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Randy Norian

TOOK HOME A CRISPY SOUVENIR BUT STILL HAD A GOOD TIME

What a crazy 2 weeks it has been. Not only was the week leading up to Barber surprisingly frantic, but the week since I got home has been super busy with work, so I've had a hard time getting my feet back on the ground. Phew!

I am hoping to collect writeups from some attendees and post them here on the Gamma Gathering website, and if they are elsewhere I will link to them- so if you have a story or writeup from the weekend, please send it to me and I'll share it here on the website. You can send me a word document complete with embedded photos and I will

At any rate, here's my take on things, both on and off track.

First off, I would like to give a HUGE THANKS to all the people who came to Barber to participate in the rendezvous weekend. These things don't happen by magic, it takes a lot of commitment and dedication on the part of the attendees, their spouses, and friends to get themselves and their equipment to the rendezvous. So please give yourselves a round of applause, it would not have been a rendezvous without you guys! Another big thanks to Shawn Daugherty who made beautiful signage, shirts, pins and stickers for the event. It really looked professional and brought the whole thing up to a higher level. So Thanks, Shawn. Many thanks to Rick Lance who brought a lot of guys to the event and organized the street rides, I know a lot of people were very keen to attend those rides. I wish I had time to have joined in! I am just sorry I did not have more time to spend with everyone who made an effort to be there, the 3 days flew by so quickly it seemed like it was over as soon as it started.

I did speak with Rick Lance several times in the week leading up to D-Day, he was prepared for the street rides and would be running a base of operation out of his hotel parking lot. I was unable to get there to participate so I am hoping everybody involved had a great time.

The group dinner Friday night was well-attended, and I was hoping people would take advantage of that initial time together to socialize and make some plans for the remainder of the weekend. Not sure how that all worked out. One of the main suggestions taken away from the Autobahn gathering was a recommendation that we get everyone together early in the event, so they'd get a chance to meet and talk on the first day. Unfortunately for me, I was beyond exhausted at that point and was not able to spend much time with all my new friends at dinner. I staggered in late, tried to say hi to everybody there, but needed to take care of my girls so my time with the big group was pretty short.

I didn't get into the museum this year, but I did spend a whole day there last year so I hope you all got a chance to get inside. It's spectacular, as you know- and judging by some of the pictures I have seen posted, others found it interesting as well.

The bike show Saturday was really great, I counted 25+ RGs, RZs and other 2T exotica there before losing track. We may have had upwards of 30 bikes in the show. It was really a tour de force of large-displacement 2T hardware. The editors at Motorcycle Classics were really happy with the turnout and had this to say in their writeup-

>>Motorcycle Classics held its annual vintage bike show, and this year's was our biggest ever. Helping to draw a crowd to our tent were some special guests, a somewhat loose-knit association of Suzuki Gamma owners. Some 25 Gamma owners descended upon our tent for the Gathering of the Gammas, celebrating 25 years since Suzuki launched the Gamma, an amazing 500cc, liquid-cooled, 2-stroke square four that put more than a little emphasis on performance. Gammas are fabulous machines, as were the bikes that participated in our show.<<

I did very little photography that weekend and am counting on everyone else to have taken plenty of photos!

There were a lot of neat bikes in the pits, I didn't get out as much as I wanted but I saw many cool bikes nonetheless.

So, without further ado, here is my crazy week of the Barber Gamma Rendezvous

I took the precaution of taking the entire week off from work. So, I'd have after work on Friday the 1st through departure on Wed the 6th to finish tweaking the bike, and leisurely pack and prepare. What was that about the best-laid plans of mice and men?

My only real last-minute effort was to finish my new tailsection. I had the mockup tail completed, but I needed to make a mould and lay up the new tail.



