

T is for Tires, the ones I don't Buy, R is for Rings, that make Leslie Cry

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The drive down on Thursday was looking to be a pleasant change from the chilly and dreary opening round at BIR. The weather was sunny with comfortable temps. Then the trailer wheel tried to fall off in Iowa. It may have actually tried to fall off sooner, but fortunately it patiently waited for me to notice it when I stopped a bit early for gas in Mason City.

After filling up the tank, Les and I decided to hit the KFC/Taco Bell next to the gas station. I pulled the trailer into a good parking spot and after getting out of the car, I finally noticed the driver's side wheel on the trailer looking slightly out of place. First I noticed that the wheel rim was covered in black grease and then I finally noticed that the wheel itself was on the axle and leaning to one side. Hmm...that's not good. So Les and I went into KFC and ate lunch.



Then we called Jen to get Billy's cell number and after a few more calls, we finally tracked the number down and called him. I was hoping that Billy and Terry were planning on taking the same route we did and that they would be behind us, but since they live out in BFE, MN...they decided to take the back roads to MAM. Fortunately, I had planned ahead when I bought my spare tire for the trailer. Instead of just buying a spare wheel in case I had got a flat tire, I had bought a complete spare wheel hub and bearing kit that mounted to the trailer. I jacked the trailer up and pulled off the old wheel. The inner wheel bearings were reduced to a small piece of round metal that looked like a chewed up washer. Not good.

The axle didn't look damaged, so I then prayed that the spare wheel hub would actually fit my axle. It did! *happy dance* The trailer was back in business! So...while I had all my tools unpacked and the jack out, I decided to check the other wheel while we were close to a Fleet Farm store. It looked fine, but just in case, I added some more bearing grease to it's bearings and considered myself lucky. The rest of the drive down was uneventful.

Billy and Terry had just beaten us there and had already staked out a spot to setup the canopies. We got our pit setup and I ended up finally checking my rear suspension. I had just finished watching the Traxxion Dynamics DVDs for the 2nd time and remembered that I had never actually checked the sag on the rear. Terry and Billy helped me measure the sag and I discovered that the pre-load was set way too high. The bike basically had zero sag. So I reduced the preload until I could get the baseline of 10mm free sag. I probably should have checked the rider sag too, but I didn't. I figure that if I have the right spring rate, then the rider sag should be good if the free sag is set properly. At least, that is how it seems to work for the front. Billy, Terry, Les and I did some BS'ing and then around 9 pm we all called it a night.

Friday's practice was productive. The weather was sunny and upper 70's. A welcome change from the snow we had up at BIR! I had heard that the track was super bumpy, but if it was, I didn't notice it. There were a few more patches in the corners, but like BIR, they were off the racing line. They just let you know if you took the right line thru the corner and later in the weekend, one of them definitely let me know I had screwed up.

All of the new riders were local track experts, so the new rider's school was pretty much a non-event. I actually ended up following Jarel #178 from the <http://www.cyclezoo.com> crew around instead of the usual plan of showing the new rider around the track. He was pretty darn fast and I was glad he is a novice rider, less work for me in my races.

I checked my rear tire after a couple more practice sessions and noticed it was getting chewed up pretty badly. So...I decided to follow the Traxxion DVD's advice and I bumped up my rear compression. I theorize that with the rear shock pre-load reduced, the tire was being made to work more. The suspension was finally doing its job basically. We only had one more practice session left, so I went out with two missions for the last session of the day.

See...Les was working in turn 11 which is the last corner station before the grandstands. In case you didn't know, Les and I are planning on getting married, but when I had originally proposed to her, I didn't have a ring. I made one out of tin foil from the kitchen. Very affordable and too bad girls don't really dig tinfoil rings. I mean, don't women like guys who manage their money responsibly? So, she needed a real ring and I just happened to have taken care of that detail earlier in the week. I actually kind of enjoyed complaining about how I couldn't afford to get a ring until after the MAM weekend. She was totally surprised when I rolled to a stop at her corner station and took the ring out of the tiny inner pocket of my leathers and re-proposed to her with ring in hand. She said yes (again) and was so surprised that it took about five minutes before she

started leaking. Fortunately, I had to get back to the pits before the New Rider's race started so I missed the leaking. Hehe!

I checked the tire again and it hadn't got any worse, but it wasn't any better either. It was still looking pretty chewed up. Hmm...where's Paul to yell at me about tires when I need him? Maybe it's time for a new tire? Okay...so I put a new rear tire on the bike. The front tire looked okay and I figured it would easily make it through the weekend. It almost did. Paul...stop snickering.



Saturday was just as nice as Friday. A bit windier, but the breeze felt good with the heat. I took the bike out for practice and the bike/suspension felt fine. I didn't screw things up with the suspension! The rear tire looked perfect too. Better than perfect really. The compression adjustment appears to have been the correct choice. The rear tire was scuffed, yet smooth and providing plenty of traction instead of torn and jagged.

