

HAWKWORKS

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BY KARL "KRAZED" GOLDSCHMIDT

HAWKSTER EXTRAORDINAIRE

Hawksters know Kiyo Watanabe as one of the first people to offer a larger tank for our beloved ride. His carbon fiber tank has been the standard replacement for Hawk endurance racers and long distance riders alike. I first met Kiyo because of his tank, but soon found that he was more than just a businessman. Kiyo, head of Kiyo Watanabe Racing, has a passion for the Hawk and the knowledge to build and use one to its full potential. Hawkworks was lucky enough to talk to him after he got back from Daytona and ask him a few questions.

HW Many Hawksters know you from the high capacity, carbon fiber Hawk tank that you sell. Could you tell us a little bit about your motorcycle history and background?

Kiyo Yes, I started racing motorcycles in 1986. I won eight championships within two years, including the AFM National Championship, AFM Northern Championship, AFM Southern Championship, and the ARRA Championship. I then decided I should race AMA 250 Grand Prix. That is how I got into professional racing in 1988. I raced a 250 until the Honda Hawk came out. Then I switched from 250 GP to Pro-Twins. Since then I have won one national championship on a Honda Hawk; I won three Daytona Sprints. Oh, I do not know how many races I have won, but I always run in the top group of the AMA professionals racing as a Pro-Twins. I also have a WERA National

Championship. Now I am kinda getting old, but I am still racing.

HW That's interesting. You started as a two-stroker and then went to the four-stroke.

Kiyo I always had interest in the four-strokes, but the two-stroke was an easy way for me to start racing. I went out first on an RD 400 as a novice, then I switched to a TZ125. That 125 taught me lots of stuff about racing and also about working on a motorcycle—the thing broke all the time. After that, the 250 taught me a lot, and I guess I was ready to go into four-strokes after that.

HW Did you fall in love with the Hawk as soon as Honda introduced it, or was it a bike whose potential you discovered later?

Kiyo I went riding with a Cycle magazine test rider on a Hawk when I was riding a 400 four. I knew the bike was good, but I had no intentions of racing the Honda Hawk as a Pro-Twins contender. I guess I found out when I borrowed my friend's stock Honda Hawk and went out to Sears Point with it with just slick tires and a shock. I finished fifth. That's when I said, "Well, if I modify this bike, I should be able to win." So when I came home, I went out and bought the Hawk, and that's how I got started. So I guess I found out the potential of the bike by accident.

HW What was the first modification you did to your first Hawk?

Kiyo Taking a brand new motorcycle apart into pieces and looking at it, throwing all the heavy stuff away, I guess that has to be the first modification.

HW Is there anything that you can leave stock?

Kiyo Actually the transmission on a Hawk is not so bad. I do modify them, but you can just about leave them stock. The clutch basket, clutch components, you can almost leave them stock. The oil pump I use is almost stock. When you are really talking about purely stock parts, no—everything is changed on my bike. Sorry!

HW What is, in your opinion, the single product that gives the best performance "bang for the buck" for the street rider?

Kiyo I sell a carburetion kit, which is really modified stock carburetors. They are machined. This is not a jet kit, but it gives you better flow into the intake induction system. I think this is the best product that you can buy for the stock Hawk or any Hawk. But you have to know how to tune the carburetor. That's the thing. It's just like a component that you buy from the

Continued on page 3

in this issue

Hawkster Extraordinaire	1	The Black Art of Carburetion	4
Page 2 (Editorial)	2	Add a Dash of Carbon	6
Hawk Droppings	2	In Box	6
Joe Rocket Ballistic Jacket	4	Hawk Bits	7



HAWKWORKS

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Hawkworks is a bimonthly newsletter intended for fans of the Honda Hawk. Hawkworks is in no way endorsed by or representative of the Honda Motor Corporation. Their loss. Any modifications undertaken on your own bike should be done under the supervision of a qualified motorcycle mechanic.

