

Father's Day has been good to me in many ways!!!

Ironically, three years ago I won my first motorcycle race on Father's Day.

This past Father's Day was the first time I qualified for and raced in a professional AMA Super Stock race.

Not only did I race the entire, well 12 of the 13 laps, since I was lapped with just over two laps to the finish, but I also finished 29th out of 36 competitors to receive 2 AMA Super Stock Championship points.

Unfortunately, unlike three years ago, my entire family was unable to bear witness in person to my racing endeavors, but prior to and just after the race, we as a family celebrated not only Father's Day, but also my most humbling day's race events.

Normally my racing exploits are followed up by a large heart-filled thank you to all that helped in my trials and tribulations, but since this was more than just, and I say that very lightly, a club race, I feel the need to thank everyone up front.

Since I have started on my professional racing journey, three years ago, I have had many supporters in many forms.

My family has been the absolute greatest among these supporters, I must thank them, for without the support of Jodie, my loving, very understanding, and extremely forgiving wife of now almost 15 years, I would not be half of the way as to where I have made it so far, and hope to make it in the future.

Jodie, I love you and hope to be able to support you and your dreams two times as much as you have helped me so far in life.

I LOVE YOU!!!

To my daughter, Josephine, and two motorcycle loving sons, Sebastian and Valentino, you three know how much I love you all and will continue to support your life's endeavors as well, be it motorcycling or whatever your heart's desire.

I LOVE YOU THREE AS WELL!!!

As far as racing sponsors, my newest have helped out tremendously, and haven't heard yet, will most likely be helping out even more in the very near future, as I had a minor get off in Saturday's qualifying, thus leaving my A1 bike in need of new quality bodywork and another high-end paint job.

Thank you to Tiffany and Ed of www.E-Racings.com, the suppliers of the fabulous and robust fiberglass bodywork that adorns my two 2005 GSXR-1000 race bikes. Thank you as well to my most excellent of painters, Gene, over at Foster's Auto Body, as he painted two beautiful masterpieces, one of which I may have slightly scratched and dented last weekend, but it will just go to show off his painting talents again, as we ready the bike for the next asphalt adventure, hopefully Laguna Seca in July.

I also recently moved back to the Central Coast of California and met up with an old friend, Chris Thorsen, who just happens to own Thorsen Motorsports a Suzuki / Kawasaki shop, www.thorsenmotorsports.com, just down the road from my shop. Thank you to him and his crew at the shop for all their help in preparing my bike to make the grid at Miller Motorsports Park this past weekend, but hopefully other events in the near future.

Personally, I also want to thank Dennis Smith, of Sport Tire Services,

www.sporttire.com, my local Dunlop tire supplier, for hooking me up with the right compound slicks for my Sunday's main event.
The tires worked just as expected and reacted well to the heat and my bike's output as well, even when I tried to push them harder than the day's climate would allow.

Next, I need to thank the people that showed up in person to help in the pits, on the grid, in the stands, and generally around the track.

Bonnie was my umbrella woman, and I don't want to call her a girl, because those that have met her, know she is a WOMAN!!!

Thank you for the shade and support, all weekend long.

Ryan came out to supervise, as he knows that position well.

Thank you for the help and I look forwards to having you crew chief my pits for the Toyota 200 in September as well.

John and Cathy came out to ride the track day on Monday, but managed to work on bikes for most of the weekend helping my pit mate Sahar Zvik #161, only to have the bike and rider crash on the fifth or sixth lap of the race. J

Brian made the trip from Salt Lake to watch the races and meet a few people he had only interacted with on the internet, and as always, made some great friends in person.

Thanks for coming out to spectate and be part of the initiation of the new race facility so close to your hometown.

I want to thank Sean Hunter, and most of you know who he is, as well as Steve and Mike, for sharing your time with my pit mates and me as well as sharing your time to gather and distribute race pictures of us riders that were fortunate enough to catch your cameras eye.

Thanks for the pictures as well as pit beauties you almost always have around.
Looking forwards to seeing you and your women very soon.

We met a few of the other teams members over the weekend, and want to thank them for their hospitality as well as help in our pits and hope to see them in the future at other races.

Thank you to all my sponsors as well, as I used their products and services to perform up to the AMA Super Stock qualifying standards as well as race pace.

