

TASMANIAN MOTORCYCLE CLUB

SPOKE

Newsletter of the Tasmanian Motorcycle Club. January 2022.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT



WE had a great start to 2022 with our first Symmons Plains ride day, on Sunday, January 16 where I traded the COVID check-in for the recovery vehicle and had a pretty relaxing day, for the most part.

ONE incident had Daniel Fenton realising that he needn't bother with a Lotto ticket for the next few months as he used a huge chunk of his luck quota that Sunday.

JUST before he was about to tip in for the hairpin, Martin Long flew straight past and ploughed into the kitty litter, his brakes having failed.

DANIEL was up-beat about his narrow escape and posted on Facebook, "I think I win the luckiest rider award today. Could have been ugly if I'd tipped in a bit earlier."

MARTIN was not quite as lucky, finishing with a broken ankle.

GET your bikes ready because we'll be doing it all again on Sunday, February 20 (minus the high-speed trips into the kitty litter, hopefully).

BUT remember what the late, great Joey Dunlop once said, "There's green blurs and grey blurs, the trick is to keep it on the grey blurs."

Cary McMahon
Hon. President

LOOKING BACK: WITH KEN YOUNG

Sidecar racing in Tasmania: Part 3

THE story so far of sidecar racing in Tasmania has shown a bit of a pattern. Teams had to be inventive as you couldn't just go into your local bike shop and buy one of the shelf. It was the domain of the "tinkerer" to develop ideas. Mechanics like George Gibbons, Ross Alison, Greg Davies Garry Willis, Terry Brooks, Steve Sheldrick and Mick McBain. Then there were the mechanically minded like Donny Miller, Nigel Keefe, John Watkinson, Bill Smith, John Price and Tom Sheppard. The remaining group were lovers of sidecar racing with talented people helping them like Keith Bingham, Chris Robinson and Lance Roper.

MANY teams were very stable with few changes, like Chris Robinson who started with brother-in-law Geoff Reader and finished with Dave Lambert. John Price only ever had Garry Campbell and Keith Bingham mostly had Scott Tweedie. Some went the other way like Garry Willis who had Barry Lack, Geoff Reader, Leigh Blazely, Arnold Cashion and Tony Oliver, to mention a few. Some of the passengers specialised in "guest rides". I swung for John McGuinness, Les Swallow, Bill Smith and John Watkinson, whilst hanging out the side of Les Walkden's MX chairs, in MX, Grass Track, Flat Track, Speedway and Road Racing.

COMPETITIVE sidecars had come a long way from road trial models with a fully built body with a door to get in (for the lady navigator with a full-length dress). Next was either a small body or wicker basket for racing on the grass at Longford horse track. Followed by the stripped down "box on wheels" for beach time-trials and the platform with handles for beach racing. Road racing started with bolt on platforms followed by purpose-built body work. Then it became the all in one frame with the "sitters" and then the "kneelers"

When I arrived back from Sydney in the mid 1970s, the snowball of development was starting to pick up speed.

THIS sidecar support race for the 1975 3-Hour production race shows how much was changing. Firstly, at that time grid positions were in the program so in the morning just practice, no qualifying and pole was beside the control tower. That meant pole was #4 Mick McBain / Chris Robinson with an 820 Honda Home built,

#2 Keith Bingham / Scott Tweedie with a 750 Cooper BSA (built in England by the team who modified the Mini Cooper "S"), #12 Garry Harper / Arnold Cashion Honda 820 new style called a "wedge". The second row was #6 John Watkinson / Terry Johnson 500 Watsuki home built with a 500 Suzuki two stroke motor, #7 Roger Johnson / TBA 900 Kawasaki, #10 Lance Roper / TBA 820 Honda, and the third row was headed by Bill Sheppard / S Mason on an 1192 SVW that, you guessed it, was a home built with a VW motor.

By the way sidecar people were "colourful characters" take for instance the front row. Nance and Robbo, Keith and Haggis, and Chook and Bluey.



