

Crate to the Eights

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The challenge was set: Take a stock Hayabusa and in eight hours turn it into an 8 second monster. For added interest all mods had to be performed at the dragstrip where the ultimate measure of success – the 8 second timeslip - would be produced.

Joe Marasco from MSP took the challenge – actually he came up with it. He was the perfect candidate for the task: he has vast experience preparing Hayabusas for the dragstrip and his rig is a rolling bike shop complete with dyno. Besides, when have you known Joe Marasco to shy away from a challenge?

It was all set up for a feature article for *Super Street Bike* magazine. Tim Hailey was the scribe and I was along for the ride, Canon in hand, to capture the images and give my uninvited opinions whenever I could.



It all took place in Florida in the middle of Bikeweek at Bradenton Motorsports Park. Joe enlisted Dan Rudd of MPS (Motorcycle Performance Specialties - not to be confused with Joe's MSP - Maximum Street Performance). Dan provided a plethora of hop-up goodies for the project, his high-tech hardware contrasted by his 1970's hairstyle. Also joining Joe were his usual cast of characters: Pops Luzador, Mark Hill and Josh Davis. Joe, as he has a tendency to do, had a secret weapon: a virtually unknown veteran jockey named Stuart Hamby. Even one-time hot-shot motorcycle drag racer Marty Ladwig was in attendance. Ladwig, the current hot-shot Sport Compact racer, was at Bradenton testing his new turbo Chevy Cobalt Pro Front Wheel Drive car.

To add to the drama – and ensure the Hayabusa was truly stock and not touched beforehand – the bike was brought to the track in the box it was shipped in from Japan and actually uncrated on the starting line.

Morning rains on the scheduled day kept an early start at bay but the ceremonial uncrating took place somewhere between 12:00 and noon.



The crate is rolled out...



...and the bike revealed.



The cast of characters (L to R) Joe Marasco, Dan Rudd, Josh Davis, Pops Luzador, Mark Hill and jockey Stuart Hamby.

With that the bike was turned into its stock showroom state. They even mounted the mirrors!

Break-in was the first step. With the bike gassed up Stuart took a few leisurely laps around the track to make sure that all the parts were working. Next the bike was brought onto the dyno where it underwent 30 minutes of varying speed pulls. Some of them on the other side of 140 mph. Run hard after break-in, 167 horsepower came up on the monitor.

The basic break-in done, Stuart took a couple of quarter mile passes on the track to get a baseline e.t.. He backed up his first run of 9.90 with a strong 9.77 both with 1.6 60 foot times and at 142 mph. Pretty good with absolutely no modifications.



Joe breaks in the bike on the dyno.



Hamby takes the first laps at stock height.

The bike was brought back to camp and the team went to work. The bike was lowered front and rear, one of Joe's Tsukigi full exhaust systems was added with the accompanying PowerCommander, an ignition module, an airshifter and a dry nitrous system.

Joe wanted to install a modified air box but the technical committee (me) protested, saying the work on the box was not performed at the track. The technical committee (me), plied with the offer of free dinner, decided that since MSP has modified airboxes in stock ready to ship (a fact that I could not actually verify but hey, I wasn't missing out on free dinner) it was allowed.



The parts table. The pre-fab airbox (meal ticket) is top left.

Ah, yes, the hitch... Joe wanted to re-gear the bike but the replacement sprocket could not be found in the parts box. Josh was sent to retrieve one at a not-so-local Suzuki dealership. The team was one man down for almost two hours.

Hitch number 2: While Joe was installing his clutch mod and stiffer springs, the bike had to be leaned over to keep the oil in. Someone inadvertently hit the clutch lever, causing the fluid to leak and requiring the system to be re-bled.

The work done it was back to the dyno to gauge the horsepower increase. On motor it pulled 178 hp. With spray it went up to 220 hp.



Hiding the bottle.



Hey! The winning Lotto numbers!

It was then back to the track for some all-motor passes to further gauge the progress. Looking for a 9-teen Stuart hit successive numbers of 9.23 and 9.28 with the now-improved 60 foot slipping on the second hit.

Stuart performed admirably, running strong and consistent numbers on a bike he had never been on before. But there was a problem. The clutch wasn't behaving properly and Joe brought the bike back to camp and set to taking the clutch cover off and getting things right.

Time was running out. It was past 6:00 and we still had a good bit of time on the 8 hours but daylight was the enemy. Track manager gave us a 7:00 curfew – just past sunset. The technical committee (me) judged that the extra hour could be performed the next day if the bike was impounded overnight. To be honest I didn't feel like sleeping in the trailer and it would probably mean missing dinner. And that would not sit well with Hailey, the king of free meals. Besides, this would not have been as compelling a story if they couldn't pull off the 8 second run in one day.



Time becomes a factor.
Dan's getting the band back together!



The clutch is worked on as the sun sets.

At 6:45 Stuart brought the hopefully-repaired bike to the line. The pressure was on. He would probably have a couple shots at it but it was getting dark. Would the clutch work as hoped? If he didn't make it on the first run would the clutch be too hot for the second? Would the airshifter and nitrous system perform? Was Stuart up to the task? What would we be having for dinner?

Stuart rose to the occasion. With one shot on the juice he cracked off an 8.98 at 156 mph less than 7 hours after the bike was uncrated from its shipping container. Awesome!



Hamby makes **The Run** (above). The scoreboard shows success as the crew celebrates (below).



The crew was buzzing afterward and took a long time to get packed up. We missed the awesome seafood restaurant nearby and ended up eating at Applebee's as the staff was closing up. It sucked.

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