

RnR Repsol Racing Conquers CMP with a Team Challenge GTU Win!

With Rick Beggs going down the day before, low-siding and grinding his pinky fingernail until it was



almost gone, squeezing the raw mess into a glove and racing a full hour in round 2 of the Carolina Motorsports Park Team Challenge race on Sunday was sure going to be a challenge. But, with Rick pulling slightly faster times than his counterpart, Rachel Sasse, it was decided he would start the race. Unfortunately, the night was wrought with surprising bands of thunderstorms, dropping bouncy-ball sized hail, and making for a misty, damp, and cool next morning's practice.

As practice sessions started promptly at 8am, it was clear that NO ONE wanted to go out in the day's first practice to be a human squeegee and test the track's grip at the same time. Eventually, a few brave souls tip-toed their way along the track as time wound down to the day's last round of morning practice.

Even though Rick had raced his bike later the same day he had wrecked it, it was discovered afterward that the engine case cover had ground down enough to start weeping oil. Luckily, to test out their teammate's newly prepped bike, they had brought it along and now quickly drafted it so that both Rick and Rachel could participate in the morning practice. To seat in some newly installed brake pads, Rick hopped on Rachel's bike, which was the bike they had planned to use for the Team Challenge race. Rachel hopped on the bike 'on-loan' that belonged to her other teammate, Jason Gibbens. "DO NOT wreck this bike!" She adamantly told herself, a bit worried about the wet track and misty weather compounding the possibility of Murphy's Law.

The practice round went quickly. Rick stayed out long enough to brake in the new pads, conserving the tires for the upcoming 2 hour race. Rachel found some others on the track willing to push it a bit harder and like a guppy, she was only too happy to give chase to prove to herself that she could overtake them. Thankfully, she didn't ride over her head in the conditions and brought back the loaned bike in one piece.

There was plenty of time to set up their pit for the endurance race, carting necessary tools and supplies to hot pit lane that might be needed if either one of them wrecked, none of which they hoped they had to use. The back-up bike was also put in the pit, just in case. There was a quick change to put RnR Repsol Racing's correct Team Challenge competition number on the bike's number plate while the tire warmers were put on, and the team was set to race. Or so it was thought.

By the time first call came for the Team Challenge race, Rick was already donning his gear, gulping down water for extra last minute hydration. Third call came and the bikes started to line up for their hot lap at pit-out. As Rick got on the bike, Rachel stripped down the tire warmers and went to turn on the bike's on-board video camera, hoping to capture some great footage of the race, but for some reason, the camera wouldn't turn on. Rachel made a split second decision- there was still time. She yelled over the engine's din that she was going to get the other camera and hastily ran to grab it. It took more time to swap out the memory cards between the two cameras and as more bikes lined up to start their hot lap, Rick was getting increasingly anxious.

Finally, the camera was switched over and set to record! Rick put the bike in gear and started to go, but then stopped suddenly. He screamed something at Rachel, but with the collective rumble of the bikes getting ready to go out on course and his helmet muffling his words, she couldn't hear him. "What?!?" She asked a bit frantic, confused at his sudden stop.

Rick tried again, "CHECK THE TRANSPONDER! CHECK THE TRANSPONDER!" When it finally struck Rachel what Rick was trying to say, she quickly wrestled the transponder off the tail of the bike and flipped it over to check the label. Sure enough, it was the wrong transponder! Then, Rachel was like a deer stuck in the headlights. She knew from the practice session that the back-up bike had the Team Challenge transponder on it, which was now out by hot pit lane. Rachel motioned to the hot pit area trying to explain what she needed to do, but Rick adamantly pointed to the trailer and screamed, "Check the floor!"

Not thinking it would be there, she again pointed to the hot pit, but again Rick screamed again, "Check the floor!" feverishly pointing at the trailer. Sure enough, there it was! Under the gun but with bikes still waiting imminently for the signal to take their sighting lap and grid up, Rachel struggled to shove the transponder back in the bracket. Fumbling to seat the transponder, it suddenly clicked in, secure, and she slapped Rick's back signaling him to go.

That close mistake right there could have cost the team the whole race if Rick had not thought to check the transponder. If the wrong transponder had been used, no points would have been awarded at all and the race would have been for naught! "If that was the most excitement in the race, that would just be fine," Rachel thought to herself, imagining how awful the outcome would have been otherwise.

As the green flag dropped and unfurled, the bikes bolted, screaming towards the first turn. Rick had a good start and at the end of the first lap, he managed to grab a spot in 5th. A BMW 1000 was running in first, closely followed by an 1125R Buell, and a Yamaha R6 not too far behind. A powerful Kawasaki ZX10R was in front of RnR Repsol Racing's ZX6R with plenty of lead. Trailing Rick closely was a Honda CBR600. Every once in a while, the Honda would overtake the ZX6R, but Rick would quickly fight back. Lap after lap, Rick fended off the Honda, keeping the 5th place position.

