

Monthly Newsletter

Gennaio 2011



Editor's Report

Hi everyone

I hope you all had a fantastic Christmas and top New Year. Let's hope not too many hangovers but lots of stories to tell.

This newsletter is a short one with not much happening in the world of Ducati except I hope everyone has logged onto the Ducati website and had a look at Nicky Hayden doing his Christmas thing at the Factory. If not, go to either the web site or stream it on You Tube.

With many club rides on the agenda, I hope to see lots of members coming along. Don't forget to buy a club calendar if you have not already got one. It's a cracker with lots of info re the club meetings and Race dates for WSBK and MotoGP. Don't forget also that the Super's are coming up, so plan for a weekend away at good old Phillip Island. And of course, don't forget to come along to the monthly meetings....the more the merrier!

The next meeting is Monday 10th January at 7.30pm.....6.30pm for dinner if you like.

Also if you see any interesting articles that you think the rest of the club would be interested in, please email them to me and I will put them in the next newsletter.

I hope 2011 is a great year for everyone and of course let us cheer on Rossi on his campaign for MotoGP glory - this time on a Ducati..... is there anything else!

Pete 'da club Editor'

Eventi #Uno - what's on

Ride Calender

Saturday and Sunday 15th /16th January – Mount Panorama Ducati Shown n Shine.

For full details see www.docnsw.org.au. 7.00 am for 7.30 am start Saturday Bardies at Bungendore. Ride via Goulbourn to Oberon then O'Connell Hotel (yay, another one!) to meet up the DOC NSW crew. Great roads

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through the rolling hills and ridges of the Great Divide. Registration 11am – 1pm. Winner announced at 4.30 based on condition, style and sound. Saturday night entertainment – a band, BBQ or spit or seafood. Overnight accommodation to be booked by each rider. Phone 02 6332 4500 (Publican Scott) \$75 pp single \$110 double all with ensuite, big breakfast, lock up area for bikes; one block from party venue. OR 02 6331 1353 (Publican Andrew) \$25 pp communal shower, light breakfast, ample parking out the back – venue for the Ducati party. Mention you are there for the Ducati Show n Shine. Accommodation bookings essential.

Sunday 12 February – Bermagui for fish and chips.

Via Candelo? Green Square at 8.00 for an 8.30 start.

25 – 27 February World Superbikes at Phillip Island.

The club is proposing a tour from Monday 21 Feb ending at the WSB on Thursday 27th. Details TBA

19th – 20th XXXXXX - Fuller Family Farm.

Grant Fuller and family, long standing club members and bevel-meister, invites us to spend the night at his property at Tumblong. Last year we visited Ian Gowanlochs place nearby. Always entertaining.

1, 2, 3 April - Harrierville.

One of our premier long standing overnight trips. Well worth the effort to ride some fabulous mountain roads. Two nights at the Snowline Hotel/Motel Harrierville \$58pp 3 share bed and breakfast (no, you get your own bed) or \$64pp twin share BnB. Make your own bookings (03 5759 2524) and mention the CDDC for your 10% discount. Saturday is either a loop ride via Mount Hotham, The Blue Duck Inn on the Omeo Hwy, Bogong High Plains, Falls Creek and Bright. Or a visit to a winery, take in some Kelly country history or just chill and do your own thing.

30th April 1st May Oberon, Bells Line of Road, The Putty, Denman, Rylestone.

Anyone interested?

All welcome

Visit the CDDC website <http://www.cddc.org.au/events.asp> for updated ride details

For further information, please contact Chris at events@cddc.org.au or ph 0419 910 692.

Eventi #Duo
- the wraps

Ride Captain Report

This is your Captain speaking. There is no need for alarm; the club is running along smoothly under the new committee-ship. However, I cannot say the same for the membership represented at the AGM who replaced Craig with my/good/bad/ugly self as Ride/Events Coordinator. What were they thinking? Thankfully the Secretary position is in safe hands now that Craig and I have swapped roles.

Would all members please proceed quietly to their garage and say thank you to their Ducati for being such a faithful companion and assure your bike you WILL take it out soon. There are plenty of club rides coming up so as long as the weather plays its part, excuses should dry up.

Since I started writing this, I have received the very sad news that Phil Goldacre has passed away after what seemed to me to be an exceptionally short illness. I did not know Phil well or for very long so I will leave the obituary up to people who did. I have done several rides with him; Grant Fuller's place with Phil on his old 750GT and last year on the Harrierville and Khancoban rides. At Harrierville he was part of the small group who went for a Saturday ride to the Omeo Highway and over the Bogong High Plains so we chatted quite a bit. He was quiet and unassuming but excellent company and a lovely person. I think a lot more people will miss him than he realised. Vale Phil.

