

Race Talk with James "the Rocket"

Hi Everyone;

This latest AMA Pro Singles race made me finally realize what I can do when I put my mind to it and focus on my goals. Where I place in this class at the end of the season is ultimately not as important as what I have learned that will make me the best of the best long term. Participating in this national race I found something, that little extra, that over the top feeling that I was invincible. I have been working with my sponsors and supporters on next seasons program for the last couple of months. During these conversations and meetings I was coached that to be an elite athlete I have to do the things that elite athletes do. Not just ride a motorcycle well; there is a ton of riders who can do that! What I mean is eat, sleep, train and most of all think the thoughts of an elite athlete.

Now it's not like I haven't heard all that before, but for some reason this time around it sunk in. I realized in order to



play at the absolute top of the game and be in it for the long haul I would have to change my thinking on what it took to be the best of the best. Up to now I can say I am riding as a pro racer, but the divisions I am racing in both Pro Singles and Pro SuperSport are the low end of the pro scales. Its the first level to even see if you have what it takes to become one of the elite. And I don't mean just racing at the next level, I mean racing and challenging for the front at the next level right from the get go. Even at the top of the game the field is only so deep with elite athletes that are doing all the work. Those are the athletes at the top of the charts week in and week out, good days or bad you know they bring their "A" game each time they throw a leg over a bike. They are prepared and ready to go.

Hagerstown was that turning point for me. It was a race that I felt my new training regime, my new thoughts on how I viewed the sport, and my years of training and experience riding and racing all came together. It was a race where I only charged forward, I never looked back and I passed people like it was my job. Inside lines, outside lines, bad starting positions it just didn't matter. I was ready, able and was just going to do it. At the Hagerstown race I felt I was the man to beat and that on any given day in the future I will be one of the top athletes that all others will wonder about, maybe even be a little worried I'd take their spot near the top. It is a transformation that has been taking place since I started realizing being an elite pro athlete was who I am, what I want to do, and that I'm going to be darn good at it for a long time to come.

Its tough to be on your own a 19 year old with a young unfamiliar 23 year old Mx mechanic trying to make a name for yourself while competing on the circuit like this, but Dustin and I have a great relationship and even greater support from our sponsors for parts and supplies. And Dustin, well he works endless hours making sure everything on my bikes is just right and that alone lets me feel confident every time I'm at the track. We all know there is no money to made in our class with expenses higher than the purse payouts and cash funding for the sport difficult at best for even the most wiley of veterans, but you do what you have to do. What other class can you set up a motor and suspension and come out and play in front of a packed house on the national scene. Its a great starting place for Dustin and I.

But Hagerstown was the race that almost wasn't for me. I was at VIR for a WERA National Endurance road race event at the Cycle Jam weekend. I showed up on Thursday and had my practice and race on Friday. I intended to stay at the track and watch the sprint races Saturday and train all week since the AMA Superbike national was the next weekend and I'm competing in the SuperSport class. My endurance race went so, so but with some other mishaps we ended up leading our 600 cc class with 10 minutes to go before our clutch burnt up putting us out of the race. In endurance racing that's the way it goes sometimes. Late Friday after the race I got a call from my dad who said why don't you head to Hagerstown? He met with Dustin my mechanic the night before and Dustin was down for coming to Hagerstown with a bike. We only had our TT bike available with our big track bike apart getting some updates for Indy and a back up for Peoria. It was kind of cool to show up with one bike in the back of a pickup truck while around me was big rigs and top funded riders from around the country. Most, even the top guys in my class had the fortune 500 of bike builders right there in their corner at the race helping with motor and set up, but it didn't matter. Dustin and I again like we have done all year unloaded our bike with the minimalist of crews and support ready to do battle.

I was fast out of the truck like I have been each race this year. My Cycle Dynamics /Ant-racing.com supported bike just jumped off the corners but with gearing and the lack of some overrev I was a little short at the end of the straight. I made that up like I always do by running it in hard and tight, searching for lines that would withstand my hard charging style and support the grip of my rock hard tires. I found it where others couldn't! After a fast practice off the number one spot by less than a tenth, Dustin and I went to work. A call here and a call there and we were making changes getting ready for qualifying. I qualified well again but decided to make additional changes to see if we could even do better. Our last qualifier showed us we were starting to go in the wrong direction. We waited a while, went back to our second set up and readied for our heat.

I took second in the heat, seeing, feeling and testing the track and my opponent. I was confident I had something for them for sure. In the final I didn't have the best starting position but I was determined to not let that phase me one bit and got off the line. I wasn't first, but I railed my Cycle Dynamics / Ant-Racing supported bike around the outside of Baker and took the point. I gapped the field and took flight inching forward all the time. Late in the race with 4 laps to go a rider went down at the back of the pack. The red flag came out faster than a shooting rocket even though the rider was up and out of the way. It was one of those racing deals and it gave everyone a chance to adjust their lines on the restart and start over. On the restart I again took the lead but my set up was starting to go away. The rear tire started slipping around some more and the front started pushing a little, it was hard to hold the lines that were working for me. I tried some other lines and took one last shot at the front but couldn't make it work. My bike was just a little unstable and a little underpowered at the end of the straight for a heads up match.

I wasn't happy and initially felt robbed until now. Now I look back and know it was one of the best races of my pro career. So much came together for me at Hagerstown that is going to help me make leaps forward as I chase my dream of being an elite athlete. I am truly blessed to have such great people around me coaching and guiding me on my path. Yes, Hagerstown was the race that almost wasn't. I'm glad I was there to take advantage of everything the night had to offer. By the way, I took second and made the podium again for my sponsors, friends and family.

I want to thank Dustin for everything he has done to help me this year, I couldn't have done it without you. To Cycle Dynamics, Vaden Machine, K&N, Motion Pro, Bazzaz, DP brakes, AGV, Monster Energy and Spectro Oils and all the rest, thank you so much for the continued support. Dave Ashi of Ant-racing.com your support means so much and dad, thanks for being there every step of the way.

James "the Rocket"

For more information about James "the Rocket" please visit his web site at www.jamesrispoli.com.

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

James "the Rocket" Rispoli

I can be reached at rispoli71@yahoo.com

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