Granted, time was short, but how hard could it be? I had the bike running and pretty much complete, and I had ridden it around my neighborhood with no issues. The bike was running for many weeks last fall, I did a lot of severe testing on it, had run it up to 150 mph easily, the datalogger showed that everything was working well enough, and everything appeared to be holding air, oil, and water! Over the summer I had wrapped up many small issues and loose ends that had prevented the bike from being fully roadworthy in 2009, so there had been a huge number of fixes and small improvements- for example, the fairing stay adaptor was no longer a temporary assembly of shims, but was now a 1-piece machined from billet alloy adaptor, that also served as a steering stop (which I did not have last year). The lower fairing stay brackets were hand-laid carbon pieces that were mated to the frame like a second skin. The forks had been completely disassembled, revalved with Race Tech gold valves and resprung for the correct weight of the Delta. The EGTs had all been replaced with fast-reacting probes from Exhaust Gas Technologies, which required grinding off all the old fittings and welding new ones in place in the pipes. Fairing mounts now had captured fasteners and spacers so no pieces fell out or could be lost when removing. I had standardized many things on the bike to all be removed with a single 8mm nut driver (the magic driver, as I called it) I had lowered the rear ride height by 1" to try and reduce drag, wheelies, and stoppies. The handlebars had been narrowed by 1". Windscreen was lowered by 1". New tailsection had been painstakingly crafted by hand, and upper pipes had been modified with new location of the mufflers.. I bought a second seat unit and had a hard foam pad for track duty. revamped electronics at rear of bike with new battery mount. New fuel line setup to reduce chance of kinking a fuel line. bar sliders were drilled and tapped into the shorter bars. A quick-turn throttle was installed from an RS250R and cables modified as needed. gearing was changed. on and on and on.



My first hint of things unraveling was when I took the bike for a spin on Friday night and tried to run it to redline. It hit 10,000 and stopped running on the right two cylinders. This led to several days of troubleshooting everything on the bike, as the fault began to move around to various cylinders. Long story short, my adjustable disc valves were adjusting themselves at 10,000 rpm- but they were not loosening up. The discs would simply move, and yet once the motor was stopped everything was tight and appeared normal. I did not think to check the disc timing for several days until I noticed two of them wide open at the same time, on the same side. (not supposed to happen). The first install I used left handed threads on the right side of the motor, 17 N-M torque and red loctite.

I pulled all the disc valves and reinstalled. This time I put left handed threads on the left side (using new hubs, as I have 2 complete sets) right hand threads on the right side, 34 N-M torque and blue loctite.

I got it all together Tuesday afternoon- I was supposed to depart on wed afternoon- and tested it. The bike started and ran fine, with the 70 degree disc closing. I rode down to the freeway, zipped down the on-ramp, hit 10,000 rpm and the bike instantly went dead on the left rear cylinder (I can see the EGT- it was returning to 60C, so was cooling off completely) I limped home on 3 cylinders and checked the disc valves- all of them had moved substantially.

At this point, the manufacturer had already offered me a full refund, now he offered to overnight to me pinned hubs that did not use the nut clamp system, but I was running out of enthusiasm to work on the bike at the track. I suppose you can say that the discs were installed incorrectly because if they were installed correctly, they would not have moved. However I did try LH and RH threads on each side, and with the suggested as well as double torque value, and red and blue loctite, so I felt I had tried all reasonable options.

The fact that the discs moved without the nuts ever getting loose, and the discs show no signs of marks or scoring to indicate forcible movement, leaves me completely baffled. There is something going on with vibration, crank motion, etc etc that is beyond my ability to explain. These discs are working on other Gamma engines, however my engine is not like other Gamma engines. I have different crank weight, balancing, rpm range, on and on. There is something about the motion of my crankshaft that is causing the discs to move.

I guess when you look at a stock disc valve, and see all those rivets, the OEMs have some reason for that.

So, I put my undesirable top-end discs back on with 78 degree closing timing, and finished prepping the bike. I rode it with everything in place and all buttoned up about 2 PM on Wednesday. My tools and parts were scattered everywhere from days of frantic troubleshooting, and I had not even remotely begun to pack. I worked all wed evening gathering my stuff and packing, and prepping the tow vehicle. It turned out to have an electrical problem and so around 6 AM I gave up on the van and borrowed a pickup truck from my very generous father in law.

