my family. A small bike was a present for Christmas. The weekends were amazing. For five days I went to school and on Friday the teacher, who I remember fondly, would ask me, 'Are you very happy today?' I said yes because tomorrow I could ride my bike. I always remember my beginnings, they were amazing, with my family, with my brother, my sister.

I started in motocross at the local tracks near my home. I liked it a lot, but I never expected that my future would be on two wheels. Many of my dad's friends said, 'Your kid is very fast, maybe you can try some international races or Spanish championships to see his real level'. I started like that and every race that I did I had a victory or was on the podium, or one of the fastest guys on the track. When I was 21 or 22 years old, I signed my first contract with a factory brand.

ABR: You've gone on to compete in the Dakar Rally three times. How did you find it?

IC: Dakar is one of the toughest races in the world because the organisation plays with your health a lot. For me, it is too much. There are long stages, you arrive back very late, and then you have to get up at three in the morning and ride 400km to reach the start of the stage. And then the stage is 500km, and then you need to do another 100km to arrive back.

Every day you do somewhere between 800-1,000km. Honestly, for the stage you need to be 100% focused. It is difficult because you're at a very high speed and you need to look far ahead but also at a short distance because you need to read a small bit of paper to follow the directions on the road book.

Things like, 'right, left, after the stones turn on your right', and it is really difficult. But my experience was great. My best result was 15th in the first year, and the second year I had a big crash before the end. I was doing well overall because I was 12th, but unfortunately I couldn't make it to the end because I completely destroyed the bike.

I was happy for myself that I didn't get any injuries, but the bike was completely destroyed. You can imagine how bad the crash was and at what speed. It was on a gravel road and I didn't read the road book very well and there was a tree.



- ▲ Top left: Ivan prepares for his record attempt to ride further than anyone else in 24 hours
- ▲ Top right: He has been working with Triumph on the development of a new range of enduro bikes
- ◀ Middle left: Ivan has competed in a series of Rally Raids on the Tiger 900
- ◀ Bottom left: His record breaking ride was undertaken at the Nardò Technical Centre in Italy
- ◀ Middle bottom: Ivan is all smiles after becoming a record breaker
- ◀ Bottom right: The enduro champ has a Tiger 900 and 1200 in his garage at home



I jumped with no view at a very high speed and went over the bars. I landed well but the bike was wrecked.

ABR: Would you do it again?

IC: Not with my name. For a rider who has won the world championship five times, when I ride in the Dakar everyone has their eyes on me. Everybody says I'll win a stage or win the Dakar for sure. And then my best stage is 5th or 7th. It's tough because you could be fast in the stage and arrive back healthy, but make a mistake navigating and arrive 12th.

To go that little bit faster sometimes you play with your life, and after three years I said that's enough for me. I had the big experience. Maybe one day with four wheels, and some more safety.

ABR: You've done all these amazing things on two wheels. What's been your best experience?

IC: I travel around the world with my job but it's the bike that gives me the feeling of being free. It doesn't matter the place or the country. I have

a Tiger 900 and a Tiger 1200 at home. It depends on how I feel that day which one I take.

Normally I take the 1200 on road routes. I like it because I can just bring a big bag and not know the destination. That's amazing. You just look at your watch and think, if it's time to rest for a little, okay, I'll stop here. Sometimes I'll put the tent on the back of my bike and stay in the middle of nowhere.

ABR: Do you still ride in your downtime?

IC: Right now, I'm training. I train more than when I was a professional because I work on the off-road programme with Triumph on their new enduro bikes. Four years ago, we started this project and it's amazing. I need to be healthy and at a good fitness level because we ride with champions like Ricky Carmichael and Paul Edmondson and many other good riders. So, I'm training a lot.

But it's not difficult for me because I like my life. I'm not the type to come back home and stay on the sofa. It's okay for a little bit but not all day. I need to be active. **ABR**

▲ After 2,493.28 miles, and 24 hours, Ivan became a Guinness World Records holder