

Mental Block / Another Hot Mother in the High Desert!!!

Since some of the many readers have such a short attention span, or lack the desire to know fully what racing is like for the actual participant, I will spill the beans here and now.

Open Super Bike had me gridded 7th and finishing in the exact same spot.

Open Modified Production had me moving up one spot to a finishing spot of 6th after starting 4th on the grid.

Open Super Stock was a repeat performance, finishing 7th after starting 2nd on the grid.

The final race garnished my racing endeavors with a just outside the top ten finish of 11th, good enough to get another entrance into the end of the year motorcycle give-away. My starting position in the Formula 1 race was 9th.

For those that enjoy the more elaborate detailed account of the four races I entered this past weekend, here we go.

Since it was supposed to be extremely hot this weekend, I had planned on racing with harder compound tires, as most with some experience would also do. This small fact might have had a little input into the many off track excursions people took on Sunday, or since hardly anyone went down on Saturday, they would make up for it the next day.

Saturday morning I searched the pits for my buddy, Anthony Lanzara. If some of you remember, a few weeks ago, at California Speedway, Tony and I had a little issue in turn 5 on the first lap of a Wera West event. Anthony wasn't going to make it to this weekend's WSMC event, and I just want to take this opportunity to personally wish him the best in recovering from his now worse internal injuries. I miss your competitiveness out there Tony and hope you return, if not to race to at least cheer. Get well soon buddy.

Another pit mate novice buddy of mine deserves his own praise this race write-up. Brian, in just his second race at the young age of the last teen age year, got another second place in Open Novice, to match his first race result of last month. Next time I expect a first, or you'll be pitting in another area. J Brian was able to lead two laps on his 750 with a couple of 1000's chasing him around Willow's big track. Great job Brian!!!

The first race of Sunday's main events was Open Super Bike. Nothing like getting up early to race the second toughest class of the day first. The other joy of racing in four classes on one bike is the non-organized order in which the races occur. I only race Open Super Stock on DOT race tires and the other three classes on Slicks. Since Super Stock was the third race of the day, that meant I would be using my pit mate Brian's excellent tire changing experience to help make the two-tire changes of the day between the Open Modified Production and Open Super Stock, and Open Super Stock and Formula 1 races. One good thing about not having a pit crew is that I know when I do have one, I can truly appreciate what they will do for me each time I use their services. Thanks for all your help Brian; I do appreciate every wrench that you turned over the past couple of months.

As we headed out onto the track for the first race of the day, I knew the pace would be fast. I was absolutely correct in my assumption that the pace would be fast, but

luckily for me, my launch from grid position 7 of 15 put me into the top five after exiting turn 1 for the first time. From a standing start the first lap we turned a 1:44 something. I was amazed as the second lap put us deep into the low 26's. I was trailing the first few racers by just mere bike lengths. I was ecstatic with the way my first race was going. About three laps into the race I felt the pressure of two faster riders coming from behind. I rode my race pace and they managed to pass me at two different places on the track, even though I was turning consistent low 1:26 lap times in my first race of the day, usually a warm up for the next couple of races of the day. I kept them both in sight for the next two laps, but nothing I could do to pass them, let alone catch them. I made sure my finishing position of 7th was compromised on the last lap and managed to keep ahead of the hard charging competition behind me. One down, three to go. Damn this day would be difficult, not only due to the high 80° temperatures this first race had us enduring, but also the exceptionally fast competitors this weekend brought out.

Race number two was just a mere two races later. I barely had time to cool my core body temperature down in the air conditioning of our RV, than I had to shoot out onto the track for round number two of battle against the other Open Modified Production bikes and riders.

This start wasn't quite as nice as the first race, but it was just the same, lucky. I usually shoot out of the grid and make my way towards the outside of turn 1 to make up a place or two on the accordion affect caused by all the other racers diving into the inside of turn 1. I placed my bike into the inside of turn 1 due to my lack luster start from grid position of 4th out of 14, and just as I was at the apex of turn 1 I saw the first of many accidents this fateful Sunday of racing. Someone else got as bad a start as I did and they ended up shooting into turn 1 on the outside of me, but just in front of me, way too hot. I saw their bike begin the flip as it crashed into the back of another rider's rear wheel. I had to navigate around his face shield as it flipped, slid, and finally spun in front of my anticipated line exiting turn 1. The very moment I passed the now destroyed face shield, I gassed it as hard as my bike would allow me. I know it sounds like we don't care for our fallen competitors, but it a natural reaction of racers to notice the vulnerability once someone has crashed, we have a tiny amount of remorse for the fallen rider, but we also know this is a special opportunity to gap those close to and behind the carnage. The first reaction is to gas it; secondly we look to the next flag station to see if there is a red flag situation, thus ending immediately our exploitation of a crash event.

In this instance, no red flag was visible at the turn 2 corner workers' station so we all proceeded at a feverous pace. In a matter of one lap my lack luster start had me following the top five racers across the start / finish line. Two laps later, just as I was hunting down the bike in 5th place, we were immediately stopped in our racing tracks due to a red flag. This race was called after just completing our third lap. A 6th place finish made me happy but I knew my run on the rider in front of me would have transpired into a great battle only a few corners farther. This battle will have to continue next month, and it will definitely continue, as we are all totally addicted to the competition WSMC allows us to experience each month, as long as the money is still in our bank accounts to be spent.