By this time I had been awake since tuesday morning at 6. (48 hours straight) I was getting slower and slower at doing things. The trailer and truck were prepared by early afternoon and I left with Pit Girl thursday afternoon. I only made it to Iowa City before I realized I was not capable of staying awake much longer. I stopped to sleep for 4 hours- from 5 to 9 PM on thursday- then resumed my drive.

With many fuel stops, overnight drive and 9 MPG we arrived at Barber friday morning around 11 AM. We got our tickets and got into the pits, to hook up with some of the other Gamma Gathering racers- it was fantastic! Scott Rehl had his TZ750. Andy Jones had his trio of gorgeous bikes. Kevin Kernohan had his beautiful RGV special. I had the Delta and RS250R, and there were several other guys from the rendezvous group scattered around the pits. I went to tech and found myself staring at a beautiful blue and white RG500 racer owned by Scott Jennings, who was also racing that weekend.

I was shaky and not in very good shape, but a sandwich and a few minutes of rest and I felt pretty normal. I had lots of guys helping me get the bikes out, and ready to go, esp Matt Manspeaker who flew in from the west coast and spent all weekend slaving in the pits. Without his help I would likely not have made it through Friday, let alone the entire weekend. Can't thank you enough, Matt!



So, I head out for a session after lunch on the 250, group 3. The track is a technical marvel and I was pretty much lost, by the end I had some idea where to go but man the elevation makes it challenging.

I rolled back into the pits and took the 500 straight out in group 4 (faster pace) unfortunately the 500 was carbureting as badly as a bike can carburet, slowing down when I open the gas, gargling, then blasting off at 8000 rpm, all the usual unhelpful crap you don't need when trying to get round a racetrack. To top it off, it turned like a dump truck and when I finally got up some nerve and ran it into the corners at some kind of decent pace, it had a terrible front end chatter. I rolled into T1 with some speed (downhill left hander), FINALLY, and as I pitched it in the front began to hammer, hard. BangBangBangbangbangbang all the way down to the apex, I ran it out wide to the edge of the track and it settled down as the loading came off the front end. So, that was an attention-getter. Datalogger had T1 entry speed at 110 mph which was not a lot, but I was not real confident there.

On the back straight, into the L/R chicane at speed (also at 110 mph) and again the front hammered for a few good BANGs as I pitched it in.

I struggled thru a few laps and then came in, staggered off the bike and collapsed on the ground, about ready to puke. My body was completely fried from the heat, exhaustion and effort.

Matt Manspeaker spins wrenches on my 250 while Scott Rehl and Jim Kunath confer



Partial explanation of how Pit Girl has earned her nickname

Matt debriefed me a bit, trying to figure out how to tweak the 500, while I drank as much water as possible, and Pit Girl plied me with sandwiches. The 250 ran almost perfectly - just a speck rich on the pilots, so downshifts were a little soggy. The 500 was another matter entirely. I was just flat-out shagged, and could barely speak comprehensibly.

I had lowered the bike last summer to try and reduce tendency to wheelie and stoppy. I figured, really, what difference will it make to handling. Well, it makes plenty of difference. And the front was chattering to top it off.

Also- carburetion- the pilots were very rich in order to help with low-speed tractability on the street. Well, that's fine on the street, but on the track when you go into a corner on trailing throttle at 8000 rpm, it was sucking up so much gas the motor was choking. I couldn't even blip the throttle to downshift, it just went "bloggh, bloggh" coz it was loaded with fuel. I was spending 90% of my attention just trying to operate the basic controls on the bike.

Datalogger showed only 850 F EGT and straight speed of 109 mph.

I didn't ride the 500 any more on Friday, as I was too tired and it was running so poorly. We racked our brains for "the cure" for chatter, and as I wandered round the pits I found the Race Tech guy who gave the same advice and also told me where to adjust the high-speed adjusters on my R6 forks.

