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Euro race is 'chance of a lifetime' for Alex



ON THE RIGHT TRACK: Alex Gault beat off stiff competition and produced an outstanding trial performance to win a coveted place in this year's Suzuki GSX-R European Cup.

ALEX Gault has been selected to race for Suzuki in the prestigious GSX-R European Cup after beating off hundreds of opponents to win a selection trial in Spain.

The 16-year-old Carlisle motorcyclist stood out in the recent trial at the Guadix circuit in Spain, with the highlight being an extraordinary lap time of one minute 21.9 seconds, which would have done credit to the star-studded British superbike team who were testing on the same track.

His achievement was all the more remarkable given that he has only once in his racing career sat on board a powerful 750cc bike like the Suzuki R750 machine used in the test — and he had no training before heading to the continent due to a lack of available track time and the pressing matter of his school prelim exams.

Alex has now been selected to compete in the six European Cup fixtures, which run in conjunction with the world superbike championship, beginning in Valencia next month and taking in races all over

Europe including circuits such as Magny-Cours and Silverstone.

Dad Alex senior said: "This is the chance of a lifetime. It's a brilliant opportunity and it's up to him whether he goes on from here and how he builds on it.

"He was fantastic at the test in Spain. His best lap time was the fastest by miles and he produced constant times of 1.22, so it was a great performance all-round.

"It was a very fair test, with two identical bikes and all three riders alternating between them.

"There was a very friendly atmosphere and it was an amazing experience for him to be testing alongside the big names from the British superbike team."

Teenager Alex's display earned him one of the two places in the British Suzuki team, alongside experienced 18-year-old rider Alex Camier, who took part in last year's competition and has also raced in the Japanese superbike championship.

Alex earned his coveted place after winning a competition in

Superbike magazine — to which his father sent a "tongue in cheek" entry in hope rather than expectation.

The young rider's string of achievements since taking up the sport six years ago, most particularly winning last season's CB500 Cup title after dominating the championship, caught the eye of the racing team's management.

He also had an interview with Suzuki officials during breaks in training at Guadix, and they were sufficiently impressed to invite him to represent them in the contest, which has now been running for three years.

Alex has also made some friends in high places along the way, particularly impressing three-time British champion John Reynolds, who mentored him during his trip to Spain.

The top rider and coach said: "It was a pleasure to be at the test and to offer some advice — the team has some really exciting young talent and I'll be watching Alex's progress with interest."