



## LONG TERM PROJECT:

### Kawasaki ZX 6R, Part 1

Written by: Neale Bayly Charlotte, NC – 11/10/2007



Squeezing down behind the fairing as hard as possible, I hit two perfect up shifts as we fly toward turn seven. Nailing my brake marker, dropping two gears, and pitching into the turn, we are running on rails. Hitting my mark, it's time to twist the throttle, and as I bury the tach needle once more I can hear the deep, bass growl growing louder. Holding full throttle as late as possible into the kink, rolling off, grabbling a down shift and whacking the throttle back open, turn eleven is coming up fast. Pushing wide as I brake and hammering down to first, the sound of the Ducati behind me is so loud it almost drowns out the noise from my ZX 6R. I know the Kawasaki will turn into the tight, technical turn faster than the longer, heavier 999R, so hitting the apex I twist the throttle as hard as I dare to try and gap him before the front straight.

Exiting turn 14 I can hear him, but it doesn't feel like he is on the passenger seat this time, so giving the ZX everything it's got I scream toward turn one waiting for the pass. It doesn't come, and I hold the throttle as long as the yellow streak that matches my leathers will allow me before working the [brakes](#). With the perfect suspension set up, this doesn't even ruffle the bikes feathers, and I start the new lap with the Ducati still behind me. Riding with my buddy, Scott Vanhatten, the majority of our day is spent this way, with either him in front, or me trying to hold him off. Scott is an experienced racer, so I have no concern about riding in such close proximity, as I know he isn't going to make any hairball moves. With the ZX 6R I am riding set up perfectly, which allows me to push hard with total confidence, for once in my life I know I couldn't have made a better decision.



Nick decided we should sterilize our patient before surgery, so we rolled it out and pre-soaked it in Spectro Cycle Wash. (Photo: Neale Bayly, Patrick Bayly and Cindy Castano)

It had all started with a visit to my local Kawasaki [dealer](#), Mathews Fun Bike Center, a few months ago and a conversation with Sales Manager Tee Caldwell. Kawasaki had offered me a ZX 6R for an extended visit, so we concocted a plan to use the shop's expertise to help me do a series of articles about the bike. There is no denying the popularity of track days, and there are no shortage of schools and events to help learn the subtle art of track speed. The problem for a mechanical Muppet like myself, is machine set up, and this is where Tee came in. Assigning me a mechanic for the article, ex racer Nick, we chose a day to take my stock, street legal ZX 6R and prepare it for its first track day.

The first order of operation was to assess the bike, and it didn't take too long to realize the [Kawasaki](#) had been "ridden hard and put away wet," according to Nick. Wearing a [www.Sportbiketracktime.com](http://www.Sportbiketracktime.com) track day sticker, a set of shagged tires, with 1900 miles on the odometer and half a [tire's](#) worth of burned rubber on the underside of the rear fender, I wasn't about to argue. Further examination showed blued rotors, a dry chain, and duct tape mess on the lights and turn signals. At this point Nick decided we should sterilize our patient before surgery, so we rolled it out and pre-soaked it in Spectro Cycle Wash. Then we made sure every speck of dirt and rubber was removed with the pressure washer before drying it, polishing it, and putting it up on Nick's lift. Setting the tone for a clean, meticulous workday, we got to work.



We wired the Drain bolt for Safety. (Photo: Neale Bayly, Patrick Bayly and Cindy Castano)

With the engine warm we dropped the oil and a new oil filter was added and lock wired in place. Then we refilled with Spectro 10W 40 and had a look at the old oil. It was really nasty, and Nick said this was in part due to all the burnouts the bike had done. Allowing the engine to get extremely hot with no airflow to keep it cool, the oil breaks down quickly. While we were [safety](#) wiring the oil filter, Nick drilled and wired the drain bolt also, not necessary for your average track day, but just some added security that never hurts when you are intending to ride all day at high speed.

Next, we pulled off the bodywork to remove the turn signals, and Nick did a nice tidy job of duct taping the resulting holes. Then he drained the [radiator](#) fluid and refilled the system with Redline Coolant and distilled water. This is mandatory for the majority of track days, as crashing with anti freeze in your radiator and having a spill certainly won't win you any friends.

The next job was to pull off the passenger pegs and remove the license plate bracket, turn signals and taillight. I doubt I will be riding the Kawi on the streets, but if I wanted to it, is only a couple of hours work to convert it back. Mirrors were next, and Nick put some nice shiny bolts and washers in their place for a cleaner look. He also decided to lock wire the grips while he was at the front of the [bike](#).



