

SURPRISE WINNER: 125MX Showdown
Tests: Honda 750F, BMW RT, Yamaha IT175
Kawasaki's Radical UNI-TRAK 500

CYCLE WORLD

**AND THE
WINNER
IS...**

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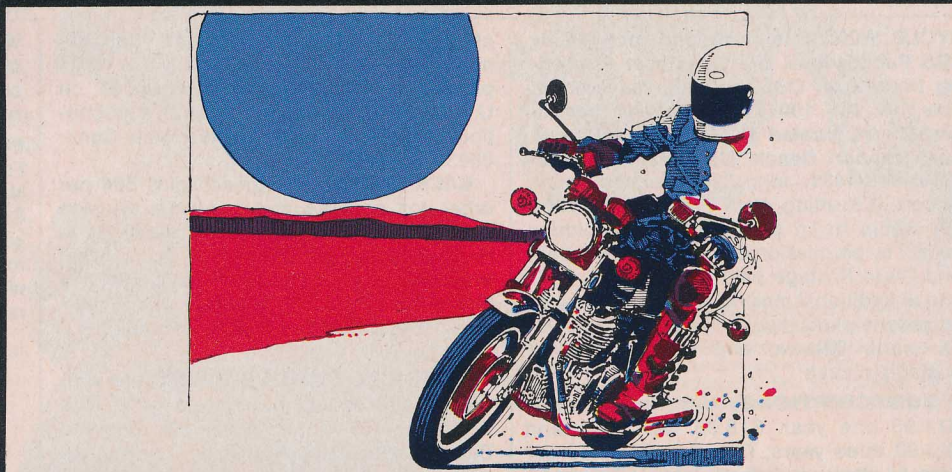
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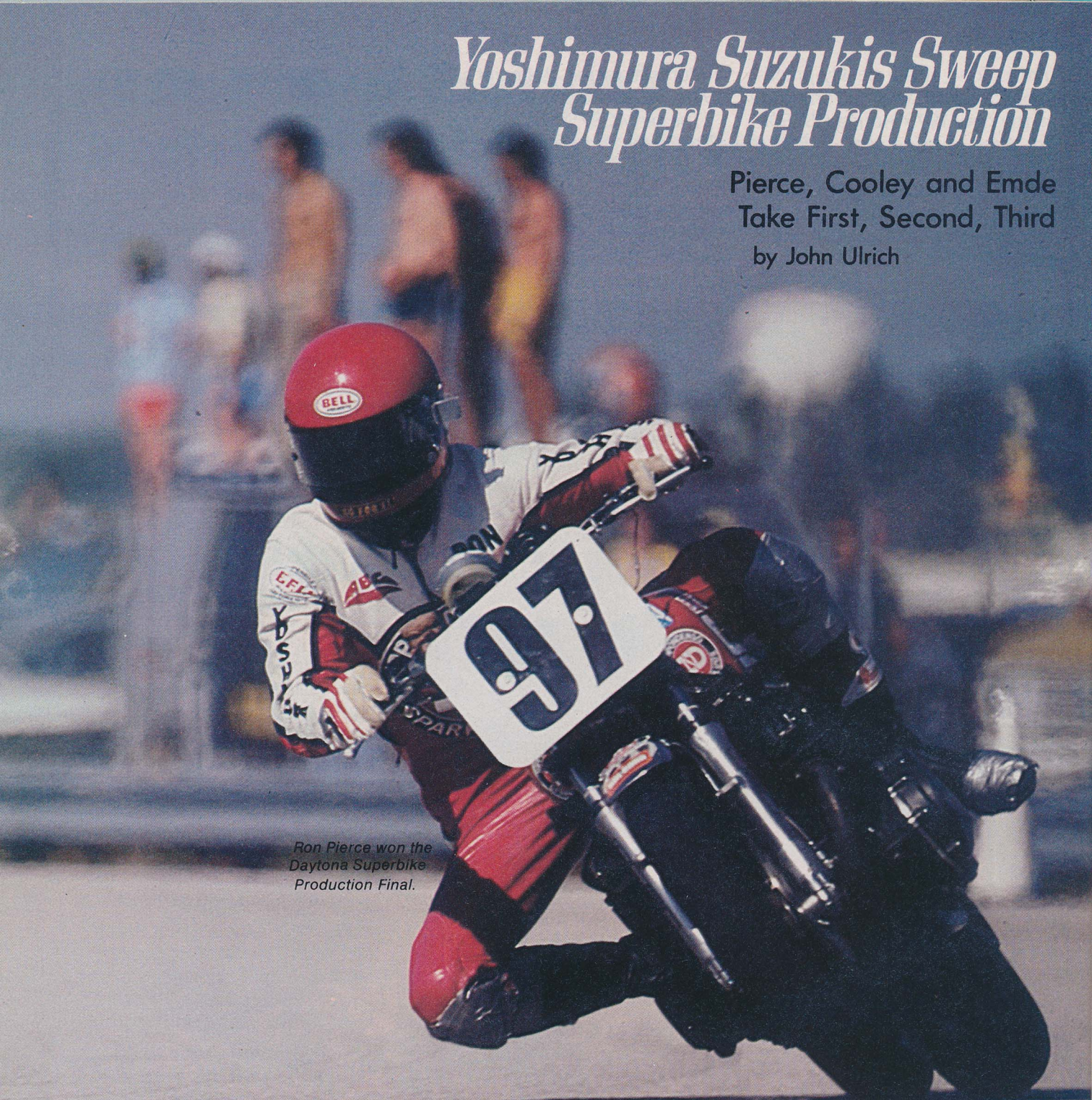
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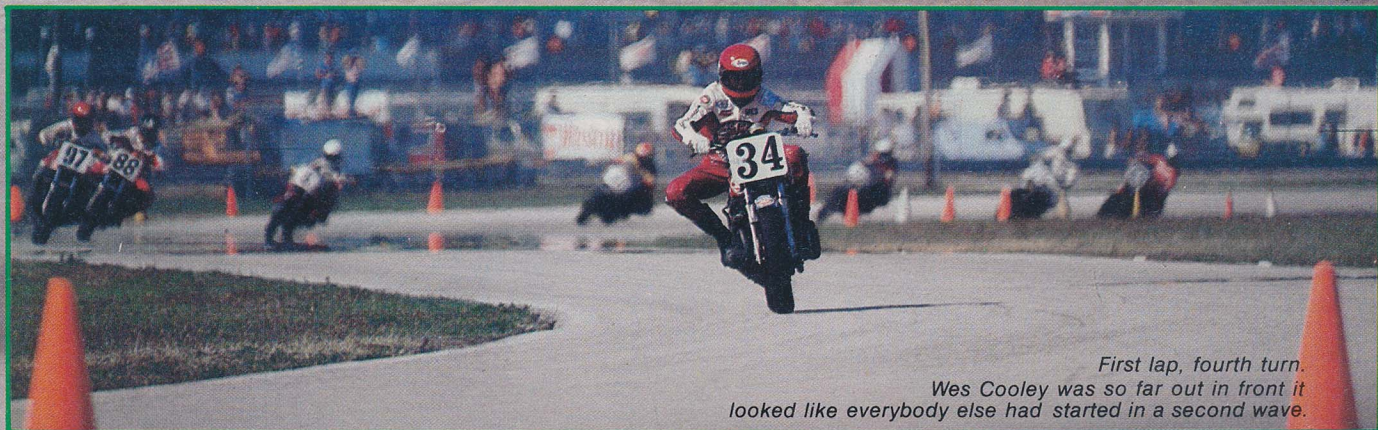
Yoshimura Suzukis Sweep Superbike Production