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PAGE 2

I met a guy a couple months ago. We parked our bikes in the same lot at work. His is a VF500 Interceptor with more miles on it than the speedometer can tally. The bike was quite obviously modified to fit just him. I built my relationship with James Garner in three minute conversations as our bikes warmed up. You see James is sixty plus years old. He rides the rubber off of his VF and raced Super Hawks years ago.

When my job moved, so did my parking spot, and we sort of lost touch. I'd see him waiting for a bus or tooling down the street on his Interceptor. One day I saw him on another bike, a funky metallic blue CB 175. Chrome fenders, spokes flashing in the sun, real metal Honda badge on the tank and a long solo seat with an Agostini-period black hump at the tail. "Take it for a ride." I did, and it was cool. Slow but cool.

A couple of months later he called and invited me over to his place for a beer and to see the rearsets he made for the bike. I couldn't find the time. Each time I thought

about it, there was someone who needed me to do this, or my pile of laundry was getting dangerously close to being declared a Super Fund site. I just didn't have the time.

A month ago at the Texas World Speedway race I saw the little Blue Honda again. Not in the spectators parking area, but in the pits with #116V proudly hung over the headlight bucket. Not quite up to speed. Not quite dragging his knee, let alone toe. Not quite comfortable with the track as it has changed in the 8 years his crusty blue and gray leathers hung on the shop wall. But his smile was more priceless than any bike on the track that day. You see, you can eventually buy any bike you want, but you can't buy memories.

What does all this have to do with the Honda Hawk you ask? Read the letter section in this issue. And next time some old guy with a white beard and a mischievous look in his eye wants to tell you about his bike over a beer, make the time. The laundry will wait.

-Ed.

HAWK DROPPINGS

When I asked Hawkworks reader Steven Dobson of Canada why he didn't turn his Hawk into a road burner after what I thought was a minor shunt, he told me the condition of his Hawk after he and it parted ways.

"I've been toying with the 'Ultimate Road Burner' idea for years, but let me give you the picture.... The frame separated completely at the welds between the perimeter rails and the casting that holds the swingarm pivot. The welds at the head are severely cracked. The swingarm pivot mount shattered. The left side case cover shattered when-the-bike-hit-the-curb (WTBHTC).

The flywheel/alternator magnet shattered WTBHTC. The crank cracked (through the cam chain sprockets) and bent WTBHTC. Then, microseconds later when-the-bike-hit-the-pole (an excellent method of protecting the lucky pedestrians who witnessed the whole thing), the cases shattered and tore apart in too many spots to mention. The swingarm swung around the pole, pulling the rear shock apart and leveraging the swingarm pivot metal apart. The pivot bolt bent but didn't let go. The rear tire smacked the front tire. The front forks are WAY bent, and I'll bet good money the triple clamp's

twisted. The subframe is quite twisted. Most of the bodywork shattered. When the frame separated, the gas tank got lengthened and flattened! With the motor stationary at the pole, and the rest of the bike wrapping itself around, the gas tank/airbox destroyed much of the carb exterior—little bits of metal. I could go on, but at this point you probably get the idea."

Oh. Never mind -Ed.

Send in your Hawk Droppings stories to Hawkworks. We'll print it along with a photo if you have one. Wouldn't mind a photograph of the pole in the case of the above bike.

HAWKSTER EXTRAORDINAIRE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

aftermarket. It's carburetors that have a lot more potential for the bike, and you need to tune them. I also can provide tuning services, stuff like that.

HW Would that be the best "bang for the buck" for the racer also?

Kiyo No, I think for the racer the best buck is my valve job and my porting, which takes time. But it is the power that you will get out of the engine. If you do not do cylinder head work, there is no such magic. You need to do the headwork.

HW I know the carbon fiber tank you sell was initially developed for Daytona. What other products do you sell for the Hawk, and why were they developed?

Kiyo I am developing a carbon fiber Hawk front fender for better performance (aerodynamics), weight savings, original (Kiyo Watanabe Racing) looks. It is not quite ready for sale yet. I offer all kinds of engine components for racing—which could be used for street performance also. I make just about everything to do with Hawk racing, but some stuff is not offered to the general public because of high maintenance and price.