I KNOW you can't actually see Lance Roper so here is what the team looked like later on as they follow Bill Smith and your scribe back into the pits. It's Lance and wife Rosanne as one of a number of ladies who passengered. Also of interest you can easily see that chairs are now using car style slicks all round. Great but consider this, on the rare occasion it rains in Tasmania you had a major problem. If it was just a passing (summer) shower there was little time to get a complex setup wheel out and to put on a wet as almost no team had a set of wets already to go. Often, they would go out on a damp track on slicks or just enough time to change a rear.

If it was a really wet day the teams would arrive on wets with the problem for the passenger of moving around a wet platform grabbing for wet metal hand grips and hoping if the bike was sliding it didn't flick back just as you were grabbing for the grip. The other problem is the rider having his face so close to the front wet with no mudguard as seen on so many chairs the spray became monsoonal. If your chair had a fairing it still had no mudguard and the water was thrown to the underside and blown back under the screen and onto the rider's face.



THE next thing the "tinkerers" were to try was center hub steering, a form of car front end as can be seen by this front shot of Les Swallow and guest rider Ken Young. The big look of fear on my face just before starting out for round 1 of the Australian Road Race Championship was replaced with delight after finishing 3rd.



YOU can see in this racing shot just how far back from the wheel the rider is and just how long the chairs had become. That will later lead to more development of long bikes.



THERE was still another approach, to just have fun, when Les Walkden decided to give his new passenger.... Me, a chance to get used to moving round the Yamaha SC 500 chair without the punishing ruts of MX racing. The bike was built by top MX rider Neil Pedder from Hobart. Cobwebs were cleaned off some road tyres found in Ian Tilley's loft and fitted. They didn't like that idea as for almost the entire day at Baskerville they squealed their hearts out in every corner.

WELL, he was riding it MX style because the “grip” gave the impression of riding on grass. We even managed a dead heat for 3rd in the handicap race to end the day when John Watkinson caught us entering the chute but wasn’t keen to ride round the outside of the slipping and sliding beast until we straightened for the run to the line.



RACING could be close at times like in this Ian Brickhill shot from Symmons. Yes, there are 2 bikes in shot. Keith Bingham and Scott Tweedie being shaded by John Price and Garry Campbell through the sweeper. Passenger rules differed slightly as can be seen by Scott’s feet out



the back. You could wear joggers for better grip. In fact, Dave Lambert always wore lace up boxing boots and, in many photos, Scott is seen not wearing gloves as he found it better for grip especially in the wet.

THIS Ian Brickhill shot shows the very competitive Mick McBain and Chris Robinson with their new “wedge” chair just before Mick decided to move to Melbourne. Chris then became a driver and started out with his Honda 820. For a passenger, he roped in brother-in-law Geoff Reader. Robinson the brick layer managed to find long time sponsor P&R Bricklaying as the main sponsor and Reader the signwriter always made sure the bike was well presented. Later when Geoff stood down for mechanic Dave Lambert the team became formidable.



PRESENTATION was now becoming very important, and a great example was this Graham Briggs Ballarat Kawasaki with a 750 Kawasaki engine in one of the last of the long line of Urquhart frames. Driven by Graham himself and with Daryl Calvert as the passenger. At the time it was a novel but successful way to go, using a large two stroke engine.

Although this 750 production engine was fast and competitive when tuned up, the late 1970's saw Yamaha release the YZ 750 GP bike. Replacement motors were available from the factory for your solo for if your motor let go big time. With new and crash damaged bikes readily available as well as slightly used models from riders who realised they were too powerful for them to handle, it made TZ750 motors a popular choice for sidecar



KEITH Bingham decided to replace the BSA motor with one of these new TZ750 motors and put it to good use. Some would say, no make that most would say, it had to be better, moving from a big old British four stroke to a state-of-the-art Japanese racing two stroke.



MEANWHILE back at the home-built specials, Greg Davies picked up this secondhand Honda at the right price but it proved to be the wrong bike as it was a real basket case. Ian Brickhill took this shot at Baskerville with David Bestwick having his second and last meeting in the chair. It was about to again blow an oil line and spin on its own oil.



