

DUCATI RACING DEPT.

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tra lean would have levered him off of his tires and into the outhouse. For most of the race I could make up in braking and turning for the Kawasaki's amazing acceleration, but after we took the Honda, he just ran away and hid. My motor seemed to vibrate a little, which was unusual, but the compression was okay and we found nothing special when we drained the oil.

Two weeks later we ran the final race weekend of the season, again at Loudon. The weather was beautiful and every leaf was a different shade of red, yellow orange and green. This time we ran the course clockwise, so the corners got tighter. This was fine with me, because I seem to have an affinity for braking late and passing going into the turns. When I first got the Sport, the front brake seemed unbelievably good, but after a few races I felt like I could use more. For 1978 we've gone to Ferodo pads and a dual disc master cylinder (Please don't tell anyone!!).

We were fortunate enough to get half of the little refreshment house adjacent to the bathrooms for our pit spot. Our "roommate" was a fellow with an RD-350 Yamaha who achieved the rare distinction of crashing in every practice session on Saturday. I think he even broke the record Mike Baldwin set when he fell off in all three races in the June, 1977 National at Loudon. As practice wore on, the 350 progressively wiped out its levers, pegs, fenders, mufflers, tank and instruments, but even so, I think he won his race!

Saturday practice went fine, despite an incident that could have caused some real problems. I felt a thump at the back of the bike as I was coming out of Eight. It felt like the rear end was collapsing, except that after the thump the bike felt fine again. Although I was accelerating out of the turn, leaned



quite far over, flatout in first, I looked back over my shoulder in time to see a fellow on a Kawasaki headed down the embankment on the outside of the turn, into the tall grass and reeds which surround a pond inside the track. Later, in the pits, I observed his tread marks on the spacer between the right side of my rear hub and the swing arm! It was that close. I also saw him. He and his bike were covered with grass and reeds and appeared rather moist. Picture King Neptune in leathers, without his trident, and you'll see what I mean.

My first race of the weeknd was modified production and I was really up for it. In practice I had gotten to the point where I was consistently drifting turns One and Four, braking waay into the corners and passing lots of other bikes. I really felt that I was finally ready to go for it. Due to having preregistered by mail, I was on the front row of the 750s (our club grids the

751+ bikes in a bunch at the line, then the 651-750s and the 411-650s last). Due to the Duke's excellent torque, I was among the first into Turn One and proceeded to start picking people off. Some people passed me too, but I was generally moving toward the front of the pack. At mid-race the motor got frumpy and I lost about ten places, to finish toward the back of the field.

When we got home, we found the horizontal cylinders' exhaust guide had worn to an exaggerated oval. This probably figured in the vibration I had felt at the previous meeting. After a while the wear exceeded the seal's ability to flex and the seal failed. The front cylinder then started sucking oil so hard that Linda Lovelace would have been envious. Meade remarked that my last few laps looked like a visit from the Bologna Mosquito Control Board.

On April 1, 1978, I stumbled across a 750 SS at a very tempting price and, after deciding that I had no money and enough Ducatis (I also have a 450 Mk III Desmo which was slated to become a Formula III), I bought it anyway. I shows signs of having been in a minor accident, poor- break-in and general neglect. Bob and I have been putting all our spare time into getting it ready for Thompson on April 22-23. The valves needed adjustment, among everything else, but fortunately the job is not hard just time consuming. One of the closing shims exhibited the mildly vexatious quality of getting thicker as I polished it down! In general the bike appears to have been assembled with much greater care than the 750s. It is a real jewel which I look forward to restoring, racing, restoring, racing..... ■

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