

## Kris (Krash) Larivee shares his racing experience on aT500 racer



## Mosport, in my own words.

Posted by Kris L., the Ugly American on August 27, 2001, 10:01 pm

My four-day saga began and ended in torrential rain, divided by a couple of heavenly days. The difference was almost manic in comparison. Little did I know this would be the theme of the whole weekend. This is the Readers' Digest version. Thursday, August 23

Left for Mosport. Jetted the bike yesterday on some deserted back roads. Running well, feels fast. Added another washer to the detent on the shift drum. Shifts much easier now. All crash damage fixed, chambers painted and Sundial stickers on tank. Drove all the way in pouring rain. Borrowed my brother's truck to get there. The VRRRA volunteer at the gate made some rude comments about us f@#\$ing Americans, then found out I was from New York. It's funny, because the VRRRA was more than happy to take my membership fees and entry fees (totalling over \$175 dollars US, along with a \$20 gate fee). If the VRRRA really feels that way about us Americans, maybe they should piss off, and have smaller grids and less money in the bank as a result. I came to race, not be stereo-typed and insulted. I hope it was an isolated incident. We'll see.

Many bikes and people are already at the track. I feel a little bit outclassed with all the beautiful machinery and experienced riders. The track looks huge.

Friday August 24

Woke at seven with the butterflies. I would be out in practice at nine, riding on a track I had never been to before. Walked the bike to tech, then ate a little breakfast. Still no sign of anyone I knew. Then I finally ran into Steven Szkora, also running a Titan. Nice to see a familiar face. Got out in practice and was trying to learn the track when the bike started whistling. Having heard this sound before on the last lap of a race at Shannonville, I pulled into the pits. Another cracked head. Left side again, cracked exactly the same way. No problem, I've got stock heads in the truck. That's funny, both of these heads look light right handers, oh no, they are! A small tantrum ensues as I watch my weekend go down the toilet, again. To be continued.

Steven S. senses my frustration, which is beginning to boil over into rage, and kindly invites me to ride his Titan with him and Eugene Stewart in the 2hr endurance race. I nearly refuse, having already smashed someone else's vehicle earlier this week(see earlier rants, er.. I mean posts on this board). Steven doesn't seem the least bit worried about letting me ride it, so I decide to. I'll get some track time before I go home. I rode Steven's bike a few laps in practice, turning 2:18s, not very good. I couldn't get used to the bike's seemingly over-tall gearing, and was having alot of trouble keeping it in the powerband. Handling was nice and stable, even with an un-braced stock swing-arm. Brakes were very good as well, (unlike mine!).

Steven rode first, Eugene second, me third. The plan was to ride smooth and take it easy, just finish the race. The fuel stops and rider changes went well, considering we didn't have much of a plan and no time to practice. I won't say we were a well oiled machine, but we worked much better than my bike has been. Four laps into my ride, I was getting used to the bike, learning the track as well. The bike could be fast, you just had to keep it on the boil. Shift at redline, and run it to the bore. I held two fingers on the clutch down the almost 1/2 mile back straight for a few laps, just in case, but the bike was invincible. The three of us rode and rode that machine for two hours straight, and the only thing was that the brakes got hot! Never a cough, or a sputter, or even an unpredictable wobble from the suspension. Why the hell can't my Titan go like this?

Attrition was high, and I started to see bikes all over the side of the track, especially during my last round in the saddle. Oh, there's that really souped up T-500 broken down. Eugene told me I was making good time, and that was the fuel I needed to really give it all I had during the last few laps. My whiplash was giving me some trouble, but on the track it was all but forgotten. I rode the bike harder and harder. I started dicing with a Honda 4, (750?), he would pass me, then me him. If I got out of the hairpin correctly, I had him on top end, but if the motor got lazy, he would pull me, and I'd have to play catch up. The back and forth made me ride even faster. I finally took the checkered flag for the team, as I was the finishing rider. Come to think of it, Steven should have run the last time out to get the checkers, as he was the bike's owner. It's a credit to him and his preparation that the bike went so well out there, being the only two-stroke to finish. Also, credit goes to Eugene and Steven for riding well, knowing that smoothness and consistency win the day, not bone-headed moves and trying to win it on the first lap, (I may be guilty of this from time to time.) I later found out that we placed second, much to our surprise! I would also find that I made my goal of an under 2 minute lap, running consistent 1:58s. I think we all had a blast, and much thanks goes to Steven for letting me flog his bike. Thank you.

Even with the elation of the endurance race, my thoughts began to turn to my bike and where the hell to get a left hand head for a T500 by tomorrow morning. Things looked bleak, as no one at my home (3 hrs away) could get me my spare heads (car's smashed, don'tcha know?). I'm ready to pack up and head for home when hope arrives in the back of a beat up Chevy truck....

Saturday, August 25

Practice. The bike is running and I want to make the most of getting used to my bike, now that I know the track. Steven and I chase each other around the track a few times when disaster strikes. I was preparing to pit in after a particularly fast jaunt down the Mario Andretti back straight when the motor made a whoomp! noise and cut out to one cylinder. Figuring another cracked head, I coasted in to the pits, only to find a holed piston on the left hand side. Upon removal of the head, I find not only is the piston holed, but the crown is stuck in the top of the bore and the cylinder is ruined. The bottom half of the piston is still attached to the con rod, except for the hundreds of aluminum bits that are down in the crankcase. I am screwed.

A few hurried phone calls later and Eugene Stewart and I are pouring gas in the base, kicking over the motor repeatedly with the con-rod bungeed to keep it from contacting the cases, and making a general mess and racket. The crank feels too crunchy too move, and indeed gets stuck several times during the process. I know the bottom ends on these bikes are bulletproof, but I doubt this one will survive such punishment. The crank finally frees up nice and smooth and we turn the bike upside down to drain the case, dumping gas everywhere. Eugene and I swap out the left barrel and piston with a stock GT barrel and piston that have 14,000 miles on them. I now have one ported cylinder and one stock one, one Titan piston and one and one GT piston, which is different than the Titan one. Eugene mentions that you are never supposed to re-use the cir-clips that hold the wrist pin in place. I ask him if that really matters, seeing how we have a crank full of aluminum chunks, differently ported cylinders, and different weight pistons. He gets my point. Two hours later the bike is running again. I will start the heat race today, thankfully we are last on the schedule.

I'm gridded dead last on the start, as I have no points with VRRRA. 29th out of 29. At least if the bike breaks on the line, I won't get run over by anyone. The flagman raises the red flag, clunk into first gear, rev to six grand, green flag and I'm off. The bike wheelies as I shift into second, passing three riders. Before I know it, there's six riders behind me, eight, ten. I'm up with Steven S., who was gridded in the third row, before we reach Turn One. I pass a couple more riders, but the bikes are getting their legs now, and a couple of them pass me on the short straight before Turn Two, the Chute. I'm doing a decent job of holding off many of the guys I passed on the line when I get to the hairpin. Who's there, but this tricked out, done-up, illegal, non-period parts, no expense spared beautiful GT750, taking a very awkward line. I try to go to the outside, but he runs wide and I almost end up in some Oil-dry from a previous mishap, so I cut in low and make the pass by running over the top of the rumble strip. Probably a bone-head move, but there was room and I knew I could make it. Before I can get it into fourth on the back straight, the angry triple comes wailing by me like a wounded banshee, leaving me wishing for much taller gearing and some more motor. I'm only revving the bike to 7 grand to keep it together and finish. I figure that's good for maybe ninety-five on top, with me well tucked in. Not enough for the P2 Heavyweight, against big Ducs and Hondas and 750cc 2 strokes. Halfway through the second lap, we get a red flag coming into the hair pin. Somebody's crashed a Dresda Honda 750 in turn 2. We head back for the re-start, I'm dead last all over again, after all that. This time I line the bike up crooked to the others, but still next to the wall, to give me a straight shot by the guys in front of me. I have my work cut out for me again. I don't react to the flag as quickly as the first start, but the bike does the work for me. I get by three in front of me, see a big hole by the pit wall, pass the GT750 (again!), scraping my knee puck on the pit wall, and still managing to make a decent line for turn one, without killing anyone else, or cutting them off very badly. I maintain a position in the middle of the pack, and finish thirteenth. I am proud, the bike finished the heat and we beat quite a few in the process. Fingers crossed for the final.

It threatens rain all day Sunday, and the schedule is hurried to beat the weather. Steven has one final race early, which he finishes, I'm not sure of position. Our race is not until just about the end of the progam. Shortly before we are set to go, the heavens open with a deluge. I will not be denied finishing another race weekend! Not by mechanical failure, crash or even and act of God. I announce that if I have to race by myself in a monsoon, I will finish this damn weekend. If I must carry the bike on my back, I will cross the line in a final race today, (at which point Steven wryly suggests I start lightening the bike up now). Racers start going home, cones are put up in the hairpin to keep us off some slippery concrete, we wonder if they will cancel. The Superbike challenge is cancelled. More people leave. I grit my teeth and try to smile. I just want to finish one event with my own damn bike. After excruciating rain delays, the skies brighten and we go out for a warm up lap. The track that was yesterday my friend, now wishes me dead. There seems to be no traction to be had, no line a safe one. I am riding a writhing snake down a greasy, slimy snail trail to oblivion. I miscalculate turn nine and almost meet with the hay bales, saving it at the last second. My foam filters are wet and making the bike run like crap. I go to pit in, not sure whether I should start the race or bag it, being nervous about the track. I look to the skies for an answer, and for a brief moment the sun peeks out, as if to say, go ahead, I will watch over you. Steven S. followed me in to see what the problem was. Unable to make the grid for the start, we have to start from pit lane, unable to see the riders or the flagman. I overhear the clutch waiting and stall the bike. It restarts, just a little roughly on the B9s Les Trotter suggested I run, we get the green and we're off for four laps of white knuckle, foot down, slip and slide. I get behind the second place guy, on a Yamaha 650 and try to take his lines, but those Metzellers feel so greasy I back off in fear of going down and not finishing at all. Finally I see the checkered flag, content to have finished a weekend on my bike. I found out in the pits later that I finished third. Four started the race out of 29 on the grid. Steven finished fourth. We probably should have packed up and gone home, as the track was so bad. But with a little skill and a whole lot of luck, we finished without falling, and got a little something for our efforts. What a rollercoaster, I am drained and think I will need a week to recover. I wouldn't have missed it for anything.

Wed. Oct.24

In between raindrops, Phil and I did some testing with the Titan on our illegal back road test strip. Much to our dismay we cracked another milled left hand head. That makes three this season, all on the left side, even after switching barrels. If anyone has any theories on this, please let me know. Zooke's porting was great, the 15/33 gearing seemed a bit too tall. Later that night we switched back to a stock head on the left. You guys will laugh when I tell you the compression readings on the cylinders. 90psi on the left and 125 on the right! I was surprised the motor even ran.

Thurs. Oct. 25

More rain, cold. Finally the roads dried up and we headed out to test the bike again. It ran, and we couldn't seem to break it, but it felt appallingly slow and came on the pipe very late making it especially hard to ride with the over-tall gearing. The only way to keep it on the boil was to twist the thing unmercifully. Yet I had confidence that the motor would hold together, with such low compression, running on race gas and B9 plugs, how could we hurt it?

Fri. Oct. 26

As soon as I hit the road for the track it started pouring. After being searched at the border I was finally allowed into Canada. It was raining at the track, but I paid for practice anyways, figuring it would dry up later. At noon it was still raining, but three guys went out to practice anyways, two of them crashed. That made up my mind not to practice in the wet. I took a nap in my tent and listened to the raindrops. No practice today. A short practice tomorrow and two races, Club Cup and Vintage. The butterflies set in. Would the bike hold? Could I learn the track in one ten minute track session? How bad was I going to get beat (or worse)? Me, a motorcycle racer? Who was I trying to kid?

Sat. Oct.27

Froze my ass off in the tent last night. No official word on how cold, but it was damn close to freezing. Good news is, the storm front blew by us in the dark and the morning nice, sunny and clear, even if everyone is wearing wooly hats and mittens at the rider's meeting! Bad news is, the bike is going terribly. Gearing is way too tall and the motor sounds sick. I'm too worried about the bike to learn the track, and it keeps bogging on the slower corners. I'm considering withdrawing from the race and going home to build a real race bike for next season. Frustration starts setting in. I count to ten (more like a hundred!) and decide to ride in one more practice session and make up my mind then. The bike goes better in the second practice, and I'm riding a little bit better. Still, the gearing is so tall, I have to drop it into first gear in the hairpin, back wheel hopping on the entry, pin the throttle WFO and fan the clutch shifting into second. That's the only way I can get any kind of drive for the long straight. Do it in second and run wide in the hairpin and the motor bogs wickedly, sputtering and sounding like a dying cow. I decide I will run my races and beat the piss out of the bike doing so. It's the end of the season, I've got all winter to re-build. right?

The first heat race is Club Cup, sort of a "run what ya brung" class. The only rules are air-cooled and twin shock. There's RD350s and 400s, CB900 and 750 Hondas, a Ducati engined Cagiva, and several Honda twins. I'm gridded eighteenth (no points) out of thirty. I know I can't catch the top five bikes, and there are a few behind me that I know will get by, but my plan is to try not to lose too many positions on the grid and make a few safe passes if chance allows. To win, you must finish. And this was only a heat race.

I get a good start and pass four bikes off the line. They catch me in turn one and the battle is on. I pass and get passed several times, but still refuse to make any heroic moves. Let them go by. I'll be back tomorrow. No one crashes and the five laps are over quickly. I finish seventeenth. Not terrible, and the bike is still going!

All the classes are gridded together for the vintage race with about 35 bikes or more total. The 500 class is gridded in the middle, I'm on row 7, outside. The light goes green and I get another decent start. I leave the others in my class at the line, and don't see them again as they get caught in traffic. I catch up to the lightweights and pass a few Honda twins. I can't control myself anymore and make a bold pass on three bikes coming out of turn 2, running on the very last inches of the track in the rubber chunks to get by. I figure the more traffic between me and my class the better, and I want to race for position now. I calm down a lap later when I realize I can't catch the two-stroke Yamahas with my ailing Suzi. A quick look over the shoulder tells me I've got some cushion between the bikes behind me, so I let it coast a little bit. Again this is a heat race, and need to finish. The only tense moment comes on the last lap when some fat-ass on a Honda twin catches me in the carousel. He passes on the outside and cuts right into my line, nailing my front wheel with his back, sending me into a tank slapper. I save it, but go way off line and speed to avoid the crash. I finish the race where I started, at least I finished. With idiots like that out on the track, it's a wonder I did. I spoke to him later and he flatly denies hitting me, or cutting in on me. He claims a clean pass. He and I both know the truth, and he shows his true colors. I make a note not to lend him any tools or trust anything he tells me. I'd really like to punch him in the nose, but I do my best to be sportsmanlike and swallow my pride and anger. I'll take it out on the track. The thing that really irks me is we are not even in the same class, and he knew it! But hey, I finished two races and the bike is still going. There's always tomorrow!

Sun. Oct.28

A cold night and the darkness gives way to light to reveal another gorgeous day. Practice goes well and I feel confident about the bike. Still isn't fast, but it will finish.

Club Cup is my first 10 lap final of the day. I get a good start, slipping the clutch all the way to turn one, passing three riders on the way. I am in fourteenth and holding when the half way flag appears. I don't expect to catch many other riders, but I start thinking about you guys on the board and figured you'd rather hear about a top ten than a fourteenth. I'm riding the hell out of the bike, arms are getting sore. I catch two riders, drop down a gear, severely over-revving the motor, and make a good pass. I catch a Honda coming into the hair-pin. Something in my brain tells me to wait until the straight and pass, but the Honda runs wide, giving me a space big enough to drive a Munch Mammoth through. Balls over-ride brain and I make the move. My knee touches down on the rumble strip and I look at the straight, knowing I am home free, crack the throttle. And promptly end up on my ass. I didn't see the oil dust on the inside of the turn from a previous crash and the front end washes out on me faster than Dick Cheney can say "heart attack". I slide off the track with the bike and a Honda twin running off the track to avoid me runs over my hand. I'm glad the ground was soft!. The right hand clip-on is broken, but the rest of the bike survives the impact and subsequent slide.