SOMETHING that may look a little like a home built special was the second bike for long time Clerk of Course Les Walkden and your scribe whom was later replaced by Ralf Harris. In this 1977 shot Ralf (not Rolf) is having a guest ride. They were being chased by 2 of the "20" Seabrooks racing on a 650 Yamaha Wasp. You may notice in the mud not a pair of goggles to be seen because this was well before roll offs and tear offs had been invented.

The chassis was a very popular British built Wasp with Norton motor and running gear. That meant it came with a twin leading shoe



Norton front drum brake. Learning from younger brother Jamie, the apprentice mechanic at Ian Tilley's, where Jamie and I were able to buy a written-off RD 350, and I scored the tank and side covers for my proddie racing bike. So, when a RD 400 came up Les followed suit and snapped it up to gain the front end and replaced the old drum and spokes with a mag wheel and disc brake system that was able to pull the heavy Norton Wasp up much better. I jumped in for the exhaust pipes for my new RD400 race bike.

THE big differences from the previous shot and this one, from 1982, shows the new Yamaha RD400 front end. Apart from the fact that a drum is not as efficient in MX it often filled with water, and it became even less efficient. A disc is more predictable but would pick up dirt and grit causing the pads to wear a lot quicker. The other big change you can see in the previous shot Les is wearing an open face helmet and that white "thing on his shoulder is supposed to be a combined goggles and plastic face shield. They proved to be about as useful as installing an ash tray, I know as when I tried to bite the cross bar a year or so later it meant I broke the jaw in 3 places. In this shot Les is now in a full face helmet, Ralf is now passenger, the new beefier wheel in the leading link suspension looking good and not even the stickers on the bike have changed. Both shots taken at grass track events not tough MX events, these events were actually fun to ride.



ONE area of interest is driver and passenger positioning. Ralf is trying to push out to the left as far as he can in front of the wheel whereas as I went over the actual wheel cover often. In the first shot Les has moved a lot of the body inboard to centralise the chair weight but is keeping some weight on the seat to give a little traction in the slippery conditions. In the second, the track has much more grip with the grass still on track so the speed would be higher and the sidecar needs as much weight in the chair as possible.

BACK to road racing and a shot of the exciting new bike for Chris Robinson and Dave Lambert. This English built chassis called an MGF (made by Mile Fiddeman) was fitted with a Honda 820 motor. It was a beautifully crafted sidecar that handled well but unfortunately the highly modified motor let them down. A little while after spending a bucket load of money on the engine they took it to Bathurst to have it confirm why Conrod Straight was so named. This



was before the chase was installed and there were two humps that had the fastest vehicles in the air. The lift off caused over revving and the landing sometimes snapped chains. The Honda called time on the lift off "throwing a leg out of bed" and scattering metal far and wide. Just think, to throw a conrod out of the motor first it had to pull itself out of the bottom of the piston and most likely return to the scene of the crime and inflicting another fatal blow to the piston before changing direction and heading out the side of the engine..... And it did. Do I need to explain the connection to the bike with that Holden Kingswood 6 wheeler with the P&R Bricklaying signage? The ute was strengthened so it could carry heavy loads like.....OH!... a pallet of bricks.

TOPFLIGHT bikes and teams came to Tasmanian once a year for the first round of the ARRC like #7 Graham Briggs and Daryl Calvert and #39 Bob Martin and Rob Simmons. Bob was a very talented builder of chairs and he also became a great friend and help to Tasmanians who wanted to compete on the mainland. His passenger "Simmo" was one of the great characters in sidecar racing (along with fellow passenger Eddie Griffin), starting with his black leathers with a white skeleton painted front and back.



THESE were still traditional chairs with the passenger hanging out in front of the sidecar wheel. Running in too deep was #14 Geoff Taylor and Barry Frazer with the completely different sidecar positioning. Passengers until then had always come out in front of the sidecar wheel. Among the reasons for the change is it is a shorter distance to move for the passenger from a left to right corner and less movement means the chair is stable for longer.

Taylor had started to make his mark at the end of the Bayliss reign with a Peterbuilt and in fact won the Tassie round that Swallow finished 3rd with the center hub bike. The Peterbuilt was a very competitive bike built by Sydney-sider Peter Campbell who amazed people when he raced his, by the fact he had to drag his Polio affected legs (I think) to his chair and then hand his two crutches to an assistant after he settled onto the bike.