At one point, the Honda pulled in front of Rick out of turn 8 and into turn 9. Rick knew he could overtake the Honda on the back straight, before the turn 11 kink. As they both raced towards turn 11, the Honda slowed slightly in anticipation of the kink while Rick throttled past him, bikes nearly side by side. But once Rick hit the kink, the abrupt transition of the pavement shifted the whole bike over a couple feet to the left edge of the track. Because Rick knew the other bike had been just behind him, he feared that the sudden shift of the bike had booted his fellow competitor off the track. Rick stole a glance behind, and sure enough, the Honda was recovering from its slight off-road excursion and charged right back at Rick's heels. Feeling bad about the close call, Rick motioned the bike to pass, thinking he would be able to eventually overtake the Honda later in the lap. But that was the window the Honda needed to regain confidence, as once Rick had given the green light to pass, it steadily pulled further and further away. No matter- there was still plenty of racing left to do, and Rick concentrated on consistent lap times.

Although there were reports that other tires were getting eaten up by the track during the weekend and would likely need to have at least a rear swap for the endurance race, RnR Repsol Racing was hoping their Dunlops would be able to last the whole race- and the overcast and cool afternoon didn't hurt. The team's plan was to only pit once, a few laps past the halfway mark of the race, at 30 laps. The bike had already been tested to be able to go at least 100 miles before having to refill. At 2.27 miles per lap, the bike would easily make it to 35 laps. Then, Rachel would jump on the bike to finish the race.

Before the halfway mark of the race, the Buell 1125 that had solidly held on to their 2nd place position went down into turn 4, shifting everyone's standing. 45 minutes into the race, some of the bikes started to pull in for a fuel change while Rick charged on. Once the halfway countdown started, Rachel Sasse got ready for her stint on the bike. Not ten minutes later, Rick zoomed past the straight honking the bike's horn signaling he was going to pit in. In the back of Rachel's mind, the use of the horn was a bit ironic as Rachel had staunchly fought Rick to keep the horn on the bike while race-prepping it over the winter months, and she smirked at this fact as she ran to put in her ear plugs and don her helmet and gloves.

Rick railed into the pits and cut the engine off. As Rick dismounted holding the bike a bit askew, it took Rachel a couple tries to get the rear stand on the spools. Pit Crew members Nick Noll dumped the fuel, while Kelly Mattes stood by ready with fire bottle in hand. Once the fuel tank had sucked all the fuel, Rachel tore out of the pits to rejoin the race and tried to keep the pace of Rick's lap times.

Unbeknownst to her, the ZX10R that had been in 3rd eventually was flagged off course due to engine smoke. The Honda that had vexed Rick earlier had changed riders and was not able to keep up the same pace. Rachel was able to make her way around the bike several times during her turn on the bike. Eventually, the Buell 1125R was able to return to the race after some repairs, but too many laps had passed for the team to be able to make up any time lost to be even close to a threat. At this point, RnR Repsol Racing was 3rd overall and holding a 2nd place position in the GTU class as both the BMW 1000 and Yamaha R6 were the only two bikes ahead of the team.

Although the left side of the rear seemed to still have good grip, Rachel could feel the rear slip on the right side as the laps wore on. She made a mental note to be careful not to push it too hard. She knew she had been doing pretty good so far- the last thing she needed to do was to make a mistake and lowside the bike. Thus, it was a COMPLETE surprise when, with about ten more minutes left in the race, she rounded turn 13 and the bike suddenly came out from under her. "Oh NO! I am going down!" She despaired, knowing that Rick would be disappointed with the race so close to the end.

She tried to hold on as her knee hit the ground, ready for the inevitable. But trying to hold on to the bike in that sideways position twisted the throttle a bit and the bike managed to stay up. But then, just as swiftly, the bike shifted back to lowsiding and again, with Rachel trying to hold on, the throttle twisted slightly as her knee hit the ground, popping the bike back up. Astonished that the bike was still upright after the second time, she clambered back onto the seat and made a bee-line to turn 14, shaking her head in disbelief and a bit wistful that SOMEONE would have witnessed that incredibly awesome save! For the rest of the race going through the sweepers of turns 6 and 7, a little out of turn 8, and again at 12 and 13, she coached herself in her helmet, "Ginger! Ginger!" as she made her way around, knowing that the race was almost done.

When she rounded turn 14 and saw the white flag waving at start/finish, a rush of relief came over her after surviving her harrowing near incident and knowing she would not have to baby the back tire any longer. Rounding the last turn and hitting it hard for the checkered, Rachel knew she and Rick had done well as she took her cool down lap. Making her way to pit-in, she raised her arms cheering in self triumph. She slowed the bike as the officials told her to make her way to winner's circle, which she had expected, but she was not prepared when Rick excitedly said, "We got 2nd overall and first in our class!" Beaming at her.

"WHAT??!?! NO WAY!" Not believing the outcome as they were directed into position by the photographer. Boy, it felt good to earn that 2nd place overall cup along with their 1st place plaque. And then the age old race adage so many had tried to pound into her brain that took her so long to learn played back in her mind: "In order to win, first you must finish."

RnR Repsol Racing would like to thank it's sponsors: Repsol, RnR Cycles, Dunlop, Pit-Bull, Full Spectrum Power, Teknic, CRG, Roaring Lion Energy Drink, Woodcraft, Undertheblackhat.net, Lizzy Leather, and Armour bodies. Big thanks to Nick Noll and Kelly Mattes for their help in the pits. RnR Repsol Racing is currently leading first place in the GTU class and running third overall in the Team Challenge Series. Join us for round 3 at Heartland Park in Topeka, KS on Friday, April 22nd!