

THE GHOST OF DAYTONA – Bertarelli winner in disguise



Benelli WINS

DAYTONA

SPORTSMAN CLASS-5, 3/15/67



SAM BERTAREL ON A 250cc BARRACUDA RACER SWAPPED THE LEAD SEVERAL TIMES WITH A VERY FAST YAMAHA AND FINALLY CAME ON TO WIN BY A QUARTER-MILE *****

BERTAREL ON THE BENELLI ALSO LED THE SECOND AND THIRD LAP OF THE NOVICE RACE ON SATURDAY TILL HE WAS FORCED TO RETIRE.

**BENELLIS ARE HOT !
SEE THEM GO IN '67.**

The only motorcycle with a
**25,000 Mile
25 Month
Warranty**

Luigi Benelli (factory owner) Larry Wise (Cosmopolitan)
Sam Bertarel (winner) Primo Zanzani (mechanic)

Cosmopolitan Motors Inc.
5521 Wayne Avenue, Philadelphia, Pa. 19144

Samuel Bertarel
5521 Wayne Ave.
Philadelphia, PA 19144
RESTRICTIONS: NONE
RIDER CLASSIFICATION: NOVICE

NO. 156B

1967 COMPETITION LICENSE EXPIRES
Dec. 31, 1967
AMERICAN MOTORCYCLE RIDERS MUTUAL BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION, INC.
P. O. BOX 1049 COLUMBUS, OHIO 43216

W. T. B... Secretary
NOT VALID FOR ADMISSION

He was the first Italian to triumph at the Speedway. But nobody knows why he used a fake name!

The Daytona Ghost disappeared without a trace. No one had ever seen him before, and no one knows where he went, but he won the 80 Mile Sportsman race with a style that

will remain a legend. Racing the world-famous Florida circuit, riding a Motobi 250 he beat the quick and feared Yamaha and Kawasaki two-stroke twin-cylinders.

Sam Bertarel - who was he? He does not exist. No one with this name is on record. On his "Novice" racing license is recorded his address: Samuel Bertarel, 5521 Wayne Ave, Philadelphia, PA 19144.

In 1967 there was only Cosmopolitan Motors, importer of Benelli and MotoBi for USA, at this address. The mysterious rider was a few thousand kilometers away, over the ocean. His real name and location: born Silvano Bertarelli from Talaton (Ferrara), born on April 5, 1941 and at that time residing in Genoa. Very Italian.

This fact is particularly significant: eight years earlier (1959) was the first Italian winner in Daytona on the short airport circuit (Giuseppe Rottigni – Parilla), but on March 15, 1967, Bertarelli was the first Italian to win on the current (full) circuit, the one with the high banking made for cars, to which the bikes started competing on in 1961. He and not Giacomo Agostini with the historic triumph in the 200 Miles of 1974, as was widespread opinion. The trouble is that few know the real story and there is no official trace, because in all records there is registered that fake name.

The lie was a choice: in those days the relationship was not good between the Italian Motorcycle Federation (FMI) and the American AMA, Bertarelli would not have been granted the necessary clearance to compete abroad. So then he illegally obtained the license from the AMA. "It was difficult "remembers Bertarelli, now 74 years old: "I was in the AMA office at Daytona saying we wanted to do the license, they asked me what my name was and I gave them the fake info. I risked a suspension of my national license if they had known in Italy. But the opportunity was too good to pass up. Mr. Wise, Benelli importer, had requested a fast bike with an Italian rider and an Italian mechanic: They chose me, so off I went with Zanzani, Luigi Benelli, his wife! "

Some explanation is required. From 1967 MotoBi and Benelli were grouped under the same umbrella: the first, from Division of one of six siblings, Giuseppe Benelli, which in 1957 had been Luigi and sons Marco, had been acquired by Benelli, while retaining its autonomy. In the MotoBi acquisition "package" was also Primo Zanzani, the head of the MotoBi racing department: ex pilot, technician of great value and father of the Sei Tiranti. This was the 250 horizontal cylinder engine that resembled the Motobi Catria 175, with which actually had very little in common, and was enormously faster than previous 207 CC (derived from 175).

