

Motocross champ Pastrana co-hosts 'Most Wanted'

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Normally, law enforcement officers on extreme sports star Travis Pastrana's property in Davidsonville would be bad news - an injury, a break-in or *vroom* ... a noise complaint.



Katrina Williams — For The Capital

County Sheriff Ron Bateman, left, talks to motocross star Travis Pastrana about the importance of education last month during the filming of the "Anne Arundel's Most Wanted" TV show.

But it was all fun and games - OK, a little education, too - last month when county Sheriff Ron Bateman geared up on Pastrana's tricked-out 20 acres for a taping of the "Anne Arundel's Most Wanted" TV show and a bike ride around the property.

Bateman and his son Zack, 15, ride motocross just about every weekend at a friend's property in Crownsville.

The sheriff said he began riding at age 13.

"I took a *very* extended break and started back again recently," Bateman said. "He (Zack) and I are really into it."

The sheriff and his son are also big fans of Pastrana, 26, and his MTV show, "Nitro Circus."

Bateman took note of how much Zack and other local teens look up to Pastrana.

He decided Pastrana would be the perfect co-host to get through to the county's youth about the importance of education, safety and finding a hobby to stay out of trouble - the theme of this month's "Most Wanted" program.

'Just too cool'

At just after 10 a.m. on April 9, Bateman, Zack, Maj. Rick Tabor, Tabor's teenage son, Josh, Deputy Sheriff Harry Neisser and a small film crew gathered outside the "shop" behind Pastrana's home.

The group had a chance to take in what Bateman called "the Disneyland of motocross" while waiting for Pastrana, who had gone up the street to the Dunkin' Donuts on Riva Road for a bite to eat.

The home looked familiar to Zack and Josh; it was once showcased on "MTV Cribs."

Bateman was noticeably giddy.

"This is just too cool," he said. "Would you look at that ramp over there? That is crazy. Zack, look at that thing."

While waiting for Pastrana, Bateman suited up in a motocross jersey, pants, gloves and boots.

Meanwhile, Hubert Rowland, the Southern-accented Tennessean "hillbilly" often seen on "Nitro Circus" fixing dirt bikes, driving tractors and building jumps, hopped aboard a Bobcat and began shuffling ramps for the filming of the county show.

Within minutes, Pastrana jogged downhill from his four-bedroom bachelor pad to his shop, a garage that stores dozen of bikes. Smiling ear-to-ear, he greeted Bateman, the teens and the crew with handshakes.

"For a multimillionaire 26-year-old, he was so humble," Bateman said last week.

Bateman gave Pastrana a quick rundown of the show and his plans for the filming.

Pastrana nodded.

"Sounds good, let's do it," he said, clapping his hands together.

1st up: Education

Pastrana started riding bikes at age 4 when Santa Claus left a 50cc motorcycle under the Christmas

tree.

Ten years later, he captured the world freestyle championship.

Pastrana said getting involved in sports, including motocross, at a young age kept him out of trouble and focused on the future.

“Sports have always given me motivation,” Pastrana said during the filming. “The second I got out of school I already knew what I was going to do.”

But he had to keep up his grades to play.

“Education is a big part of my life,” he said. “Education was always a No. 1 priority. If I didn’t stay on the honor roll there was no way I was going to ride my motorcycle.... Suzuki had a Good Scholar program and everyone worked really hard. Everyone’s main focus was to graduate before going pro at 16.”

In 1998, Pastrana suffered a severe spinal injury while competing in an FMX competition.

He put his long months of recovery time to good use.

“I was able to focus on my schoolwork,” he said. “I got my high school diploma at 15.”

But Pastrana’s education didn’t stop there.

He enrolled at Anne Arundel Community College in Arnold and took several communications courses.

“Being able to speak means a full-factory ride versus another kid,” Pastrana said. “They’re trying to get you to represent their brand. Education really helped.”

And cut.

“Perfect,” Bateman said to Pastrana.

Next topic: Safety

“Safe” isn’t the first word that comes to mind when Pastrana’s name is mentioned.

As part of his TV show, Pastrana rode a dirt bike off a ramp into the Grand Canyon, parachuting the rest of the way down. He has also jumped out of a plane without a parachute only to have a skydiver catch him in midair. He’s broken so many bones that he stopped counting.

But Bateman argued that Pastrana takes safety very seriously.

“Though he does a lot of crazy stunts, he’s really big on safety,” Bateman said. “I’ve seen his

shows. When someone is riding without a helmet, he (Pastrana) goes crazy. They'll stop taping the show and everything."

Between takes last month, Pastrana neatly stacked goggles, ankle supports, kneepads and other safety equipment into a makeshift display for the cameraman.

When asked where he'd be without his equipment, Pastrana shook his head.

"Oh, I know I'd be 6 feet under," he said.

An honor

After the taping finished, Bateman made Pastrana an honorary deputy sheriff. The honor came with a special lapel pin and a framed certificate, which Bateman hoped Pastrana would hang along with other certificates of achievement.

Pastrana is one of three celebrities named an honorary deputy sheriff, joining musician Aaron Neville and "Wheel of Fortune" host and Severna Park resident Pat Sajak.

The show will begin airing this month on Channel 98 on Comcast/Xfinity and Broadstripe, and Channel 38 on Verizon.

"Anne Arundel's Most Wanted" airs at 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. every day, Bateman said. The show also can be viewed online at www.aacounty.org/video/AAMW.cfm.