Pierce, Cooley and Emde
Take First, Second, Third

by John Ulrich



Ron Pierce won the
Daytona Superbike
Production Final.



First lap, fourth turn.
Wes Cooley was so far out in front it
looked like everybody else had started in a second wave.

DAYTONA '79

No brakes! No brakes!" yelled Wes Cooley at his pit crew when he pitted for gas on lap 13 of the 100-mile, 26-lap Daytona Superbike Production final. His bike hesitated once, twice, three times as his crew pushed him off, then finally fired on all four cylinders and was off, still leading.

Cooley had held such a huge lead before the fourth corner of the first lap that it almost looked like everyone else had started in a second wave. His margin at the end of one lap was five seconds. Yet now, halfway through the race, a mechanical problem threatened to steal Cooley's certain victory.

It had happened before, at Sears Point in 1978, when sprocket bolts pulled from Cooley's bike's rear hub and gave the win to a Ducati. The difference here at Daytona was that if Cooley couldn't win, then another of the four Yoshimura R&D of America Suzuki GS1000 Superbikes entered (ridden by Cooley, Ron Pierce, David Emde and Roberto Pietri) was certain to cross the line first.

When Cooley pitted, the Yoshimura bikes were running first, second, third and fifth. A few laps later Yoshimura Suzukis were first through fourth. Pops Yoshimura and company owned Daytona.

That doesn't mean they didn't have problems. They seized engines early in the week before discovering that the gas tank cap vents were plugged on two of the bikes. They bent valves, once because Ron Pierce missed a shift in practice just hours before the heat races, twice because the Kawasaki cam chain idler sprockets fitted into the Suzuki cylinder heads came apart on the long Daytona straights early in the week. The problem hadn't shown up on the dyno or at other racetracks, but Daytona's

length allowed the Superbikes to reach incredible speeds (Cooley's bike was clocked at 167 mph at one point, 8 mph faster than the Yoshimura Suzuki that won here in 1978, 12 faster mph than the fastest bike entered in 1977 and 17 mph faster than the bike that won in 1977) punctuated by violent deceleration and rapid downshifts at the infield entrance and back straight chicane. The cure was to replace rubber vibration-damping bushings in the roller assemblies with bronze bushings obtained from a local machine shop.

Not all the problems were mechanical. Emde crashed in his 250cc Expert heat race when his TZ250 seized and was rushed to the infield hospital. He was released, but began spitting blood on the walk back to the pits before the Superbike heats. Back in the hospital for examination, he missed the heat race; if he started the final at all, it would be in last place, number 63 on the grid.

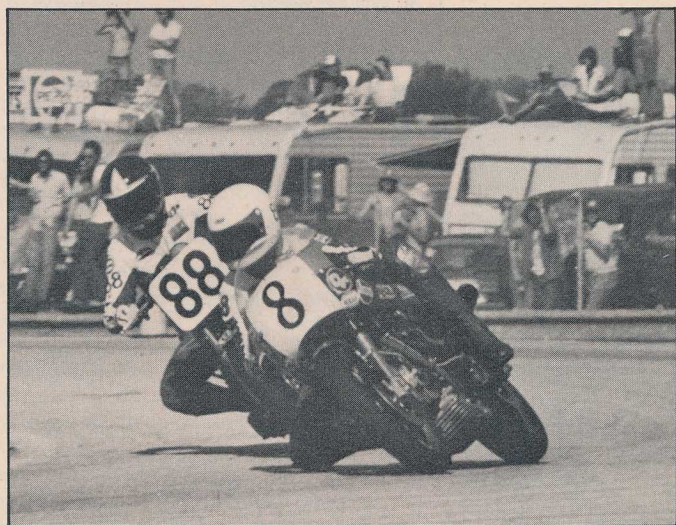
Pierce won his heat race by 41 seconds (Cooley won his by 30 seconds, with Pietri second) but set off a controversy with his starting method. AMA rules stipulate that a rider cannot creep past his individual grid starting line more than half a bike length before being docked a lap. Knowing that, and wanting to take full advantage of the rules, Pierce staged with his feet planted firmly on his line. Meanwhile, an unnamed AMA official told the riders to move back one half length *behind* their lines.

