



# On Track

## Change of Pace

by David Podolsky

**T**eam Chicken Hawk Racing made a last minute change to campaign the new Ducati 1098S instead of the 999R, the set-up of which has been well documented in this column.

Before heading to the track at Summit Point we set the new bike's sag and swapped out bodywork just as we did on the triple nine. After mounting a full-race exhaust system and doing a few dyno runs to break in the engine, the new bike was ready for the track.

The goal for the first race is to get a feel for the bike, get comfortable and rub off the rust. Starting out cautiously I picked up the pace each session. Without having seen

triple digit speeds over the winter, I was rolling off the gas too soon on the front straight.

In the pits we noticed that the right side of the

quicker. Raising the rear will also change the bike's center of gravity (CG) raising it up and affecting rear-end grip. Taking notes on changes is essential; if in case you start going in the wrong direction you can always return to where you began.

Top racers accelerating off corners with the front wheel a few inches off the ground is the epitome of a well-balanced motorcycle. Dramatically changing the CG by placing a passenger on the tail section results in a wheelie monster and an inability to accelerate hard. The same is true for a motorcycle with too much front-end weight. The rear tire will spin everywhere because very little weight is on the rear tire.

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rear tire was wearing quickly. The drive line — where you begin picking the bike up and getting on the gas, about one inch from the edge of the tire — was being destroyed. Knowing the tires were up to temp meant either the tire was being worked too hard by having the rear shock too stiff, and/or it was spinning while accelerating.

The rear sag and suspension seemed OK so we tried getting more grip by increasing the weight on the rear tire while under acceleration. We also wanted the bike to turn quicker. Our solution was to raise the rear ride height adjuster one full revolution. This will put more weight on the front, while also decreasing the rake of the front end, making the bike turn



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# ★ On Track

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A balance needs to be achieved. As you accelerate, weight transfers to the rear of the bike. By raising the rear ride height, we are also raising the CG of the motorcycle, effectively putting more weight on the rear while accelerating.

Come race time the bike was turning great, but was still spinning the tire, leaving big blackies on corner exits. This delighted the corner workers but did not get me down the track any faster. The bike is fast and I was able to make a few passes entering the corners but a couple big slides had me deciding to take it home in one piece, and we finished in eighth.

The rear tire still showed the same pattern of destruction so we think we did not go far enough and need to continue raising the rear. Sometimes having the latest and greatest bike is not an advantage until you get it sorted out.

My lap times turned out to be about two seconds off my best at this track, but being my first race of the year and still in the process of setting up a new machine, we left satisfied.

The bike has great potential; it carves corners tighter and easier than the previous big-twins I've raced, and it is certainly faster. Tune in next month as we keep up the search for that balance of good feedback, good turn-in, good grip and better results. **ZWT**

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**The drive line is about one inch from the edge of the tire.”**



David Podolsky is the founder of Chicken Hawk Racing, and is a nine-time national champion competing in AHRMA and AMA Sports Championships.

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