I thought I might provide a profile of myself for those you don't know me. Firstly I thank Craig for setting a high standard of being the Ride Coordinator for as long as I have been a member I think. I am pleased that his sledging is improving, as is his passion for track days. So what can you expect from me as Ride Captain? Maybe Mr YBAF was correct when he suggested last month that there might be more pub stops or rides to pubs – well after all, one must cater for all members and not just the wowsers! Maybe some more overnight rides and I would like to explore some rides north of Canberra but mostly I would like some input from members about where they want to go, how often they would like a club ride and tell us about any good roads you discover – even if you think they have already been discovered. Current conditions are always useful to know; eg, for anyone who has ridden the Imlay Road and thought it was good, it isn't now thanks to a very deteriorating surface.

Change is inevitable and it is no reflection on Craig if some things do change a bit. The title is the first thing that needs addressing. Craig came to my aid on my handover/takeover first official ride to accompany Paolo Pirozzi – more of that ride later. Social/Events Coordinator? It sounds like some young rave entrepreneur. Various DOC clubs refer to my position as Ride Captain. Craig, knowing of my pirate links, suggested it be changed to Captain Ride. I like it! I admit I might look a bit more like a Sergeant-At-Arms, but since we are not (yet) an OMCG, that position doesn't exist so I am well content to accept the higher rank of Captain. Why the pirate connection? Two things – the international speak like a pirate day is fortunate to have been allocated to my birthday, 19th September, and some might have been on one of 'pirate rides'; secondly, the last great pirate was Black Bart, but his birth name was Bartholomew Roberts who hailed from Wales as did my Roberts clan. Never mind that the name is about the 7th most common name in Wales. Unlike Mr YBAF, I only need about 10% truth to make a good true story.

So who is this hairy biker that you allowed to infiltrate your club and seize this commission? Allow me to introduce myself. I hail from Adelaide up by the River Torrens side where the roads are twice as long and twice as straight and when going north, a man that holds his own is good enough. I have been riding for 38 years so far and hardly stopped although having a family slowed me down considerably. In that time I have only owned six bikes, three of which I still have. I have a double garage that has no room for cars because four bikes live there. Two BMW's that I bought new; a 1977 R100S and a 1980 R80GS; plus Gaye's 1000DS Supersport and my ST3S ABS. Somehow motorbikes got into my blood and stayed. I blame my parents as most people should for all things. My mother hated bikes and my father didn't. He had a variety of bikes leading up to his pride and joy, a Velocette 250 with a fish tail exhaust that was the fastest thing around according to him – it had the flying mile record on Sellicks Beach in Adelaide. At the NDR (National Ducati Rally) in Bathurst, I discovered that a 250 Vello was the first bike to crack 100mph average on Mount Panorama in 1939 so the old man might have been telling the truth. The bike was stolen not long after he got back from the war and so a motorcycle never made a reappearance in the family – until I turned up with an XL125 Honda trail bike – red of course! Originally bought as a commuter it wasn't long before I was taking it out bush; along the Coorong, up to Queensland pig shooting, into the Flinders goat shooting and I even went to my first rally on it at Quorn in the Flinders Ranges from Adelaide – the World's End in 1976. I got the bug for trail riding and upgraded to an XL250 Honda silver tank, "The Pig". I dabbled in Enduro riding but loved travelling on a bike. The 250 gave me the chance to explore further a-field.

That seems funny now but back then it was a reasonably big bike on the dirt until the monster Yammy 500 came along.

It was on my first solo week long excursion that the travelling bug bit hard; with the most basic of camp gear (a few houchies and a sleeping bag) I explored the area north of the River Murray at Morgan heading toward the Barrier Highway at Yunta. I had done a lot of miles in cars and suddenly realised the big difference between the two modes of travel – in a car you travel though country in your controlled environment but on a bike you become part of the environment – if it is cold, you get cold, if it is wet, you get wet, if you pass a dead roo you smell it, but if you pass a patch of wildflowers blossoms, you can smell them. Maybe my heroes had always been cowboys and I substituted a horse for a bike, who knows, but I knew I had found something that connected me and so I've been a bike traveller ever since.

