

Another eventful weekend for our local racers.

Before we even left for Cali, I was trying to finish Chaz's BMS for the race, and I have no gas tank! One of my guys took it out of the back of my truck, and didn't tell me. Needless to say, frustrations were high as I began pillaging other bikes hoping to find a tank that would fit. I made the one from the Giannini work, so it was alright (even though we kept losing the cap) in the end.

Uneventful ride to Atwater, we arrive shortly after 1PM on Friday, as is usual. There is literally nobody there but PoliniUSA, and us. Not looking good for the weekend....

Fast forward to Saturday, with the weather turning very odd. Low 90's with about 40% humidity. I am confident that my tuning is spot on, so I send the boys out for a couple of sessions. Joe, on the other hand is testing and tuning, and tuning and testing...messing with the carb, the clutch, the timing, changing tires, you name it. He just didn't seem to get comfortable all weekend.

Finally get all three out there at once turning 42's and it seems to be going well - then disaster. Kolby has a huge crash, and literally launches the Polini through the second set of esses (right in front of our pit) at speed. He is a bit slow to get up so I am worried. I bolt over there to check him out, but he was already up by then. Rear tire is severely bent from the impact when it came back down, but I straighten it back as best I can. (I have no spare wheels for that bike, and cannot find a decent set anywhere). Kolby has a bruised tailbone, so he is done for the day. He guarantees that he will be ready for race day, after he drinks some Gatorade, and hits the hotel pool. Great kid - I love his attitude.

Next is Chaz - no issues on the pockets, and is doing really well on the YZ. Two back to back high 37's, then it craps the bed. Very low compression - so low I can crank it over with my bum hand. It will still start and run, but has no power. I am hoping it is just a stuck ring, so I have a plan, and pray that it works for Sunday. This bike will not be run hard until the main. Easy qualifying run, and will just complete the heat race.

Joe put an advanced timing key in his bike and it is ridiculous out of the hole - power, power, and more power. But as is always the tradeoff with timing, it loses some top end and starts to detonate pulling the long straight. I can hear it, my wife can hear it, and Chaz heard it. Joe is convinced that it is fine, but it completely shuts down going into the NASCAR turn. Uh, oh. Needless to say, we have work to do on Saturday evening....

Sunday rolls around and very few other racers have shown up. It is the lowest turnout to any Polini Cup race so far, so it is just the 3 Az guys on the grid.

They ran the Jr and Sr classes together (scored separately). Kolby wins all the Jr B heats / races by default. and Joe is setting the pace in the Sr and Open. He is on pole for both with Chaz next and Kolby rounding out the grid. Heats are pretty uneventful, with little passing. Pretty much a parade - very boring. Little did we know it would be the complete opposite in the mains between Joe and Chaz.

Sr Main:

Kolby is on the Polini with the 14 carb, so he really doesn't stand a chance. He is lapped by race end, but is still turning 43's and dipping into the 42's a couple of times.

Joe and Chaz are another story altogether: Chaz blasts a hole shot, and pulls a decent 5 to 6 bike lead coming out of the NASCAR turn. Joe isn't having it and is screaming out of the NASCAR turn carrying so much speed that he literally lifts the rear wheel off the ground trying to stop. **Fantastic save # 1.**

He is on Chaz at this point and puts his wheel in the 180 right hander. Squeaks out to about a 2ft lead when Chaz gets brave. Going into the first set of esses he gets the first turn. Joe takes back the next, and on exit they are literally side by side going into the Omega (flagpole) turn - a downhill tight left hander that they both try and out brake the other on. Joe wins this go round, Chaz is slightly behind but pulls even through the next set of esses going into the final turn (90 left with really rough spots). Joe has the better drive (and line) so he gets through the corner first. Drag race down the straight, with Joe staying out in front (surprisingly, to me). I think Joe has been sandbagging all weekend, so I say to myself: "Chaz better