Pierce didn't move, took the heat race lead from Reg Pridmore before half a lap had passed, and pulled away to win while Pridmore's Vetter Kawasaki blew up (for the second time) with a seized number three cylinder. The AMA line judge docked Pierce a lap, and the politics hit the

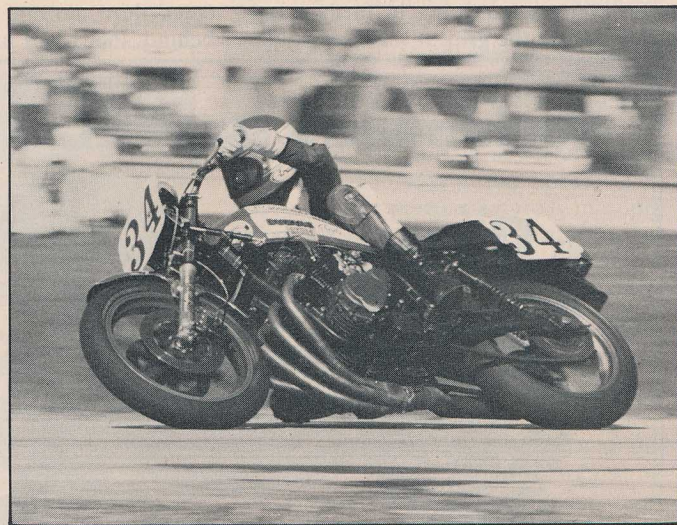
fan. AMA officials were not sympathetic to Pierce's plight, and declined to throw out the penalty on the basis of good sense. But Pierce, knowing the rulebook well, came up with a technicality—the rules require that each row of starting lines on the grid be exactly 25 ft. apart. Were they at Daytona? A tape measure revealed a distance of 23 ft. The AMA, caught by their own rules, relented. Pierce's penalty (and one imposed on Skip Aksland in his 250cc heat) was lifted, and Pierce was restored to his front-row Superbike final race starting position.

Pierce's political problems weren't over yet. Earlier in the week the entire Yoshimura team had switched from Michelin tires to Goodyear slicks—the Goodyears simply worked better. But Pierce, eager for an advantage, decided shortly before the race to exchange the recommended D1705 for a softer compound D1829 slick on the rear of his Suzuki, despite fears expressed by Goodyear technicians that the softer tire wouldn't last the 100 miles of the extended Superbike final (previous Superbike races were 50 miles). When Pierce appeared at the pit gate to scuff in his new tires during the last practice before the race start, officials wouldn't let him out, citing a rule banning clubman handlebars—the bars couldn't be lower than their mounts, said the AMA, despite the fact that some bikes, such as Ducati Desmos, are allowed to run clip-ons. Pierce's mechanics frantically changed handlebars, but by the time they were finished, practice was over. Pierce would have to start on un-scuffed slicks.

There had been much talk prior to Daytona that other tuners had mined huge horsepower finds to threaten Yoshimura dominance of the Superbike Racing. But >



Turning 2:14 lap times, Fast Freddie Spencer holds the lap record for Ducatis. It wasn't fast enough to shake Roberto Pietri's Yoshimura Suzuki in a race for third.



Wes Cooley found his bike's RG500 front brakes excellent in practice and the heat race; not so good in the final.

when it came down to lap times and racing, there were no threats. The only rider able to compete with the Yoshimura team probably would have been Mike Baldwin, riding a Yoshimura-chassised Kawasaki Motors Corp. KZ1000 Mk. II with Yoshimura parts in the engine. But Baldwin crashed his KR750 hard in practice between the 250cc heat races and the Superbike heat races. He rode one lap of the Superbike heat to qualify for the final, but doctors feared that he had dislocated his shoulder and had broken his wrist and collarbone. Baldwin didn't grid for the final.

So it was Cooley's start. Pierce and Pietri went back and forth for second until Pierce decided his tires were scuffed in enough and took off. Steve McLaughlin was fourth until his Racecrafter Kawasaki's gas cap popped open and he stopped to secure it. By the second lap Cooley had seven seconds on Pierce with Pietri an additional 18 seconds behind Pierce. Fast Freddie Spencer on an exotic Ducati prepared by Reno Leoni was fourth, three seconds back. Emde, who had started 63rd, was already ninth—he had been 21st at the end of the first lap.

On lap four Cooley and Pierce were already lapping backmarkers, one of whom forced Pierce off his line at Turn 3. That set up Pierce too close inside for Turn 4, and the sound of his bike's engine rpm soaring as the rear tire lit up and spun at the turn apex snapped spectators' heads around to see an incredible sight—Pierce, full lock, right boot, ankle and calf the only thing between the side of the motorcycle and the pavement, apparently in the process of crashing. "It completely took off out from underneath me," said Pierce later. "It hit the ground on the side and slid along a couple of feet and then caught and stood right back up again. It was an incredible feeling."

Saved, Pierce waved to the crowd and continued on his way. By the eighth lap, Cooley knew he had a problem. "The brake lever started going in farther and farther toward the grip. It was almost like

the pads had worn out of the thing completely in those eight laps. I could almost go into my regular braking points but would have to pump it a couple of times to get any lever out of it. It was still almost going all the way to the grip, but I could get it stopped a little bit." Cooley's bike was the only Yoshimura Suzuki fitted with RG500 discs and Tokico calipers. The others ran Lockheeds.

Cooley had run 2:13 the first lap, 2:11 the second, 2:12 the third and fourth, then slowed to 2:14, 2:13.6, 2:13.4, and 2:14 on the lap he discovered his brake problems. Most amazing was the fact that Cooley turned a 2:11 on the ninth lap, apparently spurred by the fear that this problem—any problem—was going to steal his win.

Meanwhile, Pierce, turning consistent 2:13s after his tires had scuffed in, caught sight of Cooley in the laps before the gas stops.

"I had been very easy on my machine," said Pierce afterward, "shifting it about 500 rpm lower than I was told to and just kind of pacing myself. Then as soon as I got Wes in sight I kicked it up to 10,000 rpm instead of 9500 like I had been running. My engine was very fresh and my brakes were fresh and I just took off." Cooley's times drifted up to high 13s; Pierce's dropped to low 13s and high 12s.

