

Humbled, with a 1:29:11!!!

The first race weekend as a WSMC expert racer has come to a close. My goal for the weekend was to as always, NOT CRASH, and get a top ten finish in all three of my races. I definitely tried to fail at the first goal, 😊 and managed fairly well to almost achieve the second goal. I learned a valuable lesson about new tires on a hot racetrack, by trying to change tires in the middle of the day. More on that in a few.

My Saturday was filled with corner work, allowing me to move up out of Novice, and into Probationary Expert. I got to work turn 4B, which is an awesome place on the track to take VERY up close shots of the racers. I also got to see how the REALLY FAST guys take turn 4. Too bad it was over 100° all day. 🚫 I was burnt physically and mentally at the end of the day, but I did learn a few new lines for attacking turn 4.

Sunday had me racing in the 4th, 7th, and 14th races of the day. I started out the first morning practice with my new lap timer letting me know I was SLOW. I couldn't ride well due to the prior days heat exhaustion. I put in a 1:31, at best.

The second practice session made me feel a ton better, as I steadily headed down the front straight to an almost slower feeling 1:29:65. Finally, I had the right feeling of speed on my almost stock GSXR 1000. 👍

The 4th race came fairly quick, as I usually had to wait until late in the afternoon to race my Novice races the past three months. I gridded in the 20th position, so different than last month when I had the pole position. 😊 I also knew the competition would be much greater this day, as I was now the little minnow in the glass bowl with man-eating Great White Sharks!!! 🚫

The green flag waved and the race was on. I managed to pass a few riders with almost little effort. Then the up hill battle of trying to keep pace with the fast guys hit me like a tone of bricks. I noticed after the race that I had performed three 1:29 laps out of the six laps. I knew faster times would be mine soon, and following and learning from the guys that beat me would be my ticket to success. That, and doing what is needed to ride as fast, if not, faster than the guys showing me the fast way around the track. I did manage to finish directly behind my old street-riding buddy "Snappy" on his Pirelli sponsored #9 bike. That made me feel great, as I knew how good he was before the race started, and now that the race was over, I was right behind him in 10th place. My first top ten of the weekend. 👍

When I looked at my lap timer in the pits, the smile from finishing behind Rick was increased 10 fold by seeing my lap times. I knew the weekend had great things to unleash on me later in the day.

Now came the drama for the entire weekend. Race number 7. 😡

I had decided that my rear tire would not cut it for the remaining two races, especially if I was turning 1:29's. So at the last minute, I decided to change it for a brand new Dunlop 208 GPA. I got the tire changed just after having to go to the registration desk to sort out the finishing position of the 4th race, and just before final call for my warm-up lap. I wasn't too worried about starting at the back of the grid for the 7th race if I missed the warm-up lap; I was assured 41st grid position in

a pack of 42. 😬

So, no scrubbing of said new rear tire. No tire warmers to bolster confidence in the rubber to road contact patch, just pure 100°+ weather to heat up my tire.

I took the warm-up lap at about 2/3 speed to try and get heat into the tire and scrub as much sidewall as possible. Too bad I didn't get the whole tire perfect, because in the race I had a couple of moments.

My second Expert race was about to start and I knew in the back of my mind that my rear tire was less than perfect. It may have been new, but that does not mean perfect by any means. As the pack took off, the first wave left, I had the gas open mid-throttle awaiting my green flag for the second wave. I left the starting line and noticed the rear tire hooking up just as if it was a nicely scrubbed, previously raced tire. I made my way around a few riders and proceeded to hunt for Stuart #16, who had gridded directly beside me just a lap ago. My buddy Rick #9 was also a couple of bike lengths ahead, and I saw a small bull's eye on both of their backs. As the second lap progressed, **IT** happened.

When I say "IT", let me clarify. I have told just about anyone that has ears, that I will **NOT** high side. Well, this was my first test of that statement. Cresting Turn 6 at

about 110-115 M.P.H., my new rear tire decided to let go, **REALLY**

BIG!!! I stayed on the gas, but it just decided to do what it wanted to, regardless of my physical input to the throttle and other motorcycle adjustments I made. The tire got hot and now wanted to stick. Here came the inevitable. I held on to the handle bars as the bike tried to launch me skyward with all it's might. My pit mate, Clayton #536, was directly behind me and told me later he wished he had a video of my incredible save. 🚫 He rolled off the throttle briefly as he thought I had thrown it away. When he saw me ride it out, or should I say hover above my seat about 1-1/2 feet for a good 50 feet down the track, he rolled back on the throttle and cleared his visor of my shit that was running out of my leathers. 😬 Let me tell you, since this was the closest I have ever come to a "HIGHSIDE", I will try my best to never complete one.

Now knowing the full capabilities of me and the tire, I gathered up my adrenaline and made a bee line towards the riders that had just missed seeing me almost crash as spectacularly as possible on Big Willow. 🤪

This race was far from over since this was only the second lap. Now came more fun in turn 9, as my tire had its own way with me again. I felt shaken but not stirred after the turn 6 event, but determined to keep my short term goal of finishing in the top ten in all three of my races for the day. I charged forwards with somewhat reserved abandon. Turn 9 was exciting but much more predictable. I gassed it with all my might to get a good drive out of turn 9 and down the front straight, but my tire had one last unscrubbed spot and I hit it. My rear slid out in a beautiful dance of sliding and spinning out of turn 9. I stayed on the gas and rode this one out like I knew exactly what I was doing. 🤪

After the race, I looked at my lap times and noticed I had only been turning 1:31's. Imagine that, loss of concentration makes you go slower. In all the excitement of

almost wadding my only ride for the track, I didn't even notice how well I was doing. I ended up finishing 13th, just a few spots behind Stuart and Rick. 🤝 Other than the lesson I learned about changing tires, I found out that I have an ability just under the surface to actually ride fairly well, even under major pressure. I looked forwards to the last race of the day with this new sense of confidence.

The last race of the day was actually a money-paying event. I was gridded 16th and would finish 9th. This race had me turning consistent 1:29 lap times and I rode the best laps back to back of the whole day. Too bad the 750's behind me were that much faster and showed me what a 1:24 looked like, at speed. As I went through turn 8 at about 145 M.P.H. the lead rider of the 750 class went by me at about 10 M.P.H. faster. He dove to my inside, after passing me on the outside. 🚫 It was startling yet invigorating to know that I someday will be going that much faster through the same turn. I watched his lines for a short bit, as I tried to follow him and the other open bikes that lead me around this final race of the day, for me. I was only passed by the front couple of 750 class bikes. I was riding well at the end of the day, high on confidence and adrenaline.

The day ended, I put away my race bike for another month, and took the valuable lessons from the weekend home with me.

I achieved most of my goals for the weekend and hopefully will be a faster rider next time. I look forwards to being in the front as soon as my abilities allow for it. Thanks for reading.

Lastly, I would like to thank my buddy Klaus, for his help, and the lessons I learned from our collective experience. Also, Jodie, Josephine, and Sebastian. My family is the most important part of my race team, until I get major sponsors. 🙏

I hope to see some of you out there next month, as the saga continues in August, September, and beyond.

Marcel