

# Race Talk with James "the Rocket"



Hi everyone,

My run at Wisconsin's Road America race was awesome. In only my 5th road race, three in 2009 and two in 2010 at the AMA Pro Supersport level I challenge and got my first podium. It was against a field of two top teams and kids that either already raced throughout Europe or came through the red bull rookie cup program and did road racing as their #1 discipline. I was also the only one on a Suzuki, a bike brand known for being underpowered against what seems the budgetless Rockwell and LTD teams I raced against. It was an awesome weekend for the privateer teams like mine on a very limited budget.

## Saturday: Race 1 & Qualifying

This was going to be another double header weekend and when I took to the track in practice I knew we needed to work on the set up. I had a new engine in the bike as well but there was a bog on the bottom end and we needed to get that fixed. It was causing me to lose time coming out of fast turns and I was already behind the semi-pro teams with their souped up Yamaha's. I tried like hell and during the first set of track times I was 5 seconds off the leaders and knew I needed help.

Lenny from Race Tech came over made some suspension changes and when I went back out for the first provisional Q I was able to come in 7th, but was off still way off the pace. I ended the first day working to get the bike looked at. Thankfully, Mark Junge from the VESRAH Suzuki team came to my rescue and put in a ECU curve that cleared up my problem and was working good. The next morning the bike felt much better and in final qualifying was able to better my position and take 5th on the grid. I was still off the pace a little but I knew I could drop my times even more so I settled in for the race. Race one was awesome in that I got a decent start. I was underpowered compared to the Rockwell and LTD bikes but could hang with most other Yamaha's on the grid which was huge.

In Supersport with the rules the Yamaha's have a real advantage with lower overall bike weight and more raw horsepower. Top riders in the class don't have to work as hard and make up tons of ground on the straights, and Road America has some of the longest straights on the circuit. I knew I had to find a way to be faster in the technical sections to make up time and later on the brakes in order to close the gaps. I did just that and finally moved up through the pack and positioned myself in 5th sniffing the draft of the main pack toward the end of the race. I was able to run the best laps toward the end of the race with a 23.4 and that was without the help of a draft. I positioned myself well and on the last lap was able to take advantage of two riders who fell to get on the box for the first time. I was so happy. I did a very limited season in 2009 doing (3) AMA Pro Supersport races taking two (4th) place finishes and Road America was my (2nd) race in 2010 and I made the podium.

## **Sunday: Race Two**

The second day came around and I was really excited. Lenny from Race Tech made some additional changes to my suspension set up and I changed to a medium front tire since my front tire from the day before was junk at the end of the race. I went out for practice and was trying to get my rhythm back but for some reason I wasn't as comfortable during practice. I came in and knew I had to get my head on straight if I wanted to be upfront again. In the race I got a decent start from the 5th position on the grid. Already the LTD and Rockwell boys were charging to the front setting the pace. I fell back into 5th place and always back as I worked to get my rhythm back into the game. After around 3 laps I started to get comfortable and was able to push. I was alone and chased as hard as I could to move forward but it was difficult being slightly underpowered. I did what I could to make up time in the technical sections and on the brakes, two places I am good at. On the long straights I just tried to get a good drive coming out and hoped the front group started fighting it out slowing the pace a little while I upped my pace to gain some ground. It worked.

Things were getting better and my lap times were also getting better as I started to catch a sniff of the leaders draft. Man I was starting to get excited but I was moving around a lot and really going in deep on the brakes. With only a couple of laps left I made a move around the outside and caught some of the lead group by surprise. While doing so I hammered in a BIG slide and the rear end started to come around. Dirt track style I just stayed in the throttle and drove off the corner picking up third place. I knew holding on to that spot was going to be a challenge but I stayed in it on the white flag lap. As we went to each corner I buried it deep into the corners and got on the gas early. We went into turn 5 but it seemed the front two checked up a little causing me to get on the brakes really hard and run wide. That cause Cameron who was right behind me to run wide and it killed my drive out of the turn. Somehow I stayed in it a little while another Yamaha rider was able to pick up the fourth spot and the LTD rider third. I was pissed because it came down to the last turn and a drag race to the line. I have no idea how I held off Cameron's LTD bike but I did and took a hard earned 5th place. While I wasn't super happy, I was pleased that my bike worked well and that I was able to come from way back, catch the lead group and fight for another podium position. It was the best weekend ever and I received a lot of compliments from AMA team owners, riders and fans.

I now have a few dirt track races to attend before I'm back on my road race bikes at Mid Ohio and then off to Laguna Seca to race when the MotoGP is in town. Till then I want to thank all my sponsors, especially **Ant-racing.com** and **Team Hooters** for all the support. And, a big thank you goes out to Lenny from **Race Tech** for working with me on the suspension making my bike work really good.

For more information about James "the Rocket" please visit his web site at [www.jamesrispoli.com](http://www.jamesrispoli.com).

***Till next time...do what I like to do GO FASTER...***

***James "the Rocket" Rispoli***

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***or call me direct at 585-356-1811 if you would like to be a sponsor in 2010***