

AMA or WSMC??? Now We Know What Fast Is!!!

As some of you know, WSMC is a hot bed of West Coast racing. When the AMA takes a weekend off, we sometimes enjoy the humbling experience of racing against some faster than normal riders. This weekend was just that, a weekend of the faster riders joining our little club racers.

Here are my quick and dirty highlights.

The first race was Open Super Bike. I started 7th of 22, and finished 11th.

The second race was Open Modified Production. I went from 5th on the grid to a finishing position of 5th. My best finish of the entire weekend, but a faster lap was performed in third race of the day, Open Super Stock.

The third race had me gridded 2nd, since I am 2nd in the class championship point's battle. I finished 8th in a field of 21. Suzuki pays half the field up to 20 entrants, so I will still get paid.

The last race of the day pitted my Super Stock machine against 32 other Formula 1 machines. I placed just in the top 20, at 20th, and earned myself another entrance into the giveaway for the 125 cc Suzuki dirt bike at the end of the year awards banquet. I now have three entrances to the truck giveaway and three entrances to the dirt bike giveaway.

Unfortunately, the past couple of race weekends have resulted in monetary loss, as well as bodily injury for me. Physically, I have been extremely lucky to only walk away with minor bruising, and mentally, I am almost 100% again. Before the past two wrecks, one at over 130 mph, and one at a mere 70 mph, I was lapping Willow Springs at a staggeringly quick pace of consistent mid 1:25 lap times, with a best lap of 1:24.7. Now just a few short weeks later, I had a weekend best of 1:25.99. I am confident that I will soon be back to my normal mid to low 1:25 lap times by next month.

The reason I am so sure is that my bike is in great shape with beautiful new plastic, supplied by my newest sponsor of the 2004 race season, AirTECH. Thank you Brian and the crew down in Vista for getting my bike back into excellent racing trim. I also had my suspension rebuilt before heading off to Vegas, where I proceeded to throw the bike away at the top of fourth gear near the end of my first WERA WEST race. Thanks Ray, from Engineered Racing Products, for not only rebuilding my suspension, but also tweaking it this weekend to have me running almost back to my normal race pace. The Race Tech parts are working just as expected, superb.

I also have to thank Brian and his family, for their hands on approach to helping out the entire MDG Racing team. Brian came out to the track to join our club this past weekend after attending four track days at Willow Springs. He had an awesome time on Saturday's new racers school, even if Dawn, Ms. Zebra, kicked his ass all day. Since Brian didn't race until the final race on Sunday, he helped me out tremendously by acting as my own personal front tire changer. I had to do a couple of tire changes on Sunday, due to the fact that I raced in the 1st, 3rd, 6th, and 12 races of the weekend. Also, the 1st and 3rd races were on Slicks, the 6th race was on DOT race tires. And finally, the 12th race was again on slicks. Brian, I can't thank you enough. Your family showing up and then producing a fabulous pizza and chicken lunch, nothing but phenomenal. Thank you Starks, you will always be welcome in our humble RV abode.

Now on to the actual racing events.

First, I want to share the pure excitement of two guys that came out to the track for the first time this weekend.

Mike made his debut on a slightly damaged 636, and was promptly relegated to start in the second wave of a 40 something packed middle-weight novice race. He finished fairly well, considering the need to go from the true back of the field all the way up to the middle of the first wave of starters. Congratulations Mike, next time you will move even farther forwards. Just remember, each time you ride, you will ride faster.

Brian had a much easier task of moving through his novice class, as there were only 13 riders in the heavy-weight novice race on Sunday. Brian had been on the track a few times prior to racing and it showed in the way he attacked all turns of the 9 corner track. His race had all the makings of a super star performance. Brian managed to dominate his 12 competitors and finished an excellent podium finishing spot just behind the leader. Not bad for a kid still in his teens. Congratulations Brian, you too have only one way to go, UP!!! He even held the lead for about 100 yards on the final lap, but a 750 is just no match for a 1000. He could have used some late braking techniques to hold off the eventual winner of the race but with time will come experience. If he learns anything from me, it will be that you never make the same mistake twice. Right Brian???

Since my first race of Sunday would be Open Super Bike, I knew the day would start rough. I made my way around the track for the warm up lap heightened with the awareness of the higher caliber of racers this weekend. I also took mental note of my bike's superior handling now with the full Super Stock treatment of exhaust, brakes, and now suspension modifications. I launched my bike from the grid and made my way into the outside of turn 1 to set myself up for a great drive to turn 2. As I throttled the powerful 1000 cc machine towards the next turn, I was passed from my great starting position of 7th on the grid to about 5th after turn 1 back to about 9th exiting turn 2. My sub-par Super Bike lap times of mid 1:28's and low 1:29's put me and my motorcycle on a backwards race. I started to come alive towards the end of the race but mentally, my mind was playing havoc on my physical ability to go faster. I finished the race confident the day would get better, and I would gain ground on the mental block put in my mind by my recent crashes.

Now that I had one race under my belt and the knowledge that faster bikes in were in my midst, I looked forwards to the challenge of competition with these other motorcycle riding warriors. Open Modified Production is a class in which I am closely matched for hardware. My Super Stock bike is enough to propel me to the top 5 in points in this class. I was gridded 5th and made the best of my second row starting position. Again, I threw my bike into the outside of turn 1 and made a dash for the fourth spot in a line of fairly fast competitors. As the laps wound down from 5 laps to go all the way to the white flag lap, I battled with my buddy Rick "snappy" Spampinato, #89. He got by me on the last lap and took fourth place away from me in the final few turns. I was happy to compete at his level, and knew the next race, Open Super Stock, may offer me ample opportunity to redeem myself.

