



Sorry, no blue smoke from burnouts, we tried!

# Burning the Blues

BY BLAKE CONNER

*Messing with a near-perfect sportbike isn't always a great idea*

It is well documented that the 2005 Suzuki GSX-R1000 is an awesome bike, even winning this year's *Cycle News* Open-class shootout by a landslide. That position has been repeated over and over in magazines from around the world, not to mention the success that Suzuki has had actually racing the bike. So far this season (pre-Mid-Ohio), Mat Mladin has won seven AMA Superbike Nationals, and young Ben Spies has grabbed a victory as well. In the World Superbike Championship, Troy Corser has reeled off seven victories and is a sure bet for the title. As such, the GSX-R1000 is without a doubt the bike of the year in our opinion. So why on earth would we take a near-perfect motorcycle like this and mess with it?

Well, there is that part about only being *near* perfect.

We decided right away that the GSX-R1000 doesn't need much in the way of performance enhancements, especially for street duty. We also decided that we are quite fond of the Suzuki's exhaust canister (although we realize that not everyone is), so we decided not to order up a louder aftermarket unit. Besides, we didn't really need to draw any

more attention to the fact that we were ripping around on a 154-hp missile that is most likely only on the rear wheel.

One thing that has always driven me nuts while commuting on Japanese sportbikes is that the speedometers are notoriously inaccurate. For the most part, they all seem to read very optimistically, and knowing this, I try to estimate the variance and ride close

to what I feel is accurate. The problem with this entire practice is that I really never know how fast I am going, and the fact that everyone in Southern California drives so fast makes it even harder to judge. The seat-of-my-pants estimate dictates that I normally ride at least an indicated 5 mph faster than the speed I want to go.

But wouldn't it be nice if they were just accurate in the first place? Well, there is now a cool product that will calibrate your speedometer, converting it to either kilometers or miles per hour and recording your *actual* top speed into its memory. The product is called the SpeedoHealer v3.0.

The SpeedoHealer took me about half an hour to install and calibrate, both of which are straightforward processes. There are a couple of different ways to determine how far off your speedometer is. First, you can go on to SpeedoHealer.com and enter a bunch of information into the site's online calculator. It will give you a calibration factor, which is called the estimated method. Having a Stalker radar gun here at the office made

our calibration process much easier. We simply did some radar readings on the street in front of the office and determined the variance, and probably made everyone in the area's radar detectors go crazy. We determined that the bike's speedo is 6 percent optimistic.

After installing the SpeedoHealer and calibrating to negative 6 percent, we went back out and did a series of radar runs and determined that we had corrected our GSX-R's speedometer completely. Now when I'm speeding, at least I know by exactly how much.

One bad thing about our GSX-R1000 is that it has an insatiable appetite for tires. It was once again time to change tires, so we decided to try something different. The guy from Tomahawk tires had recently dropped off a set of the blue T1 tires you see advertised in all of the magazines, including ours, and my curiosity got the best of me.

To be honest, I haven't heard anything at all about these tires' performance - not a single bit of feedback. That's all it took for me to give them a try. I know a thing or two about tires, so I felt that I could be a fair judge of their performance. One thing that



These are the blue-colored T1 tires from Tomahawk.

Tomahawk told me up front was that these tires are for street use only and not meant for racetrack use. They can't handle the heat generated at those speeds because, among other things, the tires don't have much if any carbon black in them, a key ingredient to a tire's durability. The reason that these tires don't have any carbon black should be pretty obvious: If they did, they would be black! So the colored tires that you see here are primarily made of a silica compound, which wears quicker than your average black motorcycle tire.

## PARTS

Speedo Healer v3.0 .....\$89.99

Available from:  
Cal-Sportbike  
www.calsportbike.com  
760-249-8890

Tomahawk T1 colored tires  
190/50ZR17 (rear) .....\$209.95  
120/70ZR17 (front).....\$139.95

Available from:  
Desser Tire & Rubber Co.  
www.cycletires.com  
800-321-9717

When I was mounting the Tomahawk tires in our shop, I immediately noticed that they were very heavy. When I had both the stock and Tomahawk tires off the bike, I weighed them and was surprised by how much more the Tomahawk tires weighed. The stock Bridgestone BT014 tires on our GSX-R1000 weighed in at 13.75 pounds for the rear and 8 pounds for the front. The Tomahawk rear weighed a full five pounds more at 18.75 pounds, while the front weighed 6.5 pounds more at 14.5 pounds. This concerned me, because this is unsprung mass that would be added to the bike. Engineers from companies like Suzuki spend countless hours trying to shave weight off components like wheels, brakes, calipers and the fork, trying to reduce unsprung weight, so it seems like a crime to add so much onto a bike's wheels. Additionally, tire companies such as Bridgestone have the same goal, always trying to shave unwanted weight off their tires for the same reasons: Less unsprung weight and less reciprocating mass means better handling and better response from the suspension.

The real test was to see how they felt on the road. After logging some decent miles on the Tomahawk T1s I have to say the extra weight is extremely obvious. I



**The SpeedoHealer mounts cleanly and compactly out of the way under the rear passenger seat, and it works.**

immediately noticed that our nimble GSX-R started to steer like a Panzer tank. Turn-in has been dramatically reduced, and once leaned over, the reciprocating mass makes the bike feel like it doesn't have enough air in the front tire. (I checked it on more than one occasion to make sure.) Another thing that I noticed was that with an additional 6.5 pounds mounted on the front rim, the GSX-R would no longer power-wheelie as easily off the line. Not that it matters, but that is the effect of that much spinning weight on the front of the bike. As a matter of fact, when I actually clutched a few wheelies up, it was amazing how much more effort it took than with the stock tires.

The grip from the T1 tires seems to be on par with most of the basic street tires on the market, at least at normal street and canyon riding speeds. I didn't push as hard as I would have liked because of the handling issues, but I walked away confident that the primarily silica-based tires offer good dry grip and should work really well in the rain as well, since rain tires have more silica in them for cold/wet grip.

As for the look, I guess they look kind of cool, but I'm such a fan of performance-oriented products that I'm on the fence about these tires. I do know that after 100 miles of riding, the only part that still looks clean and blue are the sidewalls; the rest of the tires are covered in an asphalt-colored mess. I suppose they could be really cool on a show bike, but for spirited street riding, I'm inclined to stick with what I know and trust. If you think colored tires will enhance the look of your ride and want more information on Tomahawk tires, go