

On-Track Rentals

By Michael Gougis

There's nothing like rolling up to the racetrack with nothing in your car but your gear bag, hopping out and walking over to a bike that someone else has race-prepped, transported to the track, fueled, set up and even put your personal racing number on.

All you do is suit up, hang out under the team's awnings, and think about how you're going to kick every-

through the company's website (www.feellikeapro.com), Seyl takes things from there. The machines range from model year 2009 to 2012, and are legal for WERA Superstock and AFM Production classes.

Specifically, they are equipped with Pirelli tires, Motion Pro throttles, Galfer brakes, Motorex oil, LeoVince exhausts, Woodcraft controls and Hotbodies Racing color-matched race bodywork. Feel Like A Pro crew members keep the bikes fueled and ready to ride, as well as

providing a hospitality area for racers, riders and their guests. Seyl is quick to mention his suppliers, because they aren't just vendors, but supporters; they are part of the Feel Like A Pro program and help keep the rental prices low to ensure that new people have a chance to get onto a racetrack.

Who rents the bikes? "It runs the gamut," Seyl says. "The person from Europe who wants to come over and ride Laguna Seca. They get set up with me, because obviously they can't bring their bike with them. The club racer who runs with us all year long. People who have a lot of experience on a motorcycle. People who haven't even been on a racetrack yet."

At this point, the nine-bike fleet splits its time about equally between track days and races, says Seyl. Feel Like A Pro operates at tracks where Seyl, who has raced with AFM for several years, has raced and feels at home.

"I started racing in 1999 on YSR50s at Prairie City," Seyl says. "Did that for a few years, then got a big bike and went racing with AFM. I got my license on an old GSX-R750, a 1992, I think. Got an R6, race-prepped that, and thought, 'I'm never going to ride on the street again.'

weight made it a chuckle to toss around a racetrack.

Richard Barnett started the 250R race rental business in the West with his now-discontinued Racebike rentals.com, and Brian Bartlow followed with Feel Like A Pro in 2009. Bartlow, who still operates a dirt-bike training school, tired of the travel associated with the program, Seyl says, and was looking for a buyer last year.

"I was helping him (Bartlow) out in the pits, because I had retired from the Air Force and my racing budget dried up! I helped him out and he said I could ride any time I wanted. So I did a couple of races," Seyl says. "I remember the first race coming in with a grin from ear to ear.

"I thought this was the perfect program. I always wanted to do something with motorcycles when I retired, and it was just, how can I make that pay? And then Brian decided he didn't want to do all this traveling and stuff and he offered it to me first. So I got the phone call from Brian and I said, 'Let me talk to my wife,' and I said to her, 'Brian's thinking about...' and she said, 'Yes! Do it!'"

The cost is \$299 per day. For the racer, Seyl offers a package deal of \$3300 for the whole season. Seyl

says that works out to approximately \$275 per day, and if the racer wants to rent a bike for a track day or additional races, the cost drops to exactly \$275 per day.

Probably the most frequently asked question (after cost) revolves around crash damage. If you rent a bike from Feel Like A Pro, you are responsible for 100% of the crash damage. However, you can buy insurance; if you pay an extra \$50 per day, your

liability for crash damage costs are capped at \$500. If you crash and the damage costs less to repair, you get charged the lower amount.

But Seyl points out that the 250Rs, with their light weight and slower speeds, generally don't get damaged too badly in crashes. It's one of the benefits of using the 250cc Ninjas (Seyl hopes to add 300Rs to his fleet next year) on the track.

"For this program, (the 250R is) right in the sweet spot," Seyl says. "It's not real hard on tires, and as soon as you go to a bigger bike you have to play with the suspension for every single person. All we've done is put heavier oil in the forks. This is a good, neutral set-up for just about anybody who jumps on it. And the competition at this level is outstanding—it's so much fun to watch." **RW**



(Above, Left) David Seyl (942) leads racer Eric Bostrom (32), both on rental bikes at Thunderhill Raceway Park. (Above) David Seyl. (Below, Left) The 250R rental fleet. Photos by Dito Milian/gotbluemilk.com.



one else's butt once your visor snaps down. It's like you're a total MotoGP star. And it's available to you for less than \$300 a day.

David Seyl, of Roseville, California, now runs Feel Like A Pro. The rental bike operation provides track-prepped Kawasaki 250Rs at tracks throughout California and Nevada, for racing and for track days.

"It relieves so much pressure off of you as a racer," says Seyl, a retired Air Force flight engineer and an AFM racer. "All you have to think about with this program is riding the motorcycle. You don't have to think about all of the extracurricular things that go along with racing."

Once you have reserved a bike

Raced that for a while, got on a GSX-R1000 for a while, and now I'm back here on the 250s. "I'm more comfortable on the smaller bikes. It's still enough motorcycle that it can get you into trouble, but not so much motorcycle that you're just hanging on most of the time."

When Kawasaki introduced a completely revamped 250R in 2008, several race clubs quickly moved to embrace the new bike—its 17-inch wheels made it capable of running on race-quality rubber, and its light