



MISTI HURST

## EVOLUTION OF A MOTORCYCLE RACER

Right now I am sitting under the Turn 2 Racing canopy during the last race weekend of the season at Shannonville Motorsport Park. My Honda CBR 600RR is propped up on the stands, tire warmers on, fueled and ready to go and my final race of the year in the Pro Honda Oils Women's Cup Challenge is coming up in about an hour. It's cloudy here at the track with a kind of cool moist humidity in the air. It has been raining all morning but at this very moment the track is drying and the sun is trying to make its way through the white clouds. A few of the racers cheer and comment on the warm sunshine as I sit typing away on my laptop, my portable workstation, my home away from home.

It's been an interesting year to say the least. I raced the entire Parts Canada Amateur 600 Nationals and am just finishing up the final round of the Women's Cup Challenge. Most of the races, save for the one national round in Calgary, took place in eastern Canada (Quebec, Ontario, and Nova Scotia) so it meant a lot of travel for me who usually resides in Vancouver, BC. Add that to the 75 school days I'm teaching this year with the California Superbike School at over 15 different tracks throughout the United States, and a little jaunt to Italy to watch my best friend Erin Simmons compete in the Olympic boardercross event in February, and you can conclude that I haven't spent much time at my cozy little home in Vancouver.

As I sit here basking in the one warm ray of sunshine looking around at my Turn 2 Racing Team, my Honda, my teammates, and our set-up here at the track, I realize that a lot of things have changed for me in the three years that I have been racing. I daydream about the season, my own little 'year in review', and I find myself laughing and reminiscing about the 'way things used to be'. I realize that most racers go through the same kind of process, learning the ropes, getting better, changing, growing and evolving, and it's fun to look back at where you started and to compare that to where you have ended up.

There is a photo of me that was taken during my first season racing. It's a picture of me sleeping in the back of my Chevy Astro Van, crammed between the bike and all the parts and gear that I managed to shove into that handy dandy vehicle. It is a classic first year racer's photo and when I showed some other riders at the track the picture, the stories started flying. It was amazing to hear how everyone had had similar experiences and had gone through the same processes as racers. One of the girls there called motorcycle racing "an addiction, worse than any kind of drug," and we all laughed and nodded and told more stories about the things we had given up, sacrificed and done for the love of racing.

After getting my race license in 2001 I became obsessed with racing. I gave up everything I had, to go and race and race and race. I bought the mini van after selling my car because it was a cheap way to transport the race bike and all the gear, plus it also acted like a camper by providing a place to sleep at night, a place to hang out, and a place to find cover if it rained at the track. I had no idea what I was doing in those first two years of racing. All I knew was that I had to be there and I did whatever

it took to accomplish that and to learn the ropes from other racers along the way.

I used to drive down to the track in Seattle with the mini van stuffed full of gear, get to the gate at midnight (or later) because everything always takes longer than you think to get ready. The gate would be locked so I would pull up behind the other trucks and trailers and campers (feeling very tiny and insignificant sometimes), clamber into the back, shove the bike up against the side of the van, clear out a small little sleeping nook and grab a few hours of sleep. In the morning I would set up my borrowed tent for much needed shade, prop my bike up on the one rear stand that I had, wipe the dirt off the tires that had already been used for 4 races, duct tape the holes in the bodywork, ask for help checking over my bike to make sure it was safe, and cut out racing numbers from red tape to stick on the bike because I had forgotten to get proper numbers made. I remember dreaming about one day having a nice fancy set up with tents and BBQ's and campers and tire warmers and tool boxes like the guys

across the way from me.

I'd have to borrow things like tools and spare parts, duct tape and spoons and such because I didn't have my own or I had forgotten to bring them or I didn't know I would need them. I was constantly asking questions about how to do things and what I needed to bring and what I could do to get better and faster. The people at the track were always so friendly and helpful. They would lend me parts and help fix my bike if it broke, and help change the tires if I could ever afford new ones. I remember spray painting the bike one time with black paint from Canadian Tire after it crashed because I didn't have the time or money to get it painted properly. I once stayed up most of the night after I crashed, to fix the body work with a fiberglass repair kit, patching and mashing and sticking the bike back together so I could race the next day. The more stories I told to the gang at the track, the more they told me about similar experiences, of racking up the credit cards and the lines of credit to the max just to make it to the track, of driving all night and drinking Red Bull to stay

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awake, eating power bars and drinking coffee, all for the love of racing.

I wouldn't have traded those crazy days in for the world but it is fun to look back at those days with a sense of fondness and appreciate that all those hours of hard work, stress and effort have paid off. Those days lead to something a bit grander and more glamorous. When I think back, and then look around my pit now and see the differences, I really do feel like a rock star!

