

Travis Pastrana to open training centres around the world

 By [Eugene Yiga](#)

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Eugene Yiga chats to professional motorsports competitor and stunt performer Travis Pastrana about his championship career, family life, and more.

What did you like doing as a child?

For me, it was all about just having fun. Fun was always jumping off bridges or riding dirt bikes or BMX. My family had a construction company so we were always building things. I love building ramps. We always had new piles of dirt to play with and sand piles to land in (that was a little softer). It was a lot of fun.



■ ***What did you want to be when you were growing up?***

All I ever wanted to be when I was growing up was a motocross racer. Maybe when I was about two to five, I wanted to be a monster truck driver, but both kind of came true. My mom raced motorcycles. My dad raced motorcycles. Most of my uncles raced. That's what we did as a family on the weekends.

■ ***What was it like when you started racing professionally?***

I raced all the way up through the amateur ranks; we all kind of turned pro at around the same time. It was a dream come true. It felt similar even though instead of a hundred spectators at a local track, you're in front of a hundred thousand at a big stadium. For me, it was always about the riding. It was more personal than it was about trying to be famous or anything like that. It was just a kind of progression.

■ ***What's the hardest thing you've had to overcome in your career?***

Racing was always what I wanted to do and what I wanted to be. And then I was hurt so much. After my third ACL (anterior

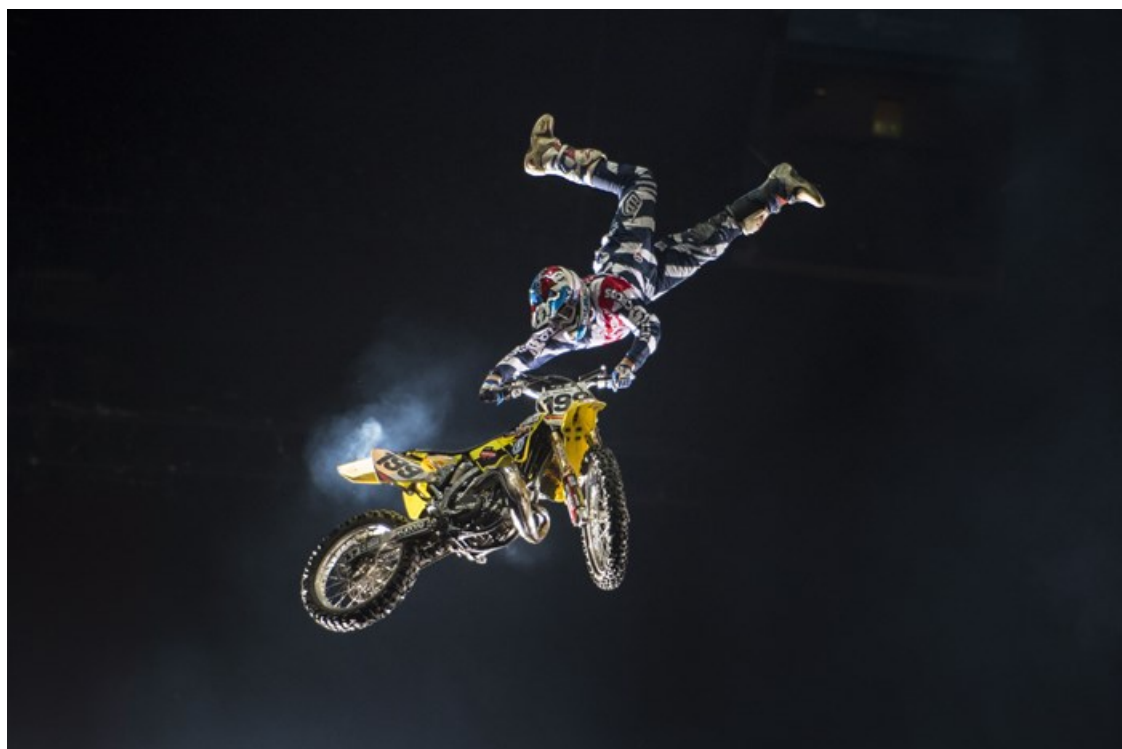
cruciate ligament) reconstruction in three years, I just didn't know what I was going to do – I could hardly walk – and I just didn't know if I could be the athlete I wanted to be. Ironically, that's when freestyle motocross started and that's when rally racing started for me. You don't need to walk well to do a freestyle trick. And you don't need to be in amazing shape to drive a car. So I could still race and still be competitive.