THE Tasmanian scene was now constantly changing as seen here with #1 Chris Robinson deciding to join the top flight teams with these new, longer chairs that were soon to be called "worms". This race was soon after the purchase as they were still in their green and yellow MGF leathers and Dave is still in his open face helmet with tinted screen. At the same time #3 Keith Bingham with this time Nick Hutton swinging had decided to import a much cheaper F2 chairs that had a TZ350 motor. Great at Baskerville but ran out of puff at Symmons. #10 Lance and Rosanne Roper were next to move up to a worm (Rosanne was to be replaced by Paul Airey) . #13 Garry Willis with this time Tony Oliver was to do a few more years before work commitments forced him to park the chair and #24 Phil Farmer was to do the same.



THIS is how a fast sidecar looks standing still. They were to get even longer and as can be seen the fuel tank has now swapped from behind the sidecar wheel to in front



.... **AND** this is how a fast team looks during a lunch break at Baskerville. Dave Lambert, Suzuki RG 500 and owner rider Robin Bowe and Chris Robinson. "Lambsie" is showing his weight handicap with a mountain of strapping around the sprained wrist and around the ribs to stop the loosened ones moving even more after a recent "off". The team dominated for around 10 years with sidecar racing going into a slow decline until we had only about 4 or 5 sidecars racing with Robbo and "Lambsie" able to often lap the entire field. The national ARRC often saw once a year exciting racing with top flight teams making the crossing. That also was in a bit of a decline. The event that was the domain of the TMCC now alternated with the sidecar club at Baskerville.



Among the last times the championship was to come north, was in 1988 with some interesting combinations. My father's markings in the program showed that in race 2 the all-conquering team of Gavin Porteous and Jeff Spencer (Vic) with a 1016 Suzuki was to win from now NSW based Chris Robinson and Lance O'Connor with a Windle 750 Yamaha and third was David McLachlan and Martin Long (NSW) with a Kawasaki 1000.

Two years later in the senior sidecar race running under the Independent Motor Cycles banner were the Tasmanian teams of Lance Roper and David McLachlan in an LPR 1000 and Davis Saville and Martin Long in a Shelbourne 350.

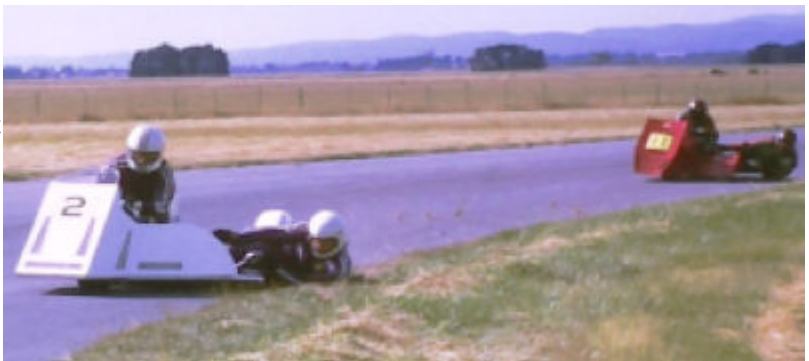
Around this time a French sidecar racer called Luis Christian started building his own even longer chairs and called them LCR's. After a few short years, if you were not racing an LCR you had no chance of winning. Even now if you You Tube "British Sidecar Racing" you will see that even though he has retired and sub-contracted the build most competitors are on LCR's.

In places like Tassie it has helped send sidecars back to the dinosaur age until they appeared at the National Historic meetings, so we are looking forward to them returning to Baskie at the 2-Hour.