An hour later the clip-on is changed and the bike re-teched and ready to race. I get a terrible start with a wheelie off the line, pull in the clutch and wheelie again. Finally I get the pig rolling and catch up with the first group of bikes. We play cat and mouse for a while. Half-way into the race the carnage begins. First one bike off the track. Two laps later another slides off the track. On the last lap three bikes in front of me crash, taking each other out and off the track. They appear unhurt. Bikes seem to be slowing down, but the race is not red-flagged. I finish first in my class and tenth over-all. I am happy. It wasn't until I returned to the pits that I learn a bike was pissing oil all over the track for most of the race. I guess I was just running too wide in the corners to hit the slick! Thankfully no one was seriously hurt, but I heard the gentleman with the leaking bike was aware of the problem before he went out for the warm-up laps. If that's true I hope they fine his dumb ass. He was responsible for wrecking at least three bikes and some minor injuries. It put a damper on the win for me, but at least I'm charged up and planning for Daytona already. See ya there!

Kris



## Kris (Krash) Larivee



### DAYTONA: From Dismay to Despair. Part I: Pregnant Cats and Bloody Knuckles

Posted by Krash on March 7, 2002

I left for Daytona, a passenger in a 25 year old van, with a man I had only met once before and his pregnant cat. My racebike was in Virginia, hopefully all prepped and ready to go. The plan was to get to Zooke's, put the finishing touches on the three Sundial bikes and be off to practice at DeLand FL. Sounds like a simple plan, had I (or Eric) known what we were in for, we both might have stayed at home with our feet propped up and a frosty beverage close by (non-alcoholic in my case), watching re-runs of the Andy Griffith Show and nary a thought to the way things could have been. If only..... A tense 14 white-knuckle, nail-biting, speedy prayers to my maker, eyes clamped shut, teeth gritted for impact, hours later I arrived in the lovely state of Virginia. My driver was a man with no need for useless conventions such as lane markers, stop signs, signal lights, one way streets, no u-turns, ect. A gentleman who truly believed in using the whole road, breakdown lane, rumble strips, grass median, the space currently occupied by another vehicle and so on, not to mention his pregnant cat that found standing on the dashboard blocking the driver's view the most comfortable spot. One particularly tense moment when the interstate split and we were given the choice of going sharply to the left or to the right, saw our vehicle travelling decidedly straight, into orange barrels and guard rails. Somehow we avoided the barrels and made our way back to the tarmac, but not before I needed a change of shorts. Racing at Daytona would be easy, if I didn't end up on a greasy spot on I-81 trying to get there.

I emerged from that rolling tomb a bit shaky, but still intact, at Sundial HQ in Pulaski, VA. Zooke informed me that we had a busy night ahead of us, as he was behind schedule with the bikes. It was a daunting task he had undertaken, preparing three bikes to run the banking at Daytona, but he showed no signs of worry, so I was encouraged. That was until I saw how much work was left to be done. The front end and brakes needed to be assembled on my bike, as well as a plethora of nuts and bolts still to be drilled and wired, fork seals installed, hydraulics bled, calipers assembled. We worked until the night was old, and the dawn rapidly approaching, before retiring for a few brief hours of rest. We awoke to a cold day, with winds and some snow. Even after living for years in upstate NY, it felt bitter. So much for sunny VA. It was at this point Eric began having trouble with his bike, it wouldn't fire. Suspecting a bad crank, he began the first of what would be at last count four (yes 4) engine swaps, and many trips up and down his driveway in the freezing cold trying to bump start the bike, to no avail. Not once did his enthusiasm or determination waver. I wish I could have said the same for me. Still recovering from the flu, I felt weak and congested. Not the way I would have liked to start off my racing season. In the end, Eric and I finally got all the bikes together and loaded up on the trailer and began the 12 hour trip to Deland. It was 1:30 am, the practice day I had paid \$75 for began in 6.5 hours. At least we were on our way.

### Part II: From Pissing Gas to Practice Laps

Zooke and I were headed down to Deland in the hours of the night when only the insane are awake. Surely our mental stability was in question at this point, only we were far too exhausted for our brains to function at any measurable output. We were the Driving Dead, our only goal to keep the truck and trailer between the white and yellow lines. Staring unflinchingly ahead into the abyss of blackness before us with burning, blinded eyes. Our shifts of sleeping and driving lasted just twenty minutes, because neither of us could stay awake any longer. I found I could sleep quite nicely while driving, if it wasn't for the tractor trailers passing us and waking me up, usually just in time to yank the truck back onto the road. Even asleep, Zooke and I were better drivers than some people (mentioned in Part I).

At the noon hour, we were rolling into the Deland Airport, where a section of runway had been cordoned off by bay bales, garbage bags filled with something and orange cones, to form some kind of makeshift, ramshackle "racetrack". It looked like the kind of thing some kids might build for a go-cart race, not a prestigious AHRMA event. Team Sundial had arrived, roll out the red carpet!

Practice was already underway, so we quickly unloaded, bought some fuel from "Super" Dave Rosno and fired up the bikes. Or at least tried to.

The second I put gas into my tank, it came pissing out the bloody petcock. A cursory inspection revealed a fiber washer was missing from one of the screws that holds the petcock on the tank. Ever tried to find a fiber fuel valve washer at the racetrack? They're all over the friggin' place, but nobody wants to take one off their tank to give it to you! I stood and watched the \$5 a gallon petrol piss and dribble all over the ground, trying to come up with a solution in my already bruised and battered head. All I could do was manage to drool a little bit and grunt. Zookerman to the rescue. In his hand he held a tiny nylon washer used on the Titans to seal the injector lines and banjo bolts. Apparently these things seal out gas as well, because my incontinent tank soon held it's own water (gas?) better than Grandma's Depends. I might get to do a couple of laps today, although I had completely forgotten how to ride a bike. Was it clutch on the left, brake on the right? Four up, one down? How did you get the silly thing to go around corners? Countersteer, what's that, a new kind of beef? Yes boys and girls, Mr. Krash was a little rusty. But never fear, he was determined to put on a display of riding tactics to make even the most idiotic of cage drivers wince. This is how NOT to ride a motorcycle. I managed not to kill anybody in my first few laps. OK, I managed not to kill myself, they're still looking for the riders I put off into the swamp. Alligator bait I suppose. Sorry.

I came back into the pits to find Eric grimacing over his Production bike that was supposed to be raced in just a few short hours. "Bad crank seal," is all he mutters as he puts the bike back on the stand. Without time to swap another engine for today's racing, it looks like Zooke will be sidelined. Frank Melling has arrived from England, with his "tuner", but the GP bike is having some teething problems, suspected fuel starvation and/or jettling glitch that will require further testing to rectify. Zooke is not worried, he has taken the "I will work harder!" creed as his own and is sticking to his guns. I am impressed, by now others would have been reduced to tears, valiantly he soldiers on, without heed to his own weariness or frustration. He is the rock that Sundial is built on, the thread that held us all together. I would have thrown at least half a dozen temper tantrums by now, but that's just me.

Just when things aren't looking so hot for Zooke racing that day, OH NO Mr. Bill Vernon shows up and offers his T500 proddie bike to Zooke to race. If I am correct, Zooke built both of Bill's bikes, his T500 and the T350 Bill would be racing. The fight is on and Zooke makes a hell of an effort on Bill's bike, coming in Third in the Historic Production class, despite handling problems and his unfamiliarity with bike. It's a credit to his smooth and careful riding, even on a bumpy, sandy bunghole of a track like Deland, and it pays off with a podium finish, "wood" if you will.

We load up the bikes and drive 90 minutes to Zooke's parents house, where we will be staying, (much cheaper than a hotel). The Kalamajas are extremely gracious, making me feel a member of the family, not just a mere guest. I would have gladly stayed another two weeks with such warm and friendly people like them. Truly their kind of hospitality is rare in this day and age. My hat is off to them, as well as a heartfelt thank you.

I am falling asleep standing up as we exchange greetings with the Kalamajas, and my need for rest is abundantly clear and quickly fulfilled, as they offer me the spare room and bed which I am soon sound asleep and snoring louder than the racebike in. Alas, no rest for Zooke, who will spend another late night, swapping the motor in his Production bike for another with hopefully good crank seals. I don't envy him as he plods out to the garage. His hands and knuckles are already swollen and bloody from long nights wrenching, and it appears this one will be no different. I think about this for nearly four seconds before passing out.

Only to be awakened by Zooke way too early in the morning. We must get to Deland. Today, Frank and I will be racing Formula 500, and already the butterflies are swarming in my gut.

### Part III: Frightening Finish and Friggin' Fork Seals

For once on this trip, Zooke and I arrive on time and almost prepared. My bike is running well, and the front brakes are just starting to bed in. I might be able to stop if I really yank the lever! Practice goes much smoother than yesterday, but I am still very anxious, and with good reason. Upon inspecting the bike after practicing, it appears the steering damper has puked it's oily guts out all over my front fender. The only thing that saved be from a nasty crash was that skinny piece of fiberglass. I nearly chose not to run a front fender, because we were running short of time and it was a pain in the ass to put on. I will never run without one now.

I think anyone who has raced before will agree that the worst, most anxious time at the racetrack is the period in between practice and your race. Doesn't it always seem that practice ends far to early in the morning and the race is way too late in the afternoon? That's definitely the case as practice wraps up and I begin the long wait for lunch break and the five other races that will occur before my Formula 500 debut on the Sundial GP T500. Plenty of time for the body to stiffen up, the mind to wander and the weariness of the last four days to catch up with me. You can't sleep because your heart won't slow down, you can't eat much because it feels like you're going to vomit your intestines out. I don't like to watch others race before I do, inevitably you will see a crash and the imagination takes over. I must have pissed thirty times before I got into my leathers, and another twenty after. The human body is 70% water, and I'm sure I lost at least 50% of myself down the port-a-pottie. It's always like this for me before a race, only it's amplified due to lack of sleep, a new bike and a long winter. I'd love to know if the other racers feel this way, or if I'm just a candy-ass.

Of course, when the green flag drops, a metamorphosis occurs. The fear is gone and the adrenaline surges. I change from the little girl quaking in his Alpinestars to a full-fledged idiot, capable of the most incredible acts of daring (stupidity?). I run off the track wide open, drag my knee in the mud and flog the bike past it's limits. My brain tells me to slow down, pay attention to the line and be smooth. I kick it in the balls and send it off to some dark corner of my skull. Every so often it will yell from the corner to go easier on the machine and not over-rev it. Another kick sends it yelping back to the depths. If I listened to it I might finish more races and crash less, and even become a better rider. "He will never be a Jedi. He is reckless. Adventure? Excitement? A Jedi craves not these things."

That's exactly how I'm riding out there as my race starts. I get over-eager and come close to jumping the start. I'm away, but the leaders are already into turn one, and I can hear some angry two-strokes chain-sawing up behind me. One of them shows me a wheel and I miss the line in the first turn, and get passed. This thoroughly pisses me off and I rev the snot out of the bike to catch up. If I don't calm down, I'm going to kill someone, or detonate the motor. Two laps into it I get a little better, but I'm having trouble with the power delivery of the engine. It's deader than my grandma below 6 thousand RPMs. If you get out of the power, forget it. Stay in power and it pulls like a freight train. I take my entry speed up a few notches and start feeling the front end going away from me in the corners. I downshift to an insanely low gear to keep the revs up, somewhere around a crankcase bursting 9500 RPMs. I'm sure I could ride this bike well if I had had more time to get used to it, but I can't seem to figure it out here in the middle of the race. I'm still not doing too badly position-wise as we reach the halfway point of the race. I pass an RD by coming into a corner way too fast, hopping the back end on the downshift and blocking his line. It ain't smooth, but it's a clean pass. He hangs with me for another lap and gets by me when I slide the back end getting the power on too early in a tight right hander. Now I have to play catch-up, determined not to lose another position, especially to a friggin' Yamaha. I'm still close to him as we hit the front straight, when a rattling noise comes from the Titan. It sounds like the whole bike is coming apart. I look down and the screw that holds my flip-up gas cap on has come off, and there's race fuel sloshing all over the top of the tank and my legs. Needless to say, this put me off my already sloppy game even further. I have to hold the cap down with one hand going down the straights. In the corners I let the gas go anywhere it pleases. Despite this set-back and my questionable riding style, I finish seventh. Frank retires early, still having problems with his bike. I am exhausted, not pleased with my riding, and upon post-race inspection of the bike it is discovered that the right-hand fork seal has given up the ghost and is vomiting the fork contents all over the lower leg. Great, another problem. And we haven't even made it to Daytona yet.

Frustrated and over-tired, we load the bikes and leave Deland to the airplanes and skydivers. If I have to look at the bright side, I didn't crash, blow up the bike or finish last, and we have two days off before Daytona. Looking at the dark side, I am in desperate need of a fork seal for a late model GT750, tomorrow is Sunday, nary a bike shop within a thousand miles will be open, and Zooke is so busy with Frank's bike that a fork seal is the least of his worries. And the icing on this dung cake is that I don't have anywhere near the seat time on my machine to feel even remotely confident in it, or my riding. Part of me wants to shitcan the whole race and spectate, check out all the cool bikes that will be there. Of course, the maniac part takes over and growls that as long as the bike will move, I will race, even if I have to empty the oil out of both fork legs, or put a girder front end from a '37 Sunbeam on it. There's no way out.

Zooke and I spend a semi-relaxed day running errands, checking on his rental property, and trying not to fret about the bikes. But I know Zooke is concerned about Frank having a good ride and a good showing, having travelled all this way. It doesn't make a very good article to tell about how you didn't race at Daytona, somehow I don't think Classic Bike would pick up Frank's tab for that one. I met a friend of Zooke's that had a GT750 he was using as a streetbike, but I couldn't con him into lending me his fork leg just for a few races. He thinks he might have some seals at home, says he will check and get back to me. I am not holding my breath. I'm starting to wake up to the grim reality that even when they have good intentions, you cannot count on other people. You truly must do it yourself, and leave nothing to chance. A lesson that was soon to be driven home with a sledge hammer. But I am getting ahead of myself.

As I did not here from Zooke's friend about the seal, much of Monday is spent trying to find one at the local bike shops. I might as well have been searching for a head for an AJS Porcupine with all the luck I had. Everybody's willing to order them, but I need them NOW! Frank wants me to drain the one fork leg and fill the other with 50WT oil. His rationale is that the legs are clamped together, and will move together, even if one is empty of oil. That will be my last resort. Others have suggested stuffing paper towels into the leg and duct-taping them in place, sort of a Maxi-pad type deal. One guy even told me to use JB-Weld on the seal, but I think he had spent too much time around uncapped inhalants in his dirt floor garage.

In a final attempt to procure a seal, I checked the box of spare parts I brought with me from NY, what seems like a lifetime ago. Buried in the bottom of the box is a used, grungy, distorted fork seal that I had forgotten to throw away at Zooke's because I couldn't find the garbage can. I knew there was no way this would work, defying all fork seal logic I had ever been taught, but there was nothing to lose. With the front end of my menstrating Titan jacked up on a log, bits spread out all over Zooke's parent's lawn, I began what I assumed would be a fruitless venture.

