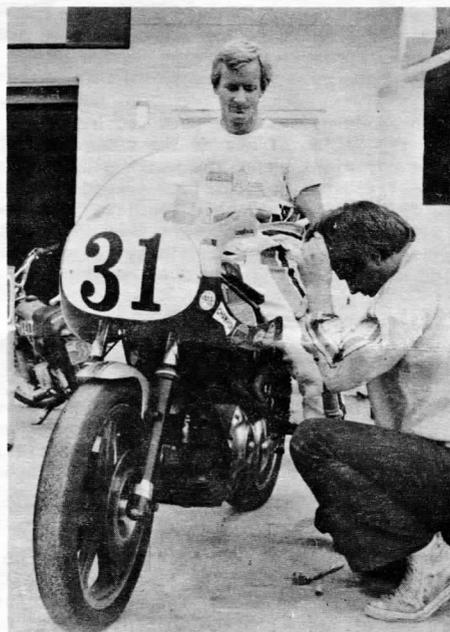


HOW WE WON DAYTONA



Beyond telling us that the Duck made a presentable amount of power and an admirable amount of torque, Ax's dyno located the power peak, which was invaluable when we were setting the gearing for Daytona. We settled on 4.1743 overall, giving us just over 17.3 mph:per:thousand: with a tire 76.5-in. in circumference, and a top speed at 8600 rpm of about 150 mph, not factoring in tire growth.

The engine was still fresh after its afternoon on the dyno so we went out to an AFM Ontario race for the final shake down and got trimmed by Wes Cooley on Pops Yoshimura's Kawasaki Z-1. Wes's bike was handling well; we weren't sure it would handle at Daytona, and we knew the Duck would.

It did, and Wes's Z-1 didn't. Nor did Pridmore's BMW, or Mike Baldwin's Moto Guzzi, or John Bettencourt's Z.

The Daytona Superbike field seemed split two ways: there were bikes that went fast and didn't handle, and bikes that handled and didn't go fast. The California Hot Rod went plenty fast (149.50 mph through the speed trap) and handled immaculately, despite a snapping cross-wind that came up just before our race was flagged off and made the equipment of the honored opposition behave even more peculiarly than usual.

The rest of the weather didn't hurt either. Because of Phil's and my clubracing background, when the Duck comes out the back of the truck it's ready to race. Track-side R&D is not our idea of fun. But for many Eastern competitors, Daytona's generous allocation of practice-time is crucial. When it rained Monday and again Thursday Phil and I were plenty happy. We didn't need the additional track time; we knew the other guys did. We wanted to save the engine and save the rear tire--it was the only remaining D1750 Goodyear in captivity.

My race strategy was simple: a back-and-forth dice with Wes Cooley or David Emde, or both, was to be avoided at all costs. The Ducati's advantage over the ultra-fast Z-1s came in the corners. But the finish line is on a straightaway, so in a "you've-got-the-straight-and-I've-got-the-turns" mix-up, I'd lose. I therefore wanted to clear out as quickly as I could and jam the Duck around the track at full honk for at least the first 10 laps before even looking back. On the ninth of 14 laps I felt my left knee touch the pavement in Turn One. Since that rarely happens I figured the time had come to check out what was going on behind me, and ease up if further berserko riding was not called for. It wasn't.

Beyond the excitement of winning the one race I've been trying to win for three years, my biggest two thrills came later. The first happened when I met with the Ducati International Owners Club the next night at the Royal Scotsman Inn in Daytona Beach and discovered that Phil and Gordon Jennings and Dale Boller and I weren't the only Duck-freaks running around loose, and discovered as well that the Ducati's Superbike win meant as much to the DIOC members as it did to us.



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