

## PHILIP ISLAND 2009 RIDE REPORT

I'd started my contribution to the Philip Island Ride Report a number of times over the past few weeks but each time I'd get stuck after just a few words. Because the rule always is "what happens on the Island stays on the Island". So if what happens on the island stays on the island, how can I write a report about what happened on the Island? I kept coming up with nothing! Then I had a brainwave. I'll just make it all up. So here it is.

### Chapter 1.

#### STRIKE 1

*'Twas the night before the Island, when all through the houses, no creatures were stirring, not even the mouses.....but Grant was ..... "Houston, we have a problem."*

So the story begins, when the night before the trip our SABERS Philip Island group (Dennis, Chris, Fred, Steve, Dave, Mark, Pete, Andrew, me) are suddenly leaderless, as our Illustrious Leader and guru Grant who we all look to for directions when no-one knows where the f%^\* we're going, gets defected that week for something trivial, like, I don't know, let's see, how about ..... modifications?? Good story so far? So Grant – determined he's not going to let a little blue smelly cupie doll spoil a good weekend, spends most of the night before the big trip rebuilding his Blackbird's tail and rewiring it all, (what a trooper!) but can't get the defect off until Regency Park opens in the morning, two hours after we're all supposed to be gone. Boo!!!!!! Hiss!!!!!!! (Remember, I'm making this up because what goes on the trip stays on the trip.)

Enter the HERO to the RESCUE ..... FRED! The Grand High Poo Bah with GPS will be our Illustrious Leader. Yay! Houston, we have lift-off. Oh oh, what? Fred's thinking about taking the car 'cos it's raining? Tell him NO, he has a pack of wild out-of-control SABERS to gather up and lead forth to ..... The Island!!! (Trumpets blaring..... TO THE RESCUE FRED!!) And so the story continues.....

Our displaced (err .... disgraced?) leader Grant comes down to see his treasured pack of kittens off and with a tear in his eye waves us goodbye saying "The double bed's mine but I'll probably beat you all there anyway!!". And he wasn't far wrong.

### Chapter 2

#### STRIKE 2

So we shoot off up the freeway like a wild out-of-control pack of SABERS avoiding the deluge of rain that is the Adelaide forecast for that day (see ya suckers!!) Stopping in Taillem Bend we fuel up, eat, drink, be merry, and paw over each other's bikes for a while before we lift off in a FLASH of light! (Oh that's right, I'm supposed to be making this up). Okay..... After leaving Taillem Bend and what seems just a short while we wave goodbye to Pete and Andrew as they turn off to head to Mt Gambier.

And the wild out-of-control SABERS continue on without further incident..... for a while..... The weather is cool and mostly dry, the storms are left behind, we're making great time and Grant is well on his way now behind us. We do miss him and we reminisce of his most unfortunate defect incident once or twice during our stops. Who could possibly beat THAT story we declare. Well coming pretty close, as we're fuelling up this side of the black stump, I hear the words no-one likes to hear on a trip: "hey Fred, what's that in your brand new back tyre?" Doh! What The? Looks like the tread's making its own track! How long's that split been there? Did it just appear? Was it there for ages before? "Take no chances" we all insist, so after a couple of phone calls and a couple of laps of Ballarat we high tail into the Honda Shop (I'm drooling and draping over the Repsol Honda in the showroom) but then – PRESTO!! Fred appears with another and much safer brand new tyre and a lot less spending money for the GP. Onward we ride!!! Towards the Island!!!