While I was dissecting my front half, Frank and Zooke were running his bike up and down the street in front of the house (somewhat illegally, I might add) trying to pinpoint the nigglng fuel delivery problem that had plagued them for days. Finally Frank suggests swapping out both carburetors for the set on the Sundial Production racer. Zooke, at a loss, concedes and the swap begins. Within thirty minutes Frank is tearing up and down the desolate stretch of central Florida backroad at speeds approaching triple digits, a distinctly English grin spreading from ear to ear inside his fiery red Arai brainbucket. Zooke decides to celebrate cowboy style, whooping it up and smacking his hat back and forth on his leg, shouting expletives of happiness and hugging anyone who would come near. You'd have thought he discovered the cure for cancer. I only share partly in their happiness, as I am waiting to see whether my ancient fork seal will stand the test. I sanded the slider with 600 grit wet or dry and used a jeweler's file on a nasty gouge that had previously escaped our notice, probably the cause of the first seal failure. Nothing good can come of rushing a project.

I test ride the bike over all the bumps I can find, trying to get the sliders to use their full travel. I dirt track it across the lawn (sorry about the ruts!) and take to the pavement. I jam the front brake several times to compress the suspension. At least the brakes are coming up. So much so that I do a pretty cool "stoppie" and nearly end up on my head! Didn't know vintage bikes could do that! After about fifteen minutes of these shenanigans, I roost back across the lawn to inspect. Nary a drop of fork oil to be seen. I push up and down on the forks, determined to get them to leak, but can't. I am happy. The bike will be ready for the banking at Daytona. The only other question is, will I?

After an excellent dinner cooked by Ma Kalamaja, I head to bed, pre-race jitters already beginning. But I have some hope, and that's a good thing.

The evening before the race at Daytona was the most relaxing time during this crazy trip, by far. Frank Melling, Zooke and I enjoyed a tasty meal prepared by Zooke's Ma. The food was good, the company was great and did much to set our minds at ease. The bikes were running well, tomorrow would be easy, provided you didn't crash or blow up the bike. I was again awakened by Zooke at some ungodly hour of the morning when only ghosts are stirring. Time to go. We had loaded the bikes and gear last night, so without further ado, we departed for the track. The temperature was in the high 20s, low 30s. The news on the radio was talking about the citrus farmers were covering up their crops. So much for sunny and warm Florida. Ninety minutes later Zooke and I are descending into the tunnel that leads to the pits at Daytona. Immediately we are swarmed upon by a gaggle of annoying creatures known as "Track Nazis", demanding credentials, and barking orders. The only way to be rid of these draconian insectozoids is to appease them. They love subservience from their victims, and this must be feigned at all times. Any hint that you might be disgusted with being told to park on the left, after another one of them told you to park on the right, just moments before another told you to park in the middle can cause them to attack. The sting of a Track Nazi can lead to a sudden rise in blood pressure, red blotchy face, a red veil before the eyes and the uncontrollable urge to rip one of those bastards to shreds and eat his heart for lunch, and spleen for dessert. Be warned.

One of these dreadful nincompoops comes over to the Sundial truck and shouts that we can drop off the trailer inside the paddock, but must return and park the truck in the outside lot, a walk somewhere between 1/4 and 1/2 mile. I am about to say something to this silly little man with the badge and walkie-talkie, when Zooke shows me the Zuki Knight Mind Trick. He bows his head and humbly acquiesces to this weaver of red tape webs, promising to bring the tow vehicle out forthwith and stable it in yonder lot. There is not a hint of annoyance in his tone, he sounds as if he's trying to talk a state trooper out of a speeding ticket. The bugman is fooled and we are on our way. Zooke mutters something under his breath about "bring the truck back, my ass". I have so much to learn, Master Zooke.

The sun is out, but the morning is freezing. I am forced to drop a heat range in plugs just to get the bike to fire. Finally it does, billowing forth plumes of two-stroke and 112 octane fumes. Many riders have opted not to head out for the first practice session, due to the cold. Zooke puts his leathers on over all his clothes for added warmth, I will never fit in mine if I do the same. We head out on the track. I have seen Daytona on tv, and listened to the racers talk about the banking, hell I even visited the track once as a kid. But the first time you come out of the infield and head out onto the banking any pre-conceptions you had disappear. The first look down is rather intimidating. A lowside here, would be very low indeed. I can see small specks moving around in the grass on the infield, only to realize they are corner workers. I take a quick look back up at the angled cement wall on top of the banking and can see the tire marks where NASCAR's finest have their red-neck wrecks. Then I become aware of my speed, somewhere over the ton, and my attention snaps back to what I am doing. I back off the throttle, not wanting to harm the bike before the race. Learn the track, save the motor. Suddenly the wind catches my bike from behind, hits the fairing and pushes me down the banking. I had heard about the wind here, that was scary. I slow for the chicane, trying to find the best line through it, then head back out onto the banking. I give her a little more stick. The bike feels like it's down on power, then I hear the sound that became all too familiar to me last season. It's a fluttering, spluttering sound that can mean only one thing, the headgasket is blown. And if the head gasket is gone, the probable reason is that the head has cracked. I thought when I bought Zooke's specially prepared bike that this head cracking that plagued me last year would be over. Apparently not. I limp the machine back down the banking and to pit-in. I kill the motor to avoid further damage to the top of the cylinder (a lesson hard learned last year when I tried to finish a race with a bad head!). I started pushing, and sweating and huffing and puffing in all my gear. Thankfully a young man decides I look utterly pitiful doing this and begins pushing me and the bike. I never got his name, but thanks to him anyrads.

Frank, Zooke, and a tuner (whose name has been changed to prevent embarrassment and a possible international incident due to circumstances I will later reveal. We'll can him Jim.) listen to the bike. Jim assures me that the head gasket is not gone, and sends me back out to practice again. I don't even get to the banking, the sound is so bad coming from the top end. I putter around in the in-field and begin the long push back to the paddock, this time with no assistance. My anger is starting to rise.

Back at the truck, my friend, and new sponsor (thanks!), Dave, owner of South St. Cycle in Philadelphia, has arrived. Just in time to watch me push the bike he's sponsoring back into the paddock. Inspection reveals what I have known for almost an hour now, the head is cracked, the head gasket has spares of both. Dave and I jump into the job, removing the gas tank and the bad head. It's the right hand side, an annoying first. It's always been the left until now. No one has any definitive answers, just the vague opinion that I am over-revving the motor. If it had any power below 6000 rpm, I wouldn't have to over-rev it by shifting into too low a gear to pull out of the corners. A quick discussion of my riding style (or lack thereof) has me wondering if I am the cause. The bike is re-assembled and I only missed one practice session. Back out on the track, I am trying to change my riding and be easier on the bike. I start using the back brake, planning my downshifts better, just trying to be smoother on the machine. I feel appallingly slow. The bike is running well, but won't pull the over-tall gearing we've got on it, and it still won't pull coming out of corners without a nasty downshift to keep it in the narrow powerband. I decide not going to worry about it any more, just to ride and have as much fun as I can. I know I'll probably get my ass whooped, but I'm here, the bike is going and that will have to do for now.

Practice is over and the wait for the race begins. My prehistoric fork seal is holding, and the motor is running, the Florida sun is shining (still a bit chilly, though) and I'm at one of the most famous race tracks in the world, with a bunch of the greatest guys in the world. Zooke is happy, Frank is happy, I'm starting to become happy. We're just one happy family. Why can't I enjoy it though? Maybe it's a quirk, or a downright personality disorder that keeps me looking for the black cloud on the horizon. Constantly finding the glass not only half empty, but also very likely to crack the moment I pick it up. Call it pessimism, narcissism, whatever, if it's one thing I have learned it's that Murphy's Law is the ONLY LAW. It's a habit I can't kick. Despite smiles in the paddock, my mind is going over all the things that can still go wrong and probably will. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy, expecting things to go awry all the time. So much so that a friend of mine once asked me if I truly wanted to win the race or was content to break halfway through and be able to b#t#h# about the bike. My knee jerk answer was of course I wanted to win, that's why I was there. I think I understand what he was saying now. If you really want to win, you find a way, whatever happens. You can't keep throwing obstacles in your own path, like what ifs, should haves and could have beens. The race is half lost already, like that. Failure is practically a guarantee. There are plenty of things to go wrong, without imagining more. That's exactly what I was doing, and using the bike breaking as an excuse. I'd be damned if I was going to do that again. I did want to win, and by hook or by crook I'd learn how. Maybe Daytona wasn't the best place to start, but then again, maybe it was. My new sponsor, Dave of South St. Cycle, Philadelphia, GO THERE, HE'S THE BEST!!!!!! (is that a good enough plug for the shop?) and I head to start/finish to watch the Great Men, Great Machines Parade Lap. There are some beautifully prepared race machines alongside some real tatty looking buggers. My info is probably wrong, feel free to correct me, but here goes: There's an ex-Cal Rayborn KR Harley, a brutish American machine with high pipes, in somber Halloween orange and black, belting out that v-twin throb, a pair of Yoshimura-tuned Honda CR750s, one of which actually won Daytona in 1972. Gary Nixon will pilot that machine, resplendent in sunshine yellow paint, the other, a more sedate metallic blue will be ridden by "Super" Dave Rosno. There's a couple of snorlin' Norton Manxes that you couldn't afford to buy a shift lever for, and some "barn fresh" Indian, freshly coated in rust, smoking profusely, that springs a gas leak before he even gets off the line and a couple of Egli Vincents that don't sound quite right. Photographers and moto-journalists are elbowing each other to get that quote, or perfect shot. Old men stand astride their old machines. Though I hate to say it, the machines look better than the pilots. There are other Great Men there I'm supposed to remember, but you'll have to forgive this whizzer-snapper, as I only had eyes for the Yosh Hondas. Possibly the finest in-line four snarl I have ever heard, and when the flag for the parade lap dropped, I was in heaven. Gary Nixon stood that yellow CR up on it's back wheel and wheeled that son of a b#t#h# almost to turn one, Rosno right on his tail. Some could call it a graphic display for a parade lap, but I thought he gave the crowd a great show, lifting his hat (wheel?) to Pops Yoshimura's dynamic tuning. I loved it, trying not to remember that I would race against both of these CRs in my second race of the day.

Back in the paddock, Frank is pulling on his leathers in anticipation of our first Formula 500 race. I follow suit, surprisingly calm. Whatever happens, I can tell people I raced at Daytona. How many hillbillies can say that? I'm not even worried about the bike. To hell with it, it breaks, it breaks. I'm not sure where we're supposed to go for the grid, but I know where I am gridded. In the back, as usual. I follow Frank, trying not to over-heat the clutch on the way. Motor sounds good, everything seems to be attached. Houston, we are ready for launch! The minute board goes sideways, bikes clonk into gear, revs up. I am screaming/laughing into my helmet. The guy next to me must hear, because he glances in my direction. Not for long, because the flagman twitches and I get one hell of a start! The bike is geared too tall to take off like a rocket, but it is like being shot out of a softly sprung catapult. The power kicks in and I am nearing Frank up at the front. Traffic is hellacious as 30 bikes all go for the same line into turn one at the same time. Bars are banging, I can see a wheel on each side of me. Discretion gets the better part of my valour, as I avoid making a couple of brave passes coming into Turn 2. I have had some trouble with this section, a fast right hander, and don't want to do anything stupid. If I'm riding well enough, I will catch them before the banking. I'm smoother, but not smooth enough, as the bikes stay ahead. I'm somewhere in the middle of the pack, not too bad, I think, as I make my way out onto the banking for the first time. Nobody in front to draft, though. A quick look back tells me there are quite a few bikes back there. I know I can't make afford too many mistakes. The straights at Daytona are long, even at speeds well in excess of 100mph. You are going so fast for so long, it stops feeling, well, fast. You can relax a bit, plan strategy, listen to the bike or do like I did, start thinking about an ex-frigginer (don't ask). I can see the chicane ahead and prepare to dive in. I slow down earlier than I normally would, and downshift carefully. If I screw up and get the motor out of the power now, it's all over. Any second I expect to get passed in the chicane, as I am surely going too slow, but no one comes by. I think I'm about 12th at this point. The next time around the banking I think, not too bad for a rookie, at Daytona. The front-runners are so far gone I don't have any plans to catch them, and I'm not worried about it. I am concerned about not letting anybody else by me, though, so I try to ride as well as I can. Not as fast as I can, just as smooth. It seems to be working, because no one comes by, even when I make a few mistakes in the infield. Don't get me wrong, they were there, I could hear them and sometimes see a wheel, but no one came by. I get the crossed halfway flags and realize the bike and I are going to finish this race, and really start having fun, when disaster strikes.

I came out of the infield onto the banking, just two laps to go, upshift, fourth, roll on throttle, upshift fifth, throttle to the stops, nothing. Just a waahh sound, and no power from the motor. I drop back to fourth, open throttle, still no power, just waahh. I figure I cooked it, and in a bad spot. The 33 degree banking is no place for a motor to die. You couldn't walk up or down it, and I know there's many, many angry bikes getting ready to come by me, some at speeds approaching 150 mph. I signal with my arm, I'm coming down, and coast into the infield grass, before the chicane. All the bikes I was so worried about getting past me, continue on without a second glance. The corner workers have noticed me, and are heading in my direction. Strangely, I notice the bike is still running. What the hell? I rev it up a few times and it seems good. I look onto the track, have to wait for some back markers to come by before venturing forth, and dive back into the chicane. So far so good. I know I've lost a good ten spots, but now finishing the race is the only thing

Unfortunately, finishing that race was not in the cards for me. As I left the chicane and hit the banking again, the bike continued with it's waah waah bullshit. It wouldn't run with anything over half throttle. I coasted down the banking, along the pavement skirting the infield and dejectedly rode back to pit-in. I'm not sure of the problem at this point, but I am not ready to give up. There's still one more race, and I aim to finish it.

Everyone is talking to Frank about his tenth place finish when I pull in. Zooke asks what happened and a quick discussion begins. We all agree fuel starvation must be the problem. I quickly unscrew the fuel filter and the friggin' thing seems to be packed with sand? Jim comes over to help, and requests some paper towel. He empties the float bowls and gives us the good news that there's no sand in there. It's between the tank and the filter. The tank has a lousy cross-over line that makes it a pain to remove, but we get it off. There's about four different people including me, working to get the bike ready. Just one race before Formula Vintage, we'll never have the bike done in time. But wait, there's a red flag, the whole race will have to be restarted. The gift of time is given us, will we make it? There's not enough time to clean the brass filter element entirely, so I opt to run without it. Dave recommends pulling the petcock apart, which we do, then drain the tank. I begin replacing the tank when first call is given for my race. Jim tells me to get my helmet on, says he will put the tank back on. I zip up the leathers, fasten my lid and pull on my gloves. There is no way to know if we solved the starvation problem until I get out on the track. Frank is off to the grid. Jim has the tank on just before second call. I start the bike and ride toward the grid, when I notice the odor of race gas. I look down and it's pouring out all over my right leg, from somewhere under the tank. I call Zooke over and he comes running up. I figure it's just a line we forgot to hook up or something dumb, but he can't find the leak. When he finally announces the tank itself has sprung a leak, I lose it. I threw the bike down on the ground and walked away, chucking my helmet and glasses at least twenty yards. Dave (South St. Cycle, go there!) comes over and tells me to calm down, we're not out of it yet. He begins canvassing the whole paddock in search of some miracle gas tank sealant, which he does indeed find, only after my race has started. Heading over to the Sundial trailer, I play punching bag on the aluminum door with my left hand, (sorry about the dents, Zooke). If Dave wasn't there to calm me down, I might have gone for a knockout on the poor, unsuspecting trailer. It wasn't until about five minutes later, that I got really pissed. Dave was still looking at the bike and tank, trying to figure out how it could have started leaking. There was no rust, no bad dents or anything. Finally he asks if I put the tank on last time. When I reply no, he tells me to come have a look at my tank. Dave says, "Whoever put this tank on last, has cross-threaded both the bolts that hold it on in the back. See how cranked down that bracket is? It broke the weld on the tank, which is what caused them. They cross-threaded it so badly, it pulled the bracket sideways. See?"