Running as late and deep as I could into the turns, there was no unsettling dive and no springy rebound coming off the gas when making the turn. (Photo: Neale Bayly, Patrick Bayly and Cindy Castano)

Working slowly and methodically, he re-installed the bodywork and my son Patrick installed some stickers. While we were having fun doing that, Nick was studying a [Kawasaki](#) memo that gave us the suspension settings from the World press intro at Barber. With Kawasaki spending a number of days figuring this out, I thought we should take advantage of their findings and not try to set it up ourselves. This produced another interesting find, as Nick barely had to change any of the adjusters, which leads me to believe I have one of the original bikes from the test. (See end of article for settings)

While we were working on the bike, Tee dropped off a pair of [race](#) stand spools for the rear swing arm and a print out from [www.hacked.com](http://www.hacked.com). Apparently, American models have their exhaust valves restricted, and by adding a jumper wire to one of the connectors, they gained 9.2 [horsepower](#) from a 2005 ZX-6R. Armed with a print out, Nick went under the seat, made the modification, and buttoned the bike back up to see if we could get some free horsepower. Without a dyno it is hard to say how much difference it made, but from the side of the track my buddies said the bike sounded a lot fiercer than a normal stocker. With the modification only giving the power increase above 13,000 rpm, you have to be on the gas to appreciate it, and I can thank Mr. Vanhatten and his roaring Ducati for making sure I did just that. From the rider's seat it is hard to know whether the placebo effect was in place, or it really was 5-10 horsepower stronger. But the bike felt like a missile, and Scott was very impressed how hard it pulled off the corners.



A set of [Pirelli Diablo Corsa III](#) tires will ensure we have adequate grip in the corners. (Photos: Neale Bayly, Patrick Bayly and Cindy Castano.)

Last but not least, on our preparation day, we installed a set of [Pirelli Diablo Corsa III tires](#). As the tires used by the European Superstock 600 racing series, they were the perfect fit for our test. Listed as a track day/street tire, to find out more about it's abundant amount of qualities, click here to see what our friends over at [Motorcycle USA](#) had to say about them. . Having read their test, I am in total agreement with all the points made, especially the longevity part. Carolina [Motorsports Park](#) is one of the tougher tracks on tires in the Southeast, and after a full day, I feel confident they will be just fine for another track day.

Checking around the ZX 6R, I felt like a proud parent as Nick decided to bleed the [brakes](#). After nearly 2,000 miles they were feeling spongy, so he made sure all the air was out of the lines. The stock brake pads looked just fine, and with a good firm lever, we stood back to admire my track ready machine. Looking lean, mean, and super clean, the day had gone by without a glitch. The bike looked phenomenal, and I couldn't have felt more comfortable with Nick's meticulous approach and focus on the project.

Arriving at Carolina Motorsports Park for a US Desmo track day, I couldn't have had a better frame of mind. All I had to do was put my leathers on and ride without having to think about the [bike](#) beneath me. Joining a small group of riders on the track, my first session was about warming up my mind and body while getting familiar with the ZX 6R. Having tested this model a number of times in the past few months, it quickly felt like an old friend, and by the second session, I was riding as hard as I could trying to hang with Scott.

The engine pulled cleanly and crisply all the way till the rev limiter kicked in somewhere on the north end of 15,000 rpm. The brakes were stronger than I could use and the suspension settings absolutely perfect. Running as late and deep as I could into the turns, there was no unsettling dive and no springy rebound coming off the gas when making the turn. The [Pirelli's](#) worked like a charm and allowed me to concentrate on accelerating harder as I exited the turns without loss of grip from the rear. As mentioned earlier, Scott was very impressed with the way the bike pulled out of the turns, so you know we weren't

hanging around.

Parking the bike for the last time and sitting back to reflect on the first part of our test, I couldn't have been happier. A huge part of enjoying a day at the track is having the right mental attitude, and a properly prepared bike goes a long way to creating this. Good tires, properly set suspension, and everything adjusted correctly is key, and thanks to Nick and Tee at Mathews Fun Bike Center, my ZX 6R was just perfect. Having a good riding buddy didn't hurt things either and I greatly enjoyed Carolina Motorsports Park. This is really a hidden jewel that I have to admit has escaped my attention until recently. Less than an hour from Charlotte, NC, it is a lot of fun, with heaps of run off should you take an off track excursion. With new management and a whole bunch of plans to improve the place, it sounds like a good thing is only going to get better.

Winter is coming, and it is going to be time to park the Kawasaki till the spring. We have a lot of plans to bring it out next year with some seriously trick parts, so stay tuned to see what we come up with over the next few months.



The ZX6R will run side by side with the heavier 999R. (Photo: Neale Bayly, Patrick Bayly and Cindy Castano)