## Chapter 3

### RATS 'N' CATS

In this chapter, of my now famous and fictitious Philip Island ride report (try saying that after a couple), Grant cleverly has pre-booked a deluxe cabin for himself at the first overnight stop at Bacchus Marsh. Unfortunately he is gazumped by the wild out-of-control pack of SABERS who arrive slightly ahead of him and smear their smelly belongings through the accommodation beforehand so all Grant is left with is a double bed in a (non-deluxe) cabin with some wild out-of-control SABERS, while the Grand High Poo Bah and leader thus far - our Hero Fred, and the little runt of the SABERS litter, me(ow), somehow end up with a room each in the deluxe cabin!! HEY! Lucky me!! ☐

So to avoid a blank Ride Report, the next morning we all get lost in the POURING RAIN, as we follow Fred (with the GPS) who leaves the freeway for a quick stopover in China, instead of following Grant who by now has taken up his rightful helm as our Illustrious Leader and he bloody well knows where to go! This story is becoming a comedy! After some wailing and much gnashing of teeth and head scratching, one of the wild out-of-control SABERS darts off from the pack like a rabbit out of a hole, a cat after a mouse, or a SABER seeking the Island (thankyou Dennis). Being of 'pack' mentality, the rest of us all madly ride off after Dennis, and I think Fred's left scratching his head. Eventually we're all mysteriously led back on to the freeway towards the Island but not without blindly riding straight past Grant who by this time has stopped in the pouring rain to look for us, got his helmet off, standing and waving his hands madly in the air at us, wondering where the hell we got our brains from that morning and thinking "Geez I gotta spend all weekend with this mob?".

I'm sure all this much didn't really happen on the real Philip Island trip but remember that what went on the ride stayed on the ride so I'm really just making this all up for the sake of a good ride report. And we haven't even got to the track yet!

## Chapter 4

### OLD FRIENDS

We make it!!!!!!! Yay! We're finally at the track, in the line up eagerly awaiting the opening of the campground gates. It's very early, we're all very excited, very wet, relieved, and very convinced that Grant has already arrived safely ahead of us and is closer to the entrance gate than we are (hee hee hope he left room for us). But wait, who's this that looks like Grant coming up the rear? WTF? How'd you get behind us? You were in front of us! We turned off and got lost, you went on and knew where to go! Huh? Grant just rolls his eyes and mutters a few well worn profanities most deserving for a wild out-of-control (silly) pack of SABERS. So once again we're back together like Old Friends. Phew and Prrrrrrrr. ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

We finally make it into the campground after being almost strip searched for our entry bands and any contrabands, and I think I'll just throw in a couple of slips and slides and whoopsies as some make it down the mud slide into the campground, while others choose to have a bit of a mud bath while they have the chance. But remember, I'm making this up so Steve won't mind if I use him as my star mud slider.

As we're setting up camp, who should pop in from the camp site next door, but our most awesome neighbours from last year, Wayne and Jeff from Mildura! Couldn't ask for a better set up. It's going to be an excellent weekend. And to top this chapter off, I think I'll have another unexpected yet very welcome cool cat come by our camp spot unexpectedly and decide to camp with us too. Another wild (tho not so out-of-control yet) SABER – ROBBIE!! And the next adventure begins.....

**So ends Book 1 of what yet might be a trilogy the way my imagination is roaring ahead for this (fictitious) ride report. Because remember, what happens on the Island stays on the Island and blah de blah de blah. Anyway these epic tales aren't just thought up on**

**the spot you know. So I'm publishing Book 1 now and Book 2 should be out in the New Year. So watch this space.! Read on for a sneak preview. AlliCAT**

### **Credits**

*Illustrious Leader..... Grant*  
*Hero..... Fred*  
*Mudslider..... Steve*  
*Longest distance traveller .... Dave*  
*Rabbit/Cat/Radar..... Dennis*  
*Out-of-Control..... Mark*  
*Not Out-of-Control..... Robbie*  
*Runt..... Alli*  
*Innocent bystanders..... Chris, Pete, Andrew*

**In Book 2, hear how the wild out-of-control pack of SABERS fight gale force winds to protect their den, how some gorge themselves on once raw shaslicks, and how the wheels on the bus just go round and round..... Totally out-of-control!**

### **Freds Experience (one of our island `virgins`)**

This was my first MotoGP experience. With all the rain leading up to our Wednesday departure day I was having serious second thoughts about riding over for the weekend. After a drenching experience earlier in the year which proved my expensive dry riding gear as useless I was eyeing off Lyn's Getz as a more comfortable mode of transport.

