

Economics 101 / Working Again and Racing Almost as Well as Before!!!

What a difference a couple of weeks can make. I accepted a full time position this week and raced last Sunday. It is amazing how the human mind operates. I hadn't made up my mind completely on the job offer I got on Friday the 13th, but just the knowledge that the prospect loomed, had me concentrating almost 100% on my riding performance this past weekend.

I have to first inform all of you of the negatives of this past weekend's races. Two of my good buddies had came out to race with us at WSMC, one in Open Novice, and the other in Middleweight Novice.

Brian, #918, had taken second place in both of his opening races so far. He had the ambition to go out there this weekend and get the coveted number 1 finishing position. After helping me change tires for the second time on Sunday for my Formula 1 race, he proceeded to get himself ready to do battle the race following our 12-lap event.

As we exited the track, Brian and his fellow Open Novice racers entered the asphalt-covered battlegrounds. Before I even had a chance to calm down after my race and about 9 turns into his race, with as the radio announcer commented, "a commanding lead", Brian began his tumble to the outside of the track and not on both wheels. His leathers showed that he had slid like a baseball player trying to score the winning run into home, and then tumbled for a moment, making sure not to leave out any part of his fairly un-scuffed body armor. His bike also took a fairly bad tumble, but not unlike my 130 mph get off, simple to fix with the addition of just some high denomination US dollars. Brian was upset, but pretty much unhurt, a great way to crash.

Now to Mike's last lap incident in his third race of this, his rookie year. Not the same result, and not as easily fixed with money of any amount. Mike, #733, had been doing extremely well, actually getting an awesome restart in his Middleweight Novice race. He was comfortably in 8th place after making a couple of great passes to advance forward in his closely contested 600 Novice field. This was the last race of the day, and on the last lap, as Mike entered turn 3, he found out what the feeling of breaking an ankle is like. I hope Mike is feeling much better today, and wish him all the best in recovering soon to return and conquer the demons after a slight spill on track. Looking at what seemed to be a twisted ankle, but in the non-horizontal plane, we knew it wasn't just a sprain.

Mike and Brian, I wish you both good luck in spending money and time to rebuild bike and body. I look forwards to having you both back tearing up the entire racetrack very soon.

I can only convey the feeling of accomplishment associated with doing well in any competition by saying, just remember the first time you went poo-poo on the toilet and then wiped yourself, it was amazing, wasn't it? Since I have a 5 month old, a 3-1/2 year old, and a 5-1/2 year old, I definitely thought this was a great analogy, even after spell checking "poo-poo".

Since I had proved my worthiness to my future employer in two interviews the previous week, I now decided to prove my own worthiness to myself on the track this weekend. I was to race against some of the fastest riders out there, as Jeremy Toye, Josh Hayes, Chris Siglin, and a few others brought out there highly polished

talents and newly acquired Super Stock machines to the WSMC August meet. Unfortunately, Stoney Landers, who had crashed in front of me this past month at Buttonwillow, didn't make it out to challenge the rest of us this weekend. He is in first place in Super Stock and I am chasing his rear wheel to try to get the very highly touted first place in the Super Stock class, my most closely bike matched competitive event.

Since this was a double point's weekend, I took the opportunity to make moves in all four of the classes I race.

I will now cut to the chase for those that don't have the immense amount of time to read through all of this write-up.

8th place in Open Super Bike.
4th place in Open Modified Production.
5th place in Open Super Stock.
13th place in Formula 1.

The first race of the day was switched from the third event to the second just before the rider's meeting. No big deal, but they also decided to change two other races I was in. I had to change tires twice again this race day, thanks Brian, since I would race Open Super Bike and Open Modified Production on slicks, change tires to DOT for Open Super Stock, and then back to slicks again for the Formula 1 race after lunch.

I was gridded 6th out of a field of 21 in the second fastest race of the day, Open Super Bike, which was my first race of the day. During the first morning practice of Sunday, race day, I had turned a few 1:28 laps to get my body and mind ready for the first high speed event. I usually go just about 2-1/2 to 3 seconds faster in a race than during practice, so I knew the day would be great, just as if I had planned it that way.

