

## **Pierre's Great Alpine Road Crash Revisited    31<sup>st</sup> March 2012**

It was the perfect day coming around another perfect corner, 24km from Bruthen on the Great Alpine Road. Entry speed wasn't an issue but somehow the front tyre let go and I was down. As usual, crashes seem to occur in slow motion and I had time to say the F.. word multiple times.

Most of my gear worked well. Boots, leather pants, good quality gloves, back protector and helmet saved me from sustaining serious injury. The only disappointment was the RJays textile jacket. It is designed to tour and is extremely comfortable compared to my leather jacket. It has full body armour inside with a 1 CE rating. As I hit the road the amour twisted inside the jacket providing me with little protection on my left arm. The textile material disintegrated within seconds as I came in contact with the road allowing this brilliant motorcycle Mecca highway to eat into my flesh. It didn't really hurt at the time and I felt I could ride the bike. That was until I could feel a warm sticky substance running into my gloves.

Ben suggested taking me directly to the Bairnsdale hospital. It was hard to say goodbye to my old Italian friend but it was time to make a move.

The ride to Bairnsdale highlighted how hard Ben's suspension is. *[Actually, softer than standard but with Pierre on the back the spring was compressed and the Ohlins TTX was working at the top end of its stroke – the hard part. ...Ed.]* I felt every bump and the pain was now starting to kick in.

At Bruthen, a number of Ducati riders (including a Desmosedici RR) were at the servo complete with recovery vehicle. I really didn't want to see this. They were heading towards Omeo and would pass the crash site. Some nice bling on the side of the road awaits them, were my thoughts.

We arrived at the Bairnsdale Hospital where I was attended to immediately. It's a bit of a concern when the ambulance paramedic recognises your face and says "Hello!". Turns out he attended my friend Byron's accident at the last Dargo ride. We had a good chat at the time and he was telling me of the high motorcycle crash rate around this area.

The next hour or so was spent cleaning my left arm. Some large gravel stones had penetrated into my wounds and had lodged into the flesh. The GP suggested opening the arm between the 2 divots to remove the gravel and rock. Once the larger rocks were removed it was time for the scrubbing brush. This is a surgical instrument that scrubs out all the small pieces of gravel. The GP stitched me up and I prepared for the long wait for my wife Kristy to collect me. She was coming from Templestowe and this would take around 3.5 hours.

During that time I had a good chat to the local nurse (Phill) attending to my wounds. He was also a bike rider and had just received a call from his mate Andrew (Rambo) Johnston. Rambo was on his way to work and passed the crash site and saw my bike. He wanted to know if the rider was at the hospital. Rambo offered to store the bike in his shed at Upper Tambo. Phill made a few calls to his riding mates to arrange for someone to collect and take the bike to Rambo's house. Eventually he found someone not too drunk to organise the collection. It seems they start their drinking sessions early in Bairnsdale.

I was most appreciative of the local hospitality as I had been concerned that someone would take the bike or remove all the bling. I've noticed that the sport bike fraternity in country regions embrace the camaraderie spirit within our sport. They always seem to nod as you pass them. This does not occur often in Melbourne. I think that adds to the appeal of rides like Dargo.

Kristy arrived at 10.30pm with the kids and we got home at 2.00am. She was not angry, just relieved I was okay. Extra housework over the next few months is required to make up for this. Paul Symonson and Frank collected my bike from Upper Tambo the following day. A big thanks to

these guys as it took them all day to recover the Duc. Speaking of the Duc, the damage is not that bad. Major parts that need replacing are the front wheel, headlight and mounting bracket. These can be sourced at a reasonable price from the States. I have all the original levers and foot pegs to replace the damaged ones and my original fairings. The insurance assessor is taking the bike today so I'll need to wait for the report, then do the math. Phill mentioned the Ducati Panigale looks good. I agree.

Once again, thanks to Tim for a great day of riding. Sorry to hear about Dennis's crash. Special thanks to Ben and Bill for taking me to hospital. Hope to be back riding on something soon.

PS. Thanks for your calls of concern.

PPS. Since writing this article, the insurance assessor has declared my bike a statutory write off. The bike appears to have taken a decent wack when it hit the side of the cliff face so the old girl will end up a track bike or for parts. I received the payout today so it's time to shop.

Three days after the crash my wounds became infected. I felt okay and didn't want to go to hospital. Kristy forced me to go to the emergency department and the plastic surgeon decided to operate immediately. It turns out that the infection was very bad and they don't muck around with these sorts of things. I spent the next few days in hospital and have now almost recovered.

**Pierre Ong**