Since the next race would have me racing on DOT's, I made my way back to my pit expediently, to get the first round of tire changing over and done with. We changed tires quickly, only to have another race stopped by a red flag, which would have given us more than enough time to bake our bodies out in the now over 100° noon

time temperature. We were glad to have changed the tires fast and be cooling down in the RV getting ready for our later in the day battle with the almost melted asphalt.

Race 7 of the day was Open Super Stock. I am presently in 2nd place in the points in this class, so I am always anxious to race and do well in the most competitive Open class I run in. Unfortunately, this day I would have a few new members to compete against, namely Mr. Toye, last year's number 1 plate holder on his new to him 2004 Yamaha R1. Jeremy is fast and with a great bike like the '04 R1 I would have a true battle royal on my hands, not to mention the other 16 guys with fast bikes and great racing abilities. This race had two crashes only a couple of bikes in front of me in two extremely different turns of the Big Track. Directly after the green flag dropped, my bike launched forwards from the number 2 grid position. I wished for the first race's start, because the moment I should have shifted into second gear my mind told my left foot to force the shift lever up. My foot reacted but it didn't use enough force, therefore, I put my bike into neutral and not second. Trying to out accelerate your fellow racers in neutral isn't quite as effective as actually being in second gear and having the bike driving forwards faster than coasting at full throttle. I immediately shifted into second, once I realized my body and mind mix up. The pack didn't completely lose me after my faux pas, but they made me put in more effort to stay with them. I made my way up to about 10th place by the end of the first lap. As I closed into catching the next couple of riders in front of me the first accident of this race occurred as we accelerated into a very fast turn 8. I have seen an indicated 165 mph entering this corner, and this day, I assumed we were traveling at least in the 150 – 155 mph region. Number 109 just two bikes in front of me had his front tire start to wash out. I saw a large plume of blue smoke come from where his tire was sliding and not sticking to the track, and a moment later I watched Marc and his bike exit the race track at a phenomenally fast speed. I watched his bike throw dirt and parts into the air as I entered the small chute between turn 8 and 9. We raced towards the start / finish line again as if it was the last lap, just in case there was a red flag. No red flag, so we continued with our final few laps. On lap four of six, there was another racing incident at the exit of turn 5. A rider lost the front just two bikes in front of me again. I was inheriting places left and right this race, but not the way I wanted to finish in 7th, due to others misfortune. This crash was less spectacular, but I still had to watch as the bike and rider slid off the right side of the track and entered the same part of dirt I had just a few 7 months prior on my maiden voyage on the now slightly damaged 2003 GSXR-1000 I race.

At this point in the day I had had enough of seeing people crashing in front of me. Not only because I didn't want to see people getting hurt, but also, I like being able to ride in a flowing manner, not having to slalom down the track avoiding bike parts and debris left over from previous crashes.

We changed tires again after the Open Super Stock race back to slicks for the all-important Formula 1 race. Up to this point in the day, I had been drinking like a champ to stay hydrated; too bad I hadn't taken the time to also eat something for lunch in between trying to cool off from the heat and changing tires. This would prove fatal later that afternoon in the race of the fastest bikes and riders.

Crashes were not done yet either, as after the race began, we encountered a rather ominous dirt cloud about 10 feet high on the outside of turn 3. At the top of the dust cloud was number 9's, Clinton Whitehouse's, bike. He and John Chen, number 73, had gone off and down pretty hard. Since this accident occurred on the fourth lap of 12 the race was restarted after they cleaned up during the red flag. I was re-gridded

back to my original starting position of 9th out of 24 starters. The re-start was only slightly better than the first start, but this 10-lap restart had me battling with Ruben Munoz, number 714 for all 10 laps. At the time I didn't know we were battling for the coveted 10th place in Formula 1. Unfortunately the affect of not eating and then having to race extremely hard with a competitor such as Ruben, who has had his share of battles in the AMA, made for a negative outcome on my part. Eight of the ten laps were great. I passed him into turn 8 once and then he fought his way back around me in turn 2. With 2 laps left to fight for the last spot to attain another entry into the drawing for a new Toyota truck at the awards banquet at the end year, we began to catch the 9th place racer. I now found out why eating is so important. Ruben made his move to catch the rider in front of him and I just stayed where I was, behind him. He gapped me pretty bad on the final lap and I never got a chance to even catch up. Ruben didn't have enough motor to catch the bike in front of him and I had no energy left to finish any higher in the final standings. I finished 11th and put my name in for the 4th time into the drawing for a Suzuki dirt bike at the end of the year awards banquet. I will definitely be eating lunch next month no matter what. Food good, hitting the wall bad!!!

This weekend was not filled with my family but more filled with racing pit mates. I will thank Jodie, Josephine, Sebastian, and Valentino first because they did endure the drive out to the track to watch just one of their daddy's races this past weekend. Thank you Graebers.

I need to thank Brian, number 918, for his amazing willingness to help out his fellow racer. I know it will end soon, as he will be exiting Novice to do battle against me in some if not all of my classes. Then it will be every man or woman for them selves. Good luck in the future Brian; I know you will do well.

I also want to thank all of my sponsors for all of their continuing support of my racing endeavors.

Thank you:

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In two weeks I will encounter another new track, Buttonwillow. I hope to have more

success with this new track as compared to my other experiences at the other new tracks I have tried this past year.

I hope some of you are planning on making the trip out to Willow Springs on October 17th for the Toyota 200. Since this month I again ran deep into the low 26's I should be in the field this year to battle 200 grueling miles of the Big Track.

Thank you for reading, and I hope to see some of you at the track soon.

Marcel