I am livid. Put out of the race by something so dumb. All that money, time and effort, wasted, because of someone else's error. I feel like smashing something, like puking, like crying. I wished I never came to Daytona. And of course, I looked to lay the blame elsewhere. I mean, I didn't cause the tank to leak, it was somebody else. I didn't build the bike, it was somebody else. I didn't cause the fuel filter to get clogged in the first place, it was somebody else. And so on....

In retrospect I realize that kind of blame laying wouldn't get anybody anywhere. It was a tense time before the start of that last race, with a group of people all working feverishly to get me out there. Somebody turned a wrench just a little too much in the wrong direction. It's an easy thing to do, especially if you don't want to be the one blamed when the tank falls off in the middle of a race. So you give it just a half turn more, and something breaks. I could ask, why me?, but then a thousand racers will stand up and tell a story of something even dumber that somebody did (themselves included) that kept them out of a race, or worse yet, from winning it. As long as there is racing, there will be stories of heartbreak, I just wish I didn't have so many to tell this early in my career!

It was a damn good effort on all parts. Zooke built one hell of a bike, and if I ever learn to ride it, I may just win some races, (thanks). Frank kept it entertaining with his racetrack tales and anecdotes. (By the way, if you're in the UK, you've got to go to the Thundersprint that Frank puts on. It's sort of a motorcycle racing carnival, with all sorts of wonderful things. Check it out at thundersprint.com)(is that a good enough plug, Frank?) Of course there's everybody else, Dave at South St. Cycle, Matt Parrow gave me a \$3 donation to help out, my friend Phil (without him I never would have seen a racetrack, he also gave me twenty bucks), all the people who helped (or tried to). Thanks. Hope this clears the air.

Frank told me some Isle of Man stories, unloading the bike, firing it up, riding literally 10 feet and having the crank go. Or getting the bike to the line and having the blasted thing sieze right before the start. There were quite a few more. The one thing he kept telling me was to get out while I could. "You're young," he said, "There's still hope for you. Stop this silly racing business and you can still enjoy a normal life. Do you really want to be a daft old bugger like me, riding around with a bunch of other old farts on old bikes? Get out now. Your wallet, your family, your girl and your body will thank you." I knew he had a point that any sane, reasonable person would have taken to heart. That's why I chose to ignore it. When someone asked Mick Hemmings what it was like to go roadracing he said, "You go to the toilet three times a week and flush all your money away. Then you get on a bus and when it gets up to 60mph you jump off it." I'm beginning to understand exactly what he means.

I eventually made it home from Daytona, my only souvenir an 8.5"x11" AHRMA Participation Certificate and a wallet with nothing but my driver's license in it. This time I drove the 25 year old van most of the way, exhausting but much less stressful than being a passenger. We arrived at my home and unloaded the bike in the middle of a lake effect snowstorm. (The next day, I used a snowbank to load the bike into the back of my pickup, really.) I sprawled out in bed, ever so grateful that I took tomorrow off from work. The only thing I wanted to do was listen to some music and pass out, forgetting about motorcycles for awhile. I put a disc in the CD player, pressed play, nothing. The goddamn CD player didn't work. This wasn't my week.



## Kris (Krash) Larivee



**Shannonville Recap: RACE Series Round 1**  
Posted by Artist still known as Krash on May 6, 2002

Overall it was an excellent weekend at the track, with only a few glitches of the mechanical and administrative type. Friday was cold, damp and cloudy, not exactly how I had hoped to start off my racing season. It had been pouring all week, so I decided to look at the ominously dark skies as an improvement, a sign of better things to come? The first problem came at the border, exchanging my money. The woman shorted me \$40, my gas money to get home! I didn't realize this until reaching the track, by then too late. I decided to shelve this problem in the "Worry about it later" section of my brain, which is now overflowing into the "Damn, I forgot all about it" section, which is already in severe crisis due to a lack of staff and is now sending all inquiries to the "I don't give a rat's ass" department (currently on strike for lack of a contract). I came to race, and nothing else mattered.

We were to run the Nelson circuit of the Shannonville Motorsports Park, an over-glorified go-kart track, with straights shorter than President Bush's attention span, a carousel, hairpin, rapidly decaying pavement and slippery cement patches, the perfect place to test the adhesion limits of my new Avon front tire. First lap on practice day, I nearly missed the second to the last turn because I was unsure of the layout, which was not clearly demarcated. I held on, and the cold tires stuck well enough to get me around the corner and propel me to my next obstacle, a river of this week's rainwater running over the track in front of me, followed by the hairpin. I eased myself across this and continued on my way. The rest of practice was uneventful aside from a lost baffle and cap to one of my silencers, giving the bike a strange tone. I searched the track high and low and finally found it, completely flattened!. Never one to say die, I reshaped the pancake-like metal into a configuration slightly similar to it's once cylindrical glory and safety-wired the bugger back in place, robbing a screw from the other silencer to hold it as well. Either both baffles would remain in place or I'd fire the suckers off at the competition behind me, a warning not to mess with Krash of the Titan!

A chilly evening was spent reading Ray Bradbury in my one man tent, wondering if I could get a hotel chain to sponsor me in return for a free room. I fell asleep dreaming of tomorrow's racing glory, trying to block out the sound of the trains that run by the racetrack all night long. I awoke to sunshine and temperatures hovering just a few degrees above the freezing mark. As a rule, I try to stay inside my tent until I hear the first bike running, my wake-up call.

Practice goes well, and after a gearing change the bike is near perfect. I am hopeful of a good finish, and confident that the bike will not break. With worries about machine fragility out of the way, I am able to concentrate on the track and my riding. The dual disc set-up with pads from Vintage Brake and braided lines is magnificent, providing excellent stopping power and wonderful feel. The Avon 90/90/18 is very sticky, inspiring the rider to throw the bike in and never worry what the front end will do. Phil Lee and I had been doing a bit of tuning to increase the low end and mid-range, which seems to have paid off as there is noticeably more power in those areas. Power delivery is still somewhat pipey, without much below 5500, but freight train pulling power above until the 8200 rpm redline. Despite that peakiness, the power is not unpredictable or frightening, (like some two-stroke twins and triples of the same era who shall remain nameless), this is not a bike that will wheelie you over on the line or come on the pipe uncontrollably while leaned over in a corner, (or sieze the top end while cracking the ton on the back straight), but a heavy hand on the throttle can set the back wheel spinning in a corner.

The powers that be decide under these cold conditions and short track configuration that circumstances dictate a 2 lap warm-up, much to the relief of all riders. Far too many bikes and bodies have been wrecked from racing on cold tires, and it seems the officials are finally taking heed of this. The light system is working, so no need to watch the flagman. I start on Row 7 for the Club Cup heat race. Only two rules govern the machines in this class, they must be air-cooled and twin-shock. Every sort of variation on this theme has been run here. Many Vintage racers (myself included) run this class, even though we are down on horsepower and handling to the more modern bikes that fall under those two rules. The man to beat is Rich Wilson on his '83 framed, '98 motored Ducati 900ss. The combination of his experience and bike make him nearly a shoe-in. There's also the hard charging gentleman on a built KZ750 twin who is one of the most aggressive riders I have ever seen. He routinely beats faster, newer, better suspended and braked bikes by virtue of having a set of cojones so big he almost needs a sidecar to carry them. He intends to give Rich's Ducati a run for the money. I get a bad start and it takes me forever to get the bike singing. When I finally do, I pass a few riders and settle into a good pace. Saturday is not the time for heroics. There's the finals on Sunday for that. I finish seventh after being passed by a drum-braked Honda 350! That made me a little irate, until I find out the rider is Mike Burke, a gentleman with decades of riding experience and many trophies to his credit. It still stings, but not as bad.

The Vintage race goes about the same way, with me running third until that blasted Mike Burke scoots his 350 past me again! I finish fourth, hot on his rear Dunlop, a quick glance rearward confirms that the rest of the pack is not in sight, which takes the sting out of getting beat by that 350, again. We aren't even running the same class, although we are gridded together. Still, when I'm out on the track I have no idea who is in my class or not, my only goal to beat every single bike I can. I watch some of the other races, eat dinner and retire early, going over every inch of the track in my head and wondering if my brother the stock car driver will show up tomorrow to watch me race.

**Day 2, RACE finals, Mixed Bag**  
Posted by Need to lose this nickname! on May 6, 2002

In Sunday morning practice I noticed the clutch beginning to slip. I had abused it alot at Daytona, so this should come as no surprise to me, but I am worried, hoping it will hold for the day. My brother has shown up with girlfriend and some other friends in tow. I want to give them a good show.

That's exactly what I do, with perhaps the greatest start in all of motorcycle racing for the Club Cup final. I started on row 4 and was up with the Ducati and KZ750 before turn one. I'm so excited with this start I decide to go hard right from the onset and get some distance between me and those behind. The only bike that gets by me is Ralph Sholtes on his built GS750 16 valver. I am running fourth and mean to stay there. The bike is going great other than clutch slippage on the short straights. I continue in fourth for three of the eight laps when I miss my brake marker coming into turn 3. I turn in too late and end up wide in the turn, the outside of which is off-camber, strewn with loose pavement chunks and bits of rubber. I get the machine over nearly on the engine cases, but it's still slipping to the outside. Fearing a lowside, I decide to stand the bike up and run off, figuring I'll just get back on the track. The ground is full of water and mud, but I keep the bike upright and close to the pavement, light on the rear brake. When I had the bike down to about 20 mph I put my left foot down and started to turn left toward the track. My boot slipped in the mud and down I went, machine and all. Of course I was close enough to the track to smack my head and left side down on the pavement. I felt my helmet hit and bounce off the ground, then the bike swatted my left hip and elbow into the tarmac. I remember thinking three things as I went down, 1. I have broken something on the bike. 2. I have ruined my new helmet. 3. I have just embarrassed myself incredibly in front of my brother. I picked myself up out of the mud and checked the bike out. Nothing bent or broken, apparently. Some mud here and there. The corner worker asked if I was going to go back out. I didn't realize that was ok, he radioed the tower and they said if I thought I could keep the bike up and if it wasn't leaking, I could go. I went back out and finished dead last, but I finished.

Back in the pits a quick check reveals the coil bracket has broken and part of my \$500 ignition system is dangling, almost in the unfiltered carbs. Two zip ties and some electric tape put that lot right. It was at this point various officials began visiting me. The first were the tech guys, to check the bike and helmet. He said my head hit the ground pretty hard, but the helmet looked ok, aside from a few scratches. The bike was fine. They left and the next official came. I felt like Scrooge being visited by the ghost of Krash's past, now the ghost of Red Tape Present. This tech official, (from the VRRRA, not RACE), said there were concerns and even a possible protest over the class the Sundial Suzuki was entered in, Vintage 500. Last year the registration people at RACE had put me in that class, and had done the same thing this year when I told them the bike was a 500. This learned official from the VRRRA began a five minute lecture about why my bike wasn't legal for the class, how I would lose my points with the VRRRA in the event of a protest and generally hurt everybody's feelings if I didn't have the bike moved into P2 heavyweight, a class where the Titan really doesn't belong, but due to the VRRRA's rules it actually does fall into. I informed this pencil pusher that it was of no import to me which class I ran in, that he could put me in Pro Open Sportbike for all I cared. Then I asked him who was protesting me, as I was the only person on the grid in Vintage 500! He stuttered a little bit and said that I could be protested if someone were to show up (this is twenty minutes before the final, mind you!), and besides, he retorted, Vintage 500 is a very fast class and I would be much better off in P2 heavyweight. This squinty-eyed little chucklehead was regarding me with all the suspicion of a cop grilling a perp in a capital crime case. For an organization that only runs two events a year, they sure spend alot of time policing events run in conjunction with other groups. God forbid I receive points in a class where no one else runs, I might help to save an ailing class or even take home a trophy that will otherwise be thrown away! I told this pissant that if he wanted it switched, he could switch it. I came to race, not correct the mistakes of others, and again re-iterated my sentiment that I did not care which class I was run in, nor was I going go deal with the already stressed out people at registration, and that I would leave it up to him to decide what to do. He huffed and puffed and then scurried off in search of some more red tape to bind me with.

Now many of you will point out the glaringly obvious. The man was right. At least according to his rulebook. I would never dispute that a mistake was made, now that I understand how RACE breaks down the vintage classes, according to the rules the VRRRA sets down. Last season, being new to RACE and VRRRA I was not aware of this and I just thought RACE simplified the rules of class breakdown and put the 500s together, regardless. Oops!, sorry, I was wrong! So when they did it again this year, I was still unaware of the mistake. So my beef really isn't with the rules, (although I may not agree with them entirely), it's with the way the situation was handled. I don't enjoy being treated like a criminal by officials of the club I support with my membership and racing fees. It's not like I was going to walk away with unwarranted prize money, or a championship or a big name sponsor. I wasn't caught running fuel injection or turbo or a single sided swing-arm. Somebody made a clerical error and gridded me in the wrong class by myself. This is the second time I have felt a little sour in my dealings with VRRRA people (the first being an incident last season with a VRRRA person at the Mosport gate who referred to me as a f@#\$ing American). And the club wonders why membership is declining and the grids aren't full. If they continue to treat it like an old man's club, eyeing new, younger members with suspicion, then that's just what they'll be, a bunch of old farts holding wheelchair races in back of the rest home, talking about how great their motorcycle club once was.

So I was switched to P2 Heavy, but my spot on the grid did not reflect that, despite my fourth place finish overall on Saturday. I should have started second row in P2 heavy, but was gridded back on Row #10, almost the very back of the entire field. A good start ensured that I passed many riders before turn one, but not feeling too brave I hung back for the first couple of laps, picking off an occasional rider here and there, despite a slipping clutch and the pain setting in from the previous race's crash. I finished fifth in P2 heavy and 11th overall, not a bad job. I left for home feeling good, tired, and a bit sore (at some officials and in my body). Two weeks until the next one, I can't wait!

**Kris- I think you ran into the hornet's nest....**  
Posted by Jim Winters on May 6, 2002

...after it had already been stirred up! If I understand the issue correctly you were running in the Vintage 500 (GP) class that has an eligibility cut off of 1967 and they bumped you into Heavyweight Super Vintage that has a cut off of 1972. This puts you up against 750s (including the TR750 which is really a T500 with another cylinder - explain how this is an even match??) and makes being competitive a tough job. I distinctly remember a VRRRA member telling me that there has been a long, bitter, and recently fought internal battle over the eligibility of the T500 in the Vintage class. Despite evidence that the T500 was available to some markets in 1967, the VRRRA (and AHRMA) won't allow it in the 500 GP class. This is only what I have been told - I am not a VRRRA member and I have not been present at any of the eligibility discussions. I will say that this is why one T500 racer we know switched to a TR750 instead. If you HAVE to run in the Heavy Super Class, why not take advantage of the extra cylinder??? By the way, I also noticed that Mr. "Whittless" didn't leave an email address after his less than kind posting on the VRRRA board although he didn't mention you by name. There's always at least one killjoy politician in every crowd!

Posted by Kris Larrivee on May 6, 2002, 10:59 pm , in reply to "Track Nazis is track Nazis....or scumbags, if you prefer."