Cooley and Pierce pitted on the same lap, and exiting the pit row Cooley had about eight seconds on Pierce. "I came around going into the chicane on the 14th lap and got to my normal braking spot. I was pumping it up and just kept pumping the thing and there was no brake lever at all, no brakes at all and I started using the gears to get the thing stopped and I just couldn't make the chicane and I went straight." It took Cooley 30 seconds to get turned around inside the haybales of the chicane run-off path and back on course. Pierce had the lead and Cooley nursed his way around in second, turning low 14s, then high 14s, low 15s, high 15s, low 16s, finally a 2:15.6 finish lap. Emde had secured third, no one close ahead or close behind. Pietri had his hands full fighting

off the advances of Spencer and John Long. Long used his GS Performance Group BMW's large tank to skip the gas stop almost everyone else needed and thus join the fight for fourth going on between Spencer and Pietri—Pietri doing an admirable job of holding the two others at bay.

Spencer and Pietri retired almost simultaneously, Spencer's Ducati shearing off its countershaft splines, Pietri's Suzuki grinding its rear sprocket to death and throwing the chain. Pietri, a paying customer of Yoshimura's racing services, had elected not to replace the sprockets and chain before the final. (The Yoshimura Team bikes are always fitted with new sprockets and chain before final events).

Long was fourth. Harry Klinkzmann fifth after a continuing dice with Reg Pridmore and John Bettencourt. Pridmore retired with a thrown chain. McLaughlin, who had worked back to eighth after his gas cap repair stop, retired after almost crashing in the chicane with a flat rear tire.

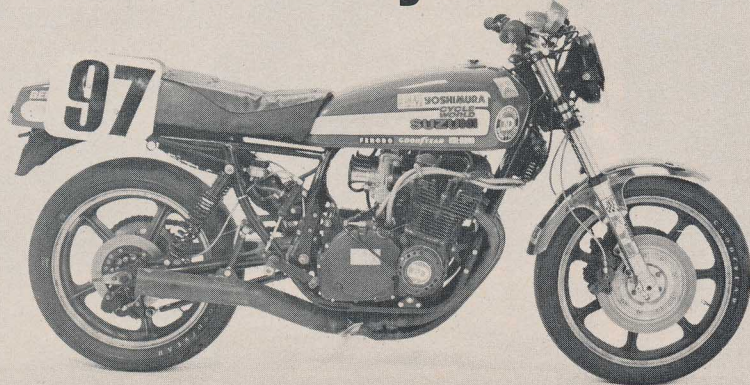
On the last lap, Pierce's Suzuki sounded a little off song, missing as he accelerated off the infield turns and onto the banking. "The last lap it dropped about 1000 peak rpm and started missing real bad," said Pierce after the finish. "But it held together. My luck was good."

Back in the pits, Yoshimura mechanics saw that the No. 1 piston crown was black, while the others showed a healthy grey/brown color. That cylinder's exhaust valve spring was broken. ☐

DAYTONA SUPERBIKE RESULTS

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------|
| 1) Ron Pierce | Suzuki |
| 2) Wes Cooley | Suzuki |
| 3) David Emde | Suzuki |
| 4) John Long | BMW |
| 5) Harry Klinkzmann | Kawasaki |
| 6) John Bettencourt | Suzuki |
| 7) Kerry Bryant | Kawasaki |
| 8) John Minnanno | BMW |
| 9) William Weston | Ducati |
| 10) Carl Smith | Suzuki |

Yoshimura's Daytona Winner



Regular readers know we featured the Yoshimura Suzuki GS1000 in the May issue. At Daytona this year, Yoshimura R&D of America team riders Ron Pierce, Wes Cooley and David Emde finished first, second and third in the Superbike Production race. Roberto Pietri, who bought a complete racebike from Yoshimura for \$10,000, ran fourth until his bike lost its drive chain.

Race machine development never stops. The motorcycles ridden by Pierce and Cooley were completely new machines, built up from stockers with less frame bracing, more shock angle and bigger engines (1023cc) than the bike in our May issue. Emde rode the bike we tested, but with a new 1023cc engine. Pietri's bike had the same chassis ridden by Steve Mc-

continued on page 153

250 Expert

Aksland Barely Beats Fast Freddie Spencer

by John Ulrich



The last lap: Aksland (27) versus Spencer, turning 2:14s and dodging traffic in a frantic struggle for the slipstream.

In theory the 250cc Expert race at Daytona should have been a chance for Americans to see how good the works KR250 Kawasakis really are. Reigning 250cc (and 350cc) World Champion Kork Ballington of South Africa was entered in his first U.S. appearance. He was backed by Mike Baldwin, whose brilliant riding made him competitive on outmoded equipment at Laguna Seca last year (until the ignition quit). For Daytona, Baldwin, like Ballington, was mounted on a Uni-Trak suspension KR250.

Daytona is a fickle track. Theories don't count. Kawasaki and Ballington didn't win the World Championship by accident, but at Daytona, Yamahas ruled. Skip Aksland won, but 17-year-old Fast Freddie Spencer from Shreveport, Louisiana stole the show.

Fast Freddie is the personable kid who won every Novice race he finished in 1978, which happened to be four out of five events (the single non-win being a mechanical failure and DNF while leading). Any questions about Freddie's ability to make the transition from Novice to Expert vanished in his Daytona heat race. Randy Mamola led Spencer, Ballington and Baldwin off the start, but Freddie took the lead and kept it for half the race until an engine misfire slowed him to fourth place at the heat race finish. Californian Mamola, 19, rode his Bimota-framed Yamaha to the heat win, slipstreaming Baldwin and rock-

eting past right at the finish line, with Ballington third.

Anton Mang won the second heat race on a KR250. More remarkable than that is the way Skip Aksland came from the rear of the grid to challenge Mang—all the while riding without the benefit of a clutch. Aksland started at the rear due to a late entry. "I did a practice burnout and a clutch plate broke," said Aksland later. "I didn't have a clutch so I just motocrossed it."

