

Starting Correctly Always Makes for a Great Race!!!

After last month's great racing action and finishing positions, I knew I had to follow up with something just as great, or even better. I have been racing this new bike, the 2003 GSXR-1000 for two months and 4-1/2 corners, yet I hadn't got in touch with a really strong launch from the grid. This was inevitably going to change, because I was planning on changing it.

Saturday was filled with wonderment if the clouds would ever open up and dump precipitation all over the "FASTEST ROAD IN THE WEST". Our prayers were answered by the time practice had ended at about 5:30 p.m. and only one full course waving yellow had been brought out, due to sprinkles. The bigger factor of the entire day was the 30+ mph winds that were making every turn a new one to practice. Usually, going into turn one, you sit up, brake, turn in late, and power out of the turn. This tornado like desert wind was making just the act of sitting up difficult, and the part about applying the brakes, almost unnecessary. Then, as you tried to turn into the banking of turn one, the accelerator would need to be twisted all the way to full lock just to slightly increase your forward velocity. Made for some interesting practice laps, with my once rocket ship like motorcycle reacting more like a Yugo on watered down gas.

Sunday couldn't come too early.

As I rose from my slumber of a Saturday night's almost 5 hours of sleep, Valentino is now 6 weeks old, but wakes twice during the night to empty my wife's bounty of breast milk, I noticed the eeriness of NO WIND!!! It was an awesome feeling to know that yesterday's practice would be wiped clear and a new day would have our bikes running like the unbelievable beasts they are.

I scrubbed my brand new Dunlop GPAs in the first PRO practice. An eye opening experience to say the least. That familiar practice from the day before of not braking into turn one had my sphincter tightening to the point of almost ripping my stock GSXR seat. As I hit the normal spot on the track where I would sit up, I had the expectation of a gust of wind to do more than its share of slowing me for the entrance to turn one, only problem was the fact that there was no wind to speak of, at all. I immediately hit my brakes, only to find out that my entrance speed to turn one was about double that of which I feel comfortable with on a normal day. I made my way through turn one and found a new appreciation for my Galfer pads and lines, great stopping power when needed. I circumnavigated the track one more time to enter turn one at a more reasonable speed and try to find my rhythm without the hindrance of "THE WIND". Two laps later, I had the right feeling of speed, fear, muscle control, and trepidation. All signs of lapping the nine turns of the track at a fairly fast velocity.

My first race of Sunday would be Open Modified Production. Most of the time, my first race is one in which I get my body and mind up to speed, and loosen the cobwebs from the night before's rest period. This race was exactly that, with just one exception, the start.

I was gridded 6th of the possible 21 racers. We were in a two wave starting grid, so I actually was in grid position 27. I knew a great start could be had, as I had been practicing my launches each and every time I left the hot pits on Saturday's practice. I felt the hard acceleration, with a slight lifting of the bike's front end, as power was

translated from the motor through the transmission to the chain to the wheel to the asphalt. As I have always believed, "perfect practice makes perfect", and you can quote me on that. I have also been heard uttering the phrase, "I said it, now I will do it", more than once or twice, and this day would see my actions following my statements.

The green flag dropped and I hit the gas as hard as I let the clutch fly. The bike seemed to float forwards extremely quickly, but compared to Mr. Iraceforaliving Hayes, I may have seemed to go backwards just as fast. I had a great start nonetheless, and comparing myself to Josh Hayes on a slightly modified factory bike, only made my start seem that much better. We all headed to turn one in a flurry of race fuel smelling, tire bugger spitting, right wrist twisting madmen. The next few laps sort of melted in my mind until I saw the cross flags, race half over. I then began to look for opportunities of weak prey to hunt and kill. Unfortunately, there were none close enough to stock, so I just played the game of; ride smooth, fast, and only be concerned if you see a wheel in your peripheral vision. Three more laps were completed in a matter of just over 4 minutes; yes we were really doing 1:25 lap times in the first race of the day. I crossed the finish line in an excellent mood as I watched my lap times and figured I had finished fairly well in the pack; only to find out my finishing spot of 10th was hard earned. I couldn't grasp the fact that I had rode so hard, and fast, and was only just barely in the top ten. Since I didn't find out my actual finishing place until later in the day, my jubilation just added to my confidence for my next race, and the one I just so happen to be second in points in, Open Super Stock.

Since I am second in the points that translated into a grid position of number 2 of 17. The gentleman in first is Mr. Stoney Landers. He had been practicing all day Saturday on his new 10, and I had noticed he wasn't riding it to his potential, or at least as fast as he had been riding his old GSXR. I figured Josh Hayes would be out in this race also, so I may not get the first place I had set as my goal this day, but I would at least go mano-a-mano with Stoney. Last month I had to pass three guys to get second place and this month I planned on getting a spectacular start and not have to contend with passing as many guys to compete directly with Mr. Landers. I did get a fabulous start, but just as in the first race, Josh Hayes flew past us all and entered turn one with a slight hint of flames leaving his rear tire, as if I was watching an old Road Runner cartoon. I pushed my bike into 4th by turn two and held that position all race long. My brand new rear tire was beginning to loose its grip about 4 laps into the race but I managed to hold onto a few quite nice slides to finish a respectful 4th place. Since the racers that were in third and fourth place in the class finished behind me, and this was a double points weekend, meant I was gaining ground on distancing myself from slipping down out of the top three for my favorite class, Open Super Stock. I felt even more confident entering my pits after the second race of the day, knowing I had done most of my race laps in the 1:25's.