It's good to know someone out there understands what I mean. I decided to let the whole issue rest until I saw the post on the VRRRA board about "cheating", which, without naming me directly (cowardly, if you ask me) was intended for me, by virtue of some of the information he put in his post. He knew that most of the members would know exactly about whom he was referring. I think this guy was so excited to have caught himself a cheater that, after wetting himself, he had to throw his weight around and put the hammer down on me, snottose punk-ass kid that I am. Instead of being friendly and helpful, pointing out my error, he comes up to me threatening disqualification, loss of points, and protests. What a self-important little busyboddy! I know it's his job to regulate this kind of thing, but where was he last season when I, unaware, entered this class twice with my illegal machine? Probably too wrapped up in his Senator Joe McCarthy impressions, witchhunting CB350 riders using non-OEM pistons and disc brakes that looked like drums. There's enough hassles with racing already than to have to deal with people like this at the track. I'm just getting to the point where I won't take their shit anymore. I could have sat back and quietly let this slip into the background, but that's exactly what the bureaucrats want, it just enforces and legitimizes their power. Yeah, I'm banging my head against a wall, but I think my skull is harder.

**You don't want me to go there. But since you asked.....**  
Posted by "Krashed" Larrivee on May 24, 2002, 2:55 pm , in reply to "Kris, what happened at Shannonville?"

It began as a typical race weekend, a late night in the garage preparing the racebike, followed by a dawn that arrived far too early (and a might cold if I may say!). The sky was dark, awash with threatening clouds, the mercury at that point where precipitation may fall wet or white. My wallet was exceptionally thin, so much so that I knew I wouldn't be able to afford the petrol for the ride home if I didn't sell the A7 Kawi engine I was bringing across the border for a guy. If he didn't buy it, I might be reduced to a "gas and go", something I have certain experience with. Yes, it was a typical race weekend.

I froze my ass off in practice. It was a National Weekend, meaning the top pros from all over Canada (hold the laughter please), and the entourages that entails would be crowding the paddock and the track. Bringing with them the groupies, pit bike antics, wheelies, stoppies, burnouts and leopard print hair. It also meant that the regional RACE guys would get screwed for practice time and that two sets of rules would be in effect. No practice starts in pit lane, no wheelies, burnouts or stoppies for the "regional" guys, and no rules for the "pros". There was still a large turnout for Club Cup (my race), and it promised to be a fun weekend.

Saturday, heat race day, was still chilly and cloudy. I was gridded dead last because of a mishap in the last round involving a low speed get-off in the mud and a last place finish (but a finish nonetheless). I wasn't worried, as the Titan is a rocket off the line and I knew I could beat many of the bikes gridded in front. This proved to be true as I found myself in sixth going into turn one. The Titan didn't let me down, murdering nearly a dozen bikes off the line. The rest of the six lap race had me chasing down a 16 valve CB750 for third place. He was very erratic, never holding his line. I could get a wheel up on him in the corners, but as soon as I did he would weave and punch the gas. Deciding a heat race is no place for heroics I kept pace behind him waiting for a chance that didn't come. I finished fourth, putting me on the second row for Sunday's final. Not too shabby. The bike was running and handling excellent, aside from a few traction problems due to the cold pavement. I spent the night in my tent planning strategy for the final. I knew I had to lead the race going into Turn One off the start and I was confident the Sundial Suzuki could put me there. There were faster bikes behind me, but I hoped opening up an early lead would put me on the podium, preferably the #1 spot.

We were given a three lap warmup due to the cold temps for our Sunday final, which meant I was going to charge hard from the get-go hoping the tires would be warm enough. The red light went green and off went the cannon that is my Sundial T500, easily pulling the holedshot and me into the lead. I would stay there for the first lap, until a crazy gentleman on a KZ750 squeaked by, using his superior torque on one of the slow corners. I chased him for several laps, resigning myself to second spot on the podium. The bastard is just fast! There were a few laps left, the 750 and I came into the slow left hander before the haybaled righthander known as Allen's corner. I was taking a wide line to avoid a slippery concrete patch and maintain my drive for Allen's. I leaned over, hit the apex and was just preparing to get back on the throttle when the noise of an engine distracts me. I shift my gaze down and left, only to see a mag wheel come into contact with my bike, just behind my boot. I felt the bike go out from underneath me. I remember hearing the sound of metal, plastic and leather grinding on pavement, then I saw sky, ground, sky, ground as I went tumbling, landing on my head, neck and back, finally coming to rest on the outside of the corner, my bike somewhere off in the weeds. I got up after what felt like a lifetime and tried to find the bike, which was off in the mud. Corner workers were running madly at me by this time, shouting "You alright? You OK?". A quick check revealed my shoulder was not quite where it should be, having been dislocated in my "fat man's waltz" across the tarmac. At this point other injuries were not yet surfacing due to the extreme adrenaline rush I was experiencing, along with the fierce desire to kill the mother####er that ran into me. With some assistance from the corner worker (they are great people, hug one today!) my shoulder returned to it's original position (it's happened before) and my bike was pushed away from further danger. I had to remain at the corner worker's station, pacing like a rabid panther, until the race was over. Whereupon I pushed the mangled motorcycle back to the pits, and went looking for the spineless cur that just ruined my day, my bike and my brand goddamn new helmet.



By the time I found the gutless pig, his leathers were off and the bike was loaded into the back of an enclosed trailer, and covered. I ran around the pits salivating until he was located, pointed out to me by someone else. I asked who was riding the black GS750 #104, and this skinny dork comes up to me and says it was him. I lose my shit. screaming and spitting all over this little puke. My face is about a hairs' breadth from his and all I can see is red. Every ounce of self-restraint I have is being exercised to keep from tearing out his throat. The most this lilly-livered pussy can do is stutter a few "I'm sorries" and a few tears running down his cheek. What pissed me off the most was that this ####head didn't even have the balls to face me, instead packing up his shit and trying to hightail it out of town before I caught up with him. I would have driven all over Canada to find his ass, only the consequences would have been much worse had we been off the track. Turns out this bozo was a rookie on his second race ever, on a bike way too fast for him, riding way over his head. I made many mistakes my rookie season too, but I never endangered anyone's life with my own. What he did was unacceptable. When I checked with the track photographer, he had photos of the jerk-off hitting me and my resultant flight. I can e-mail them to anyone who wants to see them, just send my your address. Maybe Zooke will post them here for everyone to get a laugh out of. So now I have a few weeks before the next race to fix the bike and my body. Aside from the dislocated shoulder, I cracked two ribs, got whiplash and two broken fingers on my right hand (from punching my pickup truck repeatedly, it was that or that shit's face). That little ####bag better just stay out of my way, or next time I won't be so nice. That's my story, have a nice day. Jesus, I guess Stephen will accuse me of playing the victim again, damn.

Kris



## Kris (Krash) Larivee



### Mosport Report, The Return of Krash pt. 1

Posted by Krash on August 30, 2002,

I arrived at Mosport Raceway in beautiful Canada last Thursday evening only to find many others had beat me there. Tents, trailers, and trucks were bivouacked on the grounds in anticipation of the weekend's combat. Warriors had journeyed many miles to joust on the undulating 2.5 mile asphalt ribbon that is Mosport, with it's elevation changes, off-camber blind corners, interminably long back straight and uphill hairpin. It's not a place for the faint of heart, most of the corners can be taken at an excess of 90 mph, if your cojones are big enough. The back straight is a bike killer, unforgiving to gearing or jetting mistakes. By the end of the weekend, many bikes and riders will take the "ride of shame" back to the pits in the pick-up vehicle.

After practice on Friday afternoon is the Honda Endurance Race, a 2 hour affair open to all vintage legal bikes. Last year Stephen Szikora, Eugene Stewart and I rode to a second place in the Period Two Heavyweight class on Stephen's near stock T500. I will be spectating this year, preferring to concentrate on the two classes I will contest aboard the Sundial GP T500, Period 2 Heavyweight and Period 3 Middleweight (a bump-up class for the Titan). Scott McVicker jumps out to an early lead on the much modified CB750 DOHC, with a large displacement Guzzi hot on his heels, as well as a big bore BMW. They swap the lead a few times before McVicker pulls in to the pits with a smoking engine, not to return. This would not be the last bike to succumb to the rigors of the race, testing the fiber of both rider and machine. The race comes to an early end when a KZ1000 oils the track all over turns 2 and three, sending two other riders crashing off the track. A poorly secured oil line is found to be the culprit. How many more people will have to be hurt before people begin checking their bikes more thoroughly? The scoring and timing volunteers have their hands full trying to sort out the results. I'm still not sure who won.

Saturday's racing goes well, the most serious incident a broken ankle when two riders collide in the hairpin. My T500 goes well in the P3 race, finishing eighth out of 33 bikes, including several in-line four cylinder Kawis. The key is to get the jump on the start and get ahead of the traffic and stick with the lead pack. I got a terrible start and had to fight through the slower riders. I know what to do for my P2 race later in the day. I get an excellent start, running fourth going into turn 1. That all changes when we hit the back straight, as the larger displacement bikes come flying by. The Titan sounds somewhat flat and doesn't seem to be pulling very well. I convince myself it's just that the other bikes are faster, but by the third lap I know something is wrong. Suspecting a knackered engine I take it easy and finish 14th, cursing in my helmet. Back to the pits for a diagnosis.

### Mosport Report Pt 2

Posted by Kris Larrivee on August 31, 2002

A quick check over the bike reveals nothing out of sorts. I borrow a compression tester but nothing out of the ordinary there either. Tired, I decide to sleep on it, a decision I would later regret. Sunday morning after another long drawn out rider's meeting (yes, I know what the green flag means!) I started the bike and noticed smoke coming out from underneath the engine. I know the machine is oil tight, so the only explanation could be a cracked expansion chamber, not uncommon in the two stroke world. Lying on the stones beside the machine confirms my suspicion and answers my lack of power from the previous day. A few choice phrases that would have a Royal Marine blushing ensue (not for the last time!) and quickly the offending chamber is removed. I borrow a wire welder and enlist a fellow racer to tack the pipe back up. My practice group is on the track. The P3 race is the first one on the program for the day. Looks like I'll have to run it cold. I am still safety wiring bolts when first call for our race comes. Leathers are hastily pulled over my body, helmet strapped, gloves fastened. As I head to pre-grid, I am swearing inside my Bieffe, didn't have time to check fuel or tire pressure. I arrive only to find there has been a 10 minute delay. I screamed ##### at the top of my lungs, I think the pre-grid volunteer thought I was yelling at them, and headed back to the pits for a splash of fuel and a zip of air in the tires.

I'm starting on the fourth row, the butterflies fluttering in my gut. The flagman twitches and I attack, only to bog the engine and have to slip the blasted clutch all over again. I'm ninth heading into turn one, but catching the lead traffic. It's Sunday and all stops have been pulled out. Win it or bin it is my attitude of the day. The season is almost over, only one race to go, plenty of time to rebuild the bike and heal the body. So let it all hang out mother#####er! That's exactly what I do, running up into the sixth spot and feeling pretty damn good. Until the third lap when I hit the back straight and the bike is feeling flat all over again. I know the stupid chamber has cracked again and my hopes of a podium finish are dashed, with the machine barely pulling 100 mph on the straights. I fall back into the 11th spot out of 33 machines and that's where I finish, still cursing inside my helmet.

Back in the pits I begin a frantic search for someone with torches that can braze the chamber. Bless the Norton sidecar racers for their torches and high quality rod and my fellow racer Wayne Raynard for his brazing talents. Within the hour the pipe is fixed and remounted on the T500. Time for lunch and planning strategy for the P2 heavyweight race.

Due to a mistake in the VRRRA rules the T500 falls into the heavyweight class, putting it at a serious horsepower disadvantage to the CR750 Hondas, 850 Nortons, H2s and other bikes it was never meant to run against. I know I will have to beat these riders in the corners and draft them on the back straight. Even with the Titan running well, they still have some top speed on me. The men to beat in this class are the Hurst brothers, Peter and Chris. One is running a Rickman framed Triumph Triple, the other a seriously tricked out Yamaha XS650. With a half a century of racing experience between the two brothers and such powerful and sorted bikes, they usually walk away from the rest of the pack. The rest of the grid is made up of 750 Hondas, a couple Nortons, an H1 and an H2 and other bikes I can't remember. I've spent the night and few spare moments today working out a new line in corner 9. Most riders take an inside line here, staying off of a concrete patch about mid-corner. I watched a 125 rider do it on the outside of the patch during a race yesterday. He passed two bikes and was set up for turn 10 perfectly. I tried it in practice and it works, although the pavement is bumpy and the back end gets a bit loose at race speeds, but it can be done, I think.

We take off from pre-grid and head out for the warm up lap. I am following the Hurst brothers into turn two when the Trident pulls off line and heads for the side of the track. I see what appears to be a dead snake in front of me, only it's a drive chain! The 650 Yammie slows down and we take a relaxed trip to the start/finish line. The flagman begins his procedure and we all assume the start will proceed normally. I put the bike into gear, determined to get a good start. The red flag goes down and I am awaiting the green, but the flagman throws it to the ground and unfurls the red. Someone motions for us to kill the machines and I hear the dreaded words. "Oil on the track, it's going to be a while." Apparently on it's way to resting on the racetrack, the Triumph's drive chain took a detour through the engine casing. Beautiful. We prop our bikes along the pit wall and stand around sweating. Some of the racers are friendly and talkative, others are still wearing their "game faces". Thankfully Stuart Pilkington (VRRRA executive and excellent racer) shows up in one of the track vans with a report and some cold water. Much to our amusement we can smell the heated up brakes of the van. Stuart says he had the thing over 100mph on the back straight. I can only laugh. Forty minutes later we put our helmets back on. It's time to race! I am hoping that wait will have some of these guys off their guard. We get one warm up lap and the race is shortened from eight laps to six. The green flag flies and I am off, about mid-pack into the first turn. I get to fourth spot at one point, but it is short lived as we hit the back straight. I find a Honda to draft and he carries me right to Turn 8, where I promptly pass him on the outside. Pleased with that performance I look for more victims only to find the father and son team riding their CR750s. I have yet to beat this pair in competition and I mean to do it this time. I pass one of them on the outside of Turn 9, utilizing my strategy from earlier, and stuff the other on the inside of 10. One of the CRs comes by me on the front straight, but I am right on his ass. I pass him again on the outside of Turn 2, holding the throttle to the stops and feeling both tires drifting, almost sliding. I make it. Both of the CRs get me on the back straight, but I am in their draft and it's like an instant replay of the last lap, as I pass one on the outside of 9 and the other on the inside of 10. I am screaming inside my helmet, eyeballs bulging and having the time of my life. The bike is sliding and chattering through some corners, but I hang on. The three of us battle it out for a couple more laps, but one CR falls off the pace and I don't see him again. I get caught up in a lapper and the other Honda gets by me. I am lapping this particular guy for the 2nd time this race, and it's only six laps, and I'm not even one of the fastest riders! Someone needs to take some track schools or rethink this racing thing before he becomes a speed bump! With this shortened race I am unable to catch the other Honda, but I am right on his ass when the checkers fall. I finish sixth, my best so far in the P2 heavy class. Imagine what I could do in a more competitive class! The bike has performed beautifully, even under these demanding conditions. I wish I could do this every weekend. Time to pack up and drive home, dreaming about the last race of the season, making plans for next year. Racing is the greatest thing.