Aksland's departure from the starting



Fast Freddie Spencer, at age 17 one of the future's great talents.

grid—paddling like mad with bits of clutch plate bouncing off the pavement—left spectators shaking their heads and the AMA line judge docking Aksland a lap for jumping the start, a penalty later thrown out thanks to the non-related efforts of Ron Pierce to escape a similar penalty (see Superbike Production report).

The final event was to be a conflict of tuners as well as riders. Not only who had built the best machine, but also who could make the most effective repairs before the race.

Aksland's bike, a 240-lb. prototype TZ250F salvaged from a storage room by Yamaha Motors Corp. racing manager Ken Clark, had been prepared by Kel Carruthers. It needed a new clutch after the heat on Thursday during Speed Week, and it seized in practice Saturday morning before the final race. That seizure ended Aksland's plans to scuff in new tires before the race. He'd start with the used slicks he had run in the heat race and during earlier practice sessions.

Mamola crashed his 206-lb., mono-shock Bimota Yamaha in a slow turn when sprinkles suddenly dampened the race-track during Friday practice. "I just hit the wrong spot, I guess," said Mamola as he walked back into the pits, with sponsor Jim Doyle frantically pushing in the bike so tuner George Vukmonovich could survey the (thankfully slight) damage. "It just >

started sliding. There was nothing I could do.”

Baldwin had fallen on Wednesday when another rider's machine seized in front of him. Baldwin ran off the track to avoid the other man, got into the infield mud and tipped over with minor damage.

Erv Kanemoto could find nothing wrong with Spencer's C&J-framed monoshock Yamaha's engine to explain why it had developed a miss in the heat race. Tuner Kanemoto theorized that a bit of sand had bridged one spark plug gap, then dislodged by itself. He put the engine back together and hoped it would run.

Ballington's Kawasaki overheated on the course during the final Saturday practice session, less than 45 minutes before the final event. Ballington made the long push back to the pits and tore apart the bike with his mechanic (and brother) Derek Ballington. They couldn't find anything wrong and got the engine reassembled just as the five-minutes-to-start sign came up on the grid.

Mamola led the final race into Turn 2, ahead of Pierre Buellac, Spencer, Rusty Sharp, Eddie Lawson, Aksland, John Long, Gennady Liubimsky, Baldwin and Ballington. But at the start/finish line on the second lap Spencer was in front with Mamola second and Aksland third, marking the start of a three-way battle that would see the lead change 24 times in 26 laps (100 miles) and establish a new race average speed record of 102.119 mph. (The previous record was set by Gregg Hansford in 1978, 100.489 mph average.)

Baldwin and Ballington were already out of the race. Baldwin's bike's clutch had fried, slipping uselessly (“He was spinning 11,000 rpm but wasn't moving,” said one of his mechanics later). Ballington's bike had overheated again. While the race went on, Ballington and crew found the source of the trouble—a sticking thermostat. Throwing the faulty part on the floor of the Kawasaki garage, Ballington attacked it with a hammer, beating it into bits. A Japanese engineer gathered up the pieces as Ballington fumed.

“If we had been smart we would have just thrown it away,” said Ballington.

“Can't do anything about it now. I found in the heat race that I had more top end than the other guys so I was just kind of hanging back. It would have been really good if I could have ridden the race because I haven't raced here before and the Americans don't know me. I would have liked to win it.”

Spencer led across the line again on the third lap, but it was Aksland on Lap 4, with Mamola outbraking Spencer into Turn 2 on the same lap to take second place. Lap 5 was Spencer's again; Lap 6, Aksland's; Laps 7, 8 and 9, Spencer's; 10, Aksland's; 11, Mamola's; and the rest Aksland's with Spencer right behind.

Simply reciting who led doesn't do the battle justice. It was tight, tight racing with all three riders constantly swapping places, all spending time in first, time in second and time in third, building a 16-second lead over fourth place Mang by the sixth lap. Consider Lap 11: Mamola led across the finish line, but Aksland dove underneath to pass in Turn 2, with Mamola returning the pass and regaining the lead at Turn 3. Mamola knocked over a cone marking the edge of the track and raised dust exiting Turn 2 that lap, using all the pavement—and more. Mamola's bike's dual front disc brakes had already started to fail, though, and premix from a fuel tank crack had lubricated the machine's left footpeg. Getting stopped and keeping his foot on the peg were both becoming problems.

“I grabbed it one time and the brake lever went to the grip,” said Mamola. “The rear brake locked, the rear wheel hopping and stuff. Plus I was afraid the gas would get on the rear tire like it did on Sears Point.”


So ended Mamola's chances—he fell behind as Aksland and Spencer pulled away, the pair bringing their lap times down from 2:17 and 2:16 in the early stages to 2:15s and below: 2:14.65 for Aksland and 2:14.53 for Spencer on Lap 19. The times went back up to 2:16s and 2:17s as each tried to hold second (and the slipstreaming advantage) for the last laps. Finally the times dove again, to 2:14.60 for Spencer and 2:14.68 for Aksland in the

mad dash for the finish of Lap 26.

Spencer was second, his attempt to slipstream Aksland foiled by some lapped riders at the exit of the back straight chicane.

“I'd gain in the infield and down the straight he'd get my draft,” said Aksland in the winner's circle. “That last lap I kept slowing down trying to get him to pass but he wouldn't do it. Lucky there was traffic because otherwise I think he would have beaten me. I definitely took some chances on the last lap.”

“The real turning point was the east bank on the last lap,” said Spencer. “It started out maybe two or three laps from the end. He (Aksland) slowed down because he wanted me to go around him. It came down to who was going to be second coming out the banking. Our bikes were so close that I figured whoever got the draft and used it right would get across the finish line first. The last five or six laps I was just staying behind him. But about two laps from the end we saw five or six (lapped) riders who weren't too far ahead of us. He really turned the wick up and tried to catch them. We caught them going into the chicane (on the last lap) and as we were coming out there were two slower riders, one in front of the other one. Skip just cut right down between them and the second rider must have thought I was the rider he was racing with because he raced me all the way around the bank. He was in Skip's draft and I just couldn't get by him. By the time I was past and in Skip's draft it was too late. It was just one of those things. Just like car racing, you got to wait and get the draft and slingshot by.”

