

## Humility Builds Character!!!

Well, I have had my first taste of reality smack me square in the face, and now I must struggle to not let it get me down. 😞 With high expectations sometimes come slight setbacks. I had the plan all worked out to qualify for the Toyota 200, being one of the fastest 40, and then racing the entire event, with help from friends in the pits and a strong mental attitude. 🤝 Finally finishing the event with a confident Top 20 placing. As I have learned many years ago, PLANS CHANGE!!! 🚫

Unfortunately, I didn't want the plans to deviate even to the minutest degree from the direction I had set them in.

Thursday evening had the entire Graeber family loaded into the RV trailering my race bike out to Friday's Toyota 200 Qualifying round number two. I was extremely confident in my ability to break into the Top 40 Friday. I had run mid 1:27 lap times in all three of my prior month's races and placed respectfully in each with two 6th places and a 4th place.

We entered the track and headed for our usual turn 1 pit area. The pits were unfamiliarly filled with more people and nicer race rigs than just an average race weekend. Oh yeah, this was the \$150,000 Toyota 200 race weekend. 🚫 I had dreams of great things happening this weekend while the "Sandman" entered my Thursday night's rest period.

Friday morning came quick, while I had visions of turning a low 27 or high 26 lap time, the night before. 😞 Let the front straight speed bleed into turn 1, gas it hard for a good drive into 2. Ride through turn 2 faster than I had previously taken that corner, and use the exit speed to attack turn 3. Turn 3 was now my friend, because I would drag my left boot as I headed up the hill to 4a. Speed was increasing up the hill towards the exit of 4b, with my right knee puck sliding dangerously close to the inside apex, marked by a broken piece of asphalt covered with a stripe of white paint. Twisting the throttle all the way counterclockwise until I passed the alligator stripes on the outside entrance to turn 5. Throwing my 1000 cc Suzuki towards the inside rumble strips of apex 5 while feathering the throttle to maximize traction for a great beginning to the fastest part of the Willow Springs race track. A slight dip of the gas being forced into the motor through four mighty fuel injectors cresting turn 6, as not to upset the delicate balance of suspension and tire performance with the addition of one less wheel to Earth contact patch. The last part of the lap is critical for a "fast" lap, turns 8 and 9. Keeping the most amount of combustible liquid explosive material flowing into the mixing and burning chambers, called cylinders, at the fastest rate, will keep the race bike's velocity at a maximum while traversing the never ending arch labeled turn 8. The last act in this beautiful dance of man and machine is entering turn 9 cleanly. You aim for the little dip at the apex, by almost turning in too late after exiting turn 8, with one down shift just before the delayed entrance to the final turn. Gas is already being introduced at a feverish pace mid corner to propel the bike down the front straight to restart the next lap of Willow Springs International Racetrack

I had dreamed of many laps that night before qualifying, readying my mind and body for the actual event. I slept well and was optimistic of the coming day's qualifying efforts unfolding.

Tech went smooth. Morning practice had me turning the types of times I knew I was capable of, low 1:27 second lap times. I had used all of my practice tires up and needed one more set to qualify on. Satisfied that I would be in the show, I bought a set of tires specifically for the qualification session of Friday at 3:35 p.m.

Let's put some perspective on the Toyota 200 event history by introducing last year's inaugural running qualifying lap times. First the fastest lap, a 1:21. 🚫 Secondly, the slowest qualifying lap time was a 1:28.3. I figured a mid to low 1:27 would be the ticket to racing in the 2nd Annual Toyota 200. Man was I way wrong. 😞 🤔

Our own Stuart, one seriously fast rider, 👍 showed me just how difficult it would be. Stuart ran a 1:26.492 and was one man out of the top 40, with a 41st finishing position in the qualifying rounds combined from this month and last month. 🚫 I unfortunately turned a 1:27.202, placing me 46th on the list of 61 that attempted to qualify for the race. I was extremely pleased with my final qualifying placing of 42nd, since I have only been racing for 7 months and I had gone faster than 19 others in the qualifying rounds. 👍

Since my timed practice session of the morning seeded me into the "B" crowd, posting a 1:27.4, I found it easy to go fast with little distraction from others, be them much faster or much slower than I. As the timed qualifying session began, I started out with a couple of warm-up laps. Then I turned it up a notch to put in a few fast laps. Trying to go fast and actually going fast are two different beasts all together. Since last month's crash, I had almost completely forgotten about the feeling of sliding my bike and self up the track. 😊 My first few fast laps proved to be "great" in my eyes. I had a 1:27.265 showing on my lap timer. I was completely satisfied with this time and headed into the pits to rest a short bit. 😊

Immediately upon entering the pits, my adrenaline spiked, my mind started to race, and I had thoughts of turning a 1:26 second lap time. 😊 I re-entered the track a second time to try to prove myself correct that I could go even faster. Three laps later, I had reserved the thought that a low 27 would be my finest lap to date, other than my 1:27.1 last month during practice following Stuart, just before I crashed.

