



C & B Performance's Bruce Sauer

By: Vicki Robertson

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"Everybody likes Bruce." This phrase is heard from the lips of nearly every racer involved with Bruce Sauer. A man with a mission, Sauer of C&B Performance strives to remain on the cutting edge of motorcycle drag racing. By using the latest technology, keeping up-to-date with current information, and reading between the lines, Sauer not only stays abreast of the most innovative and contemporary techniques in the sport, but predominantly ranks in the Top 10 position--alongside the racers that he supports.

It started with a shoestring budget, a racing compulsion and a lack of spare cash. Sauer worked on motorcycles for extra dollars just to counter the cost of attending races. When the beer company he worked for laid him off in 1987, the sideline became a business. Since starting out in a two-car garage-with the limited goal of helping out some friends--Sauer's C&B Performance has evolved. Today, C&B Performance is one of the most highly respected motorcycle drag racing support shops in the country.

The shop is frequented by both top competitive racers and by some of the newest names in the sport. Working virtually round the clock--at times 20 hours a day-Sauer builds precisely to customer specifications

"Whatever they want, they get," he said. "I take them to the races, and go to the races myself to teach them how to race. We go to all the national events. The video camera is one of our best learning tools.

His business is built on close friendships and associations. Although C&B Performance is his livelihood, Sauer emphasizes the racing and his relationships. No one, it seems, is just a customer. Everyone either is a friend or soon will be a friend.



Bruce Sauer

"Everyone likes Bruce." He's the right person to find in a strange racing town. Even to the point of jeopardizing his own racing position, Sauer is always glad to help out.

"I help racers I don't even know," he said. "At Atlanta, I helped a guy from Florida change an engine and put the head gasket on. I don't even remember his name.

Sauer achieves a great deal of satisfaction from watching his racers do well--and even more when they win. Besides being gracious and kind hearted, he is genuinely committed to excellence. That's just Bruce.

How does he keep all his racers in the top 10 in points? Those secrets are safe, naturally; however, Sauer did say that he learns a lot from the technology used in automotive racing. That's enough of a tip for those looking to find a new avenue to success.

"For years, everyone has said that motorcycle racing is two years behind the cars," he said, revealing that he often exchanges ideas with NHRA sportsman standout Scotty Richardson. "I know a lot of car racers and talk to them all the time. They keep me informed as to what's going on, what the new tricks are and how they use them. There are so many secrets--everyone is doing something different.

"I keep up with the new technology, read the paper and then read between the lines," he continued. "You have to talk to people. You can get information from just striking up a conversation with someone.

Does it concern Sauer that he has to occasionally go up against a client-or perhaps one of his students? Hardly.

"Let's see just how good of a student they are!" Sauer laughed. "All of us are out here for a reason--we all have our own goals. Eventually, every once in a while we're bound to knock heads. But, we appreciate each other, and if you can be a good winner, you have to be a gracious loser. "Go shake that guys hand if he was better that day."

Sauer has been riding the same bike for 19 years--a 1976 Kawasaki KZ900 he bought off the showroom floor. He is currently working on a new bike, a small-tire Super Comp bike featuring a Custom FRP ZX-9R body and fairing, with a Pro Stock look-alike chassis. At first, he planned on taking the engine from the old bike and selling the

chassis, but he's since had second thoughts. Sentimental value is hard to hang a price tag on.

Since 1976, Sauer has ridden drag racing bikes. He started out in Super Eliminator--a handicap, no-breakout class--until the NMRA went out of business in 1984. He was then instrumental in forming a Super Gas class.

"There was no Super Eliminator class for us to compete in," Sauer recalled. "So we wrote a bunch of letters and got people together from all over the country to ask for the start of a 10.50 heads-up Super Gas class in IDBA in 1985. A couple years later, we changed it to 10.20 and then to 9.90."

There is a reward for all this effort. Sauer holds three Championship titles: Pro Gas in 1992 with AMA/Prostar, and Super Gas in 1986-87 with both Drag Bike and IDBA. He was also voted Prostar's "Sportsman Mechanic of the Year" in 1992 and 1993, and received the same honor from the IDBA in 1988.