The first race, Lightweight Super Sport was my usual crappy start. I really don't like fighting for position in the first few corners. It's just too hard to predict where people are going and I'm a chicken. I had a few good battles and tried to get past a group of four being led by Mark Miller, but I just never managed to get around them. My best lap time that race was a 1:44 while Steve Bauman's time was a blistering 1:41. Looks like I still have more work to do on my riding and looking thru the corners. I think I got an 8th in that race.

The 18 lap Trophy dash was looking good to me. 18 laps gives me plenty of time to recover from my chicken start, have fun and pass people in a smooth un hurried fashion. I really enjoy the mini-endurance race format since most people ride like it's a sprint race and tire themselves out before the halfway point of the race. Then it's smooth sailing as I pick them off one by one. I managed to work myself from the back to 4th place. I was closing in on #158 on the John Deere bike when the checkered flag finally dropped. I didn't manage to get close enough for a pass though. I later found out he was exhausted and could barely hold onto the handlebars. If only it had been a 20 lap race! My best lap time that race was a much improved 1:42, but I have no idea what I did to cut that lap

time. My average lap time for that race was still in the 1:44 range.

On the plus side, the rear tire still looked perfect!

The brake pads were another story though. They were pretty worn out. One pad even started to rub on bare metal. Not too smart there Rich! I replaced last year's brand new for the endurance race pads with my almost new pads we took off the bike for the endurance race. Maybe the worn brakes actually helped me go faster for that race?

Saturday night we meet Steve, Josh, Melissa and Tristine for dinner at the casino. After the hour long wait in the line for the buffet, we finally got to chow down. The long line adversely affected Steve as he started to make "Deliverance" jokes about the Heart Shaped bathtub in his room and how he planned on using a chloroform-soaked rag with Josh. They truly bonded that night... isn't brotherly love grand?

There was a Tornado Watch Sat night. Billy was a bit concerned about it, but we were sensitive to his needs and called him a wuss. No tornados touched down and the pits survived unscathed. He was pretty bummed about that the next morning so everyone took the time to point out that there were no tornados. I don't think that cheered him up though.

Sunday is when all the fun happened. For some reason, I forgot that Super Twins means that there will be RC-51's and 996 Ducatis racing with SV-650's. Jake, the new rider from last race report, crashed during the warm-up lap. He landed pretty hard and ended up in the hospital. Then the start was a zoo with SVs, Ducats and a Novice or two on RC-51's all fighting for position going into turn one. Mark Miller and #125 from Colorado didn't make the turn. They tangled handlebars and the last I saw of Mark before the Red Flag was his feet in the air as he tumbled off his bike.

The restart was a bit less of a cluster f**k than the first one, but it was still pretty hairy with such a broad range of displacements. I didn't even bother trying to do anything that race. Just have fun, get some extra practice and bring her home was my plan. My lap times totally sucked that race too, but I survived.

The LW Superbike race was a bit better. No red flags, but I think I saw a few novices run off the track. I had my usual start. I got passed by a couple novices, including Jesse #555, and then re-passed them a couple of laps later. I am not sure if it was this race or the Super Twins race where I managed to catch and pass #46 on the last lap, but then have him pass me back just before the finish line. He beat me by about half a bike length. It was pretty interesting to see that, but I messed up the last few turns leading to the finish straight and that really messed up my drive to the finish line.

The LW GP race was a race I hadn't initially planned on racing and now I wish I had stuck with that plan. The rear tire was still looking almost new and providing lots of good traction. The Michelin Soft front was starting to look like it needed to be replaced. However; it was the last race and only needed to last a few more laps. No need to buy a

new tire for just one more sprint race. Wrong! It was around the 3rd or 4th lap and I was a little off line entering turn 11. I was at full lean and crossed the pavement patch near the apex of the corner and the front said, "Fool! I'm telling Paul!"

The crash itself was pretty painless. My leathers got a bit scuffed up and my helmet survived unscathed. The bike is a bit more wounded. The right side clip-on was snapped. The tank got a dent in it from something. The body work got a bit torn-up, but the frame slider and foot peg bore most of the damage. Oh well, live and learn I gue\$\$.

Billy and Terry had been trying to make their escape, but my crash foiled their plans as they volunteered to help me recover the bike and load it on the trailer for the drive home. Thanks you two!

New clip-ons are on their way thanks to EBay and the tank/body work is in the shop. Donn the Paint Guy (952-492-2655) is located right next to Sport Wheels in Jordan, MN and he does affordable, fabulous work. Give him a buzz if you need some race bodywork done.

Lessons Learned:

- Brakes are good, but they only slow you down.
- Tires don't like being rubbed for too long.
- Steve really loves heart shaped bath tubs.
- Setting the rear sag and tuning the suspension after two years of riding is probably a bad thing to procrastinate on.

My thanks go out to Leslie for saying "yes" and helping out at the track. Thanks also to **Sage Homes** for being a great sponsor, and **Jenspeed** for being a good source of parts (I need to suck up to him now to help get the bike running). And last, but not least of all, thanks to Billy, Terry, Steve and the CRA for making the weekend fun.