The third race of the day would be a 12 lapper. Formula 1 Pro, is the toughest class I race in. My 2003 GSXR-1000 still has stock suspension, with only the exhaust, and brakes modified, and a 44 tooth rear sprocket change from the stock 42. Last month I broke into the top 10 for the first time, in a field of more than 20 unlimited bikes. This month I was gridded 8th out of 21 and with a bit of talented riding, great equipment, and help from my family, friends, and sponsors, I would follow last month's example, but move up one place to finish in 8th. I would like to thank Gregg and Kim, Biggar and Flea, for making the drive up to watch the races this month. I know they mainly came to see little Valentino, but it was an awesome show of

support to see them cheering for me in the last two races of the day. Big effort on their part, big show of respect from me, Thank you both very much.

My race start again was just short of the perfect start that Josh showed us all on his new bike; as I launched myself into a sweet position of about 10th after traversing through turn one. As the lead pack made its way through the first couple of laps, I noticed I wasn't losing touch with them. As the race progressed, a couple of us got detached and I began to see the weaker riders in front of me starting to fade faster than I was fading. I hunted them, one was Ruben Munoz #714, the other, I never found out who he was. I had raced with Ruben many times, but usually got beat by him, not this day. I followed him and the other rider for a couple of laps to first catch them and then figure out how I would pass them. I saw it play over time and time again. Turn one was where the both faltered. I would ride right up there asses going into and coming out of that turn, so my strategy was being worked out every second more that I stayed behind them. With a couple of laps to go, I made my move. The other guy had already passed Ruben, but Ruben got him back down the front straight just before me and my 1000 pounced going into turn one. I saw where the two of them were braking for turn one and decided to wait that extra millisecond to out brake, late apex, and out drive them in turn one. As I braked, I notice two bikes go slower into turn one on my inside. Could it have worked out so sweet, yes, it could. As we all drove out of turn one, my left eye caught a glimpse of #714's front fender start to creep up next to my left knee. Instinctually I pushed my left knee towards his fender to intimidate him into letting me have the spot, an old trick from my bicycle racing days, and it worked out perfectly. Later we talked about the last two laps and how he would stay on my rear wheel until turn 9 and when we both hit 6th on the front straight how I would just disappear right in front of him. That is how I took him, out driving him to the line on the front straight after passing and holding him off for almost two whole laps. I felt victorious in the battle with a better rider as my skills have now equaled or possibly even surpassed that of my fellow competitor #714.

The last race of the day for me was Open Super Bike. After competing so well against the fastest, most built bikes on the track in Formula 1 PRO, I figured I could do as well, if not better against the regulars in Open Super Bike. Again, remember, my Super Stock bike still doesn't have the suspension rebuilt yet, stock baby. That just shows how awesome these new bikes are being built from the factory, good enough to compete seriously against steroid enhanced Super Bikes.

The last race had me sitting in the 8th spot on the grid of 19 Super Bike competitors. Well, you guessed it, Josh Hayes got a fantastic start, but I too had been following in his foot steps only slightly slower. I made my way to 7th out of turn one and followed the number 1 plate holder, number 3 plate holder, and one other top 20 guy for all six laps of the race. They never got away from me, but I never caught them either. About four laps into the race I felt me rear tire starting to act funny. I could feel the rear end sliding much more than it should have been with only 16 laps on a set of brand new Dunlop slicks, the same slicks I had just retired after using for two full race weekends and a Saturday practice. After the race, I examined the tires and found the rear tire to have couple small issues, one spot was sliced, and another spot had a small hole in it about the size of a large grape. Unfortunately that held me up from really pushing to catch the three racers in front of me, but finishing 7th and not crashing made me ecstatic.

I have to thank Jodie, Josephine, Sebastian, and Valentino first for helping support

daddy and his racing addiction. Also, my co-worker Mike for coming out to cheer us racers on. Mike races an RX-7 with SCCA, and we have been to his race, now it was his turn to come see the two wheel world. I already mentioned the sacrifice that Gregg and Kim made to come see us at the track, and we thank you very much, you both a just great people, and we are glad to know you both.

My brother Tony and his wife Heidi also made it down, and I have to thank them also for their great support. Without my brother's picture taking, my resume would not exist, or would the update of the new bike pictures exist either. Thank you both for coming down to visit.

I must thank all my present sponsors, for without their support I might not be actually achieving my goals each month with regards to racing at WSMC. Thank you

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As most of you know, our family is just about full at "Graeber, party of five". I hope to see more of you in the coming months at the track to not only watch the races but to meet our beautiful fifth member of the family. Thank you for reading and I hope to hear from and see some of you in the near future.

Marcel