



Buffalo Power

THE FIRST BUELL® MOTORCYCLE EVER TO FINISH THE RETIRED BISON RANCHER. NOT A FACTORY TEAM. ENTHUSIAST WHO WANTED TO SEE A BUELL IN AMERICA'S

DAYTONA 200 IS OWNED BY A NOT A DEALERSHIP. JUST A BUELL BIGGEST MOTORCYCLE RACE.



HOW'S THAT FOR "GRASS ROOTS"?

The XBRR™ in question, piloted with skill and unrelenting determination by Walt Sipp in the 2007 race, was originally purchased with track schools in mind, says its owner, Dick Fish of Cardston, Alberta, Canada.

"But that's a lot of money for a track school bike," he says. "I realized it ought to be campaigned [in a racing series]."

In a perfect world, Dick, a motorcycle enthusiast all his life and former cross-country racer, may have liked to take on the 200 himself. But at 65, his saddle time these days is devoted to more "reasonable" pursuits – such as setting an Iron Butt record for riding from Prudhoe Bay, Alaska to the southern tip of South America.

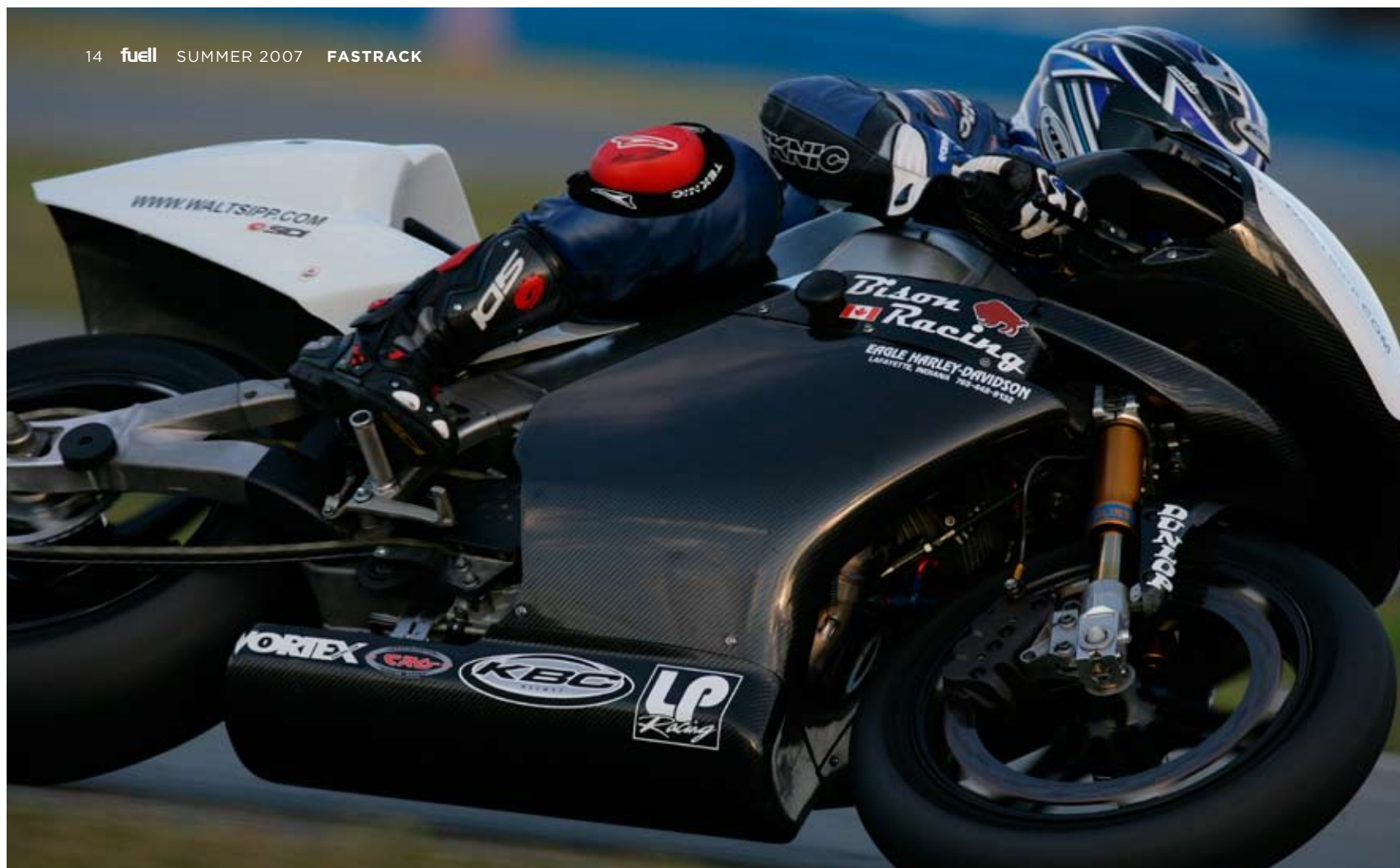
"I'm old and retired now, over the hill for most forms of racing."

