

Brad JONES
TWELVE

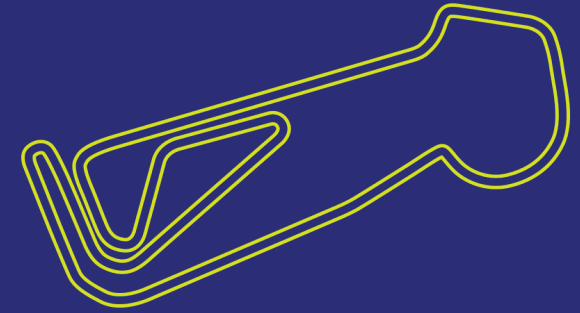
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**ROUND 5 //
KNOCKHILL**





Round 5 of the British Superbike Championship headed to Bonnie Scotland for the delights of the Knockhill circuit near Dunfermline. A tight and short circuit but it comes with technical corners and blind crests which makes for close and fast racing!



I enjoy this circuit, it is a track which you can attack and be aggressive on. The other beauty of it is with a lap being around 50 seconds you get plenty of laps in a session giving you chance to try many different things. With the weather forecast looking stable for the first part of the weekend Friday gave us chance to try last year's set up and then improve that throughout the two 30 minute free practice sessions.

Friday Free Practice- with the unique features of the Knockhill circuit the set up was crucial to make the rollercoaster elements stable as possible! In my previous weekend report I said about our 2018 set up not working for me due to my change of style, and this weekend was no different meaning we had to start a fresh.



When I say my style has changed, I'm talking about my body positioning and my throttle technique. This year I am putting a lot more input into the bike with my body by hanging off more to help turn the bike and standing the bike up more aggressively when driving off the turns. In terms of my throttle technique, my first touch of the throttle at the apex of turns is a lot harder. This means I need more support from the rear shock when cracking throttle off the turns.

With the circuit being around a 50 second lap it meant we could rattle out 28 laps per 30 minute session including making a stop mid-session. This weekend for me it was important to do a race distance on one set of tyres to see how the grip levels changed, this is because at Brands I felt the drop in grip across the race was too much and hard to manage.



Straight out the box the bike felt reasonably good, of course there was areas we needed to work on but my initial feeling was positive. The biggest area we needed to improve was the front end feel and turning. The front end felt deep in the stroke in many areas meaning it was difficult for me to carry corner speed which in turn was affecting my drive off the turns and that's where a lot of the time is made.

During my pit stop mid-session with 14 minutes to go, to try and rectify this issue we put some preload on the front to stiffen it and hold it off the bottom. In addition, we opened the compression to help the bike adsorb the bumps as the front was hard to hold a line due to it skipping over them. With the first session complete, 49.9 was my best time putting me 4th fastest in the session and 0.5 of a second off the fastest time. We still had plenty to improve on at this point, post session debriefs are always important but early in the weekend they are vital. They are so important because it allows you to set a direction for the set up and if you take the wrong direction that can have a huge impact on the weekend.

For FP2, we made one small geometry change on the bike. We raised the front of the bike by 2mm. We done this by dropping the front forks through an this would take some weight off the front meaning it would help me turning in as the front would now not be so loaded but also it would sharpen up the change of direction as the centre of gravity was raised.

The way to understand this is to think of a stack of boxes, some with heavy objects in and some empty. If you put the heavy ones at the bottom the stack is less likely to fall over as more weight is at the bottom. If you move the full boxes further up the stack it starts to become top heavy and the stack falls over. So in principle if you have more weight higher up on the bike it will go from side to side easier.

This simple change in FP2 was massively beneficial and I got down to a 49.5 which was a new personal best for me. Another positive factor from this session was my pace was consistent and the drop in grip level was manageable which was something we needed to have right as I mentioned earlier.





Going into qualifying we made very minor changes. The changes we did we made were to improve stability over bumps and a little more support on braking. With Scotland producing the goods of 25 degrees heat and sunshine the conditions were perfect for qualifying. Standard procedure of pitting half way through for a new rear tyre was the plan, but a banker lap was needed before we put the second Pirelli Supercorsa in. First flying lap and straight on to the pace, 49.4 third lap in and the bike was feeling great. Our hard work through Friday's practice and debriefs was paying dividends. I rattled out 5 laps from the off all around the 49.5 mark, this just confirmed my consistent pace and gave me a positive vibe knowing we had competitive pace and this just spurred me on to dig even deeper for that faster time. With second tyre in, this was GO time and my chance to see what we had in the locker. Traffic on track was busy as this stage with 10 minutes of the session remaining, so I had to pick my opportunity and make the most of it when I clear track ahead. It came down to my final lap before I found some clear space and knew I had to put a clean lap together to cement my slot on the front row. Apex to Apex, hitting all my marks and crossing the line with a 49.264 lap confirmed 3rd spot on the grid for race 1 meaning I set myself in a great position to challenge for the win!

Race 1- in true Scottish fashion the heavens really opened on the Saturday afternoon, so much so that race 1 was postponed and ran the Sunday morning at 10:05am. Although still wet, the track wasn't waterlogged and safe for racing to go ahead. With no wet practice it was straight into race 1, a bit daunting but nevertheless, exciting!



Lights out and a strong start, my teammate got me in to turn 1 but I soon retaliated taking the lead back. From watching other wet races, I could see the track was giving good grip. Therefore, from lap 1 I pushed hard to try and break the pack. But with Jack hot on my heels after 6 laps I knew there was no getting away from him. Lap 8 of 15 and he made the move and took the lead, at this point I decided to sit behind and weigh him up seeing where he was stronger than me. The pace was fast, and we had stretched the rest of the field by a sizeable margin. After sitting on his back wheel for a few laps it was clear that passing was going to be hard, but to add to that we had back markers to contend with! On to the last lap, still stalking Jack and preparing myself for a move into the hairpin to try and grab my first Supersport victory, Jack showed his class and put a clean and fast last lap in meaning I had nothing for him leaving me to settle for a solid 2nd place and 20 points. Considering we had no practice, the team done a brilliant job in getting a good set up and giving me a competitive bike!

Race 2- For race 2 track conditions were dry, but the wind was very strong which when sat on the grid I knew could cause a few issues during the 26 lap race. Getting a good start at Knockhill is crucial as there is limited passing places. Lights on, Lights off...a good launch and run into turn 1 coming out 2nd place stuck on the tail of my teammate. I knew Jack would be aiming to put a solid first lap together to try and get away from the hard charging pack behind. From the off we were banging in very fast times in, 49.3, 49.2, 49.4 lap after lap. This was lap record pace and no one else could maintain that pace meaning me and Jack broke away flying in formation. I hunted him down for the first 13 laps trying to see where a pass was possible.



Lots of people say to me, "you look stronger in places, why don't you pass him? Are there team orders?". There are no team orders, but for me to pass Jack is difficult because the pace was so hot. In addition, when I make a move it needs to be clean and calculated because if I take him out and myself out that is not what the team and sponsors want and it would drastically reduce our chances of winning the championship. For me to chase Jack for 26 laps round Knockhill was great for my learning curve and race craft. On lap 14 I set a new lap record of a 49.1, this was a nice little bonus from the race and just proved how fast the pace of the race was. Full credit to my team for giving me a great bike, I felt comfortable and smooth which I think was key to the hot pace and another 2nd place!



**THANKS
FOR
ALL
YOUR
SUPPORT!**

**NEXT UP
ROUND 6 //
SNETTERTON**