For the rest of Friday I rode the 250. I started to work my lap times down into the 1:46s and then latched onto a fast ducati who was zipping past. He was really showing me a good line around the place and carrying some decent speed on the corners. We zipped thru T1, up T2 and as I crested T2, the 250 lost front traction and plowed straight ahead for what seemed like 2 seconds- I was along for the ride, thinking, "Well, here comes another crash"

The front never hooked up and to be honest I was out of ideas as I neared the edge of the track and down we went. bellypan full of rocks, a bit dinged up and a ride back on the crash truck. Hard to say exactly but crest of T2 is in the 60-80 mph range looking at the logger. Amazing that you can get off a bike at 70 mph with no injury. Good leathers are amazing.

Here was the deal. I was getting a handle on the layout at Barber, which way to go and all- but I was not riding the elevation well. If the track were flat, you could just crank up your cojones and "go faster" without too much trouble. Add in the elevation changes, and you absolutely can NOT get away with the same lines that you could use if it were flat. I was riding the track as if it were flat, and really did not make any alteration to my game plan despite the fact that T2 is quite steep on the entry (positive camber) and quite negative after the apex. You could probably go up the hill much, much faster than you could go after the crest. Or, do you alter your line so that you're not turning on the downhill side? Well, I simply screwed up my courage and said to myself "get your ass in gear!" and flew up the hill, over the crest, and

washed out on the downhill side. Not terribly impressive. Later in the weekend I altered my line a bit to let the bike run out on the downhill side, trying to reduce the demand placed on the front the at the crest. Anyhow...

Back in the pits the guys descend on my bike and patch it up. unlike last year, THIS year I brought every damned box and bin of spare 250 parts, and it proved quite useful. Chuck coughlin repaired my master cylinder, Matt and others handled the bodywork, bars, levers, etc. A real team effort. Pit girl labors ceaselessly cleaning things, making sandwiches, and earning her keep. Kevin Kernohan also went down in this general time frame and ground up his palm, badly. aargh. Gloves, man, do not fool around with your gloves. Spend all you can afford and get the best gloves out there. My SYED leathers have again withstood a crash with minimal damage- this makes 11 crashes for these leathers. Sure, they've been patched up a few times but they are so incredibly heavy duty that when you manage to wear through leather somewhere, you're usually looking at the NEXT layer of solid leather underneath. Also, my Kushitani GPR5 gloves did a perfect job for me. I must thank my most wonderful sponsors (mom and sisters) for these awesome gloves.

http://www.motorcyclistonline.com/gearbox/122_0607_kushitani_gpr5_roadracing_gloves/index.html

End of Friday, the 250 is good to go again. I think I stay behind to make jetting changes on the 500 - and we made some big changes on the 500. Forks: less rebound, and more high-speed compression. Shock link: longer carbs: dropped from 370 main to 320. changed to -59 needle from -58. went 1 click leaner on needle. changed pilot air jet from 0.8 to 2.0 , and then we head off for a shower and dinner.

We get to Logan's about 7:30 and find a huge group of Gamma guys there at dinner. I went around and tried to say hi to everyone, but at that point I had gone 62 hours, with 4 hours of sleep. Definitely a personal record and I was barely functional. It was good to see so many of our guys in one place. I hope you all got a chance to meet some new people!

Back to hotel and went into zombie state.

Saturday we get to the track a little late and bring the 500 over to the bike show. Loads of bikes at the show, it looks spectacular. I talk with as many guys as I bump into, some really stellar bikes on display- Shawn's bike is gorgeous of



I'm watching practice? maybe a race- and Scott Jennings crests T2 on his lovely RG500 and loses the front just like I did on my RS250. Smoke puffs from his front tire briefly and down he goes. We hustle to catch him on the way to the pits and give him a drink of water- he is able to patch up his bike and continue later on. All I am able to donate is some gearbox oil. Also meet up with Roserunner while watching races from above T2 with TZmike, Faul, etc. I wish we had a week to hang out and do this.

