

## Racing Report Cont'd

ty wired for over a month. It is amazing how much time one can spend doing that. Bob and Lin owed me a birthday present, and the next thing I knew, the Duke had a set of D.O.T.--Approved Michelin tires made of PZ-2 compound. Bob ruined only three tubes installing the front one. We ran the Duke on Yoshimura East's dyno, got 44 BHP at the rear wheel at 7,400 and found that the stock main jets (125) are way too lean for racing conditions even though the bike tends to run rich with them on the street.

Our first race was AAMRR's 8/13-14/77 weekend at Thompson, Conn. As I lined up for the first practice, Bob and I noticed that the blue arrow on everyone else's front PZ-2 pointed in the opposite direction from ours. How could those real racers have made such an elementary mistake? We had mounted the front tire backwards. After promising myself to control my rather substantial ego and not to try to make like Hailwood, I went out and crashed on the 4th or 5th lap of the first practice session. Inadequate preload on the rear, two lbs. too much rear pressure (34 PSI), bumps on the apex, too abrupt an application of full power and poor judgement gave me a whole new perspective on Turn 4. My times were about 1:25 before the crash. Fortunately, the muffler took most of the weight and damage to the bike was minimal: exhaust pipe bent and sand everywhere, including the carb for cylinder verticale.

We cleaned the carb out during lunch and, after replacing part of my leathers with duct tape, I went out in the second practice session. Loosened from the crash, the right foot peg (we had installed folding pegs) rotated 180 degrees and flopped straight down at about 120 on the back straight. Just as we finished retightening it the second practice was over. Third practice was spent taking plug readings. The key mysteriously disappeared just before the start of the final practice and by the time we hot wired the ignition, the day was over. I'd run a total of about 7 laps all day, with too few at any one time even to heat the PZ-2s to operating temperature.

On Sunday the weather took a dive--on pun intended. That morning we remounted the front tire (no tube fatalities this time) and another plug reading used up our short practice. Fortunately, I had just enough practice to find the line. We installed No. 132 main jets and I forgot to rotate the front carb back into the vertical position. We couldn't figure out why the engine was popping on the over-run until we got home and discovered my boo-boo. For what it is worth, Dell-Orto pumpers seem to work just fine at a 45° angle.

At Thompson, the line is super critical, because the course has many large bumps in the turns. A fellow with a Guzzi LeMans verified this fact when he went a couple of feet wide of the apex of the next to last turn and did an endo down the pit straight. To avoid this problem we went to maximum preload at the rear, 5 weight fork oil and an over-sized St. Christopher's medal.

It drizzled off and on during the first 5 races. The second race was for experts on Formula Two machines. Five riders slid off on the first turn as Bob and I watched from the stands. When I saw that, my enthusiasm and self-confidence went to Nebraska. Our first race was the sixth of the day, a combined race of 10 laps for modified production bikes of 651-750 and 751 and up. I was in the middle of the front row of the 750's, unmodified and scared shitless. They placed me there because I registered early by mail and did not have the good sense to stay out of the race. The first 6 bikes lapped me and I finished 19th overall and 8th in 750, turning mid 1:30's. But I survived.

Our hero's other race was the 11th and last of the day, for 651-750 and 751 and over production machines. This time, again due to registering by mail, I was the first 750. By the start of our race it was raining like hell and everyone but the officials and the ambulance had gone home. Contrary to the usual procedure of starting from a grid with engines running AAMRR uses a LeMans type start for the production classes. The riders stand on one side of the track and a crew member holds up the bike on the other. When the starter waves the green flag, everyone is supposed to run across the track, start their bike and go racing.

If ever there was a form of attire unsuited to running, racing leathers are it. To make matters worse, I was wearing borrowed

leathers, mine not having come yet. The gracious lender is two inches shorter than I am and considerably skinnier. The leathers were also a mite stiff, as he had given up racing 10 years ago. I felt like a cross between the tin man and a link of sausage but they saved me a lot of skin in turn 4.

With a wave of the green flag we waddled across the track like a scene out of Woody Allen, started the bikes and took off. Lacking electric starters, my bike and the other two Duke Sports were 3 of the last 4 bikes off. The last bike off was a Z-1 which stalled on the line. I passed another Sport in the first turn, one end of a banked ¼ mile oval, and caught the field at my old friend, Turn 4. They were riding just like a bunch of Datsun B-210 driver. on their way to work in the rain: S-L-O-W-L-Y, and evidently psyched out by the wet. I passed a bike on the back straight and out-braked more at the end. In addition to being amazingly sticky when warm, PZ-2s work well in the rain. After settling down into my racing pace, I was actually going deeper into the turn at the end of the straight than I had when it was dry.

For about 4 laps, I continued to pass other bikes. On the fifth lap, going into turn 3, a Z-1 braked inartfully and fish-tailed in front of me. I had to go up an escape road. By the time I got back to the track, I could see the last placed bike disappear around turn 4. I set back to work, and an unexpected feeling of relaxation came over me. Going down the back straight at approximately 110-115, the puddles were so deep that the spray literally knocked my right foot off the peg. Many bikes were aqua-paning. Soon I started passing bikes again and the end of the 10 lap came all too soon.

When I pulled into the pits, I was relieved, frustrated and grinning like the Cheshire cat. Bob clocked my times for the last ½ of the race in the 1:28's so we had made real progress. Looking like two drowned rats, we packed up and went to the saloon where the results were posted. We found that we were 7th, which made us feel just fine. Then a friend came by and pointed out that we had been reading the chart wrong--we had gotten 3rd in class. What a rush!

Looking back, we were most impressed by what a congenial and well-run organization AAMRR is. The officials were friendly and courteous and the corner workers dedicated and efficient. Most of the other competitors were cheerful and relaxed. Some of the semi-official teams seemed to take themselves a little seriously, but everyone else was like M.A.S.H. at the races. The whole experience was geared for fun and despite many riders and terrible weather, no one was ever obnoxious or officious. See you at the next race, CHARLIE

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