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A thrown chain for Roberto Pietri (88) and a broken countershaft sprocket for Freddie Spencer stopped their rides in the closing laps of the race.

Bell Helmets Superbike 100

Pierce leads 1-2-3 Yoshimura Suzuki sweep

by Jack Mangus

Daytona Beach, Fl. March 10, 1979
The results of the \$11,500 Bell Helmets Super bike 100 put a smile on the face of tuning wizard Pops Yoshimura that stretched from Daytona International Speedway all the way to his home country - Japan. Team Yoshimura riders Ron Pierce, Wes Cooley and David Emde rode their modified-to-the-limit Suzuki GS1000 bikes to a 1-2-3 sweep that had their competition trailing far behind.

Thursday afternoon heat race results swung the odds heavily towards the Yoshimura camp as first Ron Pierce and then Wes Cooley easily won the qualifying events. Pierce won the first five-lap heat race at an average speed of 101.873 mph and then sat on the pit wall and watched fellow Californian Cooley heat his tires up even more as he registered an average speed of 104.043. When the field gridded for the feature event on Friday afternoon, all eyes were focused on Pierce and Cooley, and at the wave of the green flag it was that duo, in reverse order, leading the field on their first tour of the infield.

Exiting the infield first was Cooley and by the time he navigated the west banked portion of the oval and headed down the 3,100 foot back stretch he held a 3.5 second lead over teammate Pierce. Wes built that up to 5 seconds by the time he exited the back straight chicane.

At the conclusion of the first lap the infield scoreboard flashed the numbers 34, 97, 88, 8-Cooley, Pierce, Roberto Pietri and Freddy Spencer (Ducati).

And those numbers remained on the board in that order until the 13th lap of the 26 lap race when the mandatory pit stops began. Each rider was required to pit and come to a full stop whether or not they required fuel.

During those laps, Cooley maintained a lead over Pierce that varied from 6 to 9 seconds depending on which lap one clocked him on.

Behind the front running duo a dice developed between Venezuelan Roberto Pietri and Louisianan Freddy Spencer. Teenager Spencer, who said he was allowed to take some time away from his high school studies "because he was good friends with the principal", was aboard a Ducati sponsored by Howard Racing Suzuki, while nice guy Roberto was piloting an Arrow Suzuki. Pietri held third spot down, although it was never his by more than a few bike length at any one time.

Top spots behind the front running quartet belonged to Kawasaki mounted Harry Klinzmann of California and then a three-man dice for fifth between New Englander John Bettencourt, who was riding a Yoshimura East Suzuki, the defending Superbike champ-



ion Reg Pridmore aboard a Vetter Kawasaki and Floridian John Long and his G.S. Performance BMW.

While the three-man battle for fifth was being conducted skillfully by Bettencourt, Pridmore and Long, sharp-eyed race watchers became aware of a tremendous charge being turned in by David Emde, whose father and brother each registered Daytona 200 wins in past years. Emde had unloaded hard from his 250 the previous day and started the Superbike race in the last starting slot. "I started spitting up blood after I crashed. I thought I was going to die. They wouldn't let me run my Superbike heat race grid and then told me I could race today. I tried to pass as many bikes as I could off the start and I got a lot," Emde said after the race. And "got a lot" was an understatement as the tall, blonde Californian moved from 63rd to 5th by the end of the seventh lap.

Just past the halfway mark the leaders pitted together and were both underway after swift pit stops conducted by the Yoshimura crews. But Cooley's lead and hopes for the win evaporated when his front brakes started to go away and he over-shot the chicane, allowing teammate Pierce to open up a comfortable nearly half-minute lead by the checkered flag time.

Cooley recovered quickly from his chicane incident and settled into second when Freddy Spencer pitted on lap 19. Spencers pit stop took nearly a half-minute and he eventually retired from the race with mechanical problems. The pit stop period shuffled the standings behind the leaders and mechanical problems also eliminated Roberto Pietri. "We threw a chain," said Pietri.

At the end of 20 laps the winner's circle line-up was set and the average speed was a blistering 102-564.

RESULTS: Ron Pierce (Suz); 2. Wes Cooley (Suz) 3. David Emde (Suz); 4. John Long (BMW); 6 John Bettencourt (Suz); 7. Kerry Bryant (Kaw); 8. Jon Minonno (BMW); 9. William Weston (DUCATI); 10. Carl Smith (Suz); 11. John Fuchs (Hon); 12 Richard Schlachter (DUCATI); 13. William Addinton (Kaw) 14. Douglas Lantz (DUCATI).