A foot note to the piece in part 2 where I mentioned the feeling of hanging out with your face in the grass coming through Shell Corner onto what is the now finish straight. How is this shot I just discovered in the collection that

must have been taken for the March Touring Car meeting as the grass has had the tractor slasher treatment

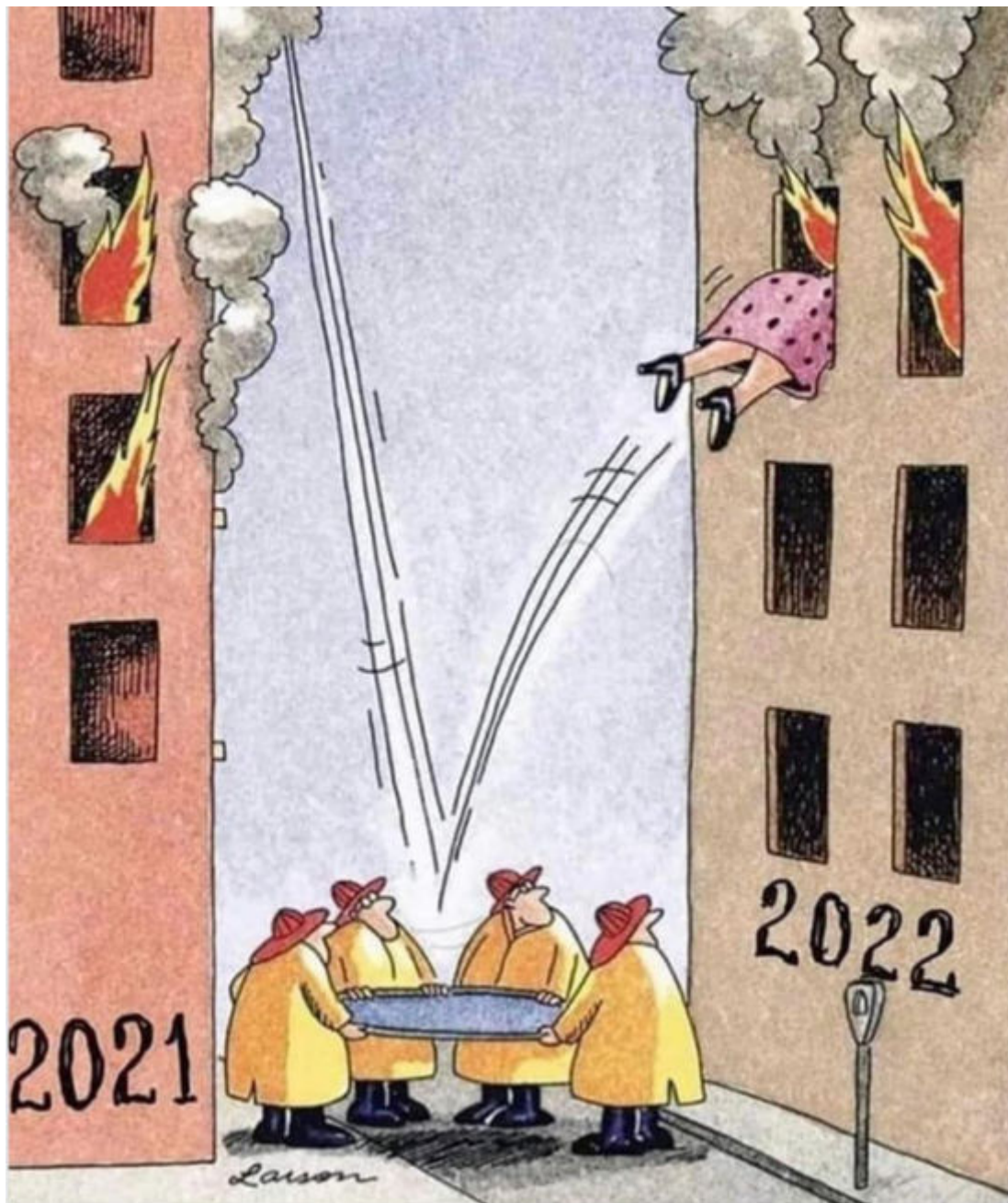
John Price and Garry Campbell are leading Mick McBain and Chris Robinson and on close inspection you can see the "blobs" of grass being thrown up by Garry's shoulders as they exit the corner.



Ken Young

THE LIGHTER SIDE

Perhaps not motorcycle related, but I think Larson summed up pretty well the trepidation with which many people view the coming year. (Nicked from Facebook)



WE GOT IT WRONG 🤯

IN his article on the 2-Hour race at Baskerville, in last month's Spoke, Ken reported that Matthew Long had a small off that relegated him and co-rider Marcus Delaney to third.

