

are taken. This is why racers strive to extend themselves in practice sessions and to keep themselves up to speed between races and in the off season.

An old racer's saying is: "Pain is nature's way of telling you to pay more attention." This wry summary itself illuminates one way the racer's world differs from the non-racer's. An injury, for most racers, is not a reason to quit, only a reason to do something differently and better, assuming that a mistake induced the injury in the first place. In this, motorcycle racing is hardly unique, given the personal-damage toll taken in football and other contact sports. But the immediate, sometimes severe and often fatal injuries that may ensue from a mistake in motorcycle racing makes moto-sport much less forgiving. Racers understand and accept the costs because the benefits, in experiential terms, are priceless to them, in ways that are hard for others to understand. It is not just a question of risk, it is a question of which risks to take, and why.

For example, I raced at Bathurst, Australia, in 1988 with Paul Dean, editor of *Cycle World*, aboard the 1987 Suzuki GSX-R 750 that I had campaigned under the *Team Cycle World* banner at the Isle of Man TT the year before.⁵² Because we had such a good time in the Island, we decided to ship the bike and the TT team manager, Terry Shepherd, to the annual races at Bathurst, where we would race it in the Arai 500 endurance road-race. The race would draw Australia's top talent, since the world-famous Mount Panorama circuit was used for racing only twice a year, for the James Hardie 1000 car race and for the annual motorcycle races. The Mount

Panorama circuit was celebrating its 50th anniversary, having been built just before World War II to train Aussie riders for the Isle of Man TT races, then as now the world's most grueling, dangerous and prestigious road-race events.

After Paul Dean's first stint in the saddle, the team was lying well up in the standings. During my session, I soon came upon a rider on a much larger and faster Formula One bike, who would slow down substantially in the tight turns at the top of the mountain, then unleash his formidable engine's power down the mile-long Conrod Straight. Realizing that I'd have to get him behind me to keep our place, I planned a pass where he slowed the most—the tight downhill left-hander known as Forrest's Elbow. All went well as we dove into the braking area for the turn; I pulled out from behind him, leaned over further and rolled on the throttle, taking a much tighter line through the turn than he did until, just past the apex, the Suzuki's fairing grounded against a slightly upthrust section of concrete I hadn't seen, instantly kicking the rear wheel out and throwing me to the ground. The bike and I slid across the track and slammed into the trackside concrete barrier, not removed for the motorcycle race, set up to protect the grandstands from race cars.

Though the Suzuki bounced off the wall and slammed back into me as I was still sliding toward it, I was only bruised. The corner workers quickly got the broken bike off the track while I leaned on a fence near the grandstands, trying to figure out whether we could continue if I could get the bike back to the pits.

At that point an Aussie came down from the grandstands. Facing me across the fence, smiling broadly, he said: "Bloody