I jumped from my 250 to a 1,000cc Beemer. My tutor was Paris Pangalos who I'd met when I lived in Canberra in the mid 70's working as a builder's labourer for the Dept of Housing and Construction before moving indoors to a desk job then back home to Adelaide. Paris found me a few years later working in Whyalla when I bought my first BMW. The first trip was with Paris from Whyalla to Canberra for the Alpine Rally in 1978. Riding along the Hume Highway on a Friday night of a long weekend in the rain is not something I will forget. I could barely see Paris' tail light but I could hear the exhaust from his 500/4 Honda so when he changed down and went for it, so did I, sight unseen, trusting he could see more than me. That weekend taught me how to ride blind in the rain and how to ride a 'big roadbike' in mud and snow.

I also caught the Rally bug and would ride a thousand k's in a weekend just to drink beer in a different pub and sit around a camp fire swapping bike stories, yarns, poems and songs – well Monty Python type songs.

While others my age were seeking the romance of o/s travel, I sought Australia.

In 1979 I did the round Australia thing anti-clockwise via Highway 1. It was a sort of pub crawl from Adelaide to Whyalla via Cairns! I ended up going around, across and up and down this Australia – just to have a look and see what was there. Some memories include camping in the rainforest by the beach at Port Douglas which was then a sleepy retirement location for fisherpersons and boasted a caravan that sold takeaway barramundi and chips as the only fast food you could get. I also camped in the sandhills on the outskirts of Broome overlooking Cable Beach chasing scorpions away from my fire. When I went back to both places more than 20 years later, they had changed! - there were resorts on both locations. The road from Broome to Port Headland was dirt then and I managed to come-a-gutsa in a large bulldust hole that sent me sailing over the handlebars and the bike cart wheeling down the road. We both needed minor repairs and I managed to ride to hospital in Port Headland with one arm and one leg not working. It was fun pulling into a servo riding around until I could coax someone to hold me up when I pulled up next to them, then riding to the hospital. That so far has been my big off.

Travelling to outback deserts fascinated me for a while. I rode the Stuart Highway when it was dirt to Alice Springs and the rough goat track out to Ayers Rock en route to the Centre Rally. Coming home I detoured to Oodnadatta. I met a bloke, struck up a conversation, ended up having a swim in his pool and staying in Oodna for a while and he convinced me to take the Beemer out to Dalhousie Springs then onto Alka Seltzer and Purni Bores in the Simpson Desert. So I did. I met some fairly bemused people at Purni when I turned up by myself. They asked, "Where's your friends?" "I don't have any" "Well what if something happens, have you got a radio?" "Sure I have, I'm not uncivilised you know, I listen to the news each night on my tranny." "But what if something serious happens?" "Well, if it is mechanical I'll try to fix it, if it is worse than that, then that is what the rope is for wrapped around the

front indicators – if it gets too bad, I'll tie it off to the bike, throw one end over a tree, twice round my neck and jump off the seat.' They changed the conversation shortly after that and didn't hang around long. Mission accomplished. Peace and quiet to make a cuppa tea from the boiling bore water and eat a piece of fruit cake. When I got back to Oodna Adam Platte admitted he lied to me about having taken his R69S out there as he wanted the first ever road bike to ride into the Simpson Desert to be a BMW and his old version of my bike wasn't up to it! (Google the Pink Roadhouse some time).

I ended up doing a lot of dirt miles on the R100S including Cameron's Corner, the old Strzelecki Track, Coopers Creek, Birdsville and the Birdsville Track. It looked odd with trials tyres, everything stripped off it that wasn't essential and carrying 10 litres of fuel and the same in water in racks over the cylinders. Remember that this was the bike that won the 1977 Castrol 6 hour; Kenny Blake and Joe Eastmure winning, the 900SS of John Warrian and Ron Boulden fourth, BMW R100S of Helmut Dahne and Tony Hatton fifth and the 750SS of Mike Hailwood and Jim Scaysbrook sixth!

Then in 1980 BMW released a road/trail bike to commemorate their Paris Dakar wins so I got the R80GS and rode it with the SA BMW Club over to Kalgoorlie, up to Wiluna then east along the Gunbarrell Highway to Ayer's Rock to be the third crossing of the Great Victoria/ Gibson Deserts by motorcycles – the first and second being the NSW



[Crossing the Finke 'River' following the old Ghan line from Alice. R80GS]

(1976) and WA BMW clubs. It remains the hardest thing I have ever done and the closest I ever got to just giving up. After almost a week of not getting out of second gear very often or for long, I was completely exhausted and probably very dehydrated and when we stopped for our afternoon cuppa and a biscuit at 3.00pm I just didn't want to crawl out from the shade of the bush I was laying under when the others moved on. I would catch up. But I couldn't. The temperature was well over 100°F made worse in overalls, boots and Bellstaff jacket and I was just was too stuffed to move. When it dawned on me that death was the next visitor, I shook myself into gear and climbed on the bike and took off. Only a few k's down the gravel track (gravel made from washed sand, not put there by man!)

