

EPISODE ONE:

By Michael Gougis

This was supposed to be the year of Team USA. The 2018 rider lineup for the MV Agusta International Island Challenge at Phillip Island had never been stronger, with Colin Edwards, Jason Pridmore, and Jake Zemke spearheading the effort. The team had put together bikes built right to the edge of the rules. There was nothing that, on paper, looked like it would prevent the U.S. team from finally winning the International Challenge trophy.

But road races are run on asphalt, not paper. And a disastrous Day Two of the three-day festival put the team desperately behind in the points, leaving the U.K. team and the Australian team to battle for top honors. Two wins by Australian David Johnson and two second places in the four headlining races led the Australian squad to the win with 685 points to the U.K.'s 654, with the U.S. squad third with 465 points and the New Zealand team last with 319 points.

"It was looking really good after the first day," said Team Captain David Crussell, a mainstay of Vintage road racing in the U.S. "But there's kind of an important dimension of the International Challenge. If you miss a race or two, you get nowhere in the points. Someone being out for one event moves other teams up. You really need good reliability.

"I had a crash that put me out. Jason and Jake both had engine failures that we analyzed, understood the cause of and have fixed in subsequent builds. On Jake's bike, a stud pulled out of a case and caused a head gasket failure. Jason had piston failure."

Crussell's response to the disappointment? Try harder, and get back into the fight in 2019. "I've been leading the U.S. team for five years now. We've gone through the progression from amateur riders on amateur bikes. We've been building up the quality of the bikes, and we've been building up the quality of the riders. We've learned a lot from our failures," Crussell says.

The plan for 2019 is to create an even more professional-style operation. In broad strokes, the core of Team USA is going to look like a factory road racing effort, a single operation at the center.

Crussell's operation is known as Mojo Yamaha. That forms the basis of Team USA. Mojo Yamaha is responsible for organizing the



(Above) Jason Pridmore (43) was the top American in the 2018 MV Agusta International Island Challenge, scoring fourth in Races One and Two, with a DNF and DNS in Races Three and Four. Photo by Kevin Eeles. (Below) Air-cooled, 1300cc, tube-framed, 170-horsepower Formula One racebikes. These are two of the CMR Racing specials that Mojo Yamaha will campaign at the 2019 International Island Challenge as part of Team USA.



building of two basic types of racebikes for the 2019 event.

Crussell's long been in love with his Yamaha TZ750, and an updated version of that machine will be one of the racebikes. The other is something that might have been produced on an alternative timeline where somehow 2018 know-how had been transported back to some point between 1980 and 2000.

The CMR Formula One racebike is inspired by a Harris replica of a Suzuki XR69, the 1000cc racebike built with cutting-edge

GP chassis technology for TT-F1 and open-class racing around the world. Denis Curtis produces the chrome-moly twin-tube frame and the heavily braced chrome-moly swingarm, as well as the aluminum tank.

Yamaha YZF-R6 front forks (upgraded by GP Suspension), wheels, calipers and brakes from the 2000 model year—the latest allowed by the rules—are bolted onto the front. Crussell says that this configuration provides the extra advantage of having a three-spoke wheel that looks almost like

the Dymag wheels of the 1980s—for a fraction of the cost!

At the back, a custom Öhlins shock is fitted, along with a Yamaha YZF-R6 wheel. Airtech supplies the XR69 replica fairing and the TZ750 replica tail section. The 17-inch wheels are 3.50 inches wide at the front and 5.50 inches wide at the rear, allowing the use of contemporary racing slicks. Crussell says individual team rider contracts dictate the use of Pirelli and Dunlop tires.

And using modern tires is critical to handling the power output of the bikes. Starting with a Yamaha FJ1100 engine, Larry Cook of LCR Racing—one of the top engine builders in the world of NHRA dragbikes—bumps the displacement to nearly 1300cc. Reworked heads, cams, pistons, connecting rods and other internal parts mate with Hindle exhausts and Keihin or Mikuni flatslides to push out about 170 horsepower.

For a bike that weighs about 380 pounds dry, that kind of power output is good enough to turn laps in the 1:36 range at Phillip Island. For some perspective, Tom Sykes' factory Kawasaki Racing Team ZX-10RR—with the most advanced electronics in racing, and a twin-spar aluminum frame, all backed by the best of the con-



(Above) Team USA 2018, from left, in front, Carry Andrew (41), Dave Crussell (17), Jake Zemke (98), Colin Edwards (5), Jason Pridmore (43), and Lorraine Crussell (72) at the International Island Challenge at Phillip Island. (Above, Right) Mark Miller (5) at Willow Springs, testing Edwards' 2018 racebike. Photo by etechphoto.com.



guru Scott Clough. The TZ750s put out 140 to 150 horsepower and weigh about 330 pounds, Crussell says.

The American Historic Racing Motorcycle Association (AHRMA) helped this year by creating a class for machines built to the Island Challenge specifications. Held at selected AHRMA events, the races give Mojo Yamaha the opportunity to test and refine its racebikes prior to heading to Australia for the January 2019 event.

And when Mojo Yamaha gets there, it will have riders capable of absolutely running at the front, Crussell says. "There is absolutely no shortage of riders who want to do this," he says. "Last year was the breakthrough. And for 2019, we have a long list of high-profile, current or recently retired racers."

siderable racing knowledge that resides at Kawasaki Heavy Industries—was on pole at Phillip Island in 2018 with a 1:30 lap time.

"This is really fast racing. When you're talking a 1:36 lap time at Phillip Island, that's serious speed," Crussell says.

The CMR Formula One rac-

ers will all be built to this spec, an indication of the change in the mindset of the approach to the Classic. As Edwards said after the last event, "There's no doubt we were under-prepared compared to Australia and the U.K."

"We're putting a core team together with similar bikes. We're

not independents running one bike at a time. We're got a team with a standard bike and a standard crew," Crussell says.

The TZ750s are also standardized, using CMR frames and R6 suspension, wheels and brakes and powered by engines built by 1970s racer turned two-stroke

Stay tuned.

RW



ÖHLINS RVP 25 RACING FORK IS NOW AVAILABLE!

RVP 25

Used in the world of Moto 2&3 and WSBK, this fork comes equipped with Öhlins brand new FKR damping system. The fork features machined fork bottoms for reduced weight, increased high speed stability and cornering. The internals use Öhlins spring pressurized system that offers quick, easy maintenance and setting changes. The new damping system design delivers a more consistent performance curve to increase grip, stability and bump absorption to improve lap times.

With the TTX Technology and a new designed 8mm piston shaft, we reduced pressure build-up and created a faster damping response. This gives a "linear" style to the damping characteristics which creates more tuning options so the rider can find the ideal setting for the type of track.



Phone: 800.336.9029

ÖHLINSUSA.COM