

This was my debut into the world of AMA Professional Road Racing.

I left for the track, California Speedway, on Thursday night, with all the anticipation of a young child going to bed the night before Christmas. As we drove towards the racetrack, I was excited to be towing a newly wired trailer, with a newly painted race bike inside, soon to be riding on brand new tires. I kept thinking of the last time I raced at California Speedway, and the pain I endured to finish the second race of the day that fateful Sunday, with WERA. I remember the first lap of the first race and the accident that collected me in turn 5. My buddy Anthony Lanzara high-sided into my bike after having a slightly less than perfect start. I was then forced to visit the track doctor before rebuilding a broken bike to make the only other race I was entered in that day after lunch.

As I remember the race, I didn't finish last, didn't get lapped, and turned a lap time of 1:41 something.

My mind raced as I went over the 21 turns of California Speedway to ready my body for the full assault on the asphalt dragon. I knew my first practice of Friday morning would be great if I could just drop my lap times into the 1:30's to eliminate the memories produced the year prior. I also had the mentality that riding with the fastest riders in the US would for sure make me a better, faster, smoother racer. Friday morning could not come fast enough.

I awoke to the smell of race fuel and baby poop. J Most of the factory riders had spent the previous day on the track gaining valuable seat time, but those of us that pay for everything ourselves can't always make as much free time as those that get paid to race. Valentino's morning bowel exercises also filled the air with the stench of bile. The true life of a privateer, family-in-tow racer.

Our Super Stock practice on Friday would be a full one hour to get the bike sorted, up to race speed, and placed into one of the two qualifying groups for the following day. I spoke with a couple of my buddies that had some prior AMA racing experience before entering the track to get at least a small feel of the tornado-like atmosphere of my first AMA Pro Racing Super Stock practice. I gained a few pointers and want to thank Brad Puetz #85, John Chen #737, and Mark Simon #102. Congratulations to them, as well as Michael Beck #360 and Skye Girard #811, for their impressive showing in our Super Stock class.

Now here are the actual interactions between myself and the best American racers at California Speedway. I entered the track as the final call was being made and followed a few of my buddies that had more track experience than I. I figured it would take me a few seconds to remember how my 2003 GSXR-1000 worked, and I was absolutely correct. As I made my way around the track for the first lap of my AMA initiation, I was forced to ride fairly expeditiously as I was now in the presence of guys I had only the pleasure of watching on television. After circulating the track a few times and getting the feel for my bike, which I had

the fortune to ride at Infineon and Laguna Seca just a mere month and a half ago, I was snapped back to reality as Roger Lee Hayden went flying past me between turns 4 and 5.

I watched his rear tires power slide as he accelerated until he hit the front brakes to set up for the left-hander approaching us at near racing speed.

I was able to hang with Roger Lee for a few corners until we hit the straight after turn 11, and due to the slight tow I received I was able to pull out a 1:38.5 lap time. Going down the front straight or slight corner, I observed a top speed of about 165 M.P.H. on one of my flying laps, just a handful of miles per hour below the factory riders' top speeds.

After my first AMA practice with these great riders, I knew it would just be a matter of time before my name would be included in this elite racers group, as one of the really fast guys.

With just one hour on a track that I last competed on over a year ago, I had already dropped 2-1/2 seconds from my previous lap times on the same bike.

I knew roughly what times I would need to drop to in order to race in my first AMA Super Stock competition.

I had seen real speed in just my first hour at the track, and knew I had entered the ultimate competitive race class closest to my now 2 year racing experience and skill level.

I might have bit off more than I could chew, but without a challenge, why just live the ordinary life I had prior to starting road racing.

Luckily, I have the support of a great family, friends, and sponsors.

Saturday morning brought about another chance to improve on my lap times, corner speeds, lines, and to gather expert experience from running with the top level AMA professionals.

As my times dipped another 1-1/2 seconds, down to a 1:37 flat, I noticed that Jason DiSalvo, a Yamaha factory rider had dropped the fastest Super Stock practice lap time to a 1:25.7.

My previous racing experience had taught me a few vital facts when competing at the top level of club racing with WSMC (Willow Springs Motorcycle Club).

I always need to ride just a little over my ability or comfort limit, therefore always broadening my comfort level and at the same time skill level.

Practice perfect to be perfect.

Finally, know your limits.