Open Super Stock is definitely my favorite race. Not only is the playing field the most level, kind of like IROC on bikes, but I am also doing quite well in this class. The start of our race was short lived, for as we rounded turn 4 for the first time, a bright, waving RED flag came out. I hadn't got a great start and wondered if I would get a

better second chance once we were re-gridded. As we were instructed to go to the pits, due to an accident in the second wave start of our race, we came around to turn 1 to see the horrific realism of motorcycle racing. Apparently, one rider, Mr. Landen, was hit from behind as he entered turn 1 on the start of the 750 Modified Production race. After being hit, he crashed and then was run over by the same guy that had just hit his rear tire. Both riders were injured, but Mr. Landen got the worst of it. Since I only know about the accident from those who saw it and only know the extent of his injuries from what I have read on other boards, I will just relay the information that he is recovering in a San Bernardino hospital after receiving massive head trauma, and numerous internal injuries. We wish you all the best and a speedy and full recovery.

Needless to say, it has been two life flight helicopters to the track in the same number of months. Not a record we want to hold by any means, but racing motorcycles is definitely an extremely dangerous adventure and we all know this well before we suit up for race day. To all those that have been hurt, I can only sympathize a little, as I have been overly lucky, so far. I can say that I wish only great joy after you all recover. Good Luck!!!

After the fairly long delay in getting medical help to our fallen racing brothers, we were put back on the track to restart our race that was now shortened to just 4 laps. I knew I would have to battle hard and make quick moves to advance my bike to a leading position. I flew from the line as if I was aboard the privately built space ship exploring the stratosphere at full throttle. I made my way to the top ten rather quickly. I noticed my buddy Rick ahead of me and just a few bike in front of him were some back markers from the 750 race. As I challenged Rick into a late braking dual into turn 3, I noticed he left me a few feet to pass him on the outside. I took full advantage of the open race track and passed him for the spot. I then had to deal with the lapped traffic of a slower 750 rider going into turn 5. I made a move to pass him on the entrance to turn 5. Later, Rick told me he thought there wasn't enough room for the pass I made and that it looked rather dicey. I told Rick that I thought I had more than enough room to make the pass, and that if there had been an incident; I wouldn't have tried the pass. You have to remember this was a race of pride between Rick and I and it was for 8th place, which I ended up winning. I knew I had the upper hand on Rick this race, but just as we had tangled in the Malibu canyons on our street bikes a few years ago, we both knew the race track would allow us even more chances to swap some racing history. This is the race that had me reaching into my experience bag of tricks and pulling out a 1:25.99 lap. I was pleased to see the lap timer flashing me a fastest lap of the day, so far, and my confidence rose slightly higher after glancing at the lap time.

Just so we all know the score, it was now Rick - 1 Marcel -1. All tied up with just the 12 lap Formula 1 race left in the day.

Since I knew there were some really fast guys out there, well, 33 of us total in the Formula 1 race, I realized I would have to perform some great lap times to even be on par with most of these other racers. I had taken a small beating in the first three races of the day, and now I would be put to the true test. I hadn't been to the gym in the past few weeks due to spending so much time working on my slightly disabled GSXR-1000. I also knew that without the proper conditioning and the added factor of the really fast guys showing up, I would have to work extra hard to secure a top 20 finish. Rick and I had a few corners of exchanging front tire showings, but in the end, he took me by one spot, he finishing 19th and I in the all important 20th spot. I

remember hitting the fourth lap and then coming to the realization that this race was only 1/3 over and I was totally beat physically. Mentally, I was up for the challenge. My confidence in my abilities to ride fast and smooth was at an all time high, as well as the ability of my machinery to perform flawlessly as it had so many times before, made me enter the race with a winning attitude. After I crossed the finishing line with crossed flags saluting me, half the race was over, I knew I would finish, but how many would pass me before it was over. I looked to my lap timer and noticed dramatically slower lap times of 1:27's, 1:28's, and a few 1:26's, which added to my mental declination. I managed to hold onto the 20th place after being passed by two more riders on the final couple of laps.

My race weekend was over; no crashes, two top ten finishes, a top 20 finish in Formula 1, and the knowledge that I can still ride fast!!! Now I look towards the future and my will to dip my lap times back into the magical region of the 1 minute 24 second range. I hope to report only great racing adventures from this day on. Thanks for reading and sharing in my trial and tribulations of racing.

My first thank you goes out to Marc, for without your help last month at California Speedway; this month may have had a different out come. I also want to thank again, the plastic builders at AirTECH for getting my bike to look as good as it did this past weekend.

Jodie, Josephine, Sebastian, and Valentino, I thank you all for your continued support, even if during Saturday's practice you all attended a birthday party and not my race practice day. Sometimes we need to make our own memories, and a 6 year old's birthday party takes precedence.

Brian and you family deserve a lot of mention as well. Thank you Brian for your willingness to work in the heat to help a buddy achieve his personal goals and for performing as well as I expected you to. Congratulations. And to your family, thank you for your generosity in providing edible ingredients on our Sunday event. We look forwards to many more adventures to be shared in the near and far future. By the way, what is the name of the resort I need to start promoting soon???

Thanks to Pranav and Phyliss for coming out. It was great to have both of your support at the track. We always enjoy sharing time with great people. Thanks.

I have a list of sponsors that I can thank for supporting me with all my racing needs each and every month I go out and do battle at the race tracks near our home. Thank you:

Suzuki of Van Nuys - www.suzukiofvannuys.com
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Next month will be another new track, Buttonwillow. I hope to have great memories and experiences from this track and will update you all with my racing endeavors.

Hope to see some of you at Laguna Seca this coming month for the World Super Bike races.

Marcel