

Abrams

ci has been involved with cles for better than 25 he'd never seen anything to the 1995 Dutch TT at put five of his exotic rac- i, along with their original he hallowed Circuit van t of a 25-rider celebration istory. There was 15-time on Giacomo Agostini on i, six-time champion. Jim jewel-like Honda 250 six- 250cc World Champion on another MV after his making funny noises, for- ampion Luigi Taveri and i went wild," Iannucci i interview at his Team near downtown Brook- "They climbed over the re out on the track, they 'more, more, more.' The chanics abandoned their ey ran out on the track, people crying and hug- g and we were on televi- Europe. It was a really was a total watershed

T was part of what Ian- e to call EuroTour '95, a ions of his classic motor- around Europe. He came awe of the power of the ait like I died and went to before in my whole life y able to make so many It was great. It was like er."

utshell, is the essential al parts bombast and performance, enthus-

siasm and ceaseless energy. He has his detractors, but none would deny his unyielding tenacity or the rabidity with which he pursues his quest. He is known to speak in hyperbole, often announcing the impending arrival of the pithy quote.

"I was about to come up with one of my famous quotes," he says during a discussion of the current state of road racing. "And that is, 'Noise is to Grand Prix road racing what taste is to eating good food.'"

Subjective?"

"It's not only subjective, it's an essential element. Good bad or indifferent, it's an essential element. It's something that has to be reckoned with, and the one thing that the two-strokes don't do, is they don't make the right sound."

Dave Roper, vintage racer nonpareil, working nearby in the Team Obsolete shop, said, "That's subjective, Rob. I think two-strokes sound great."

"That's because you're a sick (expletive), and it's a good thing you're not running Grand Prix racing otherwise the whole sport would be barefoot and shirtless," Iannucci blares amiably, to which Roper calmly responds "It's totally subjective. I think four-strokes sound great, too. I'm not saying that one is better than the other, even a Wankel sounds great."

"I think you're way out in left field here," Iannucci said. "You can have your opinion and I can have mine. I'll bet you that if you went out to a road race track and you put some of our mul-tis on the track and then you put some of the modern GP 500 two strokes on the track, and you put equipment on the spectators to measure things like heart rate and pulse and blood pressure and..."

(From left to right) Team Obsolete - Nobby Clark, Rob Iannucci, Dave Roper and Alex McLean - pose with two of their valued possessions, the Honda 6 and an MV Augusta.

Roper interjected, "Erections..."

"...rections. The whole nine yards, sexual arousal, whatever it takes. I'll bet you that we could charge up the fans with these multi four-strokes better than the two-strokes can. I bet we could do more with parades than they could with races, in terms of charging them up. Certainly, if you wanted to compare apples to apples, that sport lost something. Speed is not an important thing. People go to horse races and the horses go 30 mph."

Stepping up to the challenge, I suggested that they go to horse races to gamble away their life savings. "They don't go to horse races to watch the beauty of the horse."

"That's not true, there's a lot of places where horses are raced in the world where they don't bet on them." Iannucci responded.

I disagree, telling him that most places, they go to bet on them.

"Whatever it is, it doesn't make any difference if the bike is going 100 or 150 or 200 or 80. It's a question of close racing. Speed is a relative thing."

"My point," he says later in the discussion, "is that in order for racing to be interesting, first it has to be close, and that's more important than the absolute speeds or lap times or whatever else. And secondly it has to sound right. I think if they just told those guys you've got to have four separate exhaust pipes, even if they're muffled, they still have a nice sound to them." After a bit of back-

and-forth Iannucci disti single element:

"There's a flavor in t flavor's not just the rig not a noise expert or a he says.

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Dave Roper has wor full-time since 1984 ar serving of the nearly 20 employees. The secret

Iannucci, he says, is mu

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Roper's most notable tri

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ccci was the driving the American Historic acing Association h currently runs vigh he's involved in a eud with AHRMA's or Jeff Smith. At lan- HRMA has gotten into , and he expects it to d drag racing. There is nd it will likely come

eam Obsolete shop by you can take the D or DeKalb Avenue sta- ush Avenue, a short e Street past the long V. Ingersoll Houses, g project, turn left at hich (sic) Shop," and er you'll come to the ompound. Within the klyn shop are many of and historic pieces of nt ever to grace the nucci has devoted his resources to acquire, hem. ; never broken even," e team always runs at o make it up elsewhere ork and I have some ents."