Then a message from Grant...his bike has been defected...trip in doubt! Later another message...fronting for defect removal after our early morning departure...can you lead the ride Fred? Of course...but not in the Getz then. So off to Peter Stevens for some rain gear...just like heaps of other bikers!

Wednesday morning...wet. Grant sees us off promising to catch up later in the day.

We have a comfortable run through to Horsham with Peter B & his mates turning off for Warrnambool at Keith. Denys drops his Triumph as we pull up...side stand slipped. Looks like only damage is a scratched protector "knob". After lunch I spot a big gash in my rear tyre.



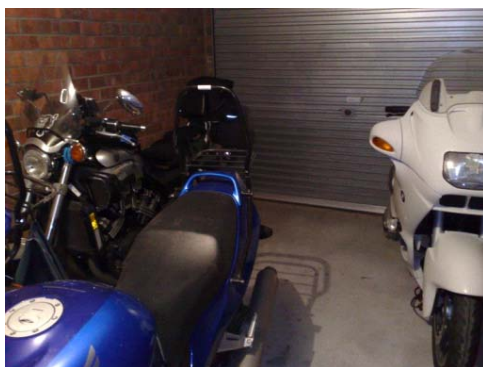
Harley shop has nothing. They ring the Honda shop, nothing. They ring two closed down bike shops, nothing. They ring one in Ballarat...bingo! So a choice...park the bike & courier the tyre over...trailer the bike to Ballarat or ride on! Ride on gets the nod. 200km's of worrying when it will let go. \$250 later we are on our way again with a nice new greasy back tyre.

Grant catches us in Bacchus Marsh and we have dinner in the pub down the hill...lasagne all round as we arrived just after closing time.

Thursday morning 5am start. Weather looks good, much better than yesterday's drizzle. It doesn't last long...soon it is rain. Wet highways in the dark with roadworks & no lines marked & only us sticking to speed limits! The tunnel is very spooky...again we are the only ones sticking to the speed limit...trucks and all screaming past.

Other side of the tunnel my GPS navigator takes us off the M1...so much for me double checking the whole route for just that sort of thing! Denys leads us back. But Dave C & I get held up in traffic. No matter soon we are on our way again. I stop for the Cranbourne exit ramp and send Dave on his way along the M1. Cooked breakfast for me in Cranbourne with friends.

The others all get to Philip Island in time to line up at the gate & get a good spot to camp. I leisurely make my way to Cowes to my lodgings...including lock up garage.



Friday...my first day at any MotoGP...awesome...and it just gets better with each day. Buy some merchandise and Andy Strapz stuff, admire the new Vmax,



walk around the track, watch a Vincent



clean up 3 historic races, marvel at just how loud even the 125's are let alone the MotoGP bikes...they hurt!

By Sunday main race day the weather was even fairly well behaved. Stoner...how good is he? How good do those Ducatis sound? Fantastic race, lap after lap with Rossi just behind him.

If you are any sort of petrol head...put this event on your bucket list, you will not be disappointed.

### **AWESOME, AWESOME, AWESOME**

All too soon we need to head home. I am late for the departure from San Remo, then I discover I have left my wallet in Cowes...I go back, the rest head off. When I get to Sorrento the ferry is there, I jump on and it disembarks immediately. My phone has a message from Grant that they are in the main street of Sorrento, I reply I am on the boat. I misinterpret no reply to mean they are in front of me...so like Rossi I "push, push" to catch up.

The Great Ocean Road



is great except for roadworks, idiots...both driving & riding...and oil on the road. I see an ambulance leave the site of a bike off. I stop in one of my favourite places Nelson



at the mouth of the Glenelg River near the SA border. Message from Grant...they are in Warrnambool!

So I beat them to Mt Gambier by an hour and a half. Check out the bugs!



We take over a pizza bar for dinner.



Next morning late, late start.



We dawdle lots, get bored on the run to Keith. Eventually we say our goodbyes in Taillem Bend and head home all safe...even Dave who still had to get around to Whyalla the next day.

Thanks Grant, Denys, Steve, Chris, Alli, Robbe, Mark, Peter & mates and Dave for a fabulous experience...recommended.

Fred