I get to spend some time with Russ Hoffman who, if you guys did not know, is a freaking genius and all around good guy although I doubt he is over 25, despite his claims to the contrary. Pit girl is going crazy for an RS125 that was for sale across from us. She has the racing bug, pretty badly. She also has the ballerina bug. The two may not be compatible. We watch Andy Jones and Steve Shaw duke it out in the exhibition GP class, Yamaha YZR500 replica vs TZ350. Steve leads Andy for most of the race, Andy has the motor but Steve brakes like a madman going into 5 and makes a lot of ground there. Eventually Andy gets by on the last lap to take honors from the TZ350. With an infectious upbeat attitude, AJ is a gigantic plus for our pit area. I am sorry I was so busy during the weekend and didn't have more time to hang with my doppelganger from up north. We have a steady stream of really great RG guys visiting and hanging out in the pits, so even though I'm too scattered to get out and see a lot, I get to spend some time with a good number of the gang. Most excellent.

Sunday morning we get out for 1 session of practice. I ride the 500 and it is WAY BETTER. Straightaway speed is 122 mph (up 13 mph) and EGT is above 1100 and while it is still bogging slightly off corners, it is rideable. Still taking extra attention to operate the bike, though. Lap times 1:46 on the 500. About 10 seconds from "fast" but I'll take it. Steve Shaw outbrakes me going into T5 on his TZ350, fer chrissakes, that bike is from 1973 or something and he's out-braking me. Steve definitely shows off the old girl to best advantage. I still have a mixture of fear and respect for the dreaded TZ350 so I am well chuffed to be next to one on the racetrack, even if I AM looking at its exhaust pipes. >8-(

I come in and jump on the 250 for session 4 (faster group). What a beautiful bike. I'm getting faster and towards the end of the session Joe Pomeroy comes flying by on his beautiful Trinity hybrid RS/RZ. This is a sweet little red Aprilia RS250 with a 396cc big-bore RZ motor in it. He has juuuuust a little more motor than the honda RS250 on the straight but whooooo, he really does ride well and knows the track intimately. He immediately drags me down into the mid 1:41s and gives a fantastic lesson on where to go for the few laps that I am close enough to see! I come off the track super excited, for once it felt like actually riding the track fairly well instead of struggling with where to go in every corner. Joe is like a marble rolling around a mixing bowl- just a treat to watch. This was the best riding lesson of the weekend. The downside is my right footpeg (repaired from the crash) seems to be about an inch or two out of place. I can't tell where my foot is supposed to be, even slowing on the way into T5 to try and look down there and see what is going on.

I keep fishing around, where to put my foot. I live with it, and when I come in, we look at it. Well, the bracket is SLIGHTLY bent. The peg was out of position by about 3 or 4 mm. seriously. I can't believe I even felt the difference. I was expecting some huge misalignment, and it turns out to be a few mm from normal. Matt swaps the bracket for a new one. Little does he know, with his nonstop wrenching he has cemented himself as the next owner of the Golden Spanner. Without his h



This was the first time I had met Joe Pomeroy BTW, and all I can say is, great guy, very modest, fast as lightning but doesn't feel compelled to point it out, builds a beautiful bike and rides it well. I hope we will have another chance to ride together next year! Maybe someplace with a bit more room in between corners and where *I* have the track experience... hmmm...

nah, probably won't do me any good. I know when I'm outclassed.

The chicane on the back straight is interesting- at 120 mph, it is pretty hard to flick a bike through there, and I have no idea how fast the quick guys are going. The 500 is a real tank compared to the 250. There must be a more clever way to ride this part. I give up on hopping from side to side on the 250, focusing on staying put and just muscling the bars more.

The 500 requires more physical input and frankly I am regretting my decision to narrow the bars. I could use the steering leverage on the 500. The 500 is wheelying in 2nd and third gear after T5 so that's fun.