If you know your limits, it is much simpler to go just a fraction above that limit to improve your skill set.

As I began the early morning bike and rider introduction to California Speedway on my second day as an AMA rider, I was thinking of the latest riders' meeting I attended on Friday afternoon with all the riders that joined me in racing with the AMA this 2005 race season.

I knew I had jumped into the deep blue ocean, filled with sharks, covered in fish guts and blood, but I also knew exactly what I was getting into.

Well, I thought I knew what I was getting into, but now it had already begun, and I am definitely not one to quit.

So, onto the Saturday morning practice to once again improve on my ever-changing lap times.

This morning, I decided to ride my own pace and see how I could do without any help from the other Super Stock racers.

Unfortunately, I wasn't alone on the track and as Aaron Yates went blowing by my

2003 GSXR-1000 on his brand new, factory prepped 2005 GSXR-1000; I was again shown what my potential was for the very near future.

I watched Yates' rear tire squirming left to right under the extremely enormous forces being pumped out of his 998 cc motorcycle engine.

I kept one eye on the bike in front of me, while trying to slowly go deeper into each corner, and get on the gas just a few milliseconds earlier than my previous lap.

After just a brief 30 minutes of early morning practice, I made my way back to our pits to change tires to a soft front medium soft rear.

Qualifying would test my abilities to their limit.

Not only would I have to go as fast as I could, but I also had to be concerned of 17 other extremely fast riders doing the exact same thing as myself.

I made sure my mind was only thinking positively as the moment of truth was fast approaching.

I thought of where I could go even faster than I had on my last 1-1/2 hours of track practice as the final warning for Qualifying Group 1 was being made.

I peeled my tire warmers from the lifeless carcasses that would partially determine my very first AMA qualifying round as a professional motorcycle road racer.

I readied my body and mind for the next 35 minutes of qualifying as I rode slowly to the hot pit lane.

As I made my way to the grid, I made sure I followed a couple of buddies that I knew would be faster than I on the track, as to possibly get a slight tow into the next bracket of speed.

I started the first lap of qualifying at nearly race pace, easily attainable with my tires being pre-warmed in the pits just prior to entering the track.

I made my way around the 21 turns of California Speedway just slightly behind John Chen.

After two laps I knew my tires were at the perfect temperature to make a flying charge at qualifying for the Sunday Super Stock race.

After a few more laps of pushing my body and bike to their limits, I had a major incident coming out of turn 6.

As I made the most of a soft rear tire for more laps than it should have been abused, I made the mistake of cracking open the throttle fully just a bit too early.

My left knee still being drug along the asphalt on the exit of turn 6, I opened the throttle to make up a bit of time lost in the 3-4 chicane type corners, and had the rear step out quite a bit.

From prior experiences with almost high siding, I knew to keep the power flowing to a now sliding rear tire.

I slid the bike out of the corner and made sure to take the next few left-handers a bit slower to avoid the major disappointment of crashing out of my very first AMA qualifying effort.

I made my way into the pits to gather up my thoughts and get a bit of refreshments, as the weather stayed cool for the beginning of qualifying but was now definitely heating up.

My new leathers were doing a fabulous job of keeping me fairly cool, not only looking but feeling as well, but as the sun came out to heat up Fontana, nothing but a cool drink and a small breeze would cool me at this time.

I made sure to glance briefly at my lap timer to observe a now fastest lap time of 1:36.5.

I knew a small tow from the faster riders in my qualifying group could have me showing another fast lap, so after getting a drink; I made my way back to the hot pits.

I sat comfortably under the bridge just before the entrance to the hot pits, and was welcomed onto the track by an AMA official.

I made a few gestures as to my choice to wait a few moments before making another challenge at qualifying for the Super Stock race on the following day. The AMA official recognized my intentions and gave me notice of 15 minutes left in my very first qualifying group effort.

Mentally I was ready to take to the track but physically I wanted to wait just a few more moments to try again.

I watched John Chen go by, and decided to wait about 1 minute before heading out just in front of him to get a tow in the second half of qualifying.

John caught me about half a lap after I entered the circuit, and I followed him for almost a whole lap.

Once my body had had enough of riding at 99.9% for each second of my now fastest lap time of a 1:36.040, I made my way into the pits a second time.

Jodie, Josephine, Sebastian, and Valentino met me in the tunnel.