■ ***What's challenging about what you do?***

I think the hardest challenge has to be routine of any kind, especially now with two kids; that might be the most difficult challenge of my life. Luckily my wife (professional skateboarder Lyn-Z Adams Hawkins) who is also a bad-ass athlete has taken on motherhood well. But marriage and parenthood are challenges for everybody. It's also difficult when you're about to do a trick that you've never done before and if it goes wrong you could possibly die. It's an interesting conundrum once you have a family, for sure.

■ ***How does your family feel about the risks of your career?***

I think it's always tougher on parents more than it is on the kids. So my mom definitely says I gave her grey hair. But no matter how bad I've been injured or what part of my life I've been in, my mom asks, "Are you sure this is what you want to do?" And I say, "Thank you for giving me the opportunity to chase my dreams."



■ ***What inspires you to do what you do despite the risks?***

It's simple, passion. It's to wake up in the morning and to have that smile on your face and to be able to do what you love to do. I hate getting hurt but the worst part about being hurt is that you can't do what you love because the pain of being hurt is less than the pain of not being able to travel the world with your friends and ride your dirt bike. So I would never stop doing what I love.

■ ***What's been your number one highlight so far?***

I won the 2000 AMA (American Motorcyclist Association) 125cc National championship, that was something that I always dreamed of. But to have started Nitro Circus and to be able to film TV shows and go all around the world to do some rad stuff with my best friends and family is the best career highlight for me.

■ ***How do you come up with new ideas for Nitro Circus?***

If you see someone doing something, even if he crashes and messes up, you might think, “Oh, he accidentally almost did this. What if we try this? Or what if we add this?” That’s the best part about being on tour, where it’s all the best in the world. There’s always someone that can do something that you can’t. But once you learn how to do it, it opens up so many doors to stuff you never even thought of.

▣ ***How do you adapt your shows around the world?***

We have a contraptions specialist that just loves welding and piecing stuff together, going out and finding the local culture and seeing what kind of contraptions they have in different parts of the world that we might not know about and seeing if we can run it down the ramp. A lot of them end poorly but the crowd loves it.

▣ ***What’s your next big challenge?***

Trying to figure out how to build training facilities. We have one in Australia and one that’s set up part-time in California. But I want to build one in South Africa, one in Europe, and maybe two in the US where riders can train and can work on these big jumps that we’re coming out with. Right now, we have a few guys on tour that are doing triple backflips and quadruple backflips on bicycles but it’s unattainable for the kids coming up. That’s why Nitro World Games is open to the public; it’s rad to have a world championship that’s not invite-only.

▣ ***What do you do in your spare time?***

The same thing we do when we’re on the show: riding dirt bikes, bicycles, four-wheelers, pit bikes, and just having fun. Now I spend a lot more time with my family and my daughters want to do the same stuff. My wife knew what she married into and I knew what I married into. But I’m scared that our five-year-old (daughter Addy Ruth) loves motorcycles and bicycles and that our three-year-old (daughter Bristol Murphy) has already been on the four-wheelers. But at the end of the day, it’s fun. And I want them to have that same passion that we have for whatever they choose to do.

nitrocircus.com/tour/

ABOUT EUGENE YIGA

Eugene graduated from the University of Cape Town with distinctions in financial accounting and classical piano. He then spent over two-and-a-half years working in branding and communications at two of South Africa’s top market research companies. Eugene also spent over three-and-a-half years at an eLearning start-up, all while building his business as an award-winning writer. Visit www.eugeneyiga.com, follow @eugeneyiga on Twitter, or email hello@eugeneyiga.com to say, um, hello.

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