the front wheel went out from underneath me and down the bike went. I knew that a smashed bike would mean the end of me so I consciously stopped it from flipping – I picked up my leg from the down side and put it on the side of the seat and hung on – riding it like a skateboard but it kept from flipping. When it came to rest, I stepped off it, picked it up, saw there was no damage, only scrape marks on the crash bar and pannier so started it and chased after the others. I was well awake by then and have never felt like giving up again – except a few Sunday mornings ago in Khancoban. So am I one-eyed when it comes to BMW's? Show me another bike with the same endurance, reliability and strength to go anywhere anytime, and I might not be.



[Some harmless rally fun R100S]





[Now that's bogged! Salt lake in the Simpson Desert]

So how did I make the (sensible) transition to a Ducati? Simple, I always loved Dukes and very nearly bought a 900 SS instead of the Beemer in the '70s. I had mates like Pete Morrissey and Greg 'Slim' Ryan who rode then and I got used to being left behind in the Adelaide Hills after 2 corners. I lost contact with many of my old bike friends until 2006 when I bumped into Slim in Civic after not having seen him for about 20 years. Over lunch one day he asked me why I had never bought a Ducati and I said I wasn't done yet and was thinking seriously of doing just that. 'Life is too short not to have owned a Ducati' is what he said. Three days later Slim died suddenly at home in bed. I went out and bought my ST3S a month later. Life is for living and one can wait too long to do the important things. He was also the one who suggested the CDDC as a 'good bunch'. He was right both times – they are fantastic bikes and I have made some lasting friendships through the club. Curiously both Pete Morrissey and Slim still had their Ducatis from way back when – Slims '73 750GT is in now in the care of Murray Willmott and Pete's Hailwood Replica has recently been brought back to life with the assistance of Grant.

So when you see me struggling along on my ST3, spare a thought for this Ducati novice still learning to ride these two-wheeled concerns on the bitumen. Luckily I have had a good teacher in Gaye who acts as the rabbit for me to chase.

Now that I have bared some, but not all, how about some other members providing a little profile of themselves. Elsewhere in this issue there is a rider profile to give you some clues. So keep those cards and letters rolling in.

Chris Roberts
Captain Ride

Plan to cut rural speed limits



The proposal reduces speeds on sealed roads from 100 kilometres an hour to 90 and gravel roads to 80. (ABC TV: ABC TV)

All Tasmanian rural roads could soon have reduced speed limits as part of a proposal to minimise car accidents.

Road safety statistics show a 10 to 20 per cent reduction in the speed limits in rural roads in Tasmania could prevent four fatalities and 13 serious injuries a year.

The State Government together with the Road Safety Advisory Council is proposing sealed roads drop from 100 kilometres an hour to 90 and gravel roads to 80.

Tasmania would be the first in Australia to introduce a statewide reduction.

It has been trialed for the last three years in Kingborough in the state's south and the local council says there has been a significant drop in the number of car accidents on rural roads.

John Gledhill, from the Road Safety Advisory Council, wants to see reduced speed limits rolled out across Tasmania then interstate.

"I think this will be a benchmark for the rest of Australia and I expect there will be other parts of Australia that will embrace this in time to come," he said.

"I think Tasmania is a pioneer and I hope that it does have an impact beyond our shores."

Public feedback on the proposal will be received until February.

J.D. Power Study: U.S. Motorcycle Riders Aging, and Leaving Market

Below is the press release issued by J.D. Power this morning concerning their 2010 U.S. Motorcycle Competitive Information Study. The summary of the study contained in the press release is interesting for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the report that U.S. motorcycle buyers continue to get older, and are not being replaced with a sufficient number of new customers. According to the study the average rider age in the United States has increased from 40 to 49 years since 2001. Think about this for a minute, the average U.S. rider is nearly 50 years old. Additionally, the study concludes that “the percentage of first-time buyers has declined for a second consecutive year.” Here is the press release.