GP Suspension - www.gpsuspension.com

Suzuki of Van Nuys - www.suzukiofvannuys.com

Motul - www.motul.com

Galfer USA - www.galferusa.com

Shoei Helmet Safety Corporation - www.shoei-helmets.com

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VP Racing Fuel - www.vpracingfuels.com

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Fuel Cel - www.eti-fuelcel.com

Suzuki - www.suzuki.com

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MDG Racing

The past few months have had my two race bikes and I traveling across the United States a couple of times.

We have made the trip to Southern California for the AMA round at Fontana, to Northern California for the AMA round at Infineon, East over to Wisconsin for the AMA round at Road America, and now East to Utah for the AMA round at Miller Motorsports Park.

Last year I tried my hand at the two California AMA Super Stock rounds but missed qualifying on my 2003 GSXR-1000 by less than 2 seconds at each even.

This year was very similar at California Speedway, missing by less than 2 seconds again, but at Infineon I almost made the cut, missing by the amount of time it takes a human to react, 44/100th of a second.

As we made the 2600-mile trip out to Road America last month, I had visions of getting to race my first AMA event on the fifth try.

Road America was a lap of a little over 4 miles long with two corners taking my bike from maximum speed in sixth gear all the way down to third gear, and one corner from sixth gear to second gear.

Needless to say, I went through a set of front brake pads in the three days of riding, but didn't make the main event on Sunday, again, by just over 2-1/2 seconds off the 110% allowed cut-off time of the 2 minute 13 second lap time of the leading qualifiers.

As I drove the almost 1000 miles from my home to the brand new race facility just outside of Salt Lake City, I contemplated my strategy of riding to my full potential this past weekend and my ability to qualify with the fastest riders in the United States.

Repeatedly in my mind, I went through a mental checklist of items I would need to utilize to overcome the past five attempts at riding to the highest level of professional road racing I strived to challenge my racing prowess to.

Each outcome gave me the same mental outlook of qualifying and racing with my peers, who previously I had only watched compete each race weekend.

Tuesday was a travel day that had me starting my travels later in the afternoon, in hopes of beating the desert heat, and afternoon traffic.

Luck had me achieving both goals without much effort.

Wednesday would be another day of thought, and an easy half-day of driving to complete the first part of my weekend's journey, getting to the track.

Thursday was promoter's practice, which allows all the privateers time to get some quality track time without the roughly top ten in each class blowing our confidence. The factory guys had their own practice a couple of weeks prior and now it was the self-supported guys turn.

Since most of us had not ridden the track before, the first couple of laps were merely informal left and right turns with a brief acceleration here and there.

I have to always remember, even riding at what we consider slower speeds, might make the average guys and girls hurl their bikes and bodies into the dirt lining the

track, as many did on the following Monday's track day.

As the day progressed, our lap times dropped as our understanding of the tracks extremely generous amount of asphalt, and 15 very flowing turns became etched in the back of our minds.

Not to disappoint any of our newly nicknamed teammates down, I proceeded to enter and exit the gravel trap on the outside of turn 5.

Right after riding into and out of my first ever gravel trap at Road America, without a crash mind you, I was designated Team Gravel Trap racing's first and only leader. Therefore, it was only fitting that immediately after the end of promoter's practice on Thursday, and my very friendly gravel trap adventure exiting turn 5, would I keep the memory alive.

Not to mention, I did the same trick on Friday during practice, again not falling down, but merely testing out my 2005 GSXR-1000's Super Moto abilities.

Unfortunately, Saturday's qualifying had a different take on the MD"G"ravel Trap Racing nickname, as I crashed out of qualifying in turn 5 after trail braking too deep into the turn with the intentions of going just a bit faster than I had in Friday's practice.

I had come up to speed on Friday with a 2:01.589, and hoped to better that on qualifying day.

Luckily, even after my little slide on the newly paved Utah landscape, and a last lap time of 2:02.158, I would qualify with just about 1 second to spare.

Since the entire AMA Super Stock field had not had a long time to acclimate to the new track, we were on a fairly level playing, or should I say qualifying field.

I awaited the official results of the combined qualifying on that fateful Saturday afternoon, just to see the leading qualifier allow my red and white striped #767 2005 GSXR-1000 race bike to ride this beautiful race track another day.

