


CLASSIC DRIVER

1973 Suzuki Other

Stafford, 18 October

- Lot sold
USD 28 610 - 31 789
GBP 27 000 - 30 000 (listed)
Year of manufacture 1973
- **Engine number** T500-55953/1
- **Condition** Used
- **Location** 
- **Motorcycle type** Street
- **Colour** Other
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Description

1973 Suzuki TR500 (XR05) Racing Motorcycle
Frame no. TR500-10201
Engine no. T500-55953/1

Rare Japanese works racer
One of two ridden by Guido Mandracci
Restored in 2012

Although Suzuki withdrew from Grand Prix racing in 1967, importers and privateers continued to fly the Hamamatsu marque's flag by racing modified road bikes. The factory too went down this route, dipping its toe back in competitive waters by introducing an over-the-counter racer based on the new T500 Cobra roadster (known as the Titan in the USA). Air-cooled to begin with, like its roadster progenitor, the TR500, coded XR05 by the factory, first made an impact on the American scene in 1968 when works riders Ron Grant and Mitsuo Itoh finished 4th and 9th respectively at that year's Daytona meeting. Over the next few seasons power was progressively increased from an initial 63.5 to 71.5bhp, in which form the TR500 had a top speed in excess of 150mph.

In 1971 the TR500 made its European debut, still in air-cooled form, and was ridden during that season by Dutchman Rob Bron, Australian Jack Findlay and New Zealander Keith Turner. Turner finished 2nd, Bron 3rd and Findlay 5th in that year's World Championship, Findlay claiming the honour of giving Suzuki its first Grand Prix victory in the 500cc class with a win in Ulster.

Spurred on by the success of the air-cooled twin in tuned form, the factory developed a water-cooled version, the XR05 II, for 1973. As well as the water-cooled top end, the XR05 II featured larger carburettors and triple disc brakes, while some of the works bikes used six-speed gearboxes. Power went up to 73bhp and the maximum speed rose to 157mph.

The factory's effort in the World Championship was run by the Suzuki Europa Racing Team, which had been set up by the Italian Suzuki importer, SAIAD. Works rider Findlay won the Isle of Man Senior TT on his way to 5th place overall in the '73 World Championship, a highly creditable achievement on what was still a roadster-based machine. His Italian team-mate Guido Mandracci claimed a 6th place at that year's French Grand Prix and a 4th at the Austrian round, finishing 14th overall at the season's end. Mandracci fared better in that year's Italian Championship, finishing 5th.

The final development of the XR05 - the III - featured revised cylinders, with a squarer external profile, and laid down rear suspension. In truth though, the XR05 was only an interim model raced pending the arrival, in 1974, of the four-cylinder RG500.

The TR500 II offered here is one of two machines campaigned by Guido Mandracci during the 1973 Grand Prix season while he was riding for the Suzuki Europa Racing Team. It was restored (wheels excepted) by the current vendor in 2012 and is presented in commensurately good condition. There are bills on file for rebuilding the crankshaft and clutch, together with magazine articles featuring this machine. A wonderful opportunity for the serious collector to acquire a rare and highly sought after Japanese racing motorcycle.

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