WESTLAKE VILLAGE, Calif.: 16 December 2010 — *Managing owner expectations through proactive communication and providing personal service has a considerable positive impact on overall satisfaction with the motorcycle ownership experience, according to the J.D. Power and Associates 2010 U.S. Motorcycle Competitive Information StudySM released today.*

The study, now in its 13th year, measures owner satisfaction with new motorcycles by examining six major factors of the overall ownership experience: product; build quality; cost of ownership; sales; service; and warranty. The study identifies a number of action items based on key diagnostics that most significantly impact the overall motorcycle ownership experience. These best practices can be used by manufacturers and their dealers to improve overall satisfaction. Two of these best practices, which are common among high performers, are managing owner expectations through proactive communication (including following up after a sales visit) and providing personal service (including a fluid and seamless process in servicing their motorcycle). When best practices such as these are met, satisfaction averages 878 on a 1,000-point scale—more than 50 index points above the industry average of 827. In comparison, when manufacturers and their dealers do not deliver on these best practices, satisfaction averages only 752.

“In an industry currently confronted with limited consumer spending, it is to the advantage of motorcycle manufacturers and dealerships to identify and implement the best practices that satisfy owners that may lead to higher revenue,” said Dennis Goodman, senior research manager of the powersports practice at J.D. Power and Associates. “Slightly more than one-half of motorcycle owners state that their brand missed on two or more best practices, indicating that there is room for improvement across the industry.”

In addition, the more best practices that are delivered, the more likely the motorcycle owner is to recommend and repurchase the brand. For example, among motorcycle owners whose brand delivered on all of the best practices, 84 percent say they “definitely will” recommend the brand, and 63 percent say they “definitely will” repurchase the brand. In comparison, just 65 percent of motorcycle owners whose brand missed four or more best practices say they “definitely will” recommend the brand, and less than one-third say they “definitely will” repurchase.

The study also finds that quality has declined from 2009, with the industry average increasing by 29 problems per 100 motorcycles (PP100) to 152 PP100—the same level reported in the 2008 study. One-half of all owners report experiencing at least one problem with their motorcycle, with most of the problems being engine related (44%).

Among motorcycle owners who experience at least one problem, overall satisfaction is significantly lower than among owners who did not experience a problem with their new motorcycle (792 vs. 862, respectively). The problems that have the greatest negative impact on the overall satisfaction score are gearshift problems, clutch chatter and the engine lacking power.

The study also finds the following key trends:

- *Sales volumes and revenue of ancillary goods and services tend to be considerably higher—by an average of \$957—at motorcycle dealerships that provide a highly satisfying experience vs. dealerships that do not.*
- *The population of motorcycle buyers is aging, with the average rider age increasing from 40 to 49 years since 2001—an indication that many owners may soon exit the market. Additionally, the percentage of first-time buyers has declined for a second consecutive year, making it more critical now than ever for manufacturers to focus on attracting new customers.*

The 2010 U.S. Motorcycle Competitive Information Study includes responses from 8,490 owners who purchased a new 2009 or 2010 model-year on-road or dual-sport motorcycle between September 2009 and May 2010. The study was fielded between September and October 2010.

Why Rossi pressed the red button

Toby Moody explains why Ducati signing Rossi is seismic for MotoGP and investigates whether the great Italian still has a trick or two up his sleeve

Finally... we can get on with the rest of grand prix motorcycling history now we know officially that Valentino Rossi is riding a red, loud, fire-breathing Ducati MotoGP bike for 2011 and 2012. One's head can finally conjure up imagery that we've always wanted and one that Italy will go into melt down for. For motorcycle racing, it just doesn't get any better. For bike people it is up there with The Pope winning at Monza in a Ferrari.

Seriously though, British designer Alan Jenkins – who does much of the aerodynamic work for Ducati – did make me realise what it's going to be like when I spoke to him about it the other day: "We've been going to the same wind tunnel in Italy for some time now, and it involves us staying in this hotel nearby. So we all meet for breakfast and although I'm in a white shirt, some of the Ducati guys have got their red MotoGP shirts on, but in recent weeks people have been coming up to us while we're eating breakfast, badgering us to know if Valentino is going to ride a Ducati. "One day we got in the car to the tunnel and stopped at some lights only for someone walking down the street to see the guys' red Ducati shirts in the car. He came over and knocked on the window saying, 'Rossi. Ducati, Si?' with his thumbs up. This is stuff just happening in the street. It's massive."



So now we know it's really going to happen, why the move? Is the major reason because current Rossi's current Yamaha team-mate Lorenzo is quick – too quick - and a threat to making the #46 fade into the middle field? Or is it that Yamaha couldn't offer Rossi any more money, with rumours even of a pay cut to try and top up the larger amount that Lorenzo would need for winning the 2010 world championship? Or is it that he always wanted to try out a Ducati just as everyone wants to drive a Ferrari in F1. It's in the script then that a very native

Italian should ride a red Ducati. As President of Ducati, Gabriele Del Torchio said: "Near Bologna (Ducati) we have Ferrari, Maserati and Pagani. We are very passionate."