I headed to the tire vendor to thank him for the temporary use of his product to perform my qualifying effort, and hope that it would put me in the Toyota 200. I thanked them, the tire vendor, and was rudely awakened that a 27.2 was the bubble. 🚫 Unbeknownst to me, during my first two trips out to the track for qualifying, I had managed to run myself into 40th then 41st position. I quickly decided, even after looking at my completely worn front and rear tire, to re-enter the track one last time to get myself in this race one way or another.

My last three laps, had me turn my fastest lap on Friday, the 1:27.202. 👍 I had to be pleased as I saw my result from the afternoon's performance; I was now 39th on the qualifying roster. 👍 When it mattered, I had performed to the best of my ability, and it was good enough. 😊 Sadly, this was only qualifying from the day. Now came the true test, the conglomeration of last month's times with this month's times. My fate was almost sealed when the final list of qualifying came to be posted in the WSMC office window. I was now 46th. I was optimistic, as I left the transponder on my rear fairsing the entire Saturday expert races, until the final grid was posted for the Toyota 200.

The Top 40 had until 12 noon on Saturday to pay their entrance fee, and then the alternates got their shot. Alternates then had until 2 p.m. to pay. When the final Top 40 had grid positions, I had climbed the ranks to number 42. Just a mere two spots away from being in the big show. Now to compare last year to this year, with regards to qualifying times. This year's fastest lap time was a 1:19.7, 2 seconds faster than last year. 🚫 The slowest qualifying time this year was a 1:26.8 verses a 1:28.3 last year. Again, almost 2 seconds faster. 🚫 I plan on being a Top 10 contender next year, since I will have a year to get faster, and I am already turning 1:27's. The Top 10 this year were all in the 23's, and this is where I plan to be, soon. 🤔

Since the Toyota 200 was not an option, and I had three sets of race tires, I figured I would race my normal three classes, Open Super Bike, Open Modified Production, and Open Super Stock.

Just prior to the Saturday expert races I was joyously rewarded for my first 6 month's race efforts by receiving my WSMC PRO racing license. 🍷 Next month, November 2003, I will enter in my first Formula 1 race. Finishing in the top ten will earn me a raffle entry into the give-away of a brand new Toyota pick up truck. 🍷 I plan on getting two entries to the raffle, one in November and one in December. 🤔 My results will be posted from these outings in the next couple of months.

Saturday's first race had me reintroduced to humility. 🚫 I started 10th in a field of 21. I got a bad start, possibly still thinking about the prior day's experiences. I fought hard and managed to place 11th. When the starting grid filled at the beginning of the race, I only saw faster guys numbers in front of me. I made all efforts to run them down, but I ended up mentally abused at the end of that race.

Next, I tried to mentally rebound and wipe the negativity clear from my mind. Apparently I have the ability to shake bad vibes clear, 🍷 and rather quickly. I finished the second race with a top ten finish of 7th. 😊

The last race of the day came immediately after finding out my fate of Sunday, spectator for the Toyota 200. I started this race in the 6th position and rode my best race of the day with another 4th place finish. 🍷 The same result as last month in Open Super Stock. I am ever so close to getting my first podium in WSMC Expert class racing. I will be a winner again, soon. I have the taste of victory and envision the occurrence in the near future. 🤔

Now for the new to me part of thanking my SPONSORS!!! Yes, I put out a large effort last month to get help in my racing endeavors. I was rewarded with a few people seeing my potential and wanting to help MDG Racing. 🍷

Jodie, Josephine, and Sebastian, THANK YOU!!! 🍷 Without my family I would not be where I am today. 😊

Simi Valley Cycles, Starbucks, and now Motul or Motorex, THANK YOU!!! 🍷 I look forwards to getting more help in the future from more companies, and hopefully people. Your help now and in the future is greatly appreciated. 🍷

Lastly, THANK YOU to all my friends and acquaintances that have helped in my

racing endeavors and to those that wanted to help but didn't get the chance. 🤝 I promise I will give you or anyone that wants to help a chance anytime they want it.



Pranav, you know exactly what you have done for me, and I must say a personal THANK YOU to you for all of your help up to now and in the future.

Peg, I can only convey my appreciation with the words, THANK YOU!!! 🤝 You are half the reason I have a few sponsors already. My resume looks awesome, all due to you. 🤝

I look forwards to seeing more of you out at the track in the future, and it was great seeing those of you that came out in the past.

Now it is time to pound the pavement in search of more support in whatever form it may come. 😊

Thanks for reading.

Marcel