In those years the American market was exploding, and Sunday's victories transformed into sales the following Monday. Then you can well understand the desire of Larry Wise, owner of Cosmopolitan Motors, to take advantage of the favorable moment! Just two years earlier he had taken over the importing of MotoBi and Benelli from Mr. Berti at Cycle Products in Boston, MA, who had reaped publicity and sales from MotoBi's famous win by Jess Thomas at Daytona. There was nothing better than a win to give popularity to his company.

The Italian clan had to move cautiously in the US minefield that is a very different

environment from European competitions. Bertarelli was noticed by officials even before the engines started: "I went to get on the track and they threw me out because I was in completely black leathers – American regulations required colored leathers they told me. So I put white insulation tape on my arms, and borrowed a Harley-Davidson vest, turned it inside out and spray painted my number on the back. I proceeded to the track gate and was sent out again, this time because I had my original half helmet on. These were apparently banned in US racing so I had to borrow an AGV jet helmet. But it was not in my lucky orange color." It was his hallmark in Italy. But he was at the Daytona "bowl". Even now our hero does not look back and laugh

Strong was Bertarelli: in his career he ran as official driver for several brands and he earned this special ride for MotoBi: In his first Italian Senior Championship at Sanremo, in 1963, riding a private (non-factory) Motobi 175 he qualified with the best time, ahead of Pasolini with the Aermacchi and Ballestrieri with the MotoBi, both official factory machines and riders. Silvano recalls, "Sunday morning Zanzani came and said: "come with me ". And from the Racing Department's Lancia van, Primo pulled out the faired 175 meant for Eraldo Ferracci: they didn't rush to give his bike to me. In the race I was third, Pasolini and Ballestrieri I arrived in front of - it could not have gone better." But from there he began everything. Remember the rider who lost his ride?: Ferracci: We'll talk of him later. But in the meantime Bertarelli had "arrived" at MotoBi and enjoyed a good treatment, at a time when the majority of works riders had jobs of testing production machines during the week. Even Silvano had his own workshop. However ... "Mr. Marco (Benelli) said, "Bertarelli, if you win, bring me the trophy and I'll give you money. If you are second – no present". And since I was quite fast I got presents! ... But there was never a contract, was only an agreement to enter me in races."

Bertarelli also applied himself to Daytona. "I qualified on the front row, but I was behind two riders with a Kawasaki twin and a Yamaha twin that were faster on the straights. In the straights, they teased me, they passed to the right, passed me on the left. The difference was huge. However, at the entrance of the Daytona infield, immediately after the pits, when they slow down and peel off, I'm not touching the brakes! I just shove in between their front wheels and pass them. They were afraid of the curves and corners. This lasted for almost the entire race. Then the Yamaha rider - I don't remember the name – put down his head and passed me. I was second but held onto his tail. And then came the last lap: at Daytona then there was a fast curve to the left, then you enter to the right and then again to left onto the overpass. I passed this curve and afterwards did my normal braking. But there was no space to pass him on the inside curb so I hold full and go on top. Obviously this frightened him and he lost time. Meanwhile, I pull right onto the overpass and into the lead. I expected that he would recover in the straights with all his extra power. I told myself "Now come, come now ... but he did not arrive. And I won! "

Photo finish? In the face of more modern twin-cylinder two-stroke, the Sei Tiranti was very fast compared to other four strokes but was fragile: the ignition drive shaft on end of the camshaft, often shearing off the bolt holding the ignition cam on. In fact this was

already breaking on Bertarelli's machine, but luckily had held to the finish. The defect was well known to Zanzani and had in fact run a pilot bike with a super-efficient ignition prepared in Pesaro. This was sent previously to Cosmopolitan Motors, along with another bike owned by the importer, and was marked with a big "Benelli" on the fairing. "The first race was won with the Cosmo owned bike, in the second race we used our bike. There too we had a big opportunity to win - we were racing the same opponents. I was doing good and leading but I broke the shaft. "The mission, however, was already accomplished. Larry Wise could celebrate a second victory of a MotoBi/Benelli in Daytona.

A gripe remains: Silvano Bertarelli could never brag or get credit for the victory that happened on the other side of the world. "It's not that people don't know, Mascheroni with Aermacchi and Farne with Ducati were there, who were responsible for their American racing departments ". Of course they knew well the true identity of Sam Bertarel. But if the rumor got out and was found to be true, the Federation would have been forced to take measures. "I knew almost nobody and I spoke very little. I was never concerned what was written in the results book". Of that victory at Daytona only one photo exists, showing Zanzani, Samuel Bertarel and Wise holding the trophy in the pits. Not excellent quality but most important for what it represents. And then, of course, the memories of The Beach, but not those of other men that made the company with him. "I remember very well that race" – answered Larry Wise by email – "but as I'll be 85 years in August, I cannot remember all the details as well!".