Mamola was third, Mang fourth. 

250cc EXPERT RESULTS

1) Skip Aksland	Yamaha
2) Freddie Spencer	Yamaha
3) Randy Mamola	Yamaha
4) Anton Mang	Kawasaki
5) Gennady Liubimsky	Yamaha
6) Rusty Sharp	Yamaha
7) Eddie Lawson	Yamaha
8) Hal Coleman	Yamaha
9) Tommy Byars	Yamaha
10) Barry Woodland	Yamaha



The 250cc Expert race turned out to be the dice of the week. Here, Freddie Spencer (8) leads Randy Mamola (39) and Skip Aksland.



200-mile 750cc Expert

Pig Farmer Dale Singleton Slops the Hogs
by John Ulrich

Sooooooooooooooooooooo!" screamed a frenzied fan, standing just a few inches from the back of Dale Singleton's head as Singleton yelled into a reporter's tape recorder. A group of maybe 50 well-wishers and supporters stood in a bunch 15 ft. away, cheering. Singleton broke from the reporter, jumped up and down with legs braced and knees bent, arms up in the air, like a slightly crazed circus gorilla.

He screamed. They screamed. The crowd rushed forward and hoisted him up on their shoulders, shouting, laughing. Singleton rode with the crowd in the pits, waving a pen he had used to sign autographs just a few moments before.

His feet back on the ground, Singleton hoisted his pet pig, Elmer, out of a packing-crate pen and held the piglet feet up over a portable barbecue, hollering all the time. There was no charcoal in the barbecue, but for a moment it looked as if Singleton would make good on his pre-race vow: to eat Elmer if he won the Daytona 200.

It could be argued that Singleton won the race by outlasting his opponents, but it is also true that Singleton spent more time in first place than any other rider, even

while the others were in the race. More important, you've got to still be running at the finish to win. Singleton, a self-styled "pig farmer" from Dalton, Georgia, is unique among the very top-running American road racers in that he—and he alone—builds his engines. Working in the basement shop of his father's house, 22-year-old Singleton disassembles and rebuilds his own crankshafts, fits his own pistons, does everything. In three years of 750cc racing, Singleton has failed to finish

a race due to mechanical trouble just twice. He hooked up with California tuner Stuart Toomey for 1979, but Toomey's duties include pipe building and chassis work, not motor building.

Patrick Pons of France led off the grid, through the infield and into the back-straight chicane, chased by Singleton. Skip Aklsland, David Aldana, Holland's Boet Van Dulmen, Gene Romero, Ron Pierce and Mike Cone. But by the start-finish line on the first lap, Singleton was out in front. >



Photo by Kent Peterson

The start: Pons (303) in front of Singleton (30), Aklsland (27), Romero (3), Aldana (10), Van Dulmen (327, behind Pons), Cone (47), Mamola (behind Cone), Schlacter (48).

Photo by Joe Parkhurst



With Mamola out, Singleton is chased into the chicane by Aldana, Van Dulmen, Pons.

Photo by John Ulrich



His bike disabled, Aldana stands on the edge of Turn 1 and waves Singleton on.

Photo by Daytona International Speedway staff



Singleton and Elmer the pig in the winner's circle.

Another lap and Aksland was out of the race with a seized engine. Aksland's bike stuck one cylinder in the final practice session before the start of the race, and mechanics Kel Carruthers, Knobby Clark and Trevor Tilbury quickly rebuilt it, replacing everything affected plus the coil and carburetor. But the bike seized again in the race. The bike Aksland rode was the Yamaha Motors Corp. YZR750 that Kenny Roberts would have ridden at Daytona, had he not been hurt in Japan the month before.

Romero's Imperial Spas/Don Vesco TZ750 seized one cylinder and threw the connecting rod through the crankcases on the fifth lap; he was out.

The group of leaders were joined by 19-year-old Randy Mamola, who just six months earlier had doubted that he would ever learn to ride a TZ750 fast enough to be competitive. The race was up front, Singleton, Aldana, Mamola, Van Dulmen, Pons all in a close group and circulating at 2:07 and 2:08 lap times. Mamola was the first to retire, slingshotting into the lead across the finish line of lap 10, but catching

a neutral when he started downshifting and braking for Turn One. He ran off the track, across the infield grass and stopped just feet before crossing the track at turn five and ramming some backmarkers. One more slow circuit of the banking with the bike surging in gear and Mamola retired with gearbox troubles.

Pons lost the draft and couldn't keep up after the first gas stops started, leaving Singleton, Aldana and Van Dulmen in front. But Van Dulmen was soon out of the race with engine problems. The battle for the lead now involved only Aldana and Singleton.

By the 40th lap it was Singleton and Aldana back-and-forth in earnest, close everywhere on the track, Singleton leading always across the finish line, but Aldana close, so close, cutting, diving, trying to find a way past. Suddenly, it was Singleton alone, with Aldana standing on the edge of the track waving him on—Aldana's bike lost a connecting rod after one cylinder seized, a failure identical to Romero's, right down to the cylinder affected. Ron Pierce, who had been alone in fourth on

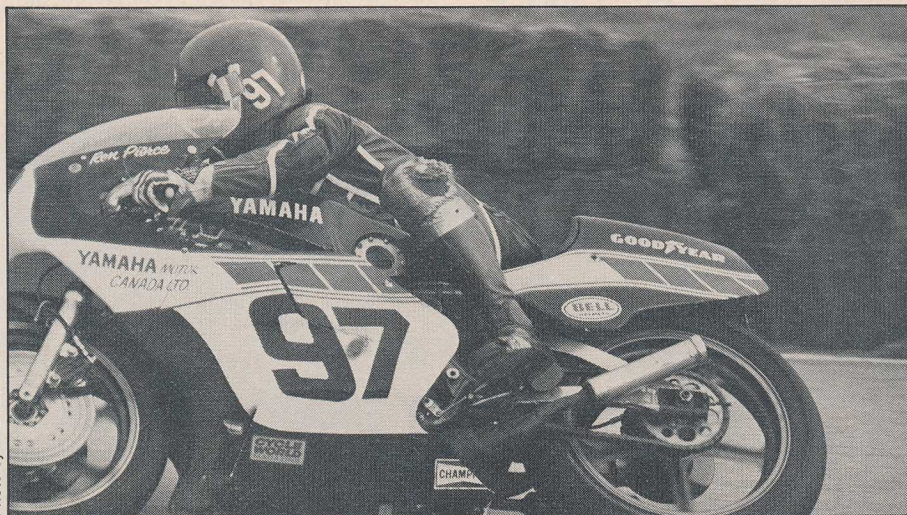
the Yamaha Motor Canada YZR750 prepared by Bob Work (with Larry Worrell tuning during the week while Work was on business in Japan), moved up and passed Pons to secure second.

