

## Back on Track by Randy Sautner

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**Am I dreaming?** Am I really in the saddle of the #2 Graves Yamaha R1 doing frighteningly fast laps at a world class race course? It's a dream, alright. A dream come true. What a thrill it is to be on a championship winning team bike that Jamie Hacking once rode like the wind.

I was informed of the Historic Moto Gran Prix racing series by a photographer friend, Chris Anderson of Surfin Turf photography. He told me that my Graves Motorsports Superstock R1 was just the sort of motorcycle that the organization needed. This prestigious bike was raced by Jamie Hacking in the 2005 racing season. Unfortunately, an injury sidelined him before he got to race it at Road Atlanta. The bike was purchased from Graves in full race trim and set up for Road Atlanta.

However it was reduced to a stealth street racer for a couple years. The race plastics, electronics and suspension were replaced with more street minded parts. Stock 05 Raven bodywork, lights and even the horn were hung on the former racer. It even got a shiny new vin#. The suspension was sent to Ohlins for spring changes and re-valving. At a quick glance it appeared to be a lightly modified R1. But when fired up it was clear that this is no ordinary R1. The roar of the finely tuned machine through the titanium exhaust sounds like no other street bike. It was fun to play with unsuspecting victims on the twisty back roads, but this is a true factory race bike and it needed to be on the racetrack.

So after speaking with HMGP leader Bill Brown, I made the decision to take this thoroughbred back to the track. Actually the decision was quite easy. Gentleman racing sounded pretty sweet at my age. Knowing some speedy kid won't be diving under me to take the win and the camaraderie with like-minded enthusiasts was just the ticket. I got off the phone with Bill and within mere minutes the R1 was being transformed back into the race bike that it was born to be.

My first time at the track was at the AMA event held at Road Atlanta April 16-18th. I got to meet the HMGP members and ride at the famous racetrack. First of all, the people involved in this organization are top shelf. It felt as though I had known them for years. Seeing the assortment of classic motorbikes was a feast for the eyes. And sharing the weekend with the pro racers made for an experience of a lifetime. I tried to do exactly as Mr. Brown suggested. Keep it on the track and give them a good show. Although the Graves R1 seemed to know it's way around the course I took my time and learned the "new to me" track. Cautiously improving my times with each lap. By the end of the weekend I was able to say I kept it on track and gave it my best. I'll never forget Jamie James on Yamamonster and the wheelie he

rode between Roy and I as we both carried the front wheel of our R1's exiting turn 5. Good stuff right there.

I had so much fun and had such a great time with my new riding buddies that attending the Mitty two weeks later was a must. When my better half and I rolled onto the race grounds of Road Atlanta we amazed at the number and quality of vintage racecars. From Formula 1 to classic Datsuns. There was something for everyone. But the bikes are why I was there. The event brought many classic motorcycles for show as well as for the track. Seeing the guys from the previous event made me feel right at home and meeting even more new friends at the Mitty made it special. This gentleman racing draws the best people.

This time I knew the track just a little better and the race bred R1 wanted to stretch her legs. So I picked up the pace and hit it a bit harder. Running it a little deeper and rolling on a little earlier in attack mode. We did a grid start Saturday afternoon for the first time of the weekend event and I started dead last but by the time we headed into the first turn I found myself in fourth place. After carefully making passes I worked my way into second position. The leader, JB of Team Zyvax played with me. I had nothing for the fast guys but it was fun for me. And that's what this kind of racing is all about.

In the final race on Sunday we found our place on the grid. The flagman dropped the green cloth and it was on. A pack of screaming two wheel racers twist the throttle's then drop their clutch's and head down the front stretch. All riders tip right into turn 1 then up the hill. Everyone is in a battle for position. The bikes spread out and go at it for several exciting laps. I was proud to finish third in that race because the men that finished 1st and 2nd are fantastic racers. I looked at Lib's back for most of the race. He raced the famed Yamamonster. The leader was out front on his Colin Edwards tribute RC51 making blistering laps. I learned a lot from my experience with the guys on the track.

The HMGP is the perfect place for me, and my ol' R1. I hope to be a part of the Historic Moto Gran Prix for a very long time and I look forward to riding with the members of this fine group again soon.