It's like a Yamaha France-run Gauloises Yamaha being ridden by Christian Sarron or JPS Nortons ridden by Trevor Nation, Ron Haslam and Terry Rymer, let alone an Italian in a Ferrari F1 car. Hell, the last near-Italian winner in one of those was Jean Alesi in 1995, while the last full-blooded Italian winner was Michele Alboreto in 1985.

Was the Rossi Ducati all put into place a while ago after talk of Ferrari running Valentino in an F1 car, when he was riding for Yamaha, six years ago? Only this spring Luca di Montezemolo mentioned his name during an interview with Martin Brundle on the BBC. It was a very precise name drop. From a marketing point of view, Yamaha is of course disappointed, but it cannot bank roll something it cannot afford. Speaking to a high-up Yamaha MotoGP person about Rossi leaving, we discussed the loss of the rider that not only turned the company's MotoGP results around but also its image with stock bikes and the R1. He said that he was disappointed that Rossi was leaving after seven years, but aware that just like Agostini had a relationship with Yamaha, he is still perceived as an MV Augusta rider. "The same is true of Eddie Lawson as he was a Yamaha rider at his height, and although he rode for Honda and Cagiva, he is a Yamaha man today. Maybe..." He stopped himself.

The exact same thing is true in the mind's eye of four-wheeled fans with Ayrton Senna being a McLaren driver, Michael Schumacher being a Ferrari driver, and Tommi Makinen being a Mitsubishi rally driver. People remember them in those cars. One thing that will be the lynchpin to all of this from a technical side will be Jerry Burgess and the crew that have tended to Rossi's every need since the start of 2000. That's eleven seasons of everyone knowing who does what, when and how with a nod a wink and a look when under pressure. It works.

Seven-times a world championship it works, so whatever Ducati should do is to get the whole shooting match over from Yamaha. Burgess is the man who can translate what goes on to the factory guys. However, Rossi has already said, "I always speak with [Ducati general manager] Filippo Preziosi, and I see in him the similar behavior that I saw in Furusawa in 2004." And by all accounts I hear that there are sponsors kicking down the door wanting to be associated with one of the most charismatic sportsman of this era. Besides, "We will put all the money that is necessary for it to be successful," said del Torchio an hour after the announcement on Sunday.

With the money that Yamaha save in not paying Rossi, it could chuck that at Burgess and the crew to engineer Spies. Now that would throw up a curve ball that would keep a smile on the faces of the Yamaha guys wouldn't it? But the amount of merchandising that Ducati is about to sell is going to be stratospheric. They'd better start making the caps now for Christmas because there is going to be an awful lot that need to be embroidered!

For Rossi, is this a move too far? He announced to the world in November 2003 that he was leaving Honda in a packed press conference in Valencia. He sat down and told everyone face-to-face rather than through an email

and a hand written photocopy – he even posed on his Honda V5 one last time with a rucksack on. The move from Honda to Yamaha when the 990cc bikes were able to be turned into winners even if one of the major set-up parameters wasn't quite 'bob on' when the lights went out. Nowadays you can't get away with that and it takes a very skilled rider to thread through all the scenarios in limited practice to get a race set-up.

Arguably, Rossi only won the opening race of the year because the dead cert for the race, Casey Stoner, fell off, and Jorge Lorenzo had such a badly injured hand that he couldn't shake hands, let alone think about using it to hold onto a 240bhp motorcycle. The #46 bike then didn't get close to Lorenzo's electrifying pace at Jerez, nor Le Mans. Admittedly, Valentino was riding with a right shoulder injury that he'd picked up moto-crossing, but the points table waits for no-one.

What may be difficult for Rossi to get used to is a much smaller factory with very different working practices from a Japanese factory with whom he has been working for. Indeed, by the time he sorts the Ducati to his liking, might Lorenzo be faster because the Spaniard has been on the same bike for three solid years, getting three or four wins on the board before mid-June 2011?



Will Honda finally get their act together with Pedrosa and the incoming Stoner? Will the ultra-clean cut corporate way of Marlboro cramp Valentino's to-the-core bohemian way? These are all questions that people are asking. But actually all of the above will matter little because it's Valentino Rossi we're talking about here.

This is massive.

MOTOGP » Rossi's 2011 bike up and running

Valentino Rossi's mechanics assemble the Italian's 2011 Desmosedici.

All this week Valentino Rossi's team of mechanics, who moved with him from Yamaha, have been at Ducati HQ in Bologna assembling the Italian star's 2011 Desmosedici's.

