

Zaeta

Does the world's coolest flat-tracker come from Italy?

BY MARK CERNICKY

PASSION DRIVES US ALL, AND AFTER getting excellent drives, how ironic these two Italian gentlemen's lines should converge at a 2007 Daytona short-track race, of all places. Once back home in the land of love, music, fashion and history, Paolo Chiaia and Marco Belli turned their serendipitous path-crossing into Zaeta, their own piece of brand-new motorcycling history.

Chiaia describes himself as a romantic, melancholic, passionate individual who misspent his youth sliding around a cherry tree in a nearby field on a white

Piaggio moped...until he graduated to drifting his mother's Renault 5, resulting in only minimal damage.

"When I met Marco Belli at Daytona, I was there for a Confederate Motorcycles shareholder presentation of the new Wraith. I fell in love with flat track. Sideways corner entries spliced right into my DNA strands," Chiaia elucidates, "an action engraved by the time spent circling that cherry tree."

Marco Belli also spent as much time as he could slid-

ing around things and began racing at 17 on a 1/4-mile track near Verona called Castiglione Olona. Belli would remove his 125's front brake and go sideways, then reattach it for the twisty ride home. "When you knew all the policemen in the town and they saw you riding fast, they would catch you and kick your ass; then they'd take you home to your family for ass-kicking round two."

When not kicking Marco's ass, Belli's mechanical engineer father was known for wringing his OSSA's neck. His brother, Alesso, was a national-level enduro rider.





PHOTO BY FABRIZIO GRIONI

Even in street trim and Euro 3-compliant, the TM Single scoots the super-light Zaeta right along.

Motorcycles weren't just in the Belli blood, they were running down the street: Lino Tonti, the man who reinvented Moto Guzzi in 1971, lived down the road.

Belli lays claim to four local championships over the years, as well as a few more in England and an Italian FIM Cup. He's also raced dirt track in the States—Springfield Mile, Du Quoin, Daytona, Volusia—and tried his luck at Supermoto in Nashville. He's also finished third three times in the 750cc class at Pikes Peak, including in 2011.

In 2008, Chiaia, Belli and another buddy—Graziano Rossi—got to talking in the same sideways direction about what would be the perfect bike for a MotoGP rider to train on? The Doctor's dad, who's considered part of the family of sideways fundamentalists and was of course quite the racer himself, is a firm believer in Vale sliding around on dirt in the winter to maintain his fitness. He also believes it's the best practice for bike and body positioning, and a safer way to brush up on the functional/physical discipline of right-wrist traction-control.

The first Zaeta, then, was engineered for none other than the Tavullian doctor himself, with geometry taken from a J&M frame and power supplied by a Yamaha YZ450F (video evidence at www.valentinorossi.com). The YZF Single has since been supplanted by a 530cc Single from Pesaro, Italy—built for TM supermoto machines and unaltered for flat-track use: no

weighted crank or any type of slipper-clutch or fuel injection. Zaeta (www.zeata.it.net) says the TM produces 61 rear-wheel horsepower, and the bike

a group of ex-MotoGP engineers who call themselves In-Motion. Located in Bologna, In-Motion develops and produces new parts, as they did with the Zaeta's frame, swing-arm, triple-clamps, hubs and rims. All those pieces were delivered to the Zaeta works, conveniently located on Belli's property—a closeness that Marco says keeps him inspired and involved in every

“Zaeta is a yellow traditional biscuit from the city of Venice,” says Paolo Chiaia. “It’s also slang for yellow, and the ‘a’ at the end has to do with an ex-girlfriend who used to feed them to me.”

step of the finished product. If you happen to be in Italy, you can pick up a Zaeta in Milan for about 13,500 Euros (\$17,660). That's not cheap, but it does include a free track day with Belli. And you never know who else might happen to slide by. □

weighs 250 pounds dry. When sold as a streetbike with Euro-3 emissions equipment, the Zaeta suffers some power loss and gains 15 lb.

The 2012 Italian “techno-magnesio” anti-corodal 6082 billet aluminum frame was fashioned with help from

Marco Belli knows his way around a dirt oval, not to mention up Pikes Peak.