Joe comes by in the pits and I tell him I'm going to harass him in the race, he then informs me his tires are mostly shot after a full weekend of racing at the GNF and he has been taking it easy. dammit! And I thought I was doing so well. 8-)

I drop the jets in the 500 down 2 more sizes, from 320 to 300, and raise the back end a few more turns of the adjuster.



Pit Girl listens as I warm the 500



Rare photo of Delta about to actually turn hot laps. Note shiny and unsinged appearance



Man, I loove this tailsection.
And it survived the crash! woo-
hooo!



Last chat with crew chief before races start (above)
(below) headed out for combat on the greatest little bike ever



Race time! Onboard my 250 in the BOT race, I'm on row 2 or 3 of the 2nd wave. I get a good start and find myself in a nice scrap with Scott Jennings and his RG500. I sneak past him in T5 where the 250 can turn better, but he outguns me

and goes along the front car way, well into the next wave, I think. It seems that we are doing a lot of passing, and I am not getting by after all. Finally we catch a guy exiting the last corner. Scott goes around him on the outside, and taking a decent line for once on the 250 I take the inside. Well, the other bike runs it all the way to the outside of the track and there goes Scott, forced off the edge of the track. I don't waste any time waiting to see how he gets back on, put my head down and split on the 250. Going into the last 2 turns is kind of funny- it's a late-apex right hander- blind of course, over the crest of a hill- then a nice cambered left hander leading onto the straight. Well, my reference point for the right hander is the "pit out" sign about 30 yards off the track. So I come up the hill, looking way off the racetrack, and when the Pit Out sign is about the right size, I look to the inside and head for the apex. I can't think of another track where I have a reference point so far off the racing surface.

Next I close on what I think was 2nd place in my race. The leader, Steve Aspland of Rising Sun Cycles, has checked out on his bike, a 2007 Yamaha (dunno which. a TZ250?) but I think I was on the trail of 2nd place, on a 2004 Yamaha. I close it down to 30 yards, then he gets away in traffic, then I close it down a little, and finally he drives off and I decide to wrap up my last few laps all by my lonely self. I am at my comfort limit at this pace and the only way to go faster is to just "turn up the speed dial" - remembering how well that worked out for me on Friday, I opt for discretion and cruise home to the flag. Turn out I got 3rd place, pit girl has the best lap at 1:39 and change so I am very happy with that (my goal was to crack 1:40). Matt has the laptimes slower, so I choose to believe pit girl because that makes me happier. The 250 was definitely a bit flat for the afternoon race, it was hot out and I did not change jetting from the morning. But, c'est la vie. By now I have a decent handle on the racetrack, not a track specialist but enough to go decently. As for turn 2, I have a plan. It is this: do not try to go fast in turn 2. I sail into 1 at a modest pace and scrub speed all the way to the crest of 2. I mosey around the crest then get on it as hard as I can down the hill and up into 3 (blind right hander) which is extra fun on the 250. I pass a lot of people there, also on the way down to turn 5, so it must be working OK. And, I am not falling off, which is an added bonus. Sadly, I did not activate the camera on my 250 so missed recording what would have been a very exciting race film. For some reason I can not hit the apex of turn 5. I keep trying. it's like it has a magnetic repulsion to my 250. Around I go, 3 or 4 feet from the curbing, every time. I think it's a little off camber.

Turn 1 is a blind downhill entry. So, you need confidence on just exactly where the corner is. I watched a schwantz video online at the hotel the night before, and decide to turn at the black patch before T1- that works. sweet! But I am just not exactly sure where the track is over all these blind hills, so I'm not confident running super hard into corners.