"Big" Benny Baldwin

One of the closest racing relationships at the track is the one between Sauer and Benny Baldwin. Baldwin began racing in 1984. In 1986, after Sauer built a bike with obvious potential for a friend a Baldwin's, the two men started working together.

"One thing led to another and I built a bike like Bruce's over the winter. He got me straightened out," Baldwin said.

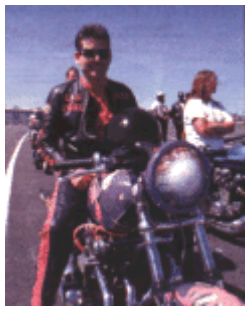
Although he was ranked number four in Super Comp last year, Baldwin experienced particularly bad teething problems this year. He stepped up to Top Gas when the sportsman classes were restructured and the Super Comp index was slowed from 8.60 to 8.90. But now, after his recent win at Indy, Baldwin holds the number four spot in Top Gas.

"Almost anyone who races with Bruce has a number plate, and that's awesome," said Baldwin. "As a friend, he doesn't hesitate to pass on the knowledge so you can do it yourself. Some people are only interested in fixing your bike, but he is interested in telling you how do it. He'll be in the stands watching and videotaping."

Sauer has a surprisingly strong impact on people--his friends, racing partners, and even his clientele. His clients generally that without Sauer, they would not be at the track.

"I would quit without Bruce, Baldwin said. "I told him that when he's done, I'm done. I don't know enough to do this myself."

Buddy Cole, father of C&B racer Joey Cole, agreed. "We've been with Bruce since 1993. We owe all of our racing credit to Bruce and he's been our main source for our mechanical work. Without him, we just wouldn't have made it. He is a major part of our career.



Joey Cole

Joey Cole used to work with Sauer until almost midnight every night. He now finds that hard to do with the arrival of his new child. A newcomer to the drag racing circuit, Cole got involved with motorcycle drag racing a couple years ago and was named "Rookie of the Year" at his home track. Last year he was voted Prostar's "Sportsman Rookie of the Year.

"I couldn't have done it without Bruce," said Cole, continuing the story of how he teamed up with Sauer. "I bought a bike, blew it up, and there was a C&B Performance sticker on the bike, so I looked him up.

The rest is in the books. Sauer taught Cole everything he knows about racing. "Without Bruce, I wouldn't be here today," Cole confirmed.

Jeff Boyer, son of Pro Stock rider Lance Boyer, hooked up with Sauer nearly two years ago.

"I wanted to build a new motorcycle and wanted the best of everything I could get," said Boyer. "Bruce put the bike together for me in basically a 24-hour time frame. I raced it the next day. He did a hell of a job and the bike has been deadly consistent. It rides like a street bike and everything is meticulous on it."

Benefiting from his father's racing background, Boyer had the opportunity to spend a great deal of time around the pros. He sees similarities between them and C&B.

"Bruce definitely has a professional operation," said Boyer. "He has helped me a lot with the electronics and the horsepower. I couldn't have done this without his help, because he had the knowledge of running the heads-up classes where I was always in a wide open class.

Although Boyer runs in Super Comp, his bike is fast enough to run in Top Gas. The engine comes from his father's old Pro Stock machine. With Sauer's help, the motorcycle is running slower times that are consistent.

"I have a real radical combination and the management of that combination on a small-tire bike is very tricky, Boyer explained. "[Sauer] is directly responsible for making it work. He has been right there."

Boyer won two Prostar events in 1994, during his first season back with the racing association. He had been racing IDBA--and currently holds the D/Modified Turbo record--but that was becoming a very expensive class to run.

"I listened to Bruce, slowed the bike down, hurt less parts, started having fun and started winning," Boyer said.

Winning, friendship and racing knowledge-Sauer has touched the lives of many in his years of racing. How can contributions like his be measured? Which is most important? Sauer has a detailed knowledge of racing technology, dedication to his business and a sense of commitment to the sport of drag racing. He thrives on the stress of racing. Still, the most intangible and most outstanding of Sauer's qualities is his ability to develop friendships. He receives gratification from watching his friends win and helping his fellow racers.

Far beyond all else, Sauer is a friend to everyone. It is this quality which has kept him successful for many years. It will, no doubt, continue to reward him in the years to come.