



RITTERS RACING ANNUAL REPORT

By PAUL RITTER

I've been meaning to write for quite some time, but I never seemed to have time during the racing season. We ended up third overall in the Superbike Class behind Reg Pridmore (Kaw) and John Long (BMW). We're pretty happy with these results, but the season was sort of up and down--I'll tell you about it now that I've got some time.

First let me introduce the bikes--first there's the 1977 Sears National winner, which is very close to stock -- it has Imola cams and megaphone exhaust but the rest was straight 860SS parts at the start of the season. The heads are not ported, valves, crank, pistons, gearbox are stock. It has absolutely no top speed compared to other Superbikes but it has gobs of torque and of course handles great.

The second bike is Cook's old bike, formerly known as "Old Blue". My sponsor/tuner Dale Newton bought Cook's bike and other Ducati pieces. As most Ducati fans know this bike is a 750SS bored out to 883cc is highly modified and has good top speed. It is definitely a top speed bike with noticeably less low and mid speed grunt compared to the stocker.

Thirdly, there's the new engine. One of the items that came with Cook's parts were the 60 degree heads. Dale and I thought these heads combined with a bigger engine might give the best of both of the other bikes--gut wrenching torque and good top speed. So at the start of the season Dale began building a 905 engine based on an 860SS with 60 heads.

So there are essentially three bikes, called "The Stocker", Cook's Bike, and the "The 905".

The season started with Daytona in March which was not a very auspicious beginning. We had the Stocker and Cook's bike, but because of a mix up with Harry Hunt we had no disks for Cook's bike. (The 905 engine was not ready) We took the entire front end off the stocker and put it on Cook's bike.

I was cold, not having raced since the previous October and did not ride very well. Cook's bike was not running right either -- it would not pull the gearing that Cook had used the year previous when he won convincingly. About half-way through the final the crankshaft locked up solid and I was out.

We knew Cook's bike was hard on cranks but this one had failed much sooner than it should have. It was a new crank that had not been checked before installation. Dale and I decided to never again install a crank without first having Jeff Bratton check it out and align it. The spare crank, also a new unit, was sent to Jeff.

While Cook's bike was laid up we took the Stocker to Sears Point club race and finished second behind Harry Klinzmann's TZ750 and was starting to get my rhythm back.

Word came from Jeff -- the new crank we had sent was corroded and Jeff was of the opinion that it would fail very quickly. We had Jeff look at the remains of the Daytona crank and although it was too messed up to be sure he thought he could detect signs of corrosion. We're convinced at this point that the Daytona crank was a dud right out of the box.

Next was Sears Point in April. The 905 still isn't ready (Dale had to fix Cook's bike) and we were going to run the Stocker. The race was rained out as I'm sure you recall.

We ran the Stocker at another club race at Sears in May. While in third place behind Randy Mamola and Steve McLaughlin (TZ750's both) I was closing when I unloaded I was not hurt badly, but the bike did an endo, breaking the front wheel, bending the forks and just about everything else. Poor Dale. Again the 905 had to wait while Dale repaired the Stocker.

June came and it was off to Loudon, H.H. Again we had the Stocker (fixed) and Cook's bike. I'm not in the best of shape having banged my shoulder in the Sears tumble. The two bikes are about equal at Loudon, and I choose to run the Stocker for two reasons -- it was easier to ride since I was more used to it and had always been rock solid reliable. (We only spin it to 7500-7800 RPM--with stock valves and ports there's no more horsepower at higher revs.) We finished fourth, which we were all very pleased with. If I had been 100% healthy I'm sure I could have been third, but I can't complain about the 4th place.

Two weeks before the rescheduled Sears National we are again running the Stocker at a Sears Club race. On lap three one of the stock pistons comes apart with a clatter that can be heard all over the paddock area. Again the 905 is pushed aside while Dale repairs a broken bike.

The Stocker is back in shape by the National and it's displacement is up to 883cc and the stock pistons replaced by Venolia slugs. We went faster than last year (1:51.5 in 1977, 1:51.2 this year) but Wes Cooley went even faster, dropping below 1:51. Three laps from the end Wes' rear sprocket bolts shear off and I win by 12 seconds over Reg