

**Brad JONES**  
TWELVE

**12**

**ROUND 3 //  
DONINGTON  
PARK**





For round 3 of the British Superbike Championship we headed to the iconic Donington Park where we were set for a weekend of action-packed racing on the 1.98 national layout circuit.



The last time I raced the national layout was back in the early stages of my career. Therefore, I needed to make sure I got the most out of the 40-minute free practice one session. The biggest thing set up wise for us this weekend was the gearing. This was because the R6 hadn't been run on this layout before. For free practice 1 one we chose a gearing ratio that we calculated.

Going into this session there was a lot to take in, different circuit layout, gearing and bike set up. Luckily, we had a 40 minute session and the lap time was around 1:09 which meant we could get at least 20 laps with some pit stops to make adjustments to the bike.



In my first 10 laps the first feelings felt positive, we planned for a 10 lap run then a pit stop to allow us to get some data out the bike and see what area's we could improve. The gearing was something I wanted to change mid-session but time wasn't in our favour. We made the bike stiffer in the second run as it was lively to ride with lots of movement.

Through Schwantz curve up towards Mcleans the rear end was like a po-go stick, stiffening the rear improved this but we still had work to do to clean it up. Ending the session in 4th with a 1:09:093 and 0.429 off the top spot was a productive start to our weekend.



**GOING INTO QUALIFYING WE TOOK A BIG GAMBLE. WE DECIDED TO CHANGE THE GEARING AGAIN WHICH THIS TIME WOULD ALSO CHANGE MY GEAR PATTERN AROUND THE 1.98-MILE CIRCUIT.**



For free practice 2, we made a change on the gearing to allow me to have more punch off the turns and a little more top end down the straights. In addition, by changing the gearing it shortened the wheelbase of the bike. This changes the handling of the bike. Having a shorter wheelbase means the bike will turn faster, therefore making it easy to turn the bike in to the corners and will also improve the transitioning of the bike in the chicane. However, it also makes the bike a little bit more unstable but with our wheelbase at 578mm, it was manageable.

I ran some consistent laps in the session although the times were harder to get down to compared to session one. We put this down to stronger winds and a higher track temperature. 3rd fastest was a positive way to end our first day at Donington, we had plenty of areas to work on going into qualifying.

On my opening laps I knew straight away this gearing was exactly what we were looking for. I rattled off 7 laps early on and got a banker lap in. I was finding it hard to get down to some decent times that would put me on the front row, I couldn't get a great feeling in the rear. There was a lot of movement from the rear end which was making it hard to touch the throttle on and get the drive off the turns.

With 16 minutes to go, I entered the pit lane for a new tyre. Whilst the lads were on with that, me and my suspension technician chatted and decided to stiffen the rear shock with some preload and adjust the rebound just to slow the rear end movements down a little bit. Bingo, that was exactly what I needed and with minutes to spare I managed to post a 1:08:2 to put me 2nd and only 0.1 off of pole!

**// I WAS RARING TO GO FOR THE 20 LAP RACE ON THE SATURDAY, I KNEW IT WAS CRUCIAL TO GET A GOOD START. AS WE WERE ON THE GRID IT JUST STARTED TO SPIT WITH RAIN BUT NEVER ACTUALLY PROPERLY POURED. MORE LIKE WHAT WE CALL 'MENTAL RAIN' //**





As the lights went out, I got a great jump and charged into turn 1, I broke really late but just got pushed out by a rider on the inside. 2nd down through Craner Curves on lap 1, but not for long! I made a pass and took the lead. In the first 5 laps there was lots of passing etc going on.

On the start of lap 6 into turn 1 I got a false neutral and really couldn't stop the bike as I had no engine braking. I lost a lot of time because of this and then struggled to get back into my rhythm. It turned out to be a lonely race for 3rd overall and 2nd in class.

However, it was some solid points on the board and it set us up nicely for race 2, as my lap times put me 3rd on the grid. Another front row start, with only Seeley from my class ahead of me.

In true British fashion it chucked it down with rain around an hour and half before race 2. But the track was warm, and the sun kept making an appearance meaning the track was drying quickly. On the out lap to the grid I had a good look at the track. There was a very clear dry line, but it was very narrow meaning if you had to go off line, things would get interesting.

Back to the grid and I had to decide, with some wise words from the team and my gut feeling I opted for an intermediate front tyre and a slick rear. This would give me some confidence on the front and a dry rear meant it would last in the drying conditions.

The opening laps were steady and just feeling to the grip. After 5 laps Seeley hit the front and began to pull away whilst I was sat in 4th. At this point I knew I needed to crack on and chase him down...I did just that.





Once I had caught him, I put a move on him quite quickly and tried to breakaway, but Seeley and Tom Oliver come with me. From this point onwards we traded paint all race long and had a very intense battle. On the last lap I took the lead into turn 1. I pushed hard and tried to put a very good lap together, on the back straight in the lead with one turn to go.

As I tucked in, I could feel my leathers being sucked off my back, so I knew they were right on me, as expected they both slipstreamed me pushing me back to 3rd. I tried to release the brake early into the final turn and get at least one of them back, but it just wasn't do-able.

**// 3RD PLACE WASN'T WHAT I WANTED AFTER LEADING 10 LAPS, HOWEVER IT WAS AN ENTERTAINING AND VERY ENJOYABLE RACE! //**

Some solid points this weekend and I am now joint second in the championship with my teammate.



**THANKS  
FOR  
ALL  
YOUR  
SUPPORT!**

**NEXT UP  
ROUND 4 //  
BRANDS  
HATCH**