Mike Baldwin, who had started 74th on the grid with his KR750 three-cylinder Kawasaki, was fourth about 20 seconds behind Pons, who was four seconds behind Pierce.

Christian Sarron, a teammate and countryman of Pons, was fifth, followed by privateers John Long, Bruce Patterson and Mike Cone. A Texan, Cone is one of the most consistent privateers in AMA racing; when he finishes, he finishes in the top 10, no matter what the track. Like many privateers, Cone owns his own bike, does his own mechanical work and races because he loves it. But his consistency on a not-particularly-fast Yamaha makes one wonder what he'd do on a faster motorcycle.

Singleton's margin of victory was 15 seconds, at an average speed of 107.691 mph. Singleton had qualified fastest at 2:06.339 and turned mostly 2:07 and 2:08 lap times in the race, with a single lap in >

Photo by Joe Parkhurst



Ron Pierce moved into second place late in the race to put the Yamaha Motor Canada YZR750 into the winner's circle.

Photo by John Ulrich



Mike Baldwin crashed his KR750 and high-sided, suffering a dislocated shoulder and wrist sprains and bruises, as well as a badly bruised collarbone. Two days later he was racing.

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In the pits after the race: a pig farmer's welcome for Singleton from Georgia fans.

the 5s, a 2:05.84 on lap 18. Compared to Kenny Roberts' 1978 average of 108.373 mph, qualifying 2:05.21 and best-race laps of low 2:03s and even a few (reported) high 2:02s. Singleton's race may seem slow. It was plenty fast enough to win.

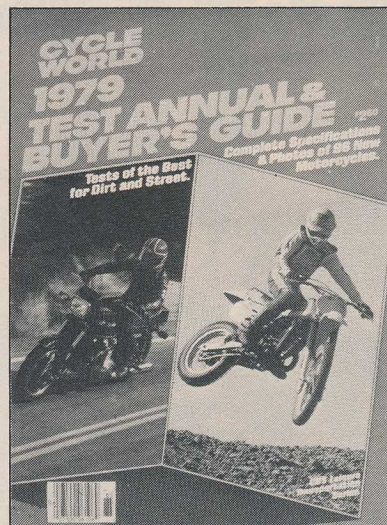
Tires worries had the AMA mandating that all 750s entered in the race must be fitted with relatively hard Goodyear D2174 slicks after Michelin declined to guarantee that their tires would go the distance. The tires were slippery at some spots. Singleton spent time sideways at several corners and Pierce managed to get crossed up over the start-finish line in the top of sixth gear one lap. Because the banking had been repaved, the problem wasn't so much with accelerated tire wear as high tire temperatures. The hard Goodyears went the distance easily, looking after the race to be ready for another start. Some competitors, including Pierce, suggested that the softer D1829 he selected—against Goodyear advice—for the rear of his Superbike would have worked fine on his 750 as well.

The tire problem at Daytona has changed. But one thing that hasn't changed is Daytona's fickle heart. It isn't who will win, but who Daytona will let win. This year the 200 belonged to Dale Singleton. 

DAYTONA 750 RESULTS

1) Dale Singleton	Yamaha
2) Ron Pierce	Yamaha
3) Patrick Pons	Yamaha
4) Mike Baldwin	Kawasaki
5) Christian Sarron	Yamaha
6) John Long	Yamaha
7) Bruce Patterson	Yamaha
8) Mike Cone	Yamaha
9) Mick Grant	Suzuki
10) Ron Mass	Yamaha
11) Phil McDonald	Yamaha
12) Bruce Lind	Yamaha
13) Bob Wakefield	Yamaha
14) Mark Jones	Yamaha
15) Corey Ruppelt	Yamaha

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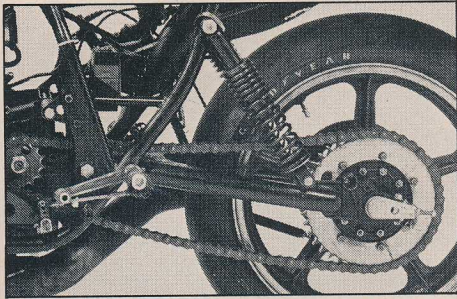
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DAYTONA '79

continued from page 108



Rear frame section is bent upwards, top shock mount relocated for shock angle of 61°. Note bracing behind upper shock mount. Swingarm is not braced. Chain and sprockets were new before race.

Laughlin and Ron Pierce in 1978, but with a 997cc powerplant.

The extra 26cc displacement came from increasing the bore from 70mm to 70.9mm, while stroke remained stock at 64.8mm. Power increased along with size—the latest Yoshimura engine makes four more bhp than its predecessor.

The CR carburetors fitted to the team bikes had a new idling circuit machined in by Pops Yoshimura. The extra circuit almost eliminated response hesitation at half throttle, normally a problem with CRs. The velocity stacks are staggered in length to compensate for slightly unequal intake tract lengths in the Suzuki cylinder head casting—the two outside stacks are 2.5-in. long, while the inside stacks are 2.125-in. long.

Last year the Yoshimuras welded an extra 35mm onto each fork tube, increasing overall length and travel. They mounted the rear shocks at a 54.4° angle; and extensively braced the rear section of the frame and the bottom of the swingarm.

