

Hawaii Road Race Association

Mid-July 2005

NEWSLETTER

Volume 3: Issue 4

MotoGP at Laguna Seca

Friday – July 8

The editor and his better half attended the USGP at Laguna Seca on July 8 – 10. This is not a race report; it's my view of the MotoGP experience. We purchased the 3-day passes (\$90), turn 4 grandstand seats for Saturday (\$10) and Sunday (\$15), and the paddock passes (\$25). (I couldn't convince my wife that we should spend \$500+ each on suite passes. She later rued this decision.) We took a Delta red-eye to SFO and drove down to Monterey on Friday morning. After a nice breakfast in Santa Cruz we arrived at the track at 9:30 a.m. and proceeded to the paddock area. I used the South Boundary road entrance and encountered no traffic of any kind. This changed dramatically on the weekend. Public parking was on Wolf Hill, quite a walk to the track.



The first thing we did was stand in line for an hour to buy some shirts, cap, patches, ticket holders and programs. Gee, we just arrived and have already spent \$170.

We walked over the Dunlop Bridge to see what was going on in the vendor area. The manufacturers had large displays of their wares; Honda had a line-up of their race bikes, starting with the 5-cylinder RC149 to the RC211V. I fell in love with the Paul Smart Ducati (\$14K). The biggest lines were around the tents selling team shirts and anything to do with Vale. Want a #46 cap? That will be \$45!



We checked out the grandstand seats and rested for awhile. We were feeling the effects of the overnight flight and left to have lunch at Cannery Row in Monterey and check in at the hotel.

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We had a room at the Monterey Travelodge (booked through Schewe Travel, thanks Scott!) for \$100/night. Nothing fancy, no air conditioning (didn't need it due to the 60-65 degree weather), but it did have SPEED and OLN so we could keep track of the Tour de France.

Saturday – July 9

I drove to the track at 9:30 a.m. and ran into a 4-mile long line of cars so it took about an hour to get into the track so I missed most of the morning GP practice.

I walked through the paddock, watched qualifying for the karts (250cc 2-stroke engines, they're fast!), AMA Superbike (see picture of Mladin and Zemke) and MotoGP. The AMA Superbike race was scheduled to begin at 4:30 p.m. but I left early to attend a dinner in Pacific Grove. (I was recording all of the races on SPEED for later viewing.)



Sunday – July 10

I left the hotel at 8:00 a.m. to see if that would improve the traffic problem. It did not. It took 1.5 hours to get in and find a parking space. (Bruce Ramsey said to use the Main entrance but I was trying to be a good citizen and follow the rules.) A quick run through the paddock and I found my seat just in time for the MotoGP warm up.



AMA Superstock Race: Aaron Yates was the early leader but Tommy Hayden ran him down and passed him for the lead. Unfortunately, Tommy later found himself in a bad spot when he ran up the outside of a back marker going into turn 4 and ran off the track headed straight for our grandstand. (I thought I might get a piece of his bike.) He was traveling pretty fast, bailed out before hitting the air fence, and tumbled a few times. He was carried off by the medical staff and the corner workers removed his bike quickly.

Aaron was gracious during the post-race interview and said Tommy should have won. Alas, I didn't get any pictures of the crash! (Some photographer I turned out to be.)

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The Race: Before I knew it, it was time for the MotoGP race. Twenty-one bikes thundering down the front straight and then they came screaming past, Nicky Hayden in the lead followed by Troy Bayliss, Rossi, Biaggi, Hopkins, Checa, the usual slow starting Texas Tornado and Sete Gibernau. (The picture above is the only one in which I could get most of the field in one shot.)

I spent my time taking pictures, watching the bikes run down from turn 2 through 5 while keeping track of the action on the giant TV screen located across the track. I know you're thinking to yourself, "Why did he go to the race just to watch most of it on TV?" There aren't any places where you can see the entire track; if you sit/stand on the hill above turn 2 you can see most of the track from turn 11 through turn 6 but it's like watching a football game from the last row in the upper deck of Aloha stadium.

(Note: Pictures were taken using a Panasonic DMC-FZ20K with a 12x optically-stabilized zoom using shutter-preferred or sports mode.)

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General Impressions

I bought my wife a set of shooting ear muffs, which she said worked well. I didn't wear ear protection as the bikes weren't as loud as I thought they would be. I was surprised by the differences between the bikes – the Hondas weren't all the same, the Suzuki V4 had a nice, throaty growl and the Yamaha and WCM bikes were surprisingly quiet.

Wear comfortable shoes and be prepared to walk a lot. It's a long walk from public parking to the track. My wife wants me to get tickets to the VIP suites for next year as she wasn't prepared for the hills. The turn 4 grandstand seats were great. (Kim, thanks for the recommendation!) The GP bikes would stop right in front and practice their starts (see picture below).



Ride a bike to the track; any kind of bike (i.e. moped) is preferable to a car. While we were sitting in the long line the bikes just rode past along side. Or, get to the track early (before 8:00 a.m.) I read that others were stuck in traffic for hours, to and from the track. I got out easily on SAT/SUN as I left before the AMA races. Parking and traffic management was poor.

The weather from Friday through Sunday was perfect! On Monday, the fog rolled back in. The racing gods smiled down upon this event.

Track food prices: A hot dog (albeit a tasty one) cost \$7, a chicken Caesar wrap was \$7.50 and a can of Coke was \$4. I didn't check to see what beers were selling for.

Don't miss next year's race. It's scheduled for July 21 – 23, 2006. Book your hotel early! Rooms were going for \$350 to \$800/night just before the race. Event tickets go on sale on September 1 on the Laguna Seca web site. (I only hope they decide to bring the 250 and 125 racers next year. Two strokes rule!)

Congratulations to Nicky Hayden for win #1 and to Colin for beating Vale!

See you there!



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2005 Track and Race Day Schedule Track days start at 9:30, Races start at Noon

Month	Track Day	Race Day	Course
August	20 (SAT)	7	Long
September	11	4 (SpeedFest)	Short
October	30	9	Fast
November	None	6	Long
December	18		

Please note that the August 20th track day is on Saturday and is limited to group 2 and 3 riders. No group 1! Call Kim for details.

Next Race: August 7 (Long Course)