The biggest chunk of sponsorship comes from Vanson Leathers and Spectro Oils, and the team also gets help from Air Tech, Avon Tires, Bell Helmetts, Works Performance, Autolite Spark Plugs, and Renold Chain.

"There's no way that I can complain that I'm a pauper. I'm surrounded by all this stuff. But I really don't have the bucks that people attribute to me. If I cashed out I would. I still struggle to pay my phone bill every month."

Not long ago, the struggle was to keep his Matchless G-50 from being impounded by city marshals. Iannucci had become a scofflaw, accumulating a number of parking tickets, which he was contesting. But during the process, the marshals came to collect his Matchless, after which ensued a 90-minute standoff during which he tried to plea bargain with the marshals and the police. Eventually they struck a deal where he could transport the bike to the impound in the Team Obsolete van, with a marshal riding along to keep them honest. The bike has since been recovered.

It's been that way ever since Iannucci got interested in motorcycles in the late '60s. He paid for his first Matchless G-50 with the proceeds from his junior-year law school loan - "which created a little problem at law school," he admits. "I never let not having the money hold me back. I always figured that if you do something, one way or another you fig-

ing an individual race, it doesn't mean all that much. It's a very abstract construct we've got here. And the title, even particularly, you've got this sort of arbitrary point system and what does it mean at the end. It doesn't mean you're a better person or anything like this. On the other side of this it's nice to have a goal, it's nice to try and do something well, it's nice to push yourself. On an individual race, I can get my satisfaction if I feel like I've ridden well and it doesn't matter if I'm first or 17th. Because it has to do with what you're riding on and who you're riding against, and all these things and individual circumstances. So, often the race result doesn't reflect at all about how you feel like you did. You can win a race and feel like you rode poorly. And I guess it's even more true in a championship. If we set that as a goal, I'm going to try, do well and try to pursue that."

On a recent weekend away from Team Obsolete, Roper drove up to Southwick, Massachusetts, to race his Greeves 380 Griffon in a vintage motocross. His actual placing is far less important than the actual result of the race. "I had a cutthroat duel with my friend and arch-nemesis, and I won that," he said. He'll be taking his Velolette ThruXtonup to Mosport in a few weeks, and he also races an A1-R Kawasaki.

Roper began his collaboration with Iannucci aboard one of the Team Obsolete Harley XR-750 road racers in 1980. He was still riding his own bikes, but he gave Iannucci and his then partner, Jeff Elghanayan, the right of first refusal.

Since then, he's ridden in countries all over the world and helped Iannucci rack up most of his better than 150 race wins. Despite having a chance to ride the Honda 250