As we saw the green flag drop, I twisted the throttle to almost fully open. At the same time the gas was flowing extremely fast through the injectors and into the cylinders for combustion, I was lightly allowing the clutch lever to slide away from the left clip on. My launch had me entering turn 1 in about 3rd or 4th position. I watched the first couple of bikes make their way out to the front of the normally large field. I also noticed that this time I was hanging quite closely behind the leading group. As we entered turn 2 a couple of bikes made their way around me and the chase was on. I knew I could ride well and fast enough to hang with the first riders with the exception of Hayes and Toye. I managed to hang on to the second lead group and push my bike and body to go as fast as they would allow me to at this point in my racing career. I managed to only be passed by a couple of bikes in the last couple of laps and held onto a very respectable 8th place in the first event of the day. Since my bike only has suspension, brake, and exhaust modifications, running on slicks, I was very happy with my first performance of the day. I had plans of nailing down some 1:25 lap times, as next month I will try to qualify for the Toyota 200, and these will be needed to be in the field of fastest 40. I noticed my lap timer displaying a couple of these times, just as if I had planned to get a job, race well, and put up some decent qualifying lap times. Plans were becoming actions.

The second race was one in which I knew I could do even better, as my bike didn't have as much of a disadvantage. I was in the grid in position 3 of 16 competitors. I

knew a good start would ensure me a good finishing position. As the flag waved on our second wave start behind the 750 Super Bike class, I knew I would be getting some passing opportunities with slower riders. I just didn't know it would come at only two laps into the racing action. I shot my 2003 GSXR-1000 from the front row of bikes into the top 5 riders into turn 1. After one lap following my buddy Howard, #20, I could tell something just wasn't right in his part of the world. He is usually just a few milliseconds faster than I am in most corners, but this day, I was cramming my bike up his rear in almost every part of the track. Instead of letting the front few bikes get a jump on me, I decided to pass Howard as soon as the opportunity leant itself to me. I late braked him into 1 that next lap and proceeded to chase the front three, who now had a slight gap on me, due to following #20 for 2-1/2 miles at a slower than full race pace. The next lap had my sights set on getting on the back wheel of the rider in front of me in 3rd place. I encountered slower 750 traffic on this, the third lap of our race. It was fun to interact with slower riders so early in the race as it meant we were going faster than normal. The traffic was just enough to keep me in a comfortable 4th place for most of the race. As we came around turn 4 for the fourth time I saw #20 in the dirt and knew he wasn't having a day like mine. Howard is a great racer and I believe he was once even in the AMA, back in the 70's. I enjoy dicing with him, but on this day, he was just a bit off, figuratively and literally. The race ended and I noticed another rider I was following in the past, #109. We would do battle two more times this day.

The third race of the day had me gridded in the number 1 spot, as Stoney would not be making the grid this day. I was second in points and thus I would be inheriting the number one starting position in his absence. I again thought about performing a great start, and when the time came I did everything according to plan. I noticed as my bike and I leapt towards the first turn that my front wheel had not been caught as yet, by any of the other 17 riders. I knew there were a few riders that could catch me by the first turn, and just as I thought it a couple of faster wheels threw their hats into the ring to be the leader out of turn one. I exited turn one in fourth place and the battle began. Since I had just enough time to change a front and rear tire between races, with help from Brian, I didn't get to check the tire pressure before being forced to heat the tires for the race. After a few laps of racing around in fourth place, Mark, #109, passed me. He made a great move around me out of turn 9 and down the front straight. As I sat on his wheel for a couple of laps, with first through fifth place all covering about five bike lengths end to end, I began to take notice where I was noticeably faster than he was. I knew I would be making a last lap pass, most likely into turn 1, 3, through 4, or into 5. As I made my way into turn 1 on the waving white flag lap, I could close the gap enough to pass Mark into or out of 1. I attacked him into turn 3, but his decrease in speed set me up for the perfect around the outside pass in turn 4. The only problem was that once I pushed my bike to get that little bit more speed into 4a, my front tire decided to let go. This was the closest I have ever come to crashing without actually going down. Later that day, Brian's buddy Brandt, who was working the turn 4 corner, said he couldn't believe I had saved it. I remember hearing the front tire screech, then seeing some distinctive blue tire smoke. I instinctually reacted by turning my handlebars into the turn to scrub some speed, while at the same time pushing violently down with my right knee, that was already on the ground, to stand the bike up. After this minor front wheel slide, I decided that my tires were not going to allow me to change my finishing position of 5th and I actually pulled back just a hair to complete the race without an incident of my own.