THIS was not the case, as was pointed out by an eagle-eyed Spoke reader. (See, some people do actually read it).

AFTER a long day on the phones checking various results, Ken was worn out and misunderstood what Matthew told him.



WHAT actually happened was that, on checking the bike a few minutes before the start of the race, Matthew discovered a flat front tyre. With not enough time to change a tyre, they quickly exchanged front wheels and started the race with a very second hand tyre.

THEY took it "easy" during the race, "only" finishing third outright in the Superbike race and winning the Supersport class.

SORRY about that Matthew.

The calendar I lifted from Facebook and reproduced in last month's Spoke had the TMCC September ride day missing. Here is a corrected version.

Month	Date	Track	Type	Day
January	9	Baskerville (South)	Ride	Sunday
January	16	Symmons (North)	Ride	Sunday
February	5	Baskerville (South)	Ride	Saturday
February	6	Baskerville (South)	RACE	Sunday
February	20	Symmons (North)	Ride	Sunday
March	5	Symmons (North)	Ride	Saturday
March	6	Symmons (North)	RACE	Sunday
March	27	Baskerville (South)	Ride	Sunday
April	3	Symmons (North)	Ride	Sunday
April	9	Baskerville (South)	Ride	Saturday
April	10	Baskerville (South)	RACE	Sunday
May	15	Baskerville (South)	Ride	Sunday
May	21	Symmons (North)	Ride	Saturday
May	22	Symmons (North)	RACE	Sunday
June	4	Baskerville (South)	Ride	Saturday
June	5	Baskerville (South)	RACE	Sunday
September	10	Baskerville (South)	Ride	Saturday
September	11	Baskerville (South)	RACE	Sunday
September	25	Symmons (North)	Ride	Sunday
October	8	Symmons (North)	Ride	Saturday
October	9	Symmons (North)	RACE	Sunday
October	29	Baskerville (South)	Ride	Saturday
November	13	Symmons (North)	Ride	Sunday
November	20	Baskerville (South)	Ride	Sunday
DECEMBER	2, 3, 4	2 Hour – Baskerville	RACE	
December	11	Symmons (North)	Ride	Sunday
December	18	Baskerville (South)	Ride	Sunday

Daniel's hairpin near miss ...
as Martin flies past.



FOR YOUR DIARIES ...

THURSDAY, MARCH 10. TMCC AGM followed by the monthly committee meeting at Gunners Arms, Lawrence St, Launceston, from 7pm. All welcome. Come along and vote for the committee you want.

The next ride day at Symmons Plains will be on Sunday, February 20.

Enter online for the chance to win a ride day pass and to speed up registration on the day



FOR SALE & WANTED

This service is available free to members. Just email your advert to tmccmag@gmail.com (with a photo if you have one) and it will appear in the next available issue of Spoke.

Immaculate 2006 Triumph Tiger 955i. \$5,800

Just 41,300km on the clock and comes with six months rego.

Great adventure touring bike with full set of original factory panniers and top box.

Fully set up for a planned trip around Australia that isn't happening because of changed circumstances.

Windscreen riser.

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New tyres front and back.

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It even has a sheepskin seat cover to protect those delicate behinds unused to covering the 1000 kilometres a day this bike will do in its sleep.

Comes with spare keys, riders hand book, workshop manual and full service history.



**Contact Peter
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**A chance to get into junior class road racing.
\$2000 ono**

Brodie's 2011 Yamaha R15 is race ready for the junior class.

Bike comes with spare rims with wets and a paddock stand.



Call Bianca Lack on **0487 909 128** for further details.



The Ninja is gone from the Renton racing stable with just the two SV650s left



Both bikes are ready to race, come with stands, heaps of spares and tyre warmers and are a steal at just \$3,500 each.

Full details are available from Trevor Renton on 0419
551 636

Also from Trevor

Still available: 3.5" front wheel for a SUZUKI SV650, from 2003. Wheel has brand new brake rotors.

\$150

