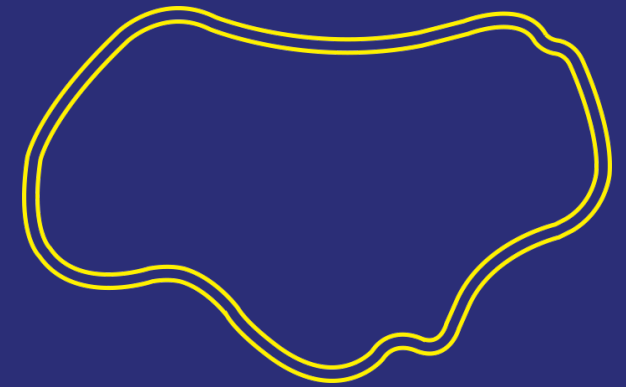


Brad JONES
TWELVE



THRUXTON //

ROUND 7 **12**



For round 7 of the British Superbike Championship we headed just 45 minutes up the road to my local meeting, Thruxton Race Circuit. The fastest track in the UK featuring many types of corner and notoriously known for its harsh tyre wear.

My goals for the weekend were just to keep on improving and challenge for the win, a different approach with the setting consisting of a stiffer front end and we hoped that was the key to taking my maiden Supersport victory. With lots of local support, it was important for me to put a strong performance in, meaning Friday was crucial in starting off our weekend positively.

FP1- with the sunny south living up to its name, the sun was scorching meaning the conditions were perfect! Thruxton is always a difficult place to get the set up of the bike correct. This is due to its very fast corners and harsh bumps.

Therefore, we made a plan with the set up based off what we used in 2018 and with some added knowledge from the guys at Ohlins. The opening laps at Thruxton are always an eye opener and adjusting your vision to the speeds and reference points. However, the opening laps are always a thriller!

In the first 10 minutes I got down to some reasonable times, lapping just 0.4 off my best ever time. The initial feeling was positive but as I began to push harder, I could feel some areas where improvement was needed. The main one being the rear spin and support.

The two were linked, the reason for the spin was due to the rear shock being too soft. When driving off the fast turns and when at full lean angle the rear would sit through and push out on the tyre causing it to spin.





With 10 minutes remaining I entered the pits and explained to my suspension technician, from the data we got from the bike it backed up what I was feeling. So, we added some more preload to give it some extra support which would stop it sitting through. On my final few laps I could feel the benefit. However, I still felt I needed more support but the next step was to use a stiffer spring. Ending FP1 in P3 with a 1:18:3 was a positive start to the weekend.

FP2- after a productive post session debrief, we made some drastic changes with the bike for this session. Different spring, different gearing, less preload, less compression and the list goes on. From the opening laps of the 25 minute session I could immediately feel the improvement and on lap 4 posted a 1:17:5 which was nearly whole second faster than my FP1 time.



The feeling was much better. However, because I was now lapping quicker, I was pushing the bike to new limits which was when I began to discover more areas to work on. The rear was still feeling a little soft but this time it came with more movement, which I would describe as 'pumping'.

With this movement it created more spin which in turn was losing me drive off the turns. With a mid-session pit stop we made some changes to try and dial it out but unfortunately only improved it slightly. Although it is great fun with it spinning, bucking and moving it is not fast and more importantly takes a lot of life out of the tyre.

Ending FP2 in P3 again but with some feeling to find we knew we would have to work hard overnight and improve the bike for qualifying.

Quali- going into this session we had made some drastic set up changes to the bike, this was a big gamble but one we were willing to take. The biggest change we made was the valving in the rear shock. We opted for a valving which meant the rear end would be stiffer at the top and then get softer as it went through. For the 30 minute qualifying session I had two rear tyres to allow me to post my fastest times. With the track abusing the tyres I would really feel the benefit of the new rubber each time. On my opening laps I could feel the improvement of our chassis changes, I immediately went quicker posting a 1:17:1 on my 3rd lap.

7 laps on the first tyre and then I entered the pits to take my second tyre. On the second I was still feeling good, however finding it hard to get some clear track and post a faster time. I managed some consistent laps close to my fastest but couldn't quite go any better. I could feel some areas we need to work on and this was the gearing. The bike was a little flat in 5th in the second sector, I needed more drive off the turns and more revs on the straight to make the most of the R6 engine. However, P3 for race 1 and feeling confident.



After a lengthy post quali de brief we again made some fairly big changes for the race. We dropped one tooth on the rear sprocket to allow me to use 4th gear on the fast parts of sector 2 which would give me the drive I was after. In contrast, by dropping a tooth you lengthen the wheelbase.

This is because you need to take the wheel back further to take the slack out of the chain. By lengthening the wheelbase, you effectively soften the rear shock because you now have more leverage and force from the swinging arm...all technical stuff!

Again, this was a gamble, but we were confident it would work.



Lights out and I got a great jump off the line grabbing the holeshot. I rode defensive on the opening laps to defend my position. However, on the back straight two slipstreamed past me leaving me in 3rd at the end of lap 1.

I decided to stick behind the Kennedy and Ryde to see what the pace was like, and it was hot! Banging out some very fast laps with my best being a 1:16:4 which was just 0.2 off the lap record. Lap by lap we were a leading trio until lap 9 when the safety car came out bunching us all back up.

For two laps we toured behind the safety car until it went in and it was go time! As we were all bunched back up I was conscious off the threat from behind but tried to bang some fast laps in.

Final lap, I was pushing to make a challenge on 2ndplace but just wasn't quite close enough to make an attack so I had to defend and hold 3rd place to the line and 2nd in Supersport. I was pleased with this result because of the improvement in pace and the handling of the bike, this left me very keen and eager for race 2!





Going into race 2 I was feeling confident after a strong performance Saturday and more importantly closing in on Seeley for 2nd in the championship. With the bike set up the same as race 1 I was raring to go for lights out. Lights out, and I made another great launch charging into turn one first. Leading the opening lap until the back straight, just like race 1, when I got slipstreamed and crossed the line to begin lap 2 in 3rd. Similar plan to the sprint race, I decided to hang in 3rd and gauge the pace and manage my tyre.



The pace wasn't quite as fast as race 1, but that was to be expected because of the longer race distance. As I've said, tyre management is so important and it is highlighted at Thruxton much more than any other circuit.

As the laps clicked off, I was suffering from a lack of rear grip, putting me out the seat a few times and losing valuable time to the leaders. After two alarming slides at very fast points on the circuit I was around 0.7 from the leaders. Digging deep to make up for lost time and I used a lot of the tyre and began to have a lot rear spin, meaning it was hard for me to maintain the pace. With a safety car out for 2 laps I had hoped that would put me back in contention but for the remainder of the race I couldn't quite match the pace for the win.

Bringing it home in 4th overall and 2nd in Supersport. However, with another 20 points in the bag and beating Seeley I jumped up to 2nd the championship which was a great positive.

**THANKS
FOR ALL
YOUR
SUPPORT!**

**NEXT UP
ROUND 8 //
CADWELL
PARK**

