OE Quality Friction

New ownership ushers in era of motorsports development

Jason Hathaways's NCATS machine is a mobile testbed for OE Quality Friction. PHOTO BY PERRY NELSON

'Win on Sunday, Sell on Monday' may not carry the same impact as it did back in the day, but this mantra continues to be a part of the business plan for many automotive suppliers.

OE Quality Friction, based in Mississauga, ON), has been manufacturing aftermarket brake pads for a variety of both Canadian and American suppliers since 1997. Starting in a small building with just a single press, Norm Abbott grew his company and his reputation over the next decade, eventually selling his venture to the current owners in November of 2008.

While maintaining the original business concept of producing brake components for others as well as marketing their in-house Vortex Brake Pads brand, the current organization has broadened its horizons and expanded into the world of motorsports.

"Our primary focus is building pads for everyday cars and trucks," explains Brian Watts, OE's Vice President of Marketing and Sales. "We were approached by several drivers from the NASCAR Canadian Tire Series, asking whether we made brakes for race cars. The high performance and racing pads are simply a derivative of our auto products line, so it seemed like a natural progression."

Adhering to specific testing protocols, done both at the plant in Mississauga and at independent laboratories in the US, OE Quality Friction also recognized the need for practical and physical testing necessary to define the requirements of the demanding racing applications.

"We needed a test platform, something we had full access to at anytime," said Watts. "We brought [NCATS driver] Jason Hathaway on board and joined forces with Ed Hakonson Racing and built a state-of-the-art Late Model race car."

TEAM SPONSORSHIP

Constructed to ACT specifications, the Vortex Brake Pads-sponsored car debuted this year at Kawartha Speedway and ran at Delaware Speedway in the APC 300 event in late 2009, all while utilizing a variety of pad compounds.

"Jason actually built his own pads at the plant, and then turned almost 300 laps with them in testing and racing at Kawartha. The racing stretches the limits and is a great tool for the Research and Development aspect of our products."

Satisfied with this initial exposure, Vortex Brake Pads were fitted to several NCATS cars for a brake test at Barrie Speedway following the 2009 season. Put through their paces by the likes of Don Thomson, Scott Steckly and Kerry Micks, the new products received high praise.

"This is a positive first step for us. We are still dedicated to our street customers, but we are looking to develop products for the Saturday night racer and right up to the top-level drivers and teams. Short term, we want to make Vortex a Canada-wide brand used by any professional installer. Long term, we hope to expand into the European and Asian markets."

Now employing upwards of 200 people, OE Quality Friction has 1200 individual part numbers currently listed in their catalogue. Enjoying double-digit growth in 2009, this Canadian company is seeing even larger potential in their market.

Concludes Watts, "We've had a great opportunity presented to us. We've only been in this for a year and we've come a long way. There is a lot of interest in our products, now we have to execute." •

NITROLUBE: Grease of all trades

When we received our sample of Nitrolube, we immediately tried it on every application in the shop. We used it in open style rear wheel bearings, steering head bearings and suspension linkage collars and bearings.

It has a bright red colour and a feel of quality when you dig into it. Its only annoying feature is also its best quality – it has a Four Cheese Pizza kind of stringy consistency that will catch you out when you grab some with your finger or applicator and turn to apply the grease to your part. You will look down to find a bright red string of it across your bench or maybe even your shirt.

This consistency is great once applied, as it will not easily wash off the part you were lubricating or trying to protect. Due to this consistency, a little extra care is needed in its use, but this is rewarded by exceptional protection.

This grease would be perfect in applications where water contamination is expected and lubrication is still important, like on most motocross bikes where the swingarm pivot bolt passes through the engine as well as the frame. This bolt not only needs good lubrication, but it sees thermal cycling as the engine heats it up. Then the rider splashes it with water, either during riding or more commonly with God's gift to the chain suppliers, the pressure washer.

The grease also performed great in the tough steering head bearing application, where tapered bearings and various torquing strategies really show up a bearing's ability to reduce friction under load. I have tested maybe 10 different greases in this application, and Nitrolube matched our best. So if you want to use one grease for all your applications, Nitrolube is it. Visit their website at www.nitrolube.com. • REVIEWED BY JOHN SHARRARD