

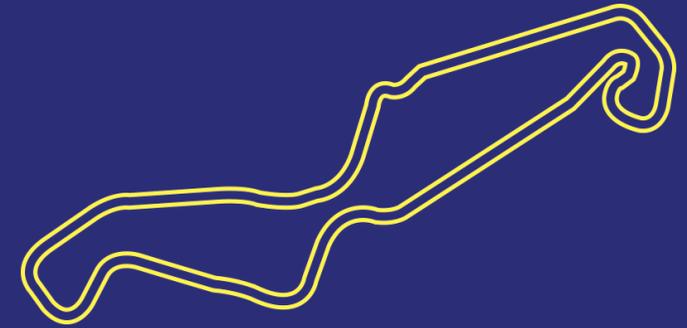
Brad JONES

TWELVE



12

ASSEN TT //
ROUND 10



For round 10 of the British Supersport championship we headed across the pond and ventured to the Cathedral of Speed which is TT circuit Assen.

Going into the weekend I was carrying some good confidence from the victory last time out. I knew the weekend was going to be challenging as it is a circuit I have very limited experience at and I knew for certain that last year's set up wouldn't work and that we would have to work hard on Friday to get a good feeling and direction.

FP1- a 30-minute session to open the weekend, the plan for this session was to run a good number of laps to find my rhythm and acquaint myself with the very fast but thrilling circuit. I managed to get out and find myself some clear space on the track which allowed me to crack on and get my head down.

Based off the team's knowledge with previous Assen settings and typical set up curve balls that it can throw up, we found a good base setting with the chassis and the initial feeling was positive. From the opening laps I was really enjoying the circuit and began to feel comfortable. Within a handful of laps I got down to some reasonable times and it wasn't long until I was into the 1:40's.





The initial feeling with the bike was very positive, I was expecting the bike to be a little further off than it was because we had come up with a setting that we had not used at this circuit before. Surprisingly we used softer springs in the front than most tracks, this was due to its fast flowing nature. However, it was crucial we set it up so we had enough support when braking as the famous 'Gurt Timmer' chicane, which is the final corner, requires some hard braking and the last overtaking opportunity.

10 minutes remaining, I was in the pits and we made one small change on the front. We opened the compression, front and rear, to allow the bike to manage the bumps better and make it less sensitive. Immediately, the bike was improved and I managed to knock another tenth off putting P3 overall and 2nd in Supersport with a 1:40:8, this was just 0.4 off my PB and 1.4 seconds faster than I went in FP1 last season, this was a nice confidence boost as it showed our progression from 12 months ago.



FP2- for this session we made a drastic gearing change. We opted for a gearing ratio that was equivalent to 4 teeth on the rear sprocket. With a change this big it meant it would alter my gear pattern around the circuit meaning the opening laps I really focused on perfecting the gear pattern and making the most of the extra RPM in the faster turns. Likewise to FP1, I wanted to put some fast consecutive laps together to really find that rhythm. In the opening 12 minutes I matched my FP1 time of a 1:40:8. However, I was expecting to find more time a little easier and I was pushing harder than I wanted to in a practice session to find those extra few tenths. During my pitstop with 10 minutes left on the clock I asked to my crew chief about altering the engine braking on corner entry.

I wanted less engine braking on that first hit of braking all the way to the point of releasing the brake at the apex. He could see from my data what RPM's I was talking about and adjusted it accordingly. Therefore, in my final run of the session I had less engine braking on corner entry. The feeling was exactly what I was after and it gave me another 2 tenths. The easiest way to describe the feeling is like originally entering a roundabout in your car in 2nd gear, then after the change it was like being in 3rd gear which allows you to run more corner speed and faster entry into the roundabout as the engine isn't holding you back. Ending the session in P3 in Supersport was a productive and positive end to day 1 at the Cathedral of Speed.

Quali- after a lengthy post FP2 debrief and some very detailed analysis of the data we opted to go back to the original gearing. Although I felt faster and liked the gearing, it was actually slower and this is down to it being at the higher end of where the power is, whereas the original gearing uses the torque of the engine more and the makes the throttle connection more 'user friendly'. Within 5 laps I broke into the 1:39's for the first time and the bike felt good. However, because I was now going that bit faster it began to highlight some areas for improvement.

The front forks were now getting very close to the bottom of the stroke when braking and trailing some brake into the corners. Mid-session whilst I was getting my 2nd rear tyre I discussed this feeling with my suspension technician, and he filled me with confidence as he said it was an easy fix.



All that was needed was some more preload to give more support to the fork as it went through its stroke. 8 minutes remaining, leaving me with around 6 flying laps to post my fastest possible lap and I was aiming for a mid 1:39. However, the track was very busy at this point so I had to pick my best opportunity to post a fast lap with some clear track.

Only managed to get one clear lap but I made sure I maximised everything, posting another new PB of a 1:39:6 putting me P3 on the grid making it my 18th front row start.



Race 1- 12 lap sprint race launching off from the front row. As always, I made a great start I held my position down into turn 1. Charging into turn 2 I made the best of a gap and pushed my way into P2 holding that place to end lap 1 and begin lap 2. I was tucked right into behind Kyle Ryde and his GP2 bike which is like a rocket ship! I wanted to get past him and stop him from breaking away. Lap 3 I was right on him by the exit of turn 1 and made a pass for the lead with a tight cut back block pass through turn 3 to take the lead. I was feeling great and the bike was working well. Full gas down the back straight into turn 6 then fast change of direction into turn 7 at around 105 mph.





Just as I touched the throttle it took a little bit of weight off the front down I went as the bike slid away from me sending me into the gravel at a rate of knots. Fortunately, I walked away unmarked but as you can imagine, very frustrated! To crash out while leading was massively disappointing of course, but I had to take the positives and remember it was first crash of the season.



Race 2- for this 15-lap feature race, I had to start from the end of row 3 in P9. This was because I didn't get chance to post a fast time in race 1 therefore, I had to go back two rows. My plan for the race was to make sure I made a good start and made some progress in the first two sectors so that the front group didn't get away.

My plan worked well meaning I was up to 6th by the end of lap 1 then chipping away making a block pass for 5th then charging ahead to chase down Mason Law for 4th. To pass the GP2 spec bike of Law proved difficult, with the strengths and weaknesses of my bike compared to his were very different which then made it difficult to pass.

Turn 3 I lined up a move, but Mason held his line meaning I couldn't find a way past. As the laps went by and the race progressed, I couldn't find a way past and annoyingly some arm pump began to creep in.

The bike was feeling good in the later stages as the fuel load decreased. In contrast, during the opening laps I could feel the that the weight transfer was exaggerated meaning the change of direction became a little bit more unstable. In the closing stages the arm pump became a limiting factor which was frustrating as it something I very rarely suffer from. Finishing the 15 laps race in P3 for Supersport, it was nice to repay the team with some silverware and round out the weekend with some champagne. Now I will focus on overcoming the arm pump issue and comeback at Donington and challenge for the win again to bring a solid end to the season.



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