So if the XBRR was going to be raced, Dick needed a rider. Somebody he could trust to do right by his new bike. Somebody mature and responsible. But also somebody hungry to win.

MEANWHILE, IN BLUE SPRINGS, MISSOURI ...

Walt Sipp needed a ride for the 2007 season. The Daytona 200? Not even on the radar screen. A well-respected veteran of the Thunderbike and Supertwins circuits, he had lost some support from 2006 and was just looking for a way to get back on the track. So when he put the word out that he was seeking sponsorship for '07, he was thrilled to get a call from Canada. And discussions began about putting together the team that would be known as "Bison Racing."





DESPITE BEING PRETTY BANGED UP, HE DID WHAT HE HAD TO DO TO BECOME THE FIRST BUELL RIDER EVER TO CROSS THE FINISH LINE AT THE DAYTONA 200.



"When I first phoned Walt, it was to talk to him about CCS and ASRA," Dick explains. "But it evolved to talk about Formula Xtreme. I don't know how Daytona came up, but it did."

"At first it didn't seem like it was going to work out," Walt recalls. "Alberta, Canada is a long way from Blue Springs, Missouri, and Dick really wanted to be at the races. But the more we talked, the better it felt. Practically at the last minute we decided, 'Let's run the Daytona 200.'"

Next thing you know, a deal was in place, and Dick delivered the XBRR to Missouri, where Walt would start prepping the bike and assembling a crew.

GRASS ROOTS GET GREENER

As word spread that a truly privateer Buell team would be competing in the Daytona 200, the effort attracted a lot of attention – and a surprising amount of additional support.

"A lot of people stepped up and helped this whole deal out," Walt says. "People were really excited

to have a Buell in the 200 – and Darren James' additional entry was very last-minute. People who had nothing to do with it sent us financial support. It was awesome!"

On the track, Walt found himself going faster and faster on the new bike. He qualified 38th but felt he could have done much better. "I thought we had another second or second-and-a-half in us," he says. "I was going to go back out on a fresh set of tires, but there was an incident on the track and we got caught out. But we made the first wave, which was one of our goals."

Still, his expectations for the race were high. His best lap times in practice seemed to put a top-20 finish within reach. Those lap times, of course, don't account for losing seven laps in the pits following a spectacular crash.

COMING TOGETHER

The Daytona 200 is not like Thunderbike or Supertwins, where if you get knocked down there's

a better chance than not it's going to be by another Buell rider. There were just two Buells on the track that day – two Buells! – in a field of 61.

So when Walt went down, you probably would have thought it was one of those metric bikes on the other side of the impact. Only it wasn't. It was the other Buell.

"It was a racing incident," he says stoically of his collision with Darren James. "It happens. You move on."

In this case, "moving on" meant getting up, getting back on the Bison Racing Buell XBRR, and heading to the pits for repairs. As high-sides, it was not that spectacular. The bike came down hard but then just slid, so the damage was confined to a few bent and broken parts on the right side.

Meanwhile, Walt also came down hard on his right side – and then tumbled a bit. Despite being pretty banged up, he did what he had to do to become the first Buell rider ever to cross the finish line at the Daytona 200 (James and the Deeley H-D/Buell XBRR

dropped out with a mechanical issue a few laps after the incident).

"I was so proud of him to get back up and finish the race," Dick says. "I mean, he was hurt. He was still hurting last week [two weeks after the race]. But he got up, came into the pits, then went out and ran the same lap times he did before the crash."

In fact, Walt's last lap was his second fastest of the day. Much credit, of course, goes to the pit crew, a dedicated bunch of skilled and enthusiastic supporters gathered from Illinois, Missouri, Wisconsin, and [Paul: Can you get us names?] who quickly got the damaged bike back in race shape – and gave Walt a standing ovation when he pulled in after the race was over.

THE LEGACY

"From a racer's standpoint, I'm not at all happy with 46th," Walt says. "I want to win every race I enter, and I know I could have done a lot better. Two riders who I qualified ahead of finished 17th and 19th, so a

top-20 finish was definitely feasible.

"But as a Buell enthusiast, I'm really stoked that we were able to finish. It was pretty special, especially considering the caliber of riders who were out there. And I was thrilled for all the people who helped make it possible."

In the end, the Buell XBRR did exactly what it was designed to do: put a fast, high-quality, race-ready motorcycle within the reach of people like Dick Fish and Walt Sipp. And be competitive in big races like the Daytona 200.

Somewhere in Canada, a herd of bison has just become a part of Daytona history. So next time you sink your teeth into a nice, juicy buffalo burger, give a nod of appreciation to those who gave their all for Buell racing. **fuel**