HW Can you estimate about how many Hawks you have built for yourself and other clients?

Kiyo To tell you the truth, I know it's more than one hundred, but I do not know how much more, so I cannot really give you that answer.

HW What is the most power you got out of a stock-based Hawk motor?

Kiyo A stock-based Hawk motor that I dynoed, on a water-brake dyno (this is a real dyno, not the DynoJet dyno): 49 horsepower. And to tell the truth, the bike is almost stock, nothing much changed.

HW We know you were just recently up at Daytona. Do you want to tell us a little bit about Kiyo Watanabe Racing's 1997 Daytona outing?

Kiyo Yes, one of my customers, whom I sponsor, won the 650 class. He just ran away, just no competition; my bike was the fastest. In the Open Twin class and Sound-Of-Thunder, I was supposed to run a 1000cc Honda Hawk, which I had run for five days including CCS Weekend. This is a prototype bike that I just built, and unfortunately some mechanical failure caused me not to finish the weekend. So I had to run my backup bike, which was my 750. I got around Jay Springsteen and other Ducati guys at the end, but they credited me with ninth. I think I had a good time racing it. My time was coming down to the point I was competitive. Only thing is I could not finish right behind or be in there with the Britten—my clutch was slipping. But I tried my best. It was good racing.

HW That is part of racing. Without giving away any secrets, in what ways have you combined Hawk motors with other motors and Hawk frames with other frames?

Kiyo I have Honda Hawk parts, African Twin parts, and Honda Shadow parts that are incorporated into my engines. There are other components from Honda I really cannot tell you anything about. Frame-wise, I have mostly Honda Hawk parts, modified parts, or my parts, meaning that I do not use any of Honda's other components like F2. Yes, I do have some parts from the CB1. The sub-frame and fairing is made by me. I do have some of the body parts off the basic RVF Suzuki Special from 1993. Oh yes, I use some components from HRC that are mostly RC45, RC30, and RS250 parts.

HW If you had all the money you needed to build your dream bike, what would its basic layout be?

Kiyo It would be a 90 degree V-Twin, double overhead camshaft, four valves per cylinder [laughs]. So I guess I could buy a VTR and start working on it [more laughter].

HW Speaking about that, with Honda's introduction of the Super Hawk to the market, do you predict many of your customers moving on to that bike?

Kiyo I think it just depends on their money. But yes, I would predict some of those people are going to be interested in racing that bike. So yes. I would say yes.

HW And do you think that bike has the potential to race against the Ducati 916?

Kiyo Oh sure, yes.

HW Was Honda's decision to not carry over the single-sided swingarm to the Super Hawk a mistake?

Kiyo No.

HW And why do you say that?

Kiyo There is an advantage and disadvantage to a single-sided swingarm. And I am sure they are going to have an option, or I will have an option to put a single-sided swingarm on the VTR. But for the regular street bike, Honda is looking at an ultimate street bike with a reasonable price and the performance of a 1000cc V-twin. The choice of Honda is the same as mine, not to have too many of the exotic components but to have an exotic performance. The choice of a regular swingarm mounted on the engine cases on the back, I think design-wise, concept-wise, price-wise, was the right choice.

HW OK, what would you guess Honda would change on the current Super Hawk to create either an SP or RR version?

Kiyo I think they would try to put on better brake components, better suspension components. Oh, some changes of the exhaust system or intake induction system.

HW Is there anything you would like to ask or say to the readers of HawkWorks?

Kiyo Keep your Hawk running! Give me a call sometime!

HW Thank you for your time Kiyo. Good luck with everything.

Kiyo Watanabe Racing may be reached at (818) 841-0930.

(Kiyo was interviewed for Hawkworks by WSMC #92 Karl "Krazed" Goldshmidt—aka "krash". Krash has had quite a bit of experience replacing both performance and cosmetic bits on Hawks.)