figure something out, since Joe is notoriously difficult to pass, unless he screws up". It doesn't look like he is going to, and they are clicking off laps. Only a couple of laps to go and the battle is on again. Chaz pops out from behind Joe (drafts him down the straight every lap) on the straight, and passes him in the kink going into NASCAR. **That sandbagging little.....!** Joe is aware very quickly, and they battle all through the back side of the track again, with Joe coming out a little more ahead (about 15ft) this time. White flag lap: Again the draft works for Chaz, but when he pops out this time he has an even better run - it seems as though the first time, he rolled the throttle back just a touch so Joe didn't know how much he had left. He knows it is one to go so he is either going to win it or bin it (his words, BTW). He pulls about a 5 to 6 bike length lead coming out of NASCAR, but we all know Joe is stupid fast there. As if on cue, Joe comes in hard and fast. I am thinking, "well here is where we find out where Chaz is mentally - make it or break it time". He sees Joe coming, sees his usual line, and moves from it to the inside to protect it from Joe. A slight bobble by Chaz but he is able to maintain good speed, and complete the block. Joe scrubbed too much speed when Chaz put the block on him so from then it was pretty much uneventful. Chaz maintained about a 2 bike lead the rest of the lap, and gives his customary fist pump just past the start/ finish line. He knows this was a legit win against a legit fast guy. Joe is no joke, on anything with 2 wheels. They give each other fist pounds on the cool down lap, and Kolby rolls up with them as they exit the track together, 3 wide. The (small) crowd is alive, still talking about it for the entire next 2 races. Great battle, no doubt.

**Chaz wins Sr Pocketbike, Joe is 2nd. (In overall they are tied for first).  
Kolby wins Jr B Pocketbike, and is first overall.**

Joe was doing some more work on his bike in between (new clutch, remove timing advance) and all I did was readjust the air pressures for Chaz. He wanted no other changes made. Joe offered to do whatever was needed, but Chaz refused. He told everybody, "the bike is perfect. If I ride perfect, Joe has a fight on his hands. He is pushing me hard, but he is clean, and I am confident I can get this win". Joe comes over, shakes his hand and looks him dead in the eye and says: "Bring it boy, let's see what you got". Everybody laughs, but you can tell they are both serious about it. It will be a clean race, but it will be a hard race, no doubt. (I told Chaz that Joe would be coming out hard from the start, so he better be prepared mentally).

I ask Kolby what I can do for him, since he is riding the BMS in the Open race. He says it is too bumpy to get comfortable. Joe and Chaz both agree so I reset the air in that bike as well. 22 front, 24 rear, the same as Chaz. Joe thinks that is too low, so he bumps his up to around 40. (I think he is insane, but we agree to disagree.) He lowers it just before the race, but I do not know how much. I ask Kolby how the clutch is working, and he can't really explain it to me so I test it. It is set a bit to high for my liking, so I lower it about 400RPM for him. On to the race....

#### Pocketbike Open

On the grid, with Joe on pole, Chaz outside, and Kolby behind Joe. Flag drops and they take off. Kolby gets the most insane hole shot of the weekend, splitting both Joe and Chaz. He maintains it all the way through NASCAR, even exiting the kink before the 180 right hander. The kid is possessed! Joe is coming, and coming hard. He blasts by Chaz exiting NASCAR like he is sitting still. Kolby does his best to block the freight train we call Joe, to no avail. Joe gets around him quickly, and settles in the lead. Chaz takes another two corners to get around Kolby, so Joe gets a pretty decent 10 or so bike lead. Kolby would be a non factor the rest of the race - he was fast enough to stay on the lead lap, but not fast enough to battle with the leaders. Chaz comes through the esses directly in front of our pit shaking his head. My heart sinks knowing that this should have been an epic battle between Joe and him. Luckily, there were no bike problems, he was just frustrated with his start. He slows way down exiting the second set of esses going into the last turn, trying to setup a good exit drive. Success! On the throttle hard before the apex and fires down the straight. He makes up some ground on Joe who is charging every corner like he is on fire. He knows where he is faster, and he knows where Chaz is faster. This is shaping up to be a lot closer than the first lap showed. They are both turning low 41's consistently, but you can see the gap is closing. By about lap 4 Joe looks around to see where Chaz is, realizes he is closer than he thought, and starts charging again. He pushes the front wide in the Omega turn, but saves it: barely. **Fantastic save # 2.** This of course opens the door for Chaz who is close enough now to smell blood. He gives me a quick thumbs up ripping through the second set of esses. The crowd [who have all made their way to the pit fence] see this, sees this and goes into an uproar. Some people think it is awesome, some think he is

cocky. (Either way, I know where he is mentally). He tucks right up behind Joe coming down the long straight. IT'S ON, LIKE DONKEY KONG!