OK- time for the 500 race. The ill-fated camera goes on the 500. Matt swaps my transponder over. Out we go. Warmup lap and HOLY COW THE BIKE IS WORKING GREAT!! Considering it was a bag of crap on Friday, we have managed to guess our way into race-ready condition within just a few practice sessions. Not bad work. The top end, well, it is quite flat. Apparently I have gone too lean on the main jets. However, there is no flat spot whatsoever now coming thru the midrange and the bike pulls hard and cleanly exiting corners. Man, I always thought this motor just had lousy midrange- turns out it was just fat in there. Straightaway speed is down to about 116- so I lost 6 mph- and no more wheelies in 2nd or 3rd (yikes) but corner speeds are up everywhere. It's actually going to be a race. Raising the back back up has made a fantastic improvement- no wonder I had it jacked up to this altitude before. Well, there's nothing like validating your settings, I suppose. Logger says I was short-shifting at ~9000 RPM so not making any use at all of the bike's phenomenal top end power. I'm using about 90-95 HP instead of the 150+ that this thing pumps out at 12,000 when the right jets are in it- The motor simply falls flat - maybe i have the powervalve off- not sure. but it is raceable. Looking at my plugs now? oh yeah- it was way lean. But that's what it took to get the midrange working. Maybe powerjets ARE in order.

Of course the rest is history as I got crashed out after the third start, but for a while there we had a contender. Looking at the bike more closely, there appears to be about \$3-5000 in damage to replaceable parts, and then the rest are parts that were handmade or can be repaired, so the Delta will take some time off in 2011 and probably come back in 2012. What price on handmade carbon fiber airboxes.. well, they don't cost me much. Just takes time to make them. And so for a lot of the pieces. A lot of this will just take time. We have some interesting upgrades planned so it should make for another learning experience.





Top to bottom...

first lap of race...

Delta burning merrily

Helping load Dave into the
Ambulance



Here is the original post from after the race:

>>Just before my race, I said- "what about the camera?" and Matt Manspeaker (my crew chief) says "forget about it".
And I say:

"But Lonny said he wants video!"

so we mount it on the side fairing

Did warmup lap on the RG for the open GP race and it felt bloody fantastic. like a proper racebike, instead of an out-of-
sorts streetbike with fat jetting. ready to rock and roll. I was thinking, "we're going to run quite fast in this race"

We grid up and I get a decent start, behind pomeroy on his big cheetah-motored RS and maybe 2 other guys into T1.
red flag immediately, someone was off after T2.

hot lap and grid up again for another start but some guy had a disaster of some sort on the starting line, red flag. we sit around for a while.

hot lap again and as I come around, a guy points frantically at my bike, waving me off. I pull into the hot pit and pit marshall comes up- the camera had fallen off and was swinging by the cable. they work to saw off the cable ties and get the camera off, but too late to grid up. He says, "You have to start from the hot pit, after everyone else has cleared the tower" and I say "no problem".

So, 3-2-1 off they go, then second wave goes, and after they clear the hill he lets me go. I do my best job to sear out of the pits and fly out onto the track. RG working perfectly, almost as much confidence as I had on the 250. While not the fastest guy at the place I'm running decent laps and so I'm catching guys immediately and with very high closing speeds. pass, pass, pass, around we go, I'm sucking up everything in my path on lap 1. As we come to the last 3 corners of lap 1 I've got andy jones in my sights, must have got a lousy start- he's 2 bikes ahead of me and the Delta is hauling ass. down the straight and I catch a motard going into T1. He goes up the hill to T2 and I'm going around him on the outside pretty rapidly, we're probably talking 10 seconds per lap differential so it's a big speed difference.

As we crest T2, I'm moments away from passing him around the outside, when he loses the front and crashes. He and his bike skid directly into my path and at this closing velocity, I smash into it in an instant. The timing was satanically perfect. Cresting a hill I had no way to slow or change direction with any authority- he had just lost traction and I didn't have much more than he did. I already fell here on Friday so I'm aware of how easy it is to lose the front on this hill.

I was afraid I hit his body but people watching said I missed him and hit his bike. (WRONG- unfortunately I hit him and cracked his ribs) So, over I go, and crash onto the right side. My bike skids off into gravel pit AND CATCHES FIRE. The motard guy is laying by his bike. I can't help him so I try to beat out the flames with my hands, to no avail. It's apparent I can't put it out, so I give up and scoot away to a safe distance.

