

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS Continued

on a stock Ducati 900SS than on a Honda 900, which I attribute to the degree of confidence that I feel on the Ducati. . . . I suppose I could talk about handling, but in being realistic, I must add that most people who talk about handling don't have any idea what they're saying, including me.

Step three. But, road racing means very little to me in the overall picture of motorcycling. I'm too big (6'7"), I'm too heavy (195 lbs.), too old (32) and too chicken to ever make anything of it beyond the fun department. So, a motorcycle must be other things, like . . . reliable. What are the standard jabs? Poor valve guides? Poor electrics? They break down? I scream when my Yamaha doesn't start. I love my Suzuki except when it's not running well, and I do take very good care of motorcycles — although everyone I know says that, the nearest Ducati dealer is 40 miles away — although I am told he is one of the best dealers in the country — Jim Woods in Glendale.

So, at last, and excuse this gigantic wind up before the pitch, but I wanted to set the stage a little. Here is my question: What can I expect for my \$5,000? Will I be a slave to the freeway that separates me from the nearest person who can adjust my desmo valves? Will my mechanical headaches be greater than those I have experienced with Hondas, Yamahas and Suzukis? Maybe I should put this another way. I have had the good fortune to ride a Ducati enough to taste the enjoyment — an enjoyment, I might add, that I haven't had on any other bike I can remember. But, I've never had to live with one. And although I'm not asking someone to promise me that if I buy one it will be a purchase I will never regret, I'm in need of knowing what I'm considering getting myself into?

I hope this all doesn't make your readers reach for No-Doze and thanks to anyone who may take the trouble to give me their suggestions.

Doug Galloway,
P.O. Box 933,
Claremont, CA 91711

BERLINER IS OK BY ME

Your request about Berliner in issue No. 29 was of interest to me. No doubt you will hear a lot of negative things mainly due to their indifferent attitude in marketing and aftersales service. Nevertheless I have had good experiences with their technical help and parts service. For service information I phone and ask for Reno Leoni; so far they have put me through and Reno is exceptionally helpful. Of course if they get tired of these calls they may give you the old routine, "he is out right now, leave your name and number and we'll get back to you", i.e. don't bother us. So far I have received the help I requested every time and commend them on this score.

For parts service I give Berliner top marks to date, although this is due in part to my excellent dealer and proximity to Hasbrouck Heights, N.J. Let me first praise Bob Giles of D&B Motorcycles in Manville, New Jersey, who will personally drive in to Berliner to pick up your parts order. Bob and his wife Dolly run that rare type of dealership where you can walk in, talk to the head guy, wander around the service area and make a general nuisance of yourself, and still get straight talk and help. None of the usual crap: "service is off limit to customers — take a check and wait for the next available assistant (usually some high school kid who thinks that shims, washers, rings and bearings are all the same hole in a hunk of metal holding the air in) — we don't stock that part but next time we place an order (i.e. next month) we will have it in (of course the wrong one). . . ." However, I digress.

I have ordered a lot of odd Ducati parts, the sort of things that were *never* available when I fooled around with my

(shudder) Yamaha, and had to be entered in a computer bank and filter through a complex and slow distribution network. So far I have had 100% availability through Berliner, far better than average. On occasion when parts were shipped out to a dealer, in this case the Sport Spot in Kinnelon, N.J. (another first class dealership) the deliveries were prompt and correct. So far you guys who complain that Ducati parts are mythical tokens always on the slow steamer from Bologna via Cape Horn I suggest the real problem may be your dealer.

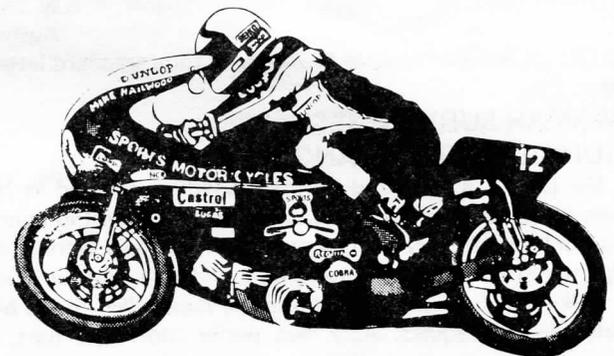
In my limited dealings with Berliner I have no complaints. They are OK and what more can you expect given the dollar volume of Ducatis sold in the USA. That's the bottom line I think, their business simply does not have the cash flow volume to support a better effort. That may sound like the old "chicken and egg" argument, in that more aggressive marketing and hyper service would establish better business to fuel the cycle, but I think we all know Ducatis will never achieve sales beyond a fraction of a percent in the US market, no matter how many glossy centerfolds were to appear in the cycle mags with naked ladies astride a 900SS crooning "my man does it with a Desmo!"

Ted Cais,
Califon, N.J.

THE REASON WHY CLUBS EXIST

Dear Joel: Your invitation for comments about Ducatis is too inviting. I think all members would appreciate some sort of index to Tech Tips. I appreciate the sweat involved but us remote readers really benefit from them little tid bits and have no way of knowing what has been published before joining the DIOC.

DUCATI 900 WORLD CHAMPION



Isle of Man - 2 June 1978 Driver Mike Hailwood ISLE OF MAN T-SHIRT

Also known as the Mike Hailwood T-shirt. This shirt will keep alive the memory of the exciting come-back to racing of "Mike the Bike" in the summer of 1978 at the Isle of Man in England, when he soundly trounced the entire field of entries from the Japanese giants. The only Mike Hailwood T-shirt in existence today. The shirt is a quality Hanes T-shirt in white with red, black, and green print. The detailed drawing appears on both sides of this shirt which also has bright red ringers on the collar and sleeves. Only \$7.15 + \$1.25 Shpg. Overseas Postage is \$3.10 Air Mail. Price is in U.S.A. Dollars.