At the ripe age of 92 years, Zanzani remember even less, but he still knows what he has built: a company that still conducts operations today in Pesaro, where his sons Mirko and Athos work to perform precision machining operations for customers, and all original drawings, patterns, and tools exist to build a small series of replicas of the famous Sei Tiranti.

But there is another important reminder of the beautiful adventure in Daytona. It is necessary to go back and discuss the MotoBi factory racing team mechanic and pilot we talked about earlier: Ferracci. Following the victory in Florida, on request of Wise, the Pesaro factory decided to send to the States a person to organize and manage the American importer's Racing Division. Zanzani was originally requested but he refused the offer, Eraldo Ferracci accepted instead, and moved to the new continent. And many years later Eraldo Ferracci became associated with Ducati, and with his team and Doug Polen went to Europe and won the Superbike World Championship. He had really found America! Probably the day that Bertarelli was given Ferracci's factory MotoBi bike they were both apologetic, but instead it was the first step in a story that would bring them up to a higher level than they would ever dare to hope.

Bertarelli shows the part that forced him to retire in the second Daytona race and the victory trophy.



PRIMO ZANZANI: Father of the Sei Tiranti

IT TOOK all the grit of Bertarelli to win at Daytona against the most powerful twin-cylinder two-strokes, but it took the imagination and genius of Primo Zanzani to build a flying single cylinder four stroke. It was also to prove a point: to make a 250 single able to beat the 250 four-cylinder engine was the condition laid down by the Italian engineer to return to MotoBi, where was started his career as an "official" engineer after experience on a privateer Laverda. And there was a reason: "in the winter between 1963 and 1964, my father had gone from the MotoBi racing dept. to Benelli" recounts Mirko, one of two sons (the other is Athos) – "he ran tests with the four-cylinder of Provini, but that bike had a problem: My father determined the oil lubrication to the center of the crankshaft was poor. When they went on a fast track such as Daytona, Provini broke three or four crankshafts. It was a bad defeat. When he returned to have discussion about this with Benelli, my father got upset and quit to work for Aermacchi. He agreed to return to MotoBi only with the promise that he could make that bike. "

"That bike" was the Sei Tiranti, referring to the 6 studs that held on the cylinder head. The existing 250 had 4 studs that left too little space to seal the head, the new design being stronger. The engine was always a horizontal cylinder but had reinforced crankcases and refigured head - no longer with the squish band derived from the 175. "But all internal parts, except the cams and the crankshaft, could fit on the old engine ". Zanzani's jewel premiered in Modena in ' 66, "Ballestreri lead everyone until the ignition shaft broke". And in ' 67 Pasolini tried the Sei Tiranti at Vallelunga: "On the first lap he was under the track record established by Agostini with the DOHC Morini in an Italian championship race. He (Paso) wanted to use that bike in short circuits, keeping the Benelli four for longer, fast ones. But he did not receive permission from Benelli."

The Sei Tiranti won several Italian Championships in the second half of the Sixties, but in the meantime the two strokes were coming. Zanzani was head of the Racing Division when the industrialist Alejandro De Tomaso, after purchasing the Benelli, had decided to quit competitive activity; the brilliant Primo continued on his own for a while, then joined the Grand Prix circus with Scuderia Diemme.

He then began to produce racing brake discs of his own design from aluminum, for small and medium capacity machines. The technician, however, did not follow the evolution towards carbon brakes - too expensive for a small company - and devoted himself to high precision machining for third parties. In the meantime, his children had grown and joined the business.

But the passion began rising again. There were still all the drawings of the Sei Tiranti: it has been built again in a small batch with enhancements that brought power from 33 HP up to 42 HP - with increased reliability. It has been sold worldwide. The bike with which he won at Daytona Beach is lost - untraceable, sold many years ago to I wonder who, as

well as the other bike that Cosmopolitan Motors had run.
But with 20,000 euros, anyone can own an identical machine - and also a better one!