"Both Nicky's guys & us are here building next year's bikes," read a Twitter post by mechanic Alex Briggs. "This is basically the same thing that we did at Honda & Yamaha. It's not special to this year. The other factory teams will all do the same anywhere from now till February.

"By doing it at the factory we have a great chance to speak to the designers & engineers about ideas to improve for the future. The bikes we are building now are the base & will evolve all year. This is also normal."

According to Briggs, Rossi's bike was started for the first time on Thursday.

"We were just about to fire up the bike before lunch, & JB [crew chief Jerry Burgess] said. Wait! If she don't go we won't get to eat lunch (that's why he gets the big \$)."

A later post, after lunch, read: "For the record the Riders bike started no prob at 2:05 PM today."

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While the bike may be ready, don't expect to see any pictures of it until the official January launch.

"I know u guys are dying for a photo of the bike. But if I do that before the team launch in January, the only dying around here will be me!" joked Briggs.

Ducati: Rossi's fitness biggest concern

By Michele Lostia and Matt Beer

Ducati's sporting boss Filippo Preziosi has admitted that he is concerned Valentino Rossi's testing programme could be hampered by his recovery from shoulder surgery.

The MotoGP legend is joining Ducati from Yamaha next season, but was off the pace in his first test on the Italian bike in November, and then had surgery on the shoulder injury he had sustained in a Motocross incident earlier in the season.

In an interview with *Motosprint*, Preziosi confirmed that Rossi's fitness was a worry, as he fears the former champion will still be below par physically when testing resumes in Malaysia in February. "At the moment, the thing that worries me the most isn't a technical issue," Preziosi said. "I can't figure when he will have the physical condition to really push on the track. Valentino will come to Sepang fully recovered from a medical point of view, but physically he will have a big gap to make up. After all, he'll come from a winter not dedicated to resting, but to working out to recover. "Valentino will not have the chance to rest, while for riders at that level it's important to pull the plug a bit. Luckily he his super strong mentally, so he will come to the races in a strong psychological state of mind."

Preziosi admitted that Rossi might have to limit his testing mileage for fitness reasons - yet will want to accumulate as many laps as possible as he adjusts to the very-different characteristics of the Ducati. "We'll have to be very able in asking him not to run too much," said Preziosi. "Temperatures are very high in Sepang and conditions are extreme. "The priority is for him to recover 100 per cent during the winter, so for February and March it's fine to sacrifice some extra information from running on the track. "We must be able to do without all the testing we'd like to do, otherwise we'd force Valentino into a hyper-activity on track that may slow down his recovery. "We'll have to make him run just as little as needed to develop the bike. I don't want to risk having Valentino under 100 per cent in the races because he got too tired in testing. We must save him energy during the winter. "It's clear, however, that we will have to hold him back because he will want to understand and develop the bike as much as possible. To do that, he'll want to run plenty."



The team boss added that Ducati would have to stay calm about its testing form, as it might not be representative. "I don't think we'll lead the lap times, but we must avoid being influenced by it," said Preziosi. "We must think about the races."



THE NEW 796 MONSTER

Italian motorcycle manufacturer, **Ducati** has released its first new model of the season: the 2011 Ducati Monster 796. This mid-range street bike fills the void between the entry-level personality of the **Monster 696** and the advanced road performance of the **Monster 1100**. The 796 is a sensible choice for motorcyclists looking for an amusing and easy-to-manuever motorbike that's ideal for jaunting in-or-around the city.

The beauty of the **Monster** line is that the basic architecture of the bikes, including the chassis, air/oil-cooled V-Twin engine configuration, and sleek minimalist body panels are shared between models. However a closer look reveals there are some key differences between this one and its siblings.

The primary difference that distinguishes the mid-level Monster is its use of a 4-valve, 803cc V-Twin, identical to the unit employed in the **Hypermotard 796** street bike. Compared to the other Monsters this engine is in a higher state of tune, employing an 11.1:1 compression ratio (versus the Monster 696/1100's 10.7:1 ratio) courtesy of pistons with a different crown shape.



(Above) The Monster 796's handlebar is positioned nearly an inch higher than the Monster 696/1100 which contributes to a more upright riding position. (Center) The Monster 796 gets a beautifully crafted single sided aluminum swingarm. (Below) The 2011 Ducati Monster 796 uses an air/oil-cooled 803cc L-Twin engine as used in the Hypermotard 796.