Jodie handed me more liquid to ingest, and I shared the good news of another ½ second dropped in my lap times.

My body was screaming at me to stop punishing it, but I knew I would need a bit more speed to make the show.

The decision was made with only about 5 minutes left in qualifying to try one last time to better my qualifying lap time.

After circulating the 21 turns on my third and final qualifying efforts' first lap, and making almost as many mistakes, I knew my 1:36.040 lap time would be the best I could perform this day.

Once I entered our RV in the pits, after sweating tears and blood, literally from shifting so vigorously, I started to calculate the reverse of 112% qualifying time needed for me to make the race.

I figured out that whoever was fastest in the second qualifying group, the fastest riders' group, needed to be just slower than the fastest practice time of Jason DiSalvo's 1:25.7.

As most already know, since our qualifying times are posted almost immediately after riding them, I missed the race by 1.2 seconds.

Jason DiSalvo rode to a very impressive 1-second faster lap time of 1:24.688, and bumped me out.

I know that racing in the AMA is definitely an earned position and I look forwards to earning my own personal spot in the elite-racing group in the very near future.

I thoroughly enjoyed my first foray into the world of AMA Professional Racing, and know that with a little more skill, talent, time riding, and support, I will be competing at the level necessary to position myself as a point's earner in the AMA Super Stock class.

I have to thank my family first, as they have been the major supporters in my following of my dreams.

Jodie, I love your passion in having me compete to the top level my body and mind

will allow.

Thank you for all that you have done and will do to help support me and my love of motorcycle road racing.

I am definitely the luckiest man alive to have a true lover and best friend such as you.

Josephine, Sebastian, and Valentino, thank you for loving daddy no matter how I have performed, no matter how sweaty I am, no matter what mood I am in, which mostly a great one is, or wherever we as a family may travel.

Next I would like to thank everyone who made the small but very significant effort to support not only me and my racing endeavors but also all the other racer's endeavors.

I want to say a special thank you to Ryan, Bonnie, Andrew, and Sara for making the long trip from Phoenix to Fontana to watch the races.

I also want to thank Jeff for making the trip out from Vegas at the last minute, only due to some strange work issues.

Gregg and Kim, I can only say thank you one more time, until I see you both again.

Lee and JC, thank you both for making the short but well received trip to the track. I promise to put you to work next time.

Mike and Dennis, great to see you both, and thank you for the moral support.

Pranav, Phyllis, Dennis, Dempsy, George, and Fluffy I really appreciate all of your support and hope to make the show next time so you all have one more racer to cheer for.

I know I am forgetting many more that came out to show their support of us soon to be AMA racers and actual AMA racers, and I want to say thank you to each and every one of you that came by and wished me well.

Lastly, I need to thank all my racing sponsors.

Suzuki of Van Nuys - [www.suzukiofvannuys.com](http://www.suzukiofvannuys.com)

Simi Valley Cycles - [www.simivalleycycle.net](http://www.simivalleycycle.net)

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Tiffany's Upholstery & Restoration

BVI Apparel USA - [www.bviapparelusa.com](http://www.bviapparelusa.com)

Graeber Engineering & Consulting

My newly painted bike turned out awesome, thanks Symphia, and stayed just as clean coming off the track as it did going onto the track.

My newly stitched leathers made me look the part of a professional AMA racer and displayed all my sponsors awesomely.

Thank you Tiffany, and Savi.

Thanks John, for making my kid's hand print emblazoned helmet look utterly perfect, and for producing truly professional looking race crew shirts.

They eventually did make their debut on television during the AMA Super Bike race, as a few others and I perused the grid just prior to the race.

Thank you to my buddies at Dunlop for supplying me with great tires that helped my turn faster laps each time I made my way around California Speedway.

The same can be said about my Galfer pads and lines, which made the effort of setting up for each corner easy and perfect every time I applied my right lever.

Thanks to all at Galfer.

Since I received my new Shoei helmet a day after the race weekend, I will thank all those that helped get me those for the next round of the AMA Super Bike series at Infineon in a week and a half.

I look forwards to seeing more of you in the near future at Infineon, if you can make it.

We will be there from Friday until Sunday, and with just a few milliseconds shaved from each corner I plan on racing this coming race weekend.

Thank you for reading and supporting my racing, as well as all the racers.

Look for my next write-up in the near future, as racing will happen again in just about a week and a half.

Thank you.

Marcel