

Racing Bits N' Pieces

THE BIRTH OF THE BURP

by Adrian S. Palmer

The art of motorcycle roadracing is both demanding and heavy with tradition. Innovations are few and far between, and when they occur, they are handed down lovingly from generation to generation. This is especially true with that particular discipline known as cornering, where only three innovations come to mind--the two-wheel drift of the late, legendary Cal Rayborn, the knee-out cut-and-slash style of Paul Smart, and the one-off style of Kenny Roberts--all created and executed by rare artists.

Spectators at the Champion Sparkplug World Championship Motorcycle Race at Laguna Seca on September 10, 1977, were fortunate enough to assist at one of these moments of creation when Maestro Cuoco "Pasta" Neilsolini, on his svelte Ducati Desmo, choreographed an incredible series of pirouettes down an infamous stretch of track known as the Corkscrew.

The *pas de deux*, which shall probably be known informally among racing aficionados as "The Burp", is best danced down a set of tight turns. The rider waits until he must make an abrupt transition from a hard bank in one direction to an immediate hard bank in the other. Then, preferably with his competing *corps de ballet* hot on his heels, he jerks the cycle upright in preparation for the next turn and, simultaneously gasses ("burps") it.

A careful examination of the various forces acting upon the machine at that precise moment (a staggeringly difficult problem in kinematic analysis which must have taken Neilsolini months to complete) reveals the primary direction of acceleration to be directly upward. The cycle leaps straight into the air--eventually to alight, en point, on its front wheel. Now, only time will tell what effect "The Burp" will have on cornering speeds. What was immediately apparent at Laguna Seca, however, was "The Burp's" electrifying psychological effect. A number of Neilsolini's competitors totally blew their cool when they took the Maestro, vaulting to new levels of technical achievement with his unnerving, innovative style. They blinked, shook their heads in bewilderment, then pulled themselves together and continued to lap--but at a reduced speed.

In addition, and perhaps even more significant in the broader race context, "The Burp" has quite an effect on the rider who executes it: He gets a much-needed psychological "lift" during those crucial moments when races are either won or lost. During a post-heat interview, when the near-systerical spectators clamored around Maestro Neilsolini, wild for vicarious share in creation, Cuoco characterized his performance--with a diffidence rare in the artist, and particularly in a temptuous Italian as "somewhat exhilarating".



This photo that I got from Moto-Sprint, taken at the Paul Ricard circuit in Monte Carlo during the Grand Prix de France (whew! thats a mouth full)...is a small example of "burping".

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