

Latest News: Chuck Skarsuane BBC Sponsored Bike Racer



Race season is upon us!

Here's the latest update on our sponsored racer - Chuck Skarsuane. Enjoy!

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Subject: Roebing Road 2010

Roebing 2010

Damn it's cold. 31 degrees in Pooler, Georgia, as we wait outside the track to get in. 7am and we've been here since 1:30am; too late to get a hotel, couldn't get in the track, so bundled up and slept in the truck.

We left Nashville at 2pm Wednesday during a snowstorm. I'd been up all night trying to help Tony Read, another Triumph rider, get his bike ready. It wasn't completely done but it went in the trailer and we headed southbound for the 2010 AHRMA opener. Our plan was to do the Georgia practice and race on Thursday & Friday, then go to the 2009 Awards ceremony in Deland, FL. No Daytona for either of us this year due to time, money, etc.

To add to the fun, once we got in the track and set up our pit next to the rest of the Kentucky Wrecking Crew, the wind picked up. And stayed up. Roebing Road Raceway's pits are a sandbox anyways and with a 30mph wind blowing, it was doing a fair imitation of a sandblaster. I teched in my leathers & bike and registered for practice and Friday's races.

Tony kept working on his bike but found a broken push rod tip that was going to require some tear down to retrieve and inspect, so he put it in the trailer and went to pit crew / photographer duty.

Thursday's practice day turned into the typical beginning of the season bike tweaking session. With the wonderful winter that global warming brought us, plus my accelerated work schedule the last few months, I had the bike together and running but hadn't even run it up and down the road. So, take a lap, fix the timing cover seal, adjust the clutch. Take a few more laps, clean the pilot jets. Retorque the head, adjust the valves. Try to stay warm. I probably did 5 laps for my \$100 but the bike was sorted. I dropped the rear sprocket to a 44 tooth after practice - the track was faster than I remembered.

Friday morning was once again frigid but at least the wind had died down a bit. A space heater had kept the trailer warm enough to survive. I went out in first practice to see if all of Thursday's work had been effective. Lo and behold, no leaks, no midrange pops and bangs, the bike was handling GREAT, gee, this is FUN! I didn't do much seriously studious practice, just rode around going fast feeling out the bike and the motor.

This was the first serious heat I'd put into the motor, so after practice, another head retorque / valve check. Everything else was looking shipshape and oil-tight. I missed 2nd practice working on the bike, but having seized a top end at the beginning of last season from not retorquing, better to have the bike make and finish the race. To finish first, first you must finish. Put the battery on charge, fill the gas, check, check, recheck.



I was entered in race 9 and 10 in the British European American Race Series (BEARS) race and my bump-up class, Formula 750. I figured to get beat handily in BEARS and really smoked in Formula 750 due to the mild tune of my motor, but since it was a one day event I was doing both races for the track time. Tony and I made our plan for the back to back races - I'd pull into the pit, shut the bike off, top off the gas, and right back on the starter to go back out. This would be my first back to back races on the same bike. NASCAR pit stop, here we come.

I watched races up till it was time to suit up and head out. We couldn't hear any of the calls so keeping track of what race was up was difficult. Did the warm up lap, gridded up, soon enough the green flag dropped and my 2010 season began. I got a pretty good start and we all hauled down to turn one. I had the BMW of Mark Mitchell as my goal - if I could keep him in sight, I'd be competitive, as his bike is very fast. Heading into the very fast turn one 3 wide, hell yes, this is why I spent uber-hours and \$\$\$ all winter long. What fun.