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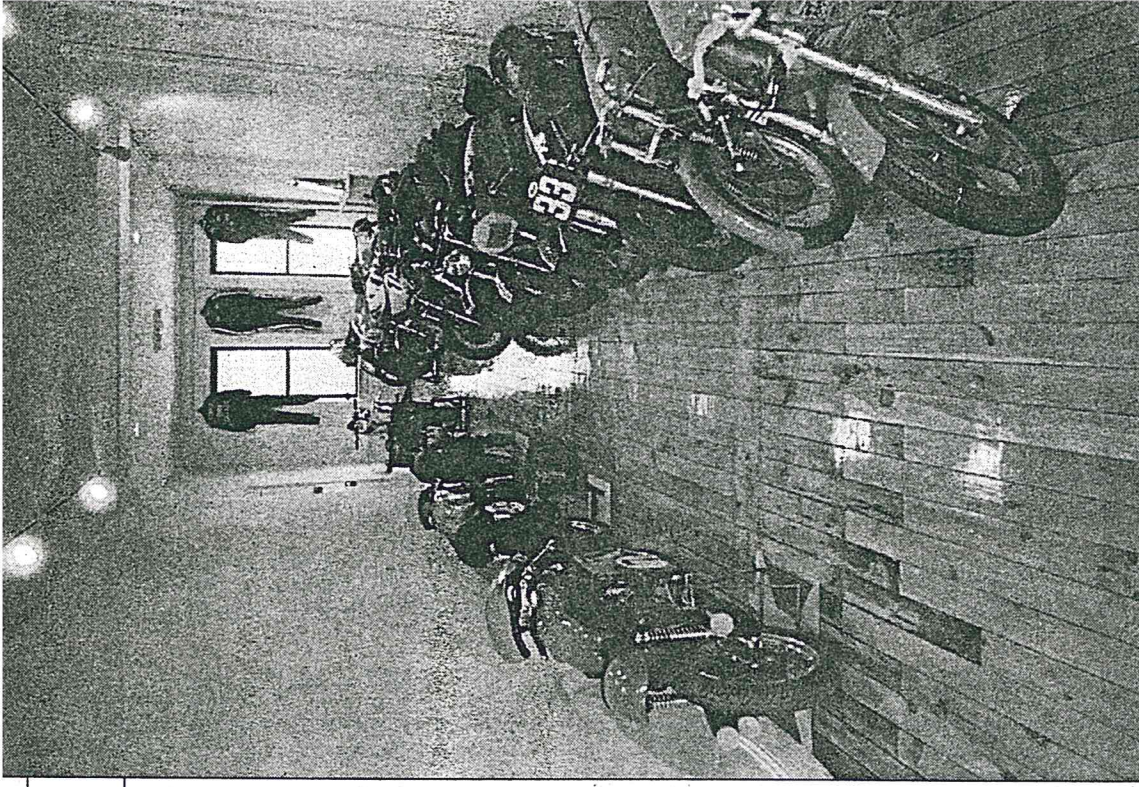
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e to think about the suc- Obsolete without thinking r. The tall, bearded New n with Rob Iannucci for cade, as a rider, full-time ling board, and whipping t out chasing champi- 3 exhibitions, such as the ssful display of World machinery at the Dutch TT er works on the race e Team Obsolete shop in when he's not doing that his own bikes or pursuing a number of that have little to do with motorcycle

cious appetite for motorcycle road racing untling to learn more, not only about the racing, but about modern Grand Prix A Superbike racing as well. In the end, ice track that draws Roper home. s monkey on my back, and I've got this er said during a talk held in the Team room/laundry room/magazine archive. e doing those high-profile things, I also absolutely nothing club race where no d racing on anything. I'll race anything. having a good dice or just trying to push something very genuine about that, so I es of things."

cci made a conscious decision to spend ibitions and less time adding to his total ifes. For Roper, it meant a different focus t provide the same kick. ybe they're more interchangeable; it's with bikes. To me, they're very different e different satisfactions for me. I do think g at Assen was neat with Ago, and Ago was classic Ago. He was the last one to ide this sort of grand entrance, and was and said 'hello' to everybody down the ent out and 'wring it's neck and really made lots of noise. He was great. And s great too. in mind that these titles, and even win-



(Above) A trip through Iannucci's gallery is a ti history of road racing.

six-cylinder and the MV Agusta three and fo Roper can't escape the lure of the single.

"It's hard to beat a 7R or G-50. It seems o chance to ride all this exotica. You get diminis from all this extra complication, and they are they handle great and they just have this feel. it's just experience, I've ridden them so muc like an old shoe. But on a real twisty course, y it," Roper said.

The Matchless G-50 is a 500 and the AJS 71 a smaller bore, is a 350. "It's sort of like a Fi type thing, just different badging. Virtually id He hasn't had a real chance to ride the Ho hard, though he has done a number of laps c ous race tracks.