After just three years of racing, and on the sixth attempt at qualifying for a professional AMA Super Stock race event, I had finally realized another dream.

I had the good news in hand just minutes before a fellow racer came to me with a strange but not unusual request to borrow my crashed bike's motor.

Lance Williams, #118, had almost blown a motor during qualifying, and since my back-up bike would be put into service after traveling over almost 10000 miles without being ridden, it was not hard to say yes.

Lance and his crew awaited the word of his engine builder to know if he indeed needed to borrow my A1 bike's motor, which now had just under 2000 race / practice miles on it.

The word came quickly after Rhett, Lance's and Aaron Yates's motor builder listened to the slightly knocking 2005 GSXR-1000 motor of bike number 118.

The bike I had just achieved qualification upon was now going to have its heart transplanted into a competitor's bike to compete against me on the following day. Unfortunately, for me, Lance is a better rider than I am, and the next day, my motor in his bike finished three places ahead of me on mine.

As Saturday night bled into Sunday morning, and my A1 bike's motor was ending its transformation from one bike to another, I dreamt of the perfect lap at just under 2 minutes flat.

I had watched others up to this point in the race weekend drop their lap times into

the sub-two-minute range and thought I wanted to achieve the same results on my motorcycle.

I spent the night dreaming of a quality lap, but reality was that during the race my mind kept remembering the not so perfect qualifying lap involving turn five's trail braking adventure.

Sunday morning came quicker than the results of my not so great qualifying session the previous day.

I knew this was a special day in which I would get to live the dream of not only my own, but of those that had been following my racing endeavors since I started writing about my racing adventures.

I barely had time to think about what I was about to do this Father's Day of 2006, before I headed out to shake down a race bike that had never seen the track.

I had complete confidence in my ability, and being that I had dealt with extremely reliable and highly qualified race bike preparers, I had confidence in my new machinery as well.

I have to stop and thank Dave and Ben, the two gentlemen I dealt with at GP Suspension, which set up both of my race bike's front suspensions.

Without their help, my back up bike would have been more than a handful to reign in during its maiden voyage into the race forum known as the AMA Super Stock class.

Sunday morning practice had me lapping the Utah track only a few seconds off my practice and qualifying times, which indicated favorably that my performance later that day might be as grand as my qualifying effort the day prior.

We got our gear over to hot pit lane, as the three "Gravel Trap" racers had all qualified for the big show.

Sahar, #161, Brad, #851, and myself, #767 all pitted along the entrance to hot pit lane, with help from our now fully functioning pit crew, consisting of Ryan, Bonnie, John, Cathy, Brian, and Brad's new lady friend he met the day before in Salt Lake City.

Every time I mention "Gravel Trap" racing I am truly just foreshadowing the inevitable, but not in a good way at all.

Final call is made for our race, the first event on Sunday, Father's Day 2006 at Miller Motorsports Park's inaugural race event.

My first main event is filling my head with dreams of even more dreams to try to achieve in the future, not in a bad way at all, just more aspirations to try to reach.

As we circulated the course on our parade lap, my heart filled with joy, knowing that I had accomplished one of my life goals, but no sooner did I think that happy thought, then I rolled up to the little yellow box my front tire would start from for the first AMA main event I was to be involved in.

The next event was the warm up lap.

Again, I had happy thoughts, even though I would be starting from the very last grid position.

I then remembered that I had actually qualified and I would be racing against the very best the U.S. had to offer in just a couple of minutes.

Time has a way of deforming under times of extreme conditions, and this was just one of those times.

As I rolled into the little yellow box for the final time before the green lights lit to signify the beginning of our race, it seemed as though ten minutes had transpired. In reality, it was more like about a minute and a half.

I hadn't raced, or should I say started a race in almost half a year, so before the green lights lit, I had a small inclination to drop the hammer like I knew I could and had in the past.

Immediately after thinking I should, I did, and the whole last half a year was being pushed upon me as I traveled down the long front straight chasing every one of the other AMA Super Stock competitors into turn one.

The race was on and I watched myself almost from outside of the racetrack, as it was very surreal to be involved in something I had spent so much effort pursuing, and was now truly enjoying.