## Kris (Suzaki) Larivee



### Krashman and SuperZooke Battle the Dying 302

Posted by Krash on March 5, 2003

The trouble started early, in fact the first hill we tried to ascend had the poor, overloaded vans motor coughing and spitting and threatening to die. It was an 85 Ford Conversion van with 144 grand on the odo, but Zooke assured me it was a strong runner. What reason had I to doubt him? Figuring it was water in the fuel, our brave heroes stopped at the first gas station for some Dry-Gas. Soon it was apparent that this wasn't working and it was time for plan B. But was there a Plan B? Not really. We just put the hazard lights on and crawled up the mountains at 35 mph, listening to the tired engine sputter and puke what seemed to be it's last breaths. The problem would come and go, sometimes the thing would run fine, then suddenly almost die. Zooke felt it was a vacuum leak, I didn't know what to think, except that I was having visions of last year's Daytona disaster (see the archives). Finally somewhere in the rural, poor backwoods of Georgia the intermittent problem became unbearable and we pulled into a boarded up gas station, about 4am. At this point our heroes nerves were wearing thin, very thin. Beary-egred and angry we both stared into the dark engine compartment looking for a sign. Zooke kept futzing with the vacuum lines and I kept having waking nightmares of the 302 tossing a rod right there and leaving us stranded in 'good ol' boy cuntry'. Granted our skin is white enough to avoid a lynchin', but I had my Confederate Flag tattoo removed a few years ago after completing my detox program and Zooke currently hailing from Virginia might not be enough for rejects from "Cops" who were still fighting the Civil War. Ok, that might be an overstatement, but you get the point. As I gazed at the aging V8 and Zooke poked and prodded with every line and wire I could have sworn I saw a jumping spark. When I asked my partner he told me he had replaced all the plug wires and was sure our problem lay somewhere in the tangle of tubes and hoses jutting out from the carb. Too tired to argue I retreated inside the van to cry. Well, I would have cried if my eyes weren't so dry and bloodshot. I could see an even bigger SNAFU than last year, the very real possibility of missing out on an \$80 practice loomed on the horizon and who knew what else? Was my friggin' luck ever gonna change?

Zooke was feeling the pressure as well, but he took it much better than I did, attempting to eliminate the variables one by one in a seemingly futile search for the source of our trouble. We hit the road a half hour later and made it a good 35 miles before the damn thing started it's shit again. Needless to say, Zooke and I weren't doing a lot of talking at this point. The sun started to rise on our puttering little caravan as exhaustion and hunger set in, just to the left of our mutual frustration. I was beginning to hate the entire world and wanted to crawl into some hole and die. I can't vouch for Zooke, but his mental state was somewhere in the ballpark. A few more hours of the on again off again engine performance brought us to the border of Florida and to the doorstep of a Ford dealer, who promptly refused to help us, muttering something about not having any technicians on duty (except for the three or four we saw hanging out in the bays smoking cigarettes). Don't kid yourself man, customer service is dead.

With forty miles left to go to Jennings GP I began to care less about solving the problem of the ailing 302 and just getting our asses to the track and trying to get in some damn practice. I hadn't ridden a bike since October and was just a bit nervous about getting back in the saddle. Without much further hubalaloo we pulled into the sandy wasteland that is Jennings GP, paid our gate fees and looked for a suitable place to set up shop amongst the hundreds of other racers that were already bivouacked there. A two-stroke GP bike was being warmed up in the paddock, the smell of race gas and synthetic Klotz in the air and the hair on the back of my neck is standing up, a smile on my face. I shake the cobwebs from my brain and all the weariness falls from my shoulders. I am home, I've been gone too long. We made it.

### The heart of the matter.

Posted by Krash on March 9, 2003

Zooke and I set up shop quickly and rushed the bikes through tech. My GP bike starts and idles well enough, but this will be the first time I've ridden it with the Crook's Squish Heads and Zooke's super-secret porting. He made me sign a confidentiality agreement before even letting me look at the cylinders and I am also under threat of death should I reveal any Sundial secrets! I find out where pit-out and pit-in are, suit up and head to the track, more anxious than a virgin on prom night. I remind myself to take it easy and bed the new motor in before doing anything stupid. I wheelee away in second gear and take my first tentative lap around the superb Jennings GP circuit.

I say superb, and I truly mean it. The course is a little over two miles, with coarse new asphalt, and plenty of sandy runoff room, with no walls or other obstacles to collide with, (knowing my "track record" many of you will agree this is my kind of place!). The track is a motorcyclist's dream, with fast sweeping lefts and rights, many right to left chicane-type flicks and 100 mph kinks in the straights, and absolutely no damn cars allowed! I soon learn that with the excellent pavement and lack of debris on the outside of the corners, you can put the bike just about anywhere in the turn and make it work. The bike is running sweetly and within a few laps I'm starting to push it a just a bit. The difference the Crook's heads make is amazing. Corners I would have to scream into in second gear to keep the power on last season are now a breeze in third, with torque much lower in the rev range pulling me out of the corners. The bike feels more like a four-stroke single than a two-stroke twin. I'm passing slower riders and loving it.

On the last lap of my session I come in hot and kill the engine to do a plug chop. It's a pain in the ass pushing all the way back to our pit, but necessary. On Zooke's insistence I am running K&N filters, which is a good idea considering how sandy the paddock is at Jennings GP. Much to my disbelief, even with the filters and the new porting, the jetting is still spot-on, as evidenced by the beautiful fan on the plug, the kind of fan that two-stroke tuners see in their dreams. The new Avons are working well, (110/80/18 front and 130/650/18 rear), and aside from some front end chatter in the two fast sweepers the bike is handling well. Even when pushed hard the Avons will slide predictably without doing anything silly. I am having a blast riding this thing. It's never run so well! Other than some difficulty finding neutral and an occasional missed shift everything is good. Zooke and I mess around with the clutch in-between sessions but it's hard to find a happy medium, too far one way and the thing slips like a b#### and too far the other and it creeps on the line with neutral harder to find than an honest politician. Practice ends without a satisfactory solution to the clutch dilemma. I hope to take care of it after the first practice session in the morning. Just as the track closes for the day, the rain starts and it downpours all evening, alternating between a steady piss and a cats and dogs affair. I have a damp night in the cab of Zooke's trailer, but sleep well, confident that the bike will go well in the morning. My first race is Formula Two-stroke, a bump-up class that will have me running against 85hp liquid-cooled RZ350s not to mention the usual contingent of bloody RDs that make my life so miserable. It will be the first time the new motor is tested under combat conditions, but my faith in Suzuki over-engineering and Zooke's careful tuning are unwavering.

I'm gridded somewhere in the middle of the pack, and as much as I would love to win this race, I know that even finishing in the top ten will be a job. WERA has the best flagman in the business and he's in pure form this day and I get a great start, running sixth into Turn One. If you've never fired a T500 off the line at a racetrack, you're missing something really amazing. You'd have to be a complete idiot to get a bad start with a Suzuki Titan, it's just a locomotive at the flag. People think I have some god-given talent for getting off the line, but it ain't me, it's the bike. Of course once the faster two-strokes get their legs under them, I know they will come walling by me like a swarm of angry bumblebees. Apparently my arms and elbows stick out in the corners and I keep seeing many guys from getting around (a left-over habit from my dirt-bike days, no smooth tucked in style for me!). I want to put spikes on my elbows but the tech inspectors told me no. Scott McCain finally gets by me on his "streelfighter" black RZ and I am called at how the thing accelerates. My T500 is no slouch, but those RZs are friggin' rockets. My only salvation is the Titan's tractable power coming out of the corners that lets me get on the gas sooner. The race ends uneventfully and I finish in 8th place, very satisfied with the bike's performance in our first race of the year. The clutch is still slipping a bit and I had two false neutrals during the race, one which happened mid-corner, causing a bit of a fright for me as I ran dangerously wide, but managed to save it. I return to the pits and decide to have a look at the clutch before my next race.

Zooke has unfortunately forgotten his gaskets in Virginia, so it becomes necessary for me to be very delicate with the clutch cover gasket so it can be re-used. I tip the bike over on it's side to save the \$6 a quart Gear Saver oil and get to work. Finding no wear on the fibers and no bluing on the recently bead-blasted (thanks Zooke!) metal plates, I re-assemble, adding a spark plug washer to each spring on the clutch to increase the preload. A slathering of Three-bond and it's back together. Careful re-adjustment of the free-play and changing a clutch lever housing that has a hairline crack in it and my hopes are high that the problem is solved.

Zooke and I are both gridded in the next race, due to some rulebook mixup. His prodliee racer really does not belong on the grid with full fledged GP bikes, including some wicked RD400s (maybe I don't either, come to think of it). Zooke still manages to bring the Sundial bike home in tenth place after a terrible start. I came from the back of the grid after a rocketship start and finished sixth, showing the way home to a few of those RDs. The clutch was much better, but still slipping at high speeds, very annoying and possibly costing me a spot or two at the finish. But that's racing and Zooke and I are very happy with our respective finishes and there's still one more full day of racing, now with AHRMA. Tomorrow would be the real test, as the level of competition would be even higher than it was today. And of course still looming in the background was the sick Ford Van which still had to get us home. At least we weren't as bad off as HcW3 and his buddies who almost turned their motorhome into a submarine, then had to remove and replace a transmission at the racetrack, hats off to their mechanical abilities and intestinal fortitude in the face of a situation that would have reduced lesser men to tears (namely me). See elsewhere on this site for his excellent story My parents, who had bravely come to watch me/Rash race, and I went out to dinner that evening. Later Zooke and I spend the rest of the night playing Superbike 2000 and generally having a good time. We survived today intact, so tomorrow was like a bonus.

Read the final conclusion as our superheroes do battle on the Jennings circuit once again, will Krash live up to his name, or finally finish a weekend on two wheels?

### What's in a Nickname?

Posted by Krash on March 12, 2003

I awoke early the morning of our final race day at Jennings. I never sleep late when at the track. A combination of excitement and a tent that wouldn't soundproof a mosquito fart. At their hotels, many racers are still sleeping, snoring away until their wake up call. You feel closer to everything sleeping at the track, almost as if staying there keeps your mind on the racing. The corners call out in the darkness, "Think you can get me right tomorrow?". Many racers are drawn to the track in the morning, as if to see if their merit might give them an advantage. They stand about pit wall, coffee mugs in hand, two-day growth, wearing sweat pants and sandals. You couldn't tell them apart from a guy on his front porch, stooping to pick up the Sunday paper. Unless you look in their eyes.

This intensity was seen in the faces of men long ago surveying the battlefield. It's with the same single-mindedness that racers inspect the track. To an observer they seem casual, sharing a joke with a competitor even. Underneath is a taut bundle of nerves submerged in a cauldron of bubbling acid, kept at bay by only the steely resolve to do what must be done. Make no mistake, these men are fierce opponents, who take victory (and defeat) very seriously. That is why people are drawn to motorsports. They remain one of the last venues where a man may test his skill, feel the thrill of risk, and go head to head with his fellows, an arena to test your mind, body and character. The sublime beauty of racing is that to defeat your opponent, you must merely pass him, and stay in front. You needn't brain him to death, or slice off his appendages with a broadsword. You just need to be faster than he is, and stay upright. Yet it affords the same satisfaction as winning a battle, even better, because if you did it right, nobody got hurt and you can sit and tell stories about it later. The very essence of "sport", all the more noble for it's subtly, derring-do and utter lack of physical violence. Most live in a comfortable world that is too safe, predictable and involves way too much TV. Racing is the eternal challenge, a bar against which to measure oneself, and a way to find out,"Have you got it, you?"

I'm hoping this morning that I do, judging by my queasiness, I may not. The warm weather has given way to a damp chill and I emerge from the trailer to realize I spent too long waxing nostalgic about racing and nearly missed the rider's meeting. I jog over to the tower. It's the same as a dozen other rider's meetings I have been to, but there's always a piece of information to be had. Subtle differences in the flags, a slick spot on the track, variations in start procedure. I find out that I'm in the first practice group. The track is wet and the threat of rain is very real. There are many new riders here today and the feeling in the paddock is an anxious one. Or is it just me?

I tool around the track at a decidedly pedestrian pace, which soon has me bored to tears. I wick it up a bit and the fun factor increases. These bloody tires are great in the wet, (they're English man, why wouldn't they be good in the rain), and my confidence increases. The bike goes well and I come in happy. The only real complaint is that I now have to wait several hours before my two races. That much waiting and I may forget why the track goes. The weather remains overcast and cool, but dry. I eat some lunch to give me something to chew on other than my fingernails. I go over the bike and re-check everything I already checked, snug up the motor mounts and top off the oil. I'm amazed at the guys who don't check this stuff between races. I am lightninging spokes and checking triple clamp bolts while others are lounging about, watching races and gasp, enjoying themselves!

My parents are here to watch me race again. I give them alot of credit for coming out, as they never quite approved of me riding around on two wheels. I don't know how much of it they understand or if they enjoy it all, but it's still cool. The only downside is that it puts extra pressure on me not to crash. Combine that with the strange feeling I'm getting in the pit of my stomach as my race approaches and it can put a damper on the old spirit.

The Formula 500 race finally arrives. The bike lights on the first kick. I line up behind the forty or so other bikers and attempt to find neutral. I can't get it. After several futile attempts one of Zooke's friends, Thad comes over to inquire about my trouble. The bike has stalled and my kickstarter is back in the pits and there's no damn room for a pushstart! Thad offers to push my bike the rest of the way to the pre-grid while I run and grab the kicker. We get the bike fired and Thad leans over and tells me what to do. "Wait till everyone else goes out for the warm-up lap, then put it in gear and head out. As you come to the last turn before the grid, starting fiddling around for neutral, once you get it, just paddle your way up to grid position and don't put it in gear until the one-minute board goes sideways."

With that I scream off onto the track for my warm-up lap. I goose the throttle in my anger and the bike answers with a wheelee. The front wheel comes back to earth in time for me to make turn one and I'm off. I may not be able to find neutral, but at least the stupid clutch isn't slipping. I'm thoroughly pissed at this situation, but the anger is good for my racing. I coast around the last turn, toeing up and down repeatedly for that sacred spot above first and below second. I let the clutch out several times only to find it lurching or screaming. I'm getting panicky. By some miracle I get the shifter into that magic spot, about 60 feet from my grid position and paddle up to it. It's a two-wave start, with Formula 500 being the second group, so I'm on like Row 13, with a bunch of freakin' Yamahas in front of me. The first wave is off and it seems like a lifetime before our one minute board goes sideways. I drop it into gear and wait for another lifetime before the green flies. I'm off, with a nice wheelee in first and a little one as I bang second. Another great start as I head into turn one in third spot. I don't stay there long as an RD scoots by as the corner opens up. I tail him for a bit but he's out-pulling me on the straight. I run hard for another lap in fourth, so hard that my eyeballs are bouncing from the chatter. Suddenly another Yamaha overtakes me, this time it's Chris Spargo, last year's Daytona winner. Something inside me snaps and I decide to follow him with everything I've got. The RD is faster on the straights, but I find I'm able to reel him in on the twisty stuff. I brake stupidly late for a few corners and throw the pig down on her side, knees dragging all over the place. I get on the gas sooner and pull Spargo coming out of the corner. I may not get by him, but I'll at least let him too my ass around the track. We start catching up with slower riders. Just a straggler here and there. If Spargo goes by on the inside, I'm right there on the outside of the rider. We split a couple of guys like this, whenever the door closes and I can't use the line Chris did. I know I'm pushing it pretty hard because I've had a couple slides out of the Avons, had both of them drifting one time. That RD still hasn't managed to get away, although it does seem doubtful I'll get by him. Everytime I get close enough, Chris gets back on the throttle and smokes me. I'm cursing and spitting inside my helmet, my eyes full of blood. Just stay with him, I tell myself, maybe his bike will break! I follow him around like a puppy for a few laps. I come around the long, fast right-hander just before start/finish, just a few bike lengths behind. I'm watching his tail section as he hits the apex just a second before I do. I look to my exit and find all routes blocked. I'm in fourth gear wide open at nearly a full lean, running somewhere around eighty miles an hour and find myself on top of a gaggle of five riders from the first wave, going about 60 mph. Spargo finds a hole and squeaks through. I make for it just in time to have the door shut by a very slow rider. What happens after this point becomes hazy. I may have tried to force the bike down even further to tighten the turn, or I may have touched the front brake to scrub off some speed. Whatever I did washed the front end out and the next thing I knew I was skidding down the track on my head, listening to the shushh of leather tearing away from my body and wondering when the ##### I was going to stop. My legs hit the sand on the side of the track, and I pole-vaulted into the air, landing on my neck and thoroughly wrenching it, not to mention several of my ribs. I finally came to rest somewhere on the side of the track. I'm on my feet quickly and looking for the bike. I find a 650 Yamaha that is definitely not mine, with a seemingly unconscious man lying beside it. He is not moving and for a second I think, I've killed this poor man. Then I get back to the task at hand and locate the Titan. I check for damage. It doesn't appear too bad, but the front brake is somehow locked on and one of the K&Ns is AWOL. I find it in the sand. The whole bike is covered in sand. The crash truck arrives and we drag the beast onto the trailer. The ambulance arrives to cart away my latest victim. I can feel the blood running down my leg, my helmet is utterly ruined as are my gloves. None of this matters, just that I get the bike ready for the next race, which will be in about 45 minutes. My parents and Zooke are freaking out, people keep asking me if I'm ok, but nobody seems as interested in getting the bike back together as I am. I feel no pain, no fear, only the burning desire to get back on the track for the final race. Adrenaline is high. Have I got it in me?