This year the new Yoshimura Superbikes have standard length fork tubes to comply with AMA rules. The upper shock mount tubes of the frame are bent forward and up and the upper shock mounts are positioned 13 in. from the swing arm pivot. The repositioning changes shock angle to 61° and yields an extra half inch of rear wheel travel for a total of 5.25 in. The swingarm itself is not braced.

At Daytona, the bikes handled as well as anything on the track in the sense that they didn't wobble or gyrate. That seems to support the Yoshimura contention that suspension, not extensive swingarm or frame bracing, is the key to controllable handling. Daytona is in many ways a unique track, however. Because they are limited to stock length fork tubes by AMA regulations, the Yoshimuras are worried about available cornering clearance for races at other tracks—Daytona is fast and flat and the turns generally wide. At other tracks with tighter turns, cornering clearance may be a problem. For that reason, the Yoshimuras may fit the longer leading-

continued on page 158

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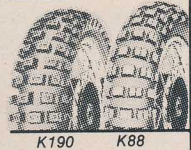
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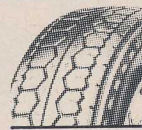


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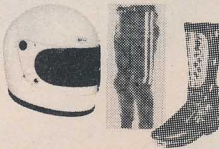
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DAYTONA '79

ways in one turn and came so close to crashing that he thought his race was over. The force of the bars slamming violently to full-lock snapped off the steering damper heim-joint mount bolt at the frame, but handling did not deteriorate after the incident, according to Pierce. Cooley did the same thing when he discovered he had no front brake at the back-straight chicane entrance. Cooley's sliding and tankslapping trip into the chicane run-off was so sudden and fierce that the entire steering damper bracket was ripped off the frame at the weld. Like Pierce, Cooley said he didn't notice a handling change afterwards. Emde had no problems during the race, and his bike finished unscathed.

All three Yoshimura team bikes ran Goodyear tires for the races after early-week experiments with Michelins. Each of the machines had 3.25-19 D1950 slicks up front. Cooley and Emde ran 3.75-18 D1705 slicks in the rear, while Pierce selected a softer 3.75-18 D1829. After the 100-miles, it was impossible to detect a difference in wear between the 1705 on Cooley's bike and the 1829 on Pierce's. Both looked ready for another 100 miles. It would appear that the AMA's fears that Superbikes are harder on tires because they weigh more than GP bikes is unfounded.

The AMA ruled that Superbikes must have stock seat profiles in 1979. The Yoshimura mechanics were ingenious about satisfying the rules and yet allowing for rider safety (the stepped seats favored in 1978 helped riders hang on). On Pierce's and Emde's bikes, foam was gouged out of the center of the seat and left standing on the edges—the whole thing collapsed when the rider sat down. Cooley wanted a more pronounced bucket, so a friendly upholsterer fabricated a metal loop at the front edge of the seat (adjacent to the gas tank), hollowed out the foam from the front section of the seat, rigged bungee cords from the metal loop to the rear of the seat section, and re-installed the cover. Without rider, the bungee cords held the seat sides up—stock profile. With rider, the front section of the seat collapsed—step seat.

But for gas cap and refueling-stop trickery, Pierce's bike took the cake. Mechanic Jyo Bito cut off the top of the key needed to open the Suzuki gas cap and brazed on a large clutch nut, drilled the nut for lightness, and safety-wired the whole thing to the handlebars. Instead of inserting a key at Pierce's gas stop, Bito only had to turn the nut and pull, saving a few precious seconds in the dump-can refueling.

The result of the changes was victory. The new bikes weigh about the same as the 1978 versions, yet make more power. In practice before the 1978 Daytona race, Steve McLaughlin was clocked on his Yoshimura GS1000 at 159 mph. This year, Cooley was caught by the radar at 167 mph. Judging by Daytona, this should be Pops Yoshimura's year. ☐

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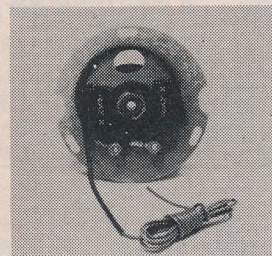
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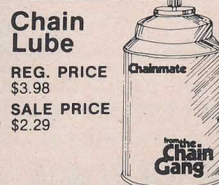
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DAYTONA '79

continued from page 153



Forks are standard length as per AMA rules. Discs are 1978 KZ1000; calipers Lockheed; wheel Morris; tire Goodyear D1950.

axle forks from a Suzuki GS1000L.

Because Daytona is so flat, not all the available fork travel was used. The maximum travel available out of the forks currently is 5.3 in., or 0.4 in. less than the travel provided by the extended fork tubes used in 1978. But at Daytona, Yoshimura R&D's chief mechanic and suspension specialist Suehiro Watanabe set up the new front forks with 4.9 in. travel. Actual fork travel can be set by varying fork spring rate, size of spring preload spacer, fork fluid level and air pressure.

The Yoshimura Superbike, tested in May (and ridden by Emde at Daytona), was fitted with Lockheed calipers and stock front discs drilled for lightness and to discourage warping. At Daytona, Cooley's bike sported a set of RG500 calipers and discs up front. Pierce's bike used undrilled, stock KZ1000 Kawasaki discs with hand-made disc carriers and Lockheed calipers. Before the final event Pierce was concerned because his bike's front brakes dragged while Cooley's didn't. Cooley praised the RG500 units not only because they didn't drag but because they were, in his opinion, more powerful and controllable than the Lockheed set-up. Unfortunately, the pads installed in Cooley's bike were early-model RG, which had the brake material bonded to an aluminum backing. During the race Cooley's bike's brakes faded seriously. After cooling down after the race they were fine. Watanabe thinks that the aluminum pad backings overheated and became spongy, distorting under pressure from the caliper pistons and preventing effective braking. Pierce and Emde had no brake problems. For the next Superbike race Cooley's bike will be fitted with late-model RG pads with steel backings.

All three Yoshimura team bikes used RG500 rear discs and calipers.

During the final race, Pierce got side->

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