On the very first lap, turn 5 came upon the pack in a hurry, and as we passed through it, I saw a flash of sliding metal, rubber, and fiberglass hit the asphalt then create a large cloud of dust as the bike and rider went into my now copy-written gravel trap.

Unfortunately, Eric Pinson #103, who is a fellow Willow Springs Motorcycle Club racing buddy was the one rolling around in the dirt.

Skill is necessary, but sometimes luck plays into racing as well, and Eric had the skill, but that day he just lacked a bit of luck.

Five laps later, as I chased and was catching #9 Eric Haugo, I witnessed my two pit mates #161 Sahar Zvik followed closely by Brad Puetz #851 about 2-3 seconds ahead crash in turn 5.

Upon further review, at the end of the televised race on Speed last Tuesday, I saw that Brad jammed on his brakes after Sahar dumped it in front of him to avoid running over the rag-dolling Sahar.

Gravel Trap racing, if optimistic, would have ended there, but there was one more adventure awaiting us in the waning moments of the race.

I now had the mentality, after briefly looking down at the borrowed lap timer I was using from my other pit mate Craig Mason #181, who also qualified for his first AMA Super Sport race after just his fourth try, to go after #9 Eric Haugo.

Remembering that I had gone faster in practice than Eric by almost a half a second a lap, I knew, not only from the present lap times I was performing compared to the lap times he was executing, that I had a real chance to not only catch him, but also to pass him.

I started my own personal race within a race to move up one more place in this, my first race, even if it was for the last spot on the final roster.

Two laps after I had the notion to go, I made a small error concerning my throttle input, which in turn made my rear tire spin up a bit.

You can guess what turn it was that I was coming out of, yep, turn 5.

As I fed too much throttle to the motor's injectors, my rear tire began to slide, and being that I have never had the pleasure of high-siding, and have told myself every time it seems like I might high-side, that I will not, I kept the throttle open to prevent the inevitable crash.

I made the right choice in throttle input, but not without consequences, and a negative one at that.

Once the rear tire hooked up, even under acceleration while sliding sideways, the bike tried to spit me off, violently.

My ass came off the seat about a foot, but I wasn't about to let go of the bars just yet, and I continued to feed the bike more fuel on its predestined journey into what we call a "yard sale": when a bike crashes and parts are laid out all over the place, like a yard sale.

The bike and I did not crash, but the violent lashing my front suspension took when it landed back on Mother Earth, made me think I had broken my front wheel. All the lap times I had run for the past eight laps were right around 2 minutes 2 seconds, while this lap was a 2 minute 8-second.

There went all of the wind in my sails, but as I watched Eric jump a few more feet down the track in front of me, I remembered that the leaders were going to start lapping us back-markers in a couple more laps. I put my head down as the blue flags waved in my face, signifying that the leaders were hot on my heels.

The leaders went around me nearing my now favorite turn, yep, turn 5. As we headed into that turn, #32 Eric Bostrom, went off entering the first part of turn 5, again as shown on the televised Speed TV race on Tuesday.

With two laps to go for me and one for the leaders, I was entering turn 12, just after the chicane, when Matt Lynn #150, who was in fifth place, dove to my inside and we bumped.

Apparently he wasn't as concerned about our coming together, but due to me being on the outside of the corner, I ended up going into the gravel, thus definitely ending my chase of #9 on my final lap.

I was not overly concerned either, since I did not crash, and finished the race in 29th place, earning 2 Championship points in the very first professional race I had qualified for.

I definitely plan to race again, and I will make sure I do everything in my power to not only qualify but also put out the same every lap effort I did in my first AMA race.

On the warm down lap, I started to reflect on the past three years of riding, racing and then the emotion took over, and I remembered the support I had waiting for me at home, and I felt all warm and fuzzy inside.

I tried to perform a small wheelie for the fans, as I noticed how much they all enjoyed seeing them when I was watching races from the stands with them the day before.

Since my bike is quite easy to lift under moderate acceleration, I made it look easy, and knew at least three kids enjoyed it, the three handprints I have on my helmet.

I hope you all enjoyed the journey so far, and hope to write more on my newly reached goals in the ranks of professional road racing in the AMA.

Thank you to everyone for every and all the support, from e-mails, to internet replies, to phone calls, to money donated, to personal compliments.

See you on the track soon.

Marcel Graeber
AMA #767