Fuel is received from a 3.8-gallon fuel tank through 45mm throttle bodies, each equipped with a single fuel-injector. Exhaust is piped through a 2-1-2 stainless-steel configuration that terminates with twin shorty-style under-tail mufflers. Each header pipe is fitted with an oxygen sensor which ensures optimum engine running conditions.

A six-speed transmission and a hydraulically-operated APTC clutch control the engine's power through a chain drive. Furthermore the clutch is bathed within the engine's oil supply enhancing reliability and reducing noise as compared to the racing-style 'dry' clutches used on the 1198 Superbike. The clutch also incorporates a slipper/back torque limiting functionality which helps prevent the rear wheel instability during downshifts at high rpm.

The engine is cradled in a lipstick-red steel trellis frame. It attaches to a reworked subframe which is compatible with passenger grab handles that are available as a Ducati accessory. The 796 also gets the same well-crafted single-sided aluminum swingarm as used on the more expensive 1100 model.

Suspension is comprised of a Showa inverted fork and an Sachs hydraulic shock that is mounted directly between the frame and swingarm without a linkage. Although the fork doesn't offer any damping adjustment, the shock provides spring preload and rebound tuning abilities.

The 796 rolls on a pair of beautiful black 5-spoke cast-aluminum wheels featuring a small red pin stripe around the edge to draw attention to them when in motion. Attached to the front wheel is a pair of 320mm brake discs clamped by a radial-mount four-piston Brembo calipers. Rear brake consists of a solo 245mm disc pinched by a twin-piston caliper. Both brake

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systems are powered hydraulically through stainless-steel lines. Anti-lock brakes are also available as an option on the new machine however pricing is TBD. Lastly, the wheels are shod with Pirelli Diablo Rosso tires in sizes 120/70-17 front and 180/55-17 rear.

Hop into the seat and the first thing you'll notice is how similar it feels to the smaller 696 model. The bike feels short and skinny, which makes it easy to manhandle on the road. The seat height measures 31.5 in. above the ground which is 0.4 in. lower than the 1100, and 1.2 in. taller than the 696. Grabbing a hold of the aluminum handlebar isn't as much of a stretch compared to other Monsters courtesy of the bar risers that elevate the bar position by nearly an inch.

Thumb the starter button and the new Ducati fires to life with deep, thumping exhaust note. Surprisingly, the 796 doesn't get the same sleek slimline switch gear as used on some of the Italian manufacturer's other new street bikes, including the **Streetfighter**. Instrumentation is comprised of a small, yet functional, white-backlit LCD display that is both easy to read and quickly operated via the switchgear on the left handlebar.



The engine in the 796 is peppy and can satisfy the needs of both novice and experience riders alike.

Clutch lever pull is light and offers 4-way lever position adjustment to accommodate different sized hands. The clutch also delivers an ample level of feel for riders who might not have a lot of experience launching a motorcycle. The lower first gear ratio only adds to its user-friendly demeanor when pulling away from a stop. Switching between the remaining five gears was smooth and trouble-free, though we wish the gearbox felt tighter.

Twist the throttle and this Monster delivers a much more robust spread of power compared to the smaller 696. Sure, it won't win any drag races against a modern liquid-cooled sportbike, yet it will still surprise you with just how much torque it cranks out at low-to-mid rpm. The engine has plenty of juice to loft the front wheel in first gear and is capable of bursts of speed whenever it's revved out to redline. While the engine delivers a bit of vibration, it never becomes annoying, even at freeway speeds.

In terms of handling the 796 feels every bit as nimble as its smaller sibling. Direction changes can be accomplished with a light touch of the handlebar. The center of gravity also feels low which aids in steering and railing around corners. Though

suspension spring rates are calibrated for lighter riders, when pushed this Monster still delivers enough grin-inducing performance for even an experienced, sport-oriented pilot.



Regardless of where you're from or your background rolling around a Monster is your entry into its exclusive two-wheeled fraternity.

The bike we rode came equipped with the optional ABS system. By default the system is always on, but you can disable it easily by navigating through the menu system on the instrument display. Braking power and feel is adequate and we appreciated the added confidence provided by the ABS. But we were more impressed by the fact that you can quickly turn it off with a few clicks of a button if you're feeling mischievous. We also appreciated that the position of the brake lever could be moved based on rider preference.

If you're a motorcyclist who covers a lot of ground in the city then the Monster 796 is a bike you need to consider. It's an easy machine to ride, looks awesome, and is compact enough to slice through any urban gridlock. Its peppy air-cooled engine not only delivers punchy acceleration but a level of charisma that is sadly missing from many other street bikes in this same price point segment.

Arrivederci

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