The corner guy takes quite a few moments to arrive as I was in an odd spot. He has a water fire extinguisher which has no effect on the fire. The fire gets bigger as my fuel lines have melted and gas is likely just running out of the tank. With my genius of not having an easily-accessible petcock I can't stop the fuel flow.

2 more guys show up with water fire extinguishers that also have little effect on the fire. The flames go down some, but keep coming back. They stop spraying, but from my vantage point I can see it is still burning inside the bodywork. I run down and say hey, let me pick it up, so you can get the flames. Well, when I do that, it really gets going. (dang it) Now the bike is burning quite merrily and I'm watching my beautiful bike engulfed by flames. it's getting ruined in a hurry.

Finally a fire truck arrives with a BIG hose and he blasts out the fire. The bike is like a charred body. oddly enough, the tailsection has mostly escaped damage (strange twist there) but it's really been badly burned up. bodywork is garbage, wires all shot, AiM dash scarred and bubbled , everything black and charred. The had to pry my gas tank off with a bar, so it's not great, either.

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Since then I have had a decent email conversation with the motard guy, David Rutherford. He feels badly about falling off, I feel badly about using him as a ski jump. This stuff happens sometimes on a racetrack, and as an upside of track riding we were not immediately run over by cars or trucks, did not fly off a cliff, and David received medical attention quickly.

I fell off in similar fashion on Friday, in a similar spot, and could just as easily have taken out another rider. So, it happens. There are absolutely no hard feelings and we'll both live to race another day.

Now, if I had taken better precautions setting up my own bike, it would not have turned into a torch. I was unable to easily reach my fuel cutoff (poor idea) and I made use of Tygon fuel lines at the carbs, which melt easily and probably split quickly with the exposure to fire. With a melting point of around 490F , Tygon melts shortly when exposed to an open flame. Should not have been my first choice for a fuel line. It is also possible that the bike, when laying on its side, allowed the fuel lines to flop against the expansion chambers. Again- bad scenario. A little research online showed numerous discussions of Tygon fuel lines melting on RC aircraft applications. Aagh. Meanwhile, my silicone oil injection lines (RC aircraft fuel lines, by the way) are generally rated for 550F continuous, 600F short-term exposure and they are unharmed and intact after the fire. One oil hose is charred on the outside but does not leak. Either way, my next build will feature a fast fuel cutoff and lines that are either silicone sleeved or rated for very high temperatures. Even my OEM-style Neoprene fuel lines were thick enough to resist burn-through, while my Tygon lines were melted through after the fire. Dang it.

Dinner out with the gang sunday night, always sad to break down the pits and pack up. Our last goodbyes and we headed back to Des Moines Monday morning- arriving tuesday at 5 AM. Man, I need a vacation to recover from THIS vacation.

Monday night, headed home, I am at a food stop with Pit Girl-- when I get a call from **Jay Sander**. It turns out this

selfless individual has sent me a Paypal donation to be directed towards the repair of the Delta, and has invited others to do the same. I am absolutely stunned when I arrive home a day later and my paypal account is over \$700 with donations from RG guys all around the globe. I can't even begin to tell you how amazing this all is. The people whom my wife calls my "imaginary friends" online are real friends indeed. Many of them say it's a karma payback. All I can say is, I am humbled and am going to put the Delta repair fund to good use. I had originally planned to just disassemble the bike and let it sit for a while as I come up with some kind of game plan, but thanks to the donations and encouragement of a lot of great guys, I will start on a rebuild this winter. I have a new enthusiasm to get the Delta back on the road (and racetrack). Not sure if I can get it running next summer, but the bike will be making a comeback much sooner, rather than later. Details on the bike are on a separate page! In the end, we all went home relatively intact with lots of memories... and now Pit Girl has her eyes on a certain scooter. Nice color, too!



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