I got hooked up with the Turn 2 Racing team this year after meeting the owner, George Budacki, in September 05 during the one women's cup race weekend I participated in. He has a business called Turn 2 Sportbike Rentals where he rents out track prepped bikes and riding gear to people for track days as well as offering some riding advice and coaching for newer riders. After some discussion, he agreed to lend me one of his bikes so that I could race with the women's cup as I didn't have a race bike at that time. After the race weekend we got talking and he mentioned that he was interested in putting a team

together for the following year. Over the winter we kept in touch and in March of this year he invited me to join his Turn 2 Racing Team which consisted of two other riders, Ross Millson and Paul Glenn.

With the support of Honda Canada, the California Superbike School, Lester Racing, Honda Centre Burnaby, Parts Canada, Roger Stange, Dave Moore, Duc Hunters and MSpeed Performance, I bought a Honda CBR 600RR and decided to race the 2006 season. George offered to transport my bike to all of the events, have it race prepped and ready to go for each weekend, fix any damages that might be incurred in a crash, be at all the races as my mechanic and provide all the necessary equipment during the race weekends, and have a full spare bike ready to go in case I wadded mine and couldn't ride it.

We had three canopies for shade, a proper floor, stands for the bikes, tire warmers, a trailer, microwave, tire machine, chairs, helpers in the pits, lunch and drinks. My teammates Ross and Paul were exceptional, often helping to change the tires on my bike, making sure that it

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was fueled and ready to go, putting the bike on and off the stands and cheering me on during the races. George had the bike ready for every race so all I needed to do was show up from whatever part of North America I was coming from and jump on the bike and ride it. Dan Sippel and Scott Laidman who were at most of the race weekends provided much needed mechanical and general support for the team and Rachel and Melissa helped tremendously with all the details making sure we were well-fed and ready to race.

It was an amazing feeling to be a part of such a cohesive and helpful team and to be able to focus on the racing part of the weekend instead of stressing about all the little maintenance aspects like I used to. To be called up to race and to know that the bike was safe and ready, that it was fueled and that the tires were warm was a very comforting feeling that enabled me to just focus on racing. To have a team all decked out in matching pit shirts standing on pit wall giving me hand signals (hurry up someone is right behind you, you are ahead by three bike lengths, go faster etc) was extremely helpful and to have such support was unbelievable. On more than one occasion I looked around in disbelief wondering how I managed to be so lucky to have what I had and to marvel at just how far I had come in a few years of racing.

As I write this, it's getting closer and closer to the last race of the year, the track looks almost dry now, George and Scott have been assessing the track conditions and have decided to go with dry tires instead of rains. I trust them so much that I let them make the decisions for me, which prevents me from getting stressed out before I ride. I take a deep breath and look around at the setup and the people at the track. They are truly like family to me and it's going to be strange packing up at the end of the day and flying away knowing I won't see them for several months. We are not sure what the plans are for racing next year, if we will do the same series on the same bikes with the same teams. We all need a bit of preparing for next year.

I'm so happy to have had the opportunity to do all the races this year with such an amazing group of people. I

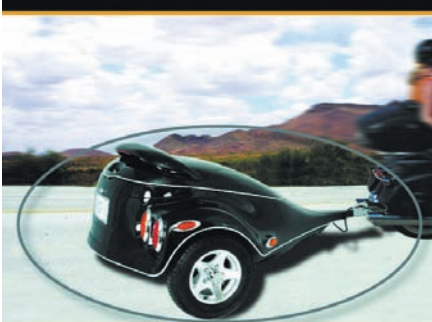
had fun and I'm proud of the accomplishment. It wouldn't have been possible without the people listed above, and my other sponsors this year: Elka Suspension, Dr. Richard Cleland, Cheetah Racing Bodies, Traxxion Dynamics, Elf, Imprint Signs, FS6 Sliders, Vortex, Pirelli, Chicken Hawk Racing, Flair Photo, RACE, Bitchin Gear, Veritas Web Design, Fitness World, Motorcyclelawyer.ca, Mr. Quick Lube & Oil, William Perry Artist, Serf to Surf and Elev8me Protein Bars.

Thanks so much to everyone for all the support and encouragement this year! It has been a great season of racing. I've grown, I've learnt a lot and I have evolved as a racer, if I keep moving at this rate, I'll be a factory racer in no time! **MMM**

Cheers, Misti

*Misti Hurst is a motorcycle racer, an instructor with the California Superbike School, and a freelance writer. More information about her can be found on her website at [www.mistihurst.com](http://www.mistihurst.com)*

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