### The Never-Ending Saga

Posted by Krash on March 13, 2003

Maybe some explanation is in order. Following a nasty tumble, such as the one I took that day at Jennings GP, most sane, rational persons would have retired to the pits to lick their wounds, after being thoroughly checked by the on-track medical personnel. I was neither sane, nor rational at this time. I was in the grip of a wonderful drug called adrenaline, which was being secreted into my bloodstream during the race, and dumped in, in copious amounts after the crash. I yanked the bike off the crash truck by myself and pushed it back to the paddock with the front brake locked on, screaming for people to get out of my way. At least six persons asked me if I was alright, to which I kept replying, "I'm fine, just #####ing pissed off, these assholes think this is a Sunday ride out there." I pulled the top half of my leathers down and saw my bloody, grapefruit sized elbow. I can remember thinking, that's gonna hurt later. Somebody asked me how the other guy was and I snapped, "How the hell should I know, I've been busy pushing this piece of shit back here by myself!" (I just found out he broke his arm and a couple of ribs in the crash. I feel bad that he was taken out by my sliding bike and hope that he makes a full recovery)

I rantned and raved for a few minutes about what a bunch of poke ass riders were doing out there five wide in a turn riding like they were in Grandma's golfcart, ect. ect.. Much of my other b#####ings are unfit to print. Later reflection would lead me to the conclusion that this crash was, as Kurtis Roberts put it, "a racing incident". In the heat of it, these things do happen, and to try to assign blame is pointless. I could argue that slower riders are always told to leave space on either side to be passed by faster ones, then you could come back and point out that as the overtaking rider, it was my responsibility to make a clean pass. Both are true. One could even go so far as to shift some blame to AHRMA for gridding two groups in the same race with such a disparity in speeds. No purpose would be served by any of these arguments. You know the risks before going out on the track, at least you're supposed to.

I grab a few cans of brake cleaner and begin hosing down my bike. The entire machine is covered in sand, and as it turns out that's what was keeping my front brake handle stuck. Brett from Pro-Flo brings a pressurized water squirter thing and we go to town, leaning the bike on it's side to drain . The clip on (a Pro-Flo item) is hardly damaged and doesn't even appear bent. The kill switch, however, is smashed beyond all repair. No time to fix it now. The gas tank has a huge fist-sized dent in it where it came down on my right hand. The throttle is working, and other than some scratches and gouging the fairing and windscreen are ok. Most of the time is spent trying to get the damn sand off the bike. Everyone is trying to help, but those tiny grains are everywhere, in every crevice. My spare helmet is pulled from it's bag and it's back to tech. Gordon Smith, chief scrutineer, does the once over on my machine, and whispers in my ear, "Take it easy out there man, your tires are covered in sand."

The loudspeaker announces first call for my race. We're bustling around in the pits trying to get ready. Zooke is out on the track just finishing up his race, which I would find out later he won, with Keith Sutton on the other Sundial bike following him home in second. Dave Crussell, an Englishman that races a quick and authentic H1R is helping me duct tape my hands to cover the holes in my gloves and the tear in the right leg of my leathers. "Just like a boxer, mate.", he says with a smile.

I wait until about half call to make my way to the pre-grid. My parents are still nearly in convulsions over my little mishap, Zooke has calmed them down a bit. I pay particular attention to the bike on the warm-up lap. Brakes fine, motor feels good, tires good. I give it the gas on the straight and the bike goes nice and steady without a hint or a wobble, nothing seems bent. I find neutral easily in the final corner and paddle my way to my grid position, row 5 in the middle. Having looked at the grid sheets earlier in the day, I know Gary Nixon is just in front of me and Jay Springsteen is just behind. That's decades of racing experience fore and aft, and it's well known that Nixon would run over his own mother to win a race. The flag flies and we're off. I run into the first turn in fourth spot. This race is called Formula Vintage, it's a catch-all for just about any bike that wants to run. I'm out there against real Harley roadracers, 750 Hondas and a slew of impressive machinery. And I know they are coming for my piddly half-liter Suzuki. Sure enough they come by me on the straight. I run around in sixth spot for a while, but the adrenaline is wearing off and the pain is setting in. There's also a breeze on my right foot, and when I look down I see a half dollar size hole in my boot, something we missed. There's no way I can finish, so discretion gets the better part of valor and I finish the race in seventh spot. I come back to the pits and everyone is smiling, happy that I kept the rubber down this time. I'm happy too. It's been a good few days, with three top ten finishes, a bike that worked great and some truly amazing people. Much thanks goes out to Eric Kalamaja, Thad, Brett at Pro-Flo, mom and dad, my sponsors who include:

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SIDI

NATURAL BRIDGE KOA

HALL'S SPORT SHOP

and anybody else I forgot. Thanks.

### Re: The Never-Ending Saga

Posted by JA on March 13, 2003, 5:12 pm, in reply to "The Never-Ending Saga"

Krash,

your are one heck of a story teller. But at the very bottom of the norm as a vintage racer. I understand that you are a "newbie" to racing and that's very exciting. We have this problem with most new (plastic rocket)riders out here at our track. And we had to impliment a "board of riders" to keep everyone safe. Each crash is exammed and an attempt to alleviate the cause. The "PR" (plastic rocket)guys think they will be the "new" Nicky Hayden and do all sorts of stupid stuff. Club racing is the first stepping stone to the big time, if that's what you are going for. Even if you are not, the same rules apply. Ride safe, not over your head and keep your cool.

And vintage racing is even more difficult. You are not only racing 3 decade old machinery, but with the new tech tire, tuning and suspension available, you are pushing the old frames past their designed parameters. Then add in decade old parts and motors and you get massive doses of the "aggravation" factor. As you know, last year I went wwwwaaayy into credit card hell to get to Daytona. The day the bike was supposed to leave for Florida the crank went in practice here. I didn't throw a fit (or helmet.....) I found the problem, sent the bike off and sent off a crank to be rebuilt and sent to Florida. I picked up the bike in Deland and proceeded to take it to my cousins garage for a full bottom end tear down. I wasn't thrilled, but that's vintage racing. Got all it buttoned up and traileired it out to a secret test track to break in and let it jse me. Of course it started raining and I got soaked. Then as I was loading the bike, the trailer tilted, and the bike fell on me, a couple of course words later I got out from under it to assess the damage. New paint scratched, 90.00 bubble busted up, foot peg broken off and a few other niggly things to be straightened. So off I went to fix the bike, again. I make it through tech (few things I was worried about), riders meeting and talked to you guys for a bit. Finally race day comes, I am really pumped. First practice scares the hell out of me, and was frigid cold as you remember. Halfway through the next practice, the new crank goes again. I just pull off the track and push the to the pits. Work a couple of hours thinking it might be a seizure. But it came to be the crank. So I carefuly reassembled the bike, very unhappy but no "fits". Thousands of dollars spent, lost race fees, busted up bike that I put a year into, and no racing for me. What can one do, the Daytona bug bit me good. I spent the rest of the day watching races, and bench racing with Zook and my other buddies. Then packed up and went to my cousins.

My very long point is that there is a great chance of things going wrong in vintage racing. And most of the guys there are older and are out to have a fun day of racing. It is also "club" racing which means no money, no chance of getting a factory superbike contract, and in the end a piece of wood if you finish in the top 3. And being a vintage club AHRMA has to combine classes. There just aren't enough riders. Add that into not having Expert and amature classes you have a wide range of speed even in a single class. You knew that going into the race.

And even though "blood in the eyes" and "drugged up on adrenalin" make for a great read, lets look at the facts. You were riding over your head trying to keep Spargo in your sight. Then in your "adrenal dugged state" you not only came barreling up on a slower group of riders, you crashed and took someone else out. And on top of that, you left the other rider laying there only thinking about your bike. Yeah, that piece of wood is more important than a rider you hurt. Add yelling at people in the pits to get out of your way, and that comes up to you being a total self centered a\$hole. Now because of your decision to be a manic on the track, you are bruised, one trashed helmet and gloves, torn-up leathers and boots, busted up bike, and a guy that was out for a fun day of racing, will be hurt for weeks with broken bones, hospital bills, maybe lost work and a trashed bike, again all for maybe getting a piece of wood. He had a right to be out there as much as you did. If you had done the right/safe thing, you would of let Spargo go, slowed down till you could of passed safely and everyone would of had a good day. If you had crashed like that at our track, you would of been banned for 2 races. Yes racing is very dangerous, we all accept that. But what you did, was just plain stupid.

I hope you really think about this, and get your priorities straight. if you can't control yourself, you need to find another hobby that when you get the "blood in your eyes" and can't see straight, that you won't be hurting others.

I'm not singling you out, a few guys here have been reprimanded for the same unsafe riding. And I probably do shake harsh, but it's very important to me and everyone racing that the other guy is in control and can make good judgment calls, because we have each others lives in our hands. And that's way more important then one little race for a piece of wood.

Ok I'm off my (wood)soapbox.

### In Defense of Myself Part 1

Posted by Krash on March 14, 2003

I believe that JA and X6er may be reacting to some of the embellishment I like to put in my stories. All the events I describe are true, but I am sometimes guilty of using storytellers license to spice up what would otherwise be run of the mill race reports. I wanted to give non-racers a view into a world rarely seen other than on SpeedVision, from someone who had lived it firsthand. I also do my damndest to be brutally honest about what I am thinking or feeling at any given time during the story. I'm sorry if that causes some people to leap to many erroneous conclusions about the type of racer and person that I am. If you will be so generous as to allow me a few moments of your time to clarify and, apparently, defend myself, I think we can all understand each other.

We have a good time here on the board and even at the track calling me Krash. Hell, I even started using it as an on-line name. It's a nickname I have been given (earned?) through a small number of incidents and mishaps, some of which are ABSOLUTELY MY OWN FAULT, others that are not entirely my own, and some that may be attributed to just dumb luck. I have been gracious enough to share these incidents in great detail with the members on this board, again in the most honest manner I am able. Therefore I do not mind being judged or criticized for what I've flung out there into cyberspace, with mostly a warm welcome, it comes with the territory. However, I will not sit idle while my remarks are being misconstrued and assumptions made about my character without totality of fact.

First of all, I am not an unsafe racer who rides over his head trying to be the next Nicky Hayden. I ride well within the limits of ability and reason when I'm out there, and I am always thinking clearly. My mindset may be in the "intense" mode, but I use that as a tool to help my concentration. It narrows your focus and keeps your head at the racetrack. It's very easy make a mistake through a mental lapse if you aren't prepared. I prepare by emptying my head of the non-essentials and making the race a primary objective. To ride as well and as hard as I can. Not to go and fling it down the road taking out everyone in my way. I have over-exaggerated this state by describing it as "the blood being in my eyes" or something to that effect. A literary device gentlemen, not a point of fact. Every decision I make out there is calculated and level-headed. I do not take stupid chances, but I have made mistakes. My goal is to learn from each one in my quest to become a better rider. Ask any number of people I've raced with, they know what type of rider I am, able to race closely, but gotten as well.

Secondly, I have been guilty of throwing a helmet or two in my day, my temper has gotten the better of me on more than one occasion. I know too well the frustrations that vintage racing can dish out, and I think it's admirable the way that JA stoically soldiered through his repeated heartbreaks at Daytona last year. I do not deal with things the same way he does. I curse, rant, chuck a helmet, make some noise. Most people just ignore me. Yeah I look like a petulant child when I do it, but it vents it to the outside atmosphere, like a bad fart. It stinks for a few seconds, but is soon gone on the wind. I don't run around beating people up or anything, I save it for inanimate objects as they are much less likely to defend themselves. I find, though, that this is happening less and less as I grow as a rider, now I am not waiting for something to go wrong to piss me off, but instead I am preparing ahead of time to lessen the chance that something will go awry. Still, even those preventative steps will not safeguard against everything. Emotions run high in the pits and it's easy to succumb to them.

Thirdly, and perhaps most important, the incident in question. There were certain details before and after the crash that did not make it into my story, and new information has come to light that I will share with you. The facts are these, as I understand them. I was chasing Chris Spargo for a couple laps of the race. I was not riding over my head trying to stay with him, his bike may not have been running 100% or he may have been going easy with it and this is probably what allowed me to remain close to him. Let's be honest here, a race tuned RD400 will smoke the pants off a T500 any day of the week, and Spargo can ride to boot. I was happy to be hanging with him, being towed around by a faster rider. I knew barring a mistake or mechanical trouble I wasn't going to get by him. I mentioned this in my first story. I made the decision to tuck into his draft and follow his lines until he got away. Does that sound like the thoughts of a glory hungry, dangerous, testosterone addled youngster? I think not. When we came around the final corner before the crash I made an error that seemed small at first, but upon further reflection I see that it probably precipitated the chain of events. I looked too long at Spargo's tail section, was too focused on following him that I didn't look to the exit of the turn early enough and lost the valuable split second that would have allowed me to see the group of riders sooner. That much I am guilty of and accept full responsibility for. It's called "target fixation" and in the brief moment I committed that mortal sin of motorcycle racing I became the key antagonist in an event that would have allowed me one person hurt, (although I wouldn't find this out until well after the fact, and after the story was on the Internet). My second mistake was one in judgement. I was closing fast and leaned over, at that other riders, but there was a hole, which Chris Spargo, only a second ahead of me had gone through. In that instant I made the same hole (wide enough for at least two bikes), knowing that I could not brake leaned over or risk washing the front out. As my front wheel was about halfway past the bikes, the two riders I was going between suddenly closed ranks, unaware that I was there. The only thing I could do was hit the front brake, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Hindsight, of course, is 20/20 and I should have been ready for the possibility of the riders coming together as I went through. There was no "out" for me at that point. Had I continued on with the pass, the three of us may have collided with even more disastrous results, or we may have swapped some paint and continued on our merry way, it doesn't really matter. I made the best decisions I could with the information I had available at the time, with rotten results. I lost the front end and this poor guy who never knew I was yet got taken out by my sliding bike, at least that's what we think happened. I'm still not sure where he was on the track, or if he was one of the riders I was overtaking or not. I do know that while I was still on my bike, I NEVER hit another rider, so it seems highly probable that as the bike slid to the outside of the corner it became tangled up with this gentleman and his machine, location and identity still unknown to me. When I got up after my long slide down the tarmac, I thought I had been involved in a ONE BIKE accident, not knowing there was another rider down. So of course the first thing I did was look for my bike, which took me a few seconds to find. I saw the crashed Yamaha first and then it's rider lying beside it, when I had the thought I mentioned in my story, 'I've killed this poor man.' Then I saw my bike with it's still spinning back tire, running on it's side. Feeling closer to the bike I ran and hit the kill switch and started to head to the guy on the ground. The crash truck beat me to him, as I was nearing the Star/Finished line, and I could see the rider moving out the ground a bit. The race officials motioned everyone to stay away as the ambulance was making it's way to the scene. Knowing I could be of no further assistance to the downed man, I went back to my bike and it was loaded onto the crash truck. Obviously my adrenaline was high at this point, any conscious human beings' would be. But I was also still in "race mode" and getting the bike knocked together was a priority. I knew I couldn't play Florence Nightingale to the other rider and I also knew that he was getting excellent treatment for what I was told were very minor wounds. In fact I was told that the gentleman was OK, just had the wind knocked out of him. So I put it out of my head and proceeded with fixing the bike, with the intentions of finding him later and making sure everything was alright. Still, the bike was my primary concern, the incident "non-essential" at that time. If that sounds callous, so be it, but why should I worry about something that was no longer in my control, or even my abilities. When I heard he just "had the wind knocked out of him" I ceased thinking about it at that moment, what else could I do? I learned just yesterday that the one injury status of the man was wrongly reported, that he had indeed broken his arm and a couple of ribs, but that he was going to be fine. This information changed the color of the crash in my mind and had I known this at the writing of the story it would have changed the tone of the article to be more than serious. It's one thing when everyone walks away, you shake hands and make amends, but it actually you feel downright shitty when somebody gets hurt, because of circumstances I was in part responsible for. I don't feel guilty about it, because I know I didn't do anything wrong, or foolish. That's why I described it as a "racing incident", not to try and shift the blame to anyone, or away from myself, but because that is, in all truth, exactly what it was. These things happen on the track all the time, and if you're going to race, you'd better understand that. If misrepresented it in my story, used a few too many enthusiastic adjectives, then maybe I need a few courses in journalism, not in the ingestion of humble pie as seems to be the feeling of a few here. My thoughts are with the rider and I hope he has a speedy recovery.