The last race of the day was the Formula 1 race. Again a tire change, and this time,

it was back to the slicks I had raced on earlier in the day, so no need to worry about pressure, just temperature. I was gridded 8th in a field of 26. I figured everything would be just as the past three starts had gone, almost flawlessly. As most plans are made, some appropriations have to be made for the unthinkable. Unfortunately, I had not thought that a fellow racer would have wheelied right across the bow of my racing vehicle. I had to get off the throttle for just a second to allow the squidly acts of this rider room so I wouldn't end up a racing statistic versus a finishing competitor. As soon as I could get back on the throttle, at least 20 of the others had passed me into turn 1. I was about 3rd from the last person out of turn 1 and knew I would need all 12 laps to make up for this worst ever start, especially in the fastest group of riders on the track this day. I proceeded to stay calm, talking to myself entering and exiting each corner. I slowly picked off riders one, two, and sometimes three at a time in each of the nine turns on Willow's Big track. Soon I began to see familiar numbers of bikes in front of me, but that also meant that I would have to work that much harder to get around them. The faster the front-runners are going the harder is to go even faster than them to get their position. I made many efforts at very interesting positions on the track to acquire a higher finishing position as the laps wound down. Coming up to my fellow rider, #109, I knew I would need to pass him for the ultimate redemption for the weekend's races this afternoon. He had bested me two other times in slower, shorter races, so I made up my mind I would finish in front of Mark this time. I made my move 1 -1/2 laps from the end of the race going into turn 3. Marc slowed, just as I had predicted he would and I went around him on the outside of turn 3. I made the pass stick and then rode on to finish the race passing 10 people to gather another top 20 finish of 13th. By the way, I love that number. I had made a few passes I was very proud of and a few that were definitely made in the heat of battling for a sacred one spot better in the results, but I was happy that all my passes were clean, the way I like to race. By the time I crossed the finish line on the final lap, my tires had sent me sliding both to the left and right more times than I cared to correct, but they were all manageable slides and fun to enjoy as the racing continued. I look forwards to going back out to the track in a month to get my qualifying time in the top 40 fastest riders for the Toyota 200, since I put my bike into the 1:25's more than half the day with a fastest lap of 1:25.41 without following anyone, just cruising in between the gap of two fast groups.

I must thank my family for the support they have continued to show me even without providing for them the past four weeks. I know unemployment is some amount of money, but not nearly what is needed to survive in this economic climate. Thank you Jodie, Josephine, Sebastian, and Valentino.

Next I have to say thanks to all that have been supportive and wished me well in continuing my Mechanical Engineering professional job search. I think my next adventure, we call work, will be exciting and rewarding, as I will be working in the R&D department of a high performance engine and accessory company that designs for the motorcycle industry. I can't wait to make my mark in this field.

I would also like to thank all of my sponsors this year, as well as ask for their continued support for next year. Without their assistance, I definitely wouldn't be where I am today, or where I will be next year. Thank you now and for what we will do together this coming year.

Suzuki of Van Nuys - www.suzukiofvannuys.com
Simi Valley Cycles - www.simivalleycycle.com

Motul - www.motul.com
Galfer USA - www.galferusa.com
Lockhart Phillips USA - www.lockhartphillipsusa.com
K & N Engineering Inc. - www.knfilters.com
Fuel Cel - www.eti-fuelcel.com
Air Tech - www.motorcyclebodywork.com
Engineered Racing Products - www.engineeredracingproducts.com
Race Tech - www.race-tech.com
HyperCycle - www.hypercycle.com
Suzuki - www.suzuki.com
Dunlop - www.dunloptire.com
WSMC - www.race-wsmc.com
WERA WEST - www.wera.com
Performance Unlimited - www.kellybakers.com
Puig Screens - www.cyclescreens.com
Graeber Engineering and Consulting

Lastly, I would like to invite all of you to come out and enjoy the great 200-mile race in October at WSMC. On October 17th we will ride our hearts out for over 2 hours at speeds over 100 mph. It should be an awesome spectacle not only for the fans but also for us racing participants. Hope to see some of you out there and hear from others of you in the near future.

Thanks for reading.

Marcel