

SOMETHING FOR THE WEEKEND SIR?

70mph, 180kgs,
tarmac vs engine casing!



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PHOTOS: John Ward / Racing Line Photography / Mark Toms

» THE OLDER FOLKS MIGHT REMEMBER THAT OLD BARBERS SAYING AND CHUCKLE TO THEMSELVES AT THE COY INNUENDO OF IT. THE BARBER WAS ACTUALLY ASKING IF THE CUSTOMER WANTED CONDOMS, WITHOUT ACTUALLY SAYING IT ALOUD. HOWEVER, IT IS A PHRASE THAT MIGHT BETTER BE USED IN THE MODERN WORLD IN A MOTORCYCLE RACE PREPARATION SHOP.

Protection, that's what it's all about and it can be bought so cheaply nowadays that it's a complete no brainer to get it done during the bike build. For around £350 you can avoid thousands of pounds worth of damage many times over during a race season.

Crashing – isn't something that modern road bikes withstand particularly well, as they are built down to absolute minimum weights in order to produce maximum performance. Race bikes need to have added protection built in to cater for the inevitable trip into the kitty litter. None of us look forward to our next crash, but it's something we all kind of accept as an occupational hazard. In terms of where you spend your initial set up budget, this should be second only to having the very best personal protection equipment. We'll cover helmets,

leathers, boots and gloves separately on another occasion as each of those items deserve an article of their own, such is the importance of having the right gear.

For motorcycle protection, you have to understand the anatomy of a crash from the angle of what happens to the inanimate object – the bike. Unlike the rider, the bike won't change shape when it hits the ground – well, it will but avoiding that being irreparable is the main object of having the right protection equipment.

If you take a piece of flat board and place it against the side of the bike, you'll see which areas of the bike are most vulnerable. The pieces it touches will be the first things to make contact with the ground in the event of a crash. Some will quickly break or deform and expose other areas to contact with the road surface. All vehicle crash testing is designed around crumple zones like this and there are distinct advantages to having some things fail or break at a controlled rate, which in turn absorbs some of the energy of the crash thus sparing other more important areas.

Your piece of board will

doubtless be touching the handlebar end, the footrest, the swing-arm and possibly a portion of the fairing too. The handlebar end, swing-arm and footrest are obvious places to start with for both protection and controlled failure. There are numerous plastic/nylon radius ended products available that are designed to abrade at a controlled rate and have a degree of shock absorption that is far superior to metal alone. These will also be a lot kinder to your hand / arm / leg than naked metal if they should come into contact with those delicate items.

Next points of contact are likely to be the engine cases and extreme edges of the fuel tank, both of which can be monumentally expensive if breached. If you go through the engine case, not only will oil come out, but dirt, gravel and all sorts of other damaging debris can get in.

Speaking as an organiser, the cost to the competitor is just the tip of the iceberg when compared to the circuit downtime a catastrophic oil related incident can cause. With track time costing an average of £74 per minute, even a 15 minute clear up costs well over £1,100 and that cost is largely borne by the competitors.

My thoughts on this were brought into sharp focus when I did my Saturday evening



Can you imagine how long the standard cover would have lasted?

RIDERS DISCOUNT 30



Proper engine protection laughs at small crashes...

track walk at Snetterton. On the left hand exit apex at Montreal, coming onto the back straight there was the start of a 72 metre long scrape mark. Following it along the track I saw that it was made not only by the metal parts of the bike, but also by something black and plastic.

At the end of the mark, there were a few tiny bits of plastic in the grass and by the Armco the remains of an engine case cover. I was about to throw the damaged cover into the next waste bin, when I took a closer look and realised it was a very clever design. It was clearly constructed in such a way that it was meant to fail in a controlled manner and absorb as much of the impact as possible so as to protect the main engine cases. It had taken the initial impact and then abraded almost to the point of wearing through, before flexing enough to fold in on itself to offer the last piece of the main plastic case – this meant that the metal case beneath never even touched the tarmac. I have since looked at a new version of the same product and something that I had previously thought of as simply a wrap around piece of injection

moulding ended up really impressing me with both its quality and design. These things don't just work by accident, they work by sheer quality and design. They are made from materials that are specifically chosen for the purpose and the casing thicknesses and attachments are very carefully thought out.

This particular incident undoubtedly saved the competitor the cost of a full engine rebuild and saved us from a lengthy and expensive clean up job. The range of protection and variety of products is huge, so for an investment of a few hundred pounds, isn't it really something that should be on your essentials list?

On a final note, it should be mentioned that Syd was dancing with glee when I showed him the cover and related not only the story, but also my research into the



Top quality engine protection isn't just the oil inside...

manufacture and design of the product. Syd was so delighted because the engine case cover that so impressed me with its performance was manufactured by GB Racing and they are one of the valued sponsors that he has in the Thundersport GB portfolio. It's always good to be associated with quality suppliers and I can thoroughly recommend their products to you.



You might be better off with the barbers protection from Alison...