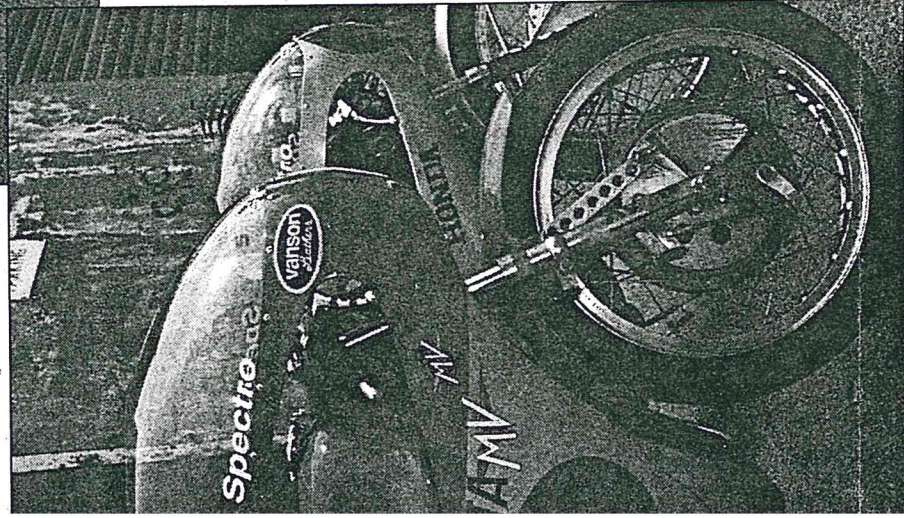
"I was sort of surprised by it, that it was as it was. I thought it would be so extremely I tried to clutch in the slow corners, but, finally you don't have to do that at all. It's easy to sta but it will start back up because it's got no fly and it's really got quite a broad powerband f grand up to 17,000. So you really have plen band. Actually the motor is fairly easy to doesn't handle. It's a little light and twitchy, I and I'd love to do it. I don't know if I'll ev chance to do it because the bike is just so valt does make more sense for Jim Redman to dc his long association with it. It would be really one of those things on and have a race with it."

Of the MVs, he says that the 350 four-c Electronica, is his favorite. "It is more develo a superb motorcycle, neat motor. And I did that at Scarborough in a race they called the which went up to 1980, I guess, with TZs an it's got the disc brakes which are easier to drum brakes. And it handles very well. The ders, I find they're sort of hard to ride. Some controls. A fairly long shift throw, and they front brake lever. The bracket is fixed on the which I find a bit of an awkward angle and ti been through a lot and it doesn't work as ti did. A long throttle throw, we put a shorter but still you're lifting three carbs and you've g And it doesn't have a lot of flywheel, a lot of a lot of gears in the transmission. So you're d this stuff with the wrist! so I find it a lot of They're fast, obviously, but they're a bit of har

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pay for it, and if you're all night and bite your have your eyeballs as t 3 a.m., that's the price Y. I guess that I've done ife because I've always 2."

ci ultimately credits the eration to is the goodwill foster over the years. ore than anything else, s a triumph of network- opele all over the world ed us out, they're our hey help in immeasur- ologistics, hotel reserva- a car in a foreign land."