The racers sorted themselves out after a lap or two. I had that BMW in sight and was chasing the Premier 500 bike of Larry Poons. What's that sound? Oh yeah, that's my knee slider coming through turn 4. As I mentioned, Roebing is a very fast flowing track. I was geared only 1 tooth up from what I run at Daytona. Laps clicked by, nobody from my class passed me, couldn't catch either Poons or Mitchell, but everything was going well. Not having had any really effective practice, my laps weren't really consistent, but I didn't blow any corners either. I did hit the shifter on the ground in one turn, kicking me up into 5th unexpectedly. Going to have to raise that up a bit! I eased up a little on the lean angle for the last few laps. A couple of bikes from the TransAtlantic Challenge class came by, including the eventual winner, Lon Fields of the KWC on his Triumph Thruxton.

Pretty soon the checkers dropped and I hustled around the track on the cool down lap so I could get into the pit and back out for my next race. As I pulled up and shut the bike off, Tony gave me a "Good job" and a thumbs up - turns out I took 3rd in the BEARS race! Excellent! Top up the gas, up on the roller starter and back out for the Formula 750 race.

We gridded up ahead of the Sportsman 750 guys, who had a 11 or 12 bike grid. Flag drops and we're off again. Most of the Formula bikes wandered off and I settled into a battle with some Sportsman 750 Yamahas. I had a great race with Jeff Hargis who happens to hail from one of my hometowns, Battle Creek, Michigan. We passed back and forth multiple times. I saw where he turned in early in a few places, which ran him wide, allowing me to cut under, and he had some chatter problems in the next to last turn which made him give up the inside there everytime. My bike was handling great with the braced frame and swingarm and fresh built forks, so I could stick the bike on the inside and hold a tighter line.

He handled me once at the end of the straight into turn one and I got him back in turn two - his extra speed ran him a little wider and my better handling let me get the bike planted and turned inside of him. Came around onto the straightaway and he must have got a better drive off the final turn, for he pulled out of the draft and passed me about the start / finish line. Thankfully, he pulled immediately back in front of me and gave me a tow down the front stretch. This was my first experience with a real draft - when he pulled in front of me, my rpms immediately jumped up about 500rpm and it felt like he'd hooked a tow rope to me! Very cool. I was on his tail again to the series of rights where I knew he went wide. Again I stuck the inside pass and held it on to the straight. I kept looking for him to pass again but didn't see him the rest of the race. Afterwards he said the chatter had got violent so he had to back it down a notch.

All in all an excellent start to the season. All the bike modifications worked out well - braced frame, rebuilt forks, 5 speed conversion, rear sets, fairing, breathing system modifications, etc. I didn't ride the best but I didn't do anything stupid either. And I was competitive in BEARS with a mild motor, which was great. New cams are already on the way to bump that up a notch. Along with alloy rims and stainless spokes. Yes, I spent my tax return on bike parts.

Tony and I went on down to Deland, FL after watching the AHRMA dirt track races at Oglethorpe Speedway Friday night. Rob McClendon, AHRMA's dirt track director, had some AMA pro classes as support for the vintage classes, so we got to watch Chris Carr and some other very fast flat trackers as well as the vintage guys. In Florida my friends the Carter brothers put us up at their house where we drooled on all the tasty Brit Bikes they had stashed in their dream shop. This place is a Brit racer's haven for Bike Week - 4 lifts, machine shop, and enthusiastic hands to help get the bikes ready. However, no Daytona races for me this year, so I just hung out and drank their beer. Went to the Road Racing Awards banquet where I picked up the National Championship plaque for last year's Classic 60's 650 class.

And then spent all day Sunday fighting traffic, construction, idiots, etc. to get home. Lots of driving and not really a relaxing vacation like some people take, but great for me none the less. Tony and I spent the entire return trip scheming on changes to our bikes and talking to other racers and friends about them.

Next round I'm for sure doing will be the WERA Nashville race in April followed by the WERA Fast from the Past Invitational at Barber the first weekend of May. Might do a WERA race at VIR in March but will probably save that money. Lots of work to do in the shop, both for myself and others, so I'll be busy. Should have the dirt bike and the street bike out shortly if the weather improves for training purposes.

Thanks for the support and stay tuned.