Side by side going into NASCAR - Chaz takes the low line with his knee puck just above the grass on the inside. Joe takes the high line, leaving a vortex of dust in his wake. You can tell it is bumpy - but fast. As is usual Joe is stupid fast leading to the 180, but Chaz refuses to let him sneak away. He desperately tries an inside pass in the 180, but Joe isn't having it. Door slammed. In his haste to try and pass, Chaz lost some drive, and Joe squirts out to a slight lead. But he knows that Chaz is there, and is game for a fight. Next couple of laps are the same, swapping the lead just about every corner with drafting down the straight. By about lap 7 or 8 Chaz again tries the inside line in the 180. Success! But Joe knew it was coming, and went wide enough to open a lane for Chaz. He knew he would take it, but be too fast to properly set up the esses, so he took it right back. The mind games begin....

Getting down to the final laps now, and they both know it has to be done. Somebody will succeed, and somebody will fail. Again Chaz tries the 180, but Joe has it locked down. No dice. Chaz decides he will try again at the Omega. Somehow Joe knows (Jedi motorcycle racer?) Chaz will try it, and starts braking into the corner, while simultaneously blocking the pass attempt. One problem - Chaz decided slow down at the previous exit (first set of esses) to get a better run going into Omega. He is able to drive hard, and go *outside* of Joe through Omega heading downhill. Joe locks the rear, and looks like he is going over, but saves it. Again. **Fantastic save # 3.** Chaz gets a good run through the second set of esses, and gets out to a decent lead. He gets as small as possible going down the straight trying to maximize his lead. Joe does the same. It is amazing watching these two guys run down the straight at speed without even watching where they were going. Head down, throttle pinned, and just going at it. Slight lead for Chaz coming around until the last corner. He is looking through the corner, and I do not know if he sees the white flag or what, but he completely misses the line and is sliding through the corner. Joe squirts through and starts heading down the straight. Meanwhile, Chaz is at the very edge of the track trying to keep it on two wheels. He was literally hanging off the bike trying to drag it back onto the track. His right foot is completely off the bike, yet he will not get out of the throttle. As he gets the bike back under him, his shoe hits the dirt, making a huge cloud of dust. **Fantastic save # 4.** He was still on the throttle so it is screaming by now. Joe has a few bikes length lead starting the kink before NASCAR. In desperation, Chaz stays tucked throughout the entire first section: straightaway, kink, NASCAR, exit kink, and only looking up and braking just before the 180. Joe is already there, so they exit side by side. Two sets of esses, one downhill turn, and one 90 degree left from victory for somebody. First set of esses is side by side. Chaz decides to again try and pass at Omega. Joe again knows, and he starts slowing down way before the entry, setting up a good exit drive. This time Chaz decides to gamble, and goes hard under Joe on exit of the first set of esses, and into Omega. No brakes, and just a slight roll off the throttle, and Chaz was ahead going into Omega while Joe was still braking. Heading downhill, and it was all throttle, all the time. The slight advantage Chaz had grew through the second set of esses, and Joe was about four bike lengths back going into the last corner. Chaz had a clean line, and Joe couldn't make up enough ground to get within about 2 bike lengths or so at the stripe. A tremendous battle for sure, and one hell of a show for the crowd. Chaz raises his hands in triumph, and Joe is right there to congratulate him on a hard fought victory. Class act. They waited for Kolby and all got huge cheers as they came back through the pits.

**Chaz wins Open Pocketbike**

**Joe is second**

**Kolby is third**

**Joe has a 4 point lead overall, and Chaz is second. Kolby moved up to third with his podium.**

14 inch Supermoto

As previously mentioned, the YZ was having some issues earlier. After the heat, I pulled the plug and filled the cylinder with Marvel Mystery Oil, hoping it was just a stuck ring. It wasn't. I had him skip the warm-up lap and just go sit on the grid without starting it until the last possible moment. However, it ran good enough for Chaz to turn two 39's back to back before losing power again. Fortunately others were having bike problems, and Chaz was able to limp it home to a 2nd place finish. I tore the top end off of it last night and the ring is wasted. I also think I may have damaged the piston, as there is a dent in the dome. (Possibly from trying to compress liquid?). So now the YZ will have a new top end by the next time it gets raced.

Overall, a pretty good weekend. Racer participation was down, but the racing was fantastic. The battle scooters were intense as well, along with the go quad races. I think there were 5 races with less than 1sec between 1st and 2nd at the finish.

Kelly Abbott