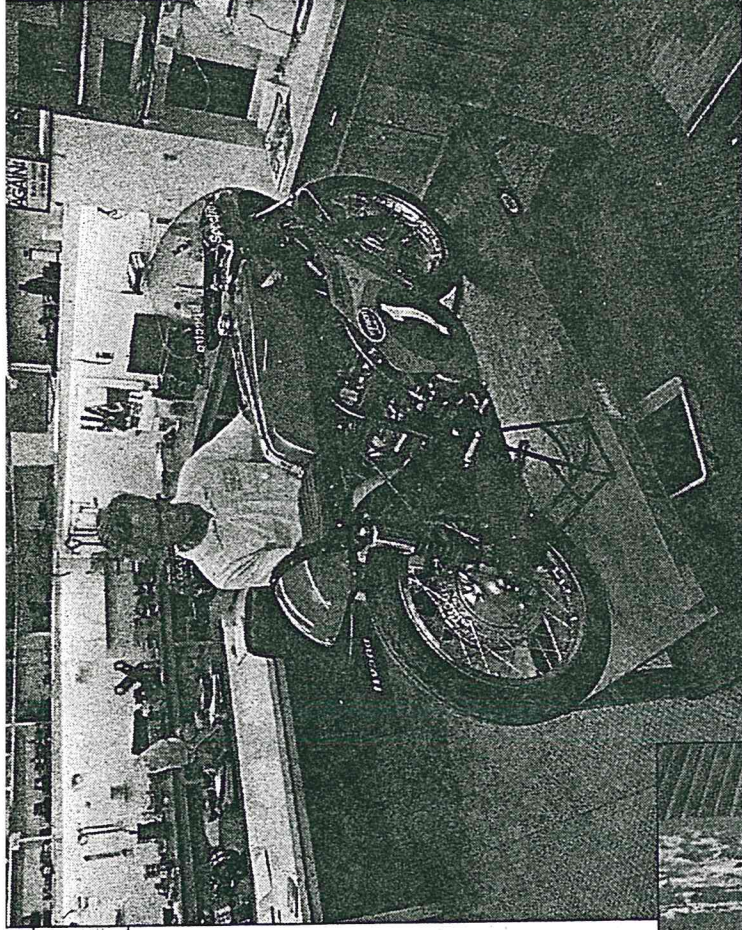
gallery

behind the Team Obsolete shop, on the floor of an apartment building that Rob Iannucci has turned into a gallery of racing motorcycles that is part of the history of road racing, along with tracking. Lined up from one end of the rail-track are vintage MVs, Harley-Davidson motorcycles, and Triumphs. Pick a bike, and you'll see the technical and racing highlights of the sport.

The first bike in the gallery is a Honda CB350F, a 350cc four-cylinder engine that Mike Hailwood won the '78 Trans-Am race on. "It's a stand-alone motor," says Iannucci. "It's a Ducati NCR. It's a version of the 860 with real trick crankcases."

Next is a Harley-Davidson XR750, a 750cc V-twin engine which Kel Carruthers raced early in his career. "It's a 250cc title on a Benelli that he won after its return from Assen," says Iannucci. "It's a very exotic bike, and we shut it up in the bottom end and we shut it up in the top end." Iannucci says these exotic bikes are like a very thoroughbred horse - it's a very, very single-purpose horse. "They were designed for privateers, they were designed for one race. And as long as they finished the race, they were designed for that."

In the tail section is the late Renzo Pasolini's Benelli 350, a 350cc four-cylinder engine which Iannucci says he and I put Pasolini's name on it because he's the most famous of the bunch, and he's not the most famous of the point," Iannucci said. "It's a very small, it wasn't well-funded. It was a completely hand-built motorcycle. If you want to see a Benelli, clearly Pasolini rode this bike, and



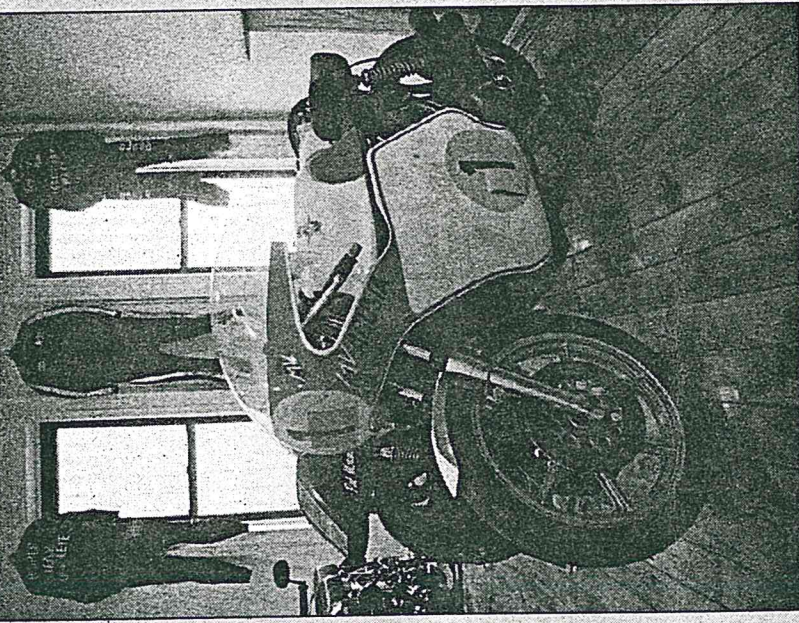
(Above) Nobby Clark tinkers with the 250cc six-cylinder Honda - Team Obsolete's most prized possession.