Lastly I want to comment on something else mentioned in one of the posts. I will never apologize for being serious about racing or for riding hard when I'm on the track. When I'm out there, it's to compete, plain and simple. Too often people want to soften the image of vintage racing into a few parade laps on old bikes with number plates. Frankly, that stinks. I know this isn't World Superbike and there isn't a factory ride waiting out there for me, but why shouldn't we take it seriously? If we want to show the masses that vintage roadracing is real and not the joke we keep trying to turn it into, then we need to act like it. New riders and those who like to circulate at a brisk pace without pushing too hard, but a big and necessary part of vintage racing, but why is it so common to chastize someone when they want more than that? It's like we keep telling the up and coming guys, "Well buddy, we sort of race here, yeah it looks like it and we put on a good show, but at the end of the day if you're pushing harder than we like, you're an asshole." Almost as if the illusion of racing is enough, and I guess for some it is. But have no illusions about this: for a small minority of us, this is "real" racing and we will continue to treat it that way.

Okay, I'm done.



Kris (Krash) Larivee Pics April 2003



Frank "Krash" Larivee managed a 2nd and a 4th place at this meeting. Well done.

The Hard Way (always).

Posted by Krash on May 12, 2003

The racing season began in Canada two weeks ago with a free "test" day at Shannonnville Motorsports Park, Ontario. It's a good way for the racers to shake the dust off their leathers and get the frost out of their bones after being snowed in all winter, without the pressure of actually racing. Not to mention getting new bikes and engines and suspensions sorted out for racing the following weekend. I arrived Saturday evening and was greeted heartily by my racing compatriots. Other than the "winter fat" many of us seemed to be carrying and some new racebikes, it felt as if nothing had changed. One of the racers put it best when he said, "We are home". These were the people who knew too well the racing obsession, men (and a few women) who would stuff you into a corner to make a pass one moment, then be lending you parts and wrenching on your bike the next. Ever watch two racers talk about racing? They use their hands as much as their mouths, (which are usually in a wide grin), mimicking the movements and feedback from the motorcycle. It's a language few that haven't raced would understand, learned only through experience. Until you've chattered the front end through an 80mph corner, had the back end step out when you gassed it early, or heard the shussing sound of leather on pavement and been wondering when you were going to stop, praying you weren't going to hit anything, it's all just words. We were home, and what a great home it was.

It was a cold night spent in the uninsulated enclosed trailer I haul the bike in, but so much better than sleeping in the tent, (thank god for sponsors!). The morning was grey and threatening, but that's Shannonnville, we were lucky it wasn't snowing. I pulled my leathers on early, newly repaired by John Bickle from my 90mph get off in Florida, to keep warm. The two-stroke began it's sweet and smoky cacophony with just a few prods. Soon we were out on the cold track, warming our tires and sussing out our lines on the Nelson circuit, a short course comprised of several tight, 2nd gear right handers. The type of track that rewards rider skill (and cojones) as opposed to sheer horsepower, where you are constantly turning, shifting and setting up. My kind of track.

Two sessions into my day, things went south. I kicked the bike over to head out for the next practice, nothing. 10 kicks later I was working up a sweat in my leathers and helmet, starting to swear profusely. The bastard wouldn't fire for anything. I enlisted the aid of a gentleman to pushstart the beast I was beginning to hate, but to no avail. Off came the helmet and gloves, and open went the tool box. I tore into all the wiring and ignition components I could get my trembling fingers on, from the kill switch to the pick-up coil and brain box, ground wires and spark plugs, but I was pissing in the wind. The patient is dead doctor, and so was my day.

I drove home like a maniac, stopping only briefly to declare to customs that I had nothing to declare except my undying frustration. I had less than 4 days to find out what was wrong with my ignition, fix it or get a replacement, or my hopes for a championship bid would get off to a terrible no points start. Long time readers of my exploits will know this type of situation is par for the course in my life. If it wasn't for bad luck.....

Things went from bad to worse as Phil (my long suffering tuner) and I troubleshot the silly machine into the late hours that Sunday night. We did discover one thing in all that time, the bloody ignition was deadlier than Lee Majors' acting career. A quick call Monday AM to the people at Pro-Flo (manufacturers of my very expensive racing ignition) yielded much sympathy, but no help whatsoever. They were no longer making that ignition and no spares were available, tough crap buddy, but thanks for your 500 bucks. A decision had to be made, and fast, as half of Monday was already gone with the wind. Go back to points and battery ignition, in a total loss set-up? Add all that weight to the bike and have to worry about continually checking points gap and battery charge? Or go down the darker road of the Suzuki Pointless Electronic Ignition (PEI), with it's teeny pick-up coils and heavy Kokusan rotor outboard on the left side of the crank? This option would require a switch of the entire bottom end, as the T500 cranks are not the same as the GT500. I had a GT bottom end that was running good two seasons ago. I knew all the gears were there and the crank was good, but what about the crank seals? If they were bad after sitting a couple years I would be royally screwed. Hello Rock, my old friend, greetings Mr. Hard Place, you both look well.

Unable to bring myself to add a battery to a racebike, I opted for the PEI system, knowing full well this decision might lead to me watching re-runs of CHiPs this weekend and lamenting what might have been. To complicate matters, I had minor surgery on the middle finger of my right hand that Monday (an extension was added so the officials could see it as I went by the tower!), leaving me with one good hand and one swollen, useless one. Not good for swapping out motors and re-assembling them. I soldiered on, trying not to bleed on too much on the bike. As the sun came up on Tuesday morning, I left the garage, BOTH hands puffy and bleeding, but the engine was out of the bike and apart, the GT bottom end cleaned and ready for the ported race barrels so lovingly prepared by Eric at Sundial Moto Sports. I had just enough time to close my eyes before the alarm clock told me it was time to go to the day job. Oh hell.

Tuesday night in the shop had the GT bottom end mated to my top end and mounted in the frame. And there was actually spark coming off the pick-up coil! As long as the black ignition module proved to be good, I would have spark. Whether the crank seals were good was anybody's guess. Eric was over-nighting me a set of external coils, as I didn't have any of the correct resistance to run with a self generating system like the PEI. I still had to assemble the clutch and various other components, but I couldn't see straight enough to put the discs back in properly, so I decided some sleep was in order.

Wednesday was nearly a bust, my right hand so swollen that I couldn't even think of turning a wrench, the doctors fearing infection. I tied up as many of the loose ends as I could one-handed and went to bed early. Tomorrow was make or break day. If I had the energy or the right, I might have said a prayer.

Thursday dawned and my hand was feeling better, but the rain was pouring down. I thought of the leaks in the trailer roof I hadn't had time to fix because of all this ignition nonsense, shrugged my shoulders and went to work. Four hours and several curse words later the bike was done. I had spark, a fully assembled motor and clutch, but would it run? First kick, nothing. Well I did empty the float bowls of fuel. Second kick, nothing. Well, the motor had just been torn apart and put back together. I paused for a moment to elevate my throbbing hand and check to make sure both choke levers were engaged. It had to go, it just had to. Third kick....the beast awoke, crackling away merrily on the stand. There was some dampness in my eyes, but that was just from the two-stroke fumes. I put my helmet on and took it out into the pouring rain. Several illegal runs down the road had me convinced the seals were good, and that I was going racing.

The Hard Way Pt.2

The trailer was loaded and off I went into the pissing downpour. I got five miles down the road before I realized I had forgotten my sleeping bag, blankets and pillows. Not good for an excursion into the Great White North. The trailer was re-loaded and off I went into the pissing downpour, for the second time.

I breezed through customs and arrived with daylight to spare (it wasn't raining at the track). Unloaded the bike and tried to set up the canopy for the first time this year. The blasted thing is a maze of numbered poles, velcro straps and plastic feet. Of course I didn't bother to save the directions. Not a pretty sight. The night was cold and damp, and at some point it started raining. The wind picked up and I could hear the canopy flapping about. The veteran racers tell stories about the tornado that ripped through here several years ago, toppling bikes, turning canopies into kites and flipping over at least one camper trailer. I shudder with visions of it happening again, roll over and try to sleep, something I haven't gotten much of lately.

Late Friday morning the rain stops and the track dries up enough to ride. I want to get as much out of the paid practice as I can. The tech inspector makes a comment about my bike being dirty, but I think the look I gave him said it all. The temperature is still quite cool, leaning out the two-stroke's jetting enough to make it run a bit crisper, but any advantage in engine performance is negated by the lack of grip the cold track configures for the tires. Even the hotshoes are tiptoeing around. There are many new riders this year, which provides for some interesting moments. It's very gratifying to slide up along the outside of a modern 1000cc bike on my little half-liter vintage wreck and pass it, even if the ego-bruised little bastard comes howling by on the next straight. The only really hairy moment comes when I try to reach for the brake and my bandaged finger can't get over the lever. By the time I start breathing again and get my eyeballs popped back into my head I've slid my way around the corner and I'm already halfway to the next one. I make sure to get my fingers on the lever early. The only other bitch is getting my glove on and off, a genuinely excruciating experience. My practice day ends a bit early when I find a leak in my gas tank. I epoxy it, but it takes the rest of the day and night for the stuff to set, as a result of the cold.

A relaxing evening, if somewhat chilly, is spent with the other vintage racers. I haven't seen them all winter, and I'd forgotten just how much I missed this great bunch of people. I'd still come to the racetrack to compete, even if I didn't have friends like these, but it increases the gratification tenfold having them there. I don't think that kind of camaraderie exists with the modern classes. Besides, the vintage guys are treated like the red-headed stepchild of racing at these RACE events anyways. Simply because we can't afford to, or choose not to ride the most expensive, modern equipment. That only increases the bond between vintage racers. Another factor that brings us closer is that we all tend to stay at the track. When the pros head out to their hotel rooms to watch cable, we sit by the campfire and tell lies about how fast we are. All part of the experience.

Saturday dawns, cold, but sunnier. I am awakened by the loudspeaker announcing 15 minutes to rider's meeting. Oh well, I didn't want a shower this morning anyways. I throw my jeans on, which are very cold, and bang my finger on the way out the trailer door, leading to a long string of curse words, I even invented a few new ones. What a lovely start to the day. I purchase a hot chocolate, that I am inclined to dump into my jeans to feel some warmth.

Morning practice goes well. My first race of the day is Club Cup, where I will be running against 1000cc four-cylinders and other more modern machinery. The only rules are: Twin shock, air cooled. Anything else goes. I have been a consistent top ten finisher in this class, and I'm hoping to better that this weekend. The T500 works well on tight tracks like the Nelson circuit at Shannonnville. Unfortunately we only run this configuration once a year, so I plan to make the most of it. I've had to draft a friend to stand at the pit wall with my kickstart lever. The transmission is hard to get into neutral, adjust it one way and the clutch slips, go the other way and it creeps on the line. Luckily, I manage to find neutral coming around the final corner on the warm up lap, and paddle my way to grid position, in the middle of the pack. There are over 20 bikes on the start line, all of different vintage and performance levels. I grin inside my helmet, it's gonna be a fun race.

The light is red, motors scream, transmissions clunk into first gear. Light goes green and I dump the clutch, expecting a great start, like always. What I get is a front end gone suddenly light and a wheel pointing decidedly skyward. Clutch back in and try again. Another monster wheelie, but I'm so pissed I go with it, carrying the front until I bang second, another brief wheel stand and I bang third and throw it into turn one, a very high speed right hander. This season I avoid the mistake that gets many riders (including me) off the start, which is shutting off for the first turn before up to speed. I keep the throttle pinned and bang fourth gear, passing two riders on the outside. Turn two comes zooming up, down into third gear, keep the revs up or it'll drop off the pipe, brake hard enough to slide the front and force it into the corner. The bike pitches and slides a bit on the greasy tar strips the racetrack sees fit to use to repair cracks, but before I have time to crap myself I'm off to the next turn. I'm running third in the amateur ranks at this point, with a KZ750 twin ridden by a maniac, and a GS750 in front of me. Two laps into the fray we get the red flag, which means I go back to the middle of the pack and restart the whole thing, watching the ambulance cart off another victim. This start is worse, I bog it off the line and have to play catch up. I run around in fifth for most of the race, swapping spots with somebody on an Aermacchi. He slides around me in the corners and I outpower him down the straights. We get caught up to John Crossley on the last lap, a big man on a big bike (GS 1000S) and get by both of them. The next short straight Crossley comes by like a friggin' rocket, brakes early. I have a decision, stuff my way past him, risk taking both of us out or sit tight and finish behind him. Before I have a chance to decide the Aermacchi jams his way up the inside of me, forcing me wide, with two corners left to go. Two voices start screaming inside my brain, let him go, save it for the Supervintage race, and the other one, get that bastard! Unable to find a middle ground I stay right on his ass. I look to the outside in the final corner, a 2nd gear right hander lined with haybales. I'm chattering the front and sliding the rear. I gas it as early as I dare. I crashed here last year, just missed breaking both legs on the wall, so I know how little traction is available in that corner. Still, I'm on the gas before the Aermacchi and coming by. I'm tucked in as far as I can get, "under the paint", so to speak. It's a photo finish with the Aermacchi getting me by the width of a tire. I end up sixth, not bad.

I've got the pole for the Supervintage Heavyweight race because of my standing in the points last year. Long time readers of my exploits have heard me bemoan this class before, sticking a 500cc bike against 750s and 900s. I'll whimper less about it this time, because I knew the tightness of the track would help to level the field a bit. Toivo Madrus and his "Yamando", a 750 kitted XS650 in a Norton frame sits next to me and to my surprise on his left is a 1982 GS750, a bike 10 years out of class! Not to mention the fact that it's the same guy that centerpunched me last season, dislocated my shoulder and wrecked my bike, then didn't have the guts to apologize for knocking me down. He looks at me and I give him the one-fingered salute and he quickly averts his gaze. I don't have any time to protest his illegal bike in this class, so I'll have to race him for now.

I get a better start this race and ride as hard as I dare. The GS 750 and Toivo's Yamando are in front of me. I spend the race following Toivo, but unwilling to make a brave move on Saturday's heat race, I decide to save it for Sunday. The GS750 is later disqualified after several others protest (I didn't get there first), so my third place becomes a second. Not exactly the way I want to move up in the standings, but I'll take it. Sunday is another day, and I'll be pulling no punches.