(Left) The MV Agusta now resides in team's headquarters, Brooklynn, New York.

There is a never-ending quest for the Holy Grail, as Iannucci puts it, and the acquisition of the MV Agusta race bikes, after five years of litigation, both in the U.S. and Italy, has to rank as one of his crowning glories.

"I'm never fully satisfied. I think that's probably my strength and my weakness. When we got the MV deal there were other people in the world who actually bid a lot more money than we did, and they sold it to us. And they did it because of our racing history and because of what they thought we would do with them, which is exactly what we have done with them. And so that's kind of my mission in life - to let people see the things and appreciate them and understand the history of the sport, and maybe it even gives ideas for the future of the sport."

Iannucci began working the phones to Gruppo Agusta in 1981 after seeing a blurb in a magazine - and in 1986 they were ready to sell. When all of the legal work was completed in 1993, Iannucci ended up with 20 motorcycles and several racks of spare parts which, he said, Roper has broken the code on.



there probably there was a great deal of exchange of bikes between the others, depending on which one was broken and who was the hot man at any given time."

Next to it is one of the late MV Agusta 450, then a MV 203, twin-cam single from '54 with an Earl's-type front fork. There is his Harley street bike, an XR750 chassis

Inside Team Ob

A tour of the dark and is like a walk through from the rafters are fair. Romero's factory Triumph factory BSA, and a seat Harley road racer ridden ford sits atop a parts v frames and wheels and tanks and walls and wa immaculately labeled. It bearing support for a tim MV triple out of a box "I've never seen parts machined as they are on are the Holy Grail, the the history of the triple i Agostini because the trip him and he was the pri ing the era of the tripl machine, it's small, it's r It's completely built ar riding style. A bigger ri have a difficult time wi

He has since acquire valuable piece, the Honc der which Jim Redmar World Championship. C resents 20 motorcycles had to sell to pay for it. And, between th said.) And, between th Honda, Iannucci has shi his operation from raci "The stuff is only ali interact with it," Iannuc people he's had to inter prise a Hall of Fame c Agostini, Jim Redman, Carruthers, Luigi Taveri Mick Grant, Gary Nixon Dick Mann, and Yvon all ridden Team Obsole

"This machinery wa the best riders in the w extent that we can recr its just a little glimps putting an old rider or plished great things wi man and seeing the loo seeing the look on the fa - that, to me, really about."

with a Thunderhead Sportster engine and another Harley XR750 street bike that he friend, and an XR1000 engine in a Bartel's

"This is a Lowboy KR Harley road racer finished restoring. Sometimes I'll sell a pe the deal will be that the bike will be deliv rebuilt. I don't really do restoration for re We don't really take small jobs. We're jus it. Occasionally, we'll sell a classic race like this was a pile of bits when we sold it

"This belongs to a friend of mine. It's Velocette, it's actually the last one built." Matchless G-50 dirt tracker that Dick Ascot in 1963, clinching the National Cl one point over George Roeder.

"This is the last MV that won a Gran was Nurburgring in 1976, with Agostini. of the Team Hanson Matchless G-50s. Th of factory Harley XR-750 road racers whi being supported by the factory in the along one wall, a Vincent Black Shadow, ing for a friend. Hanging from a wall at his and Roper's old racing leathers.

In the middle of the room is a "tri three-valve, three-cam, AJS from '54.

"This is the one that won the 1954 Isl TT," Roper explained. "It has a fuel pur fuel from the bottom of the tank and pu head of the tank, it's slick. We ran it a That was the last year that AJS had a w team. It's quite the machine. It's ver dropped-low triple, clamps. The factory let them streamline it, and they couldn why you've got this panned fuel tar management policy that said streamlin afield from what they were selling to t why they went out of business."