

Motorcycling with John Savage

MISSED OPPORTUNITY FOR LAVERTY



Eugene Laverty fell victim to the treacherous conditions at Donington, when he crashed out of the 250cc race.

Eugene Laverty slid out of Sunday's 250cc British Grand Prix, which was staged in atrocious conditions at Donington Park, and the Toomebridge man will consider it a missed opportunity to further underline his potential and add to his world championship points tally.

The 21 year old grands prix rookie scored his first points, when he finished 14th in the Spanish Grand Prix at Jerez and then picked up another point for 15th place at Le Mans in France.

Having joined Lucio Cecchinello's Team LCR Honda after contesting the British Supersport Championship aboard a Honda CBR600RR, it is a sharp learning curve for Laverty, not only to adjust to the two-stroke Honda from the four-stroke machine, but also as his kitted Honda is way off the pace of the factory Aprilia, Honda and KTM machines which dominate the quarter-litre class.

Another crucial factor, of course, is that most of the grands prix tracks are new to him.

That is why his British Grand Prix result will come as such a disappointment to Eugene, as the factory machines have less of a top end advantage over his out-paced Honda at the 2.5 Leicestershire circuit, and the

wet weather made for a more level playing field.

Ahead of the eighth world championship round, Eugene had enthused: "It will be great to be at a track that I enjoy and understand. It should be cooler than in Spain and Italy and this should help our set-up, as we seem to struggle in really hot weather. Scoring some championship points at Donington is my target for this race."

Practising last Friday took place in weather resembling a monsoon, and after Eugene qualified 14th on the provisional grid, he said: "The conditions were unbelievable — it was almost impossible to ride. It was all I could do to stay on the bike. There was no grip. It would be nice to have more grip, but it is so cold the tyres are not getting up to temperature, but perhaps we can change the set-up to try and improve the grip."

Despite his Honda running out of fuel on the final lap, Eugene put in a sterling performance in Saturday's dry qualifying to line up 15th on the grid.

Upbeat about his chances in the race, he smiled: "This qualifying shows what I can do when I know the circuit and the bike set-up. I think it shows my potential in grands prix. My times are very consistent and I think I can race for a top 12 position in the dry. If it rains, the race is wide open."

Rain did, but unfortunately, Eugene's enthusiasm was misplaced.

Race day didn't begin well, when Eugene banged a shoulder when he tipped off during the morning warm-up, nevertheless, he remained confident as he lined up on the fourth row of the grid for the 27 laps race.

He made a slow start and was 19th at the completion of the opening lap, but made up three places on lap two, and by the third lap he was on the tail of Yorkshireman Dan Linfoot, making his debut for the Italian-based Team Sicilia, after Australian Anthony West's departure to replace Oliver Jacque in the Kawasaki MotoGP team, after the Frenchman announced his retirement from racing.

Laverty passed Linfoot on lap four, to move into 12th, and for the next couple of laps the British pair duelled for 12th and swapped positions, as they closed on Aleix Espargaro.

But it all went pear-shaped for Laverty just seven laps into the race, when he slid off at the Old Hairpin, and although the young Ulsterman was quickly back on his feet, his race was over.

Eugene recounted: "I lost the front. It just tucked from under me. The conditions were terrible. There was so much spray I was probably too careful and lost some positions from the start and then I got forced wide by Locatelli."

He sighed: "It was a silly crash that annoyed me, as I was just getting comfortable in the wet conditions."

19 year old Linfoot went on to finish an excellent ninth on his Aprilia, albeit a lap down on the top seven finishers, replicating the result he scored as a 'wild card' entrant in the equally wet British 125cc Grand Prix two years ago.

Only one of this year's four 'wild card' British riders qualified for the race, and Toby Markham finished two laps down on the only Yamaha, last of the 17 finishers.

In pouring rain, the leading trio broke clear of the rest during the formative stages, as Alex De Angelis grabbed the lead from pole position, ahead of Andrea Dovizioso and defending world champion Jorge Lorenzo.

Lorenzo moved into second at Copcice on lap four, when Dovizioso was almost spat off his Kopron Scot Honda, but when Lorenzo was highsigned from his Fortuna Aprilia at the same corner on lap 11, De Angelis and Dovizioso were left to dice it out.

Dovizioso had closed right onto the tail of De Angelis when San Marino rider De Angelis fell from his Master-MVA Aprilia at Craner Curves on the penultimate lap and handed the race to the English-based Italian.

De Angelis managed to remount to salvage second position, 22 seconds in arrears of 'Dovi', who has closed to within 11 points of Lorenzo in the championship standings, with De Angelis a further seven points behind.

The rest were nowhere, with third finisher Hiroshi Aoyama 40

seconds behind on his Red Bull KTM, ahead of fellow Japanese Yuki Takahashi and Hiro's brother Shuhei Aoyama.

Alvaro Bautista and Hector Barbera retain fourth and fifth in the championship standings, despite both crashing out of the race, and other notable fallers included Marco Simoncelli and Thomas Luthi.

In the treacherous conditions, Mika Kallio fell on the final lap, but remounted to claim sixth, while Julian Simon slid out of fourth place, but got back aboard to take seventh.

MotoGP
The rain stopped before the start of the 30 laps MotoGP race, however, the track remained wet, until a drying line began to appear at around half distance.

Dani Pedrosa grabbed the early lead, but after he was overtaken by pole position setter Colin Edwards and slow starting Casey Stoner on the second lap, the Spaniard went backwards to finish eighth, and to compound a disappointing day for Repsol Honda, Pedrosa's team-mate, defending champion Nicky Hayden, crashed out of sixth place at Copcice.

Edwards kept championship leader Stoner at bay, until the 21 year old Australian grabbed the lead when Edwards ran wide at the Melbourne Loop at half distance, and once in front Stoner controlled the race from the front on his Marlboro Ducati to take his fifth victory of the season by a commanding 12 seconds.

Astride his Fiat Yamaha, Texan Edwards finished four seconds in front of another Aussie, Chris Vermeulen, who brought his Rizla Suzuki home third, after he got the better of Valentino Rossi, who had no reply after the rear Michelin tyre on his Fiat Yamaha began to

shred on the drying track.

John Hopkins was fifth on the second Rizla Suzuki, ahead of Randy De Puniet's Kawasaki.

Stoner has increased his championship lead to 26 points over Rossi, with Pedrosa a further 33 points adrift.

125cc
Matta Pasini put the mechanical gremlins which have bedevilled him this season behind him to score a convincing first win of the year in the 125cc World Championship.

The Italian had put his Polaris World Aprilia in pole position five times this season, but had inexplicably been thwarted by mechanical problems in every race, however, it finally came good and he scored the fifth 125cc grand prix victory of his career.

In a typically frenetic 125cc race, held on a dry track, Simone Corsi set the pace for ten of the 25 laps, before Pasini hit the front and eased away to win, as Tommi Koyama managed to get his KTM home second, ahead of Hector Faubel.

After surviving a big get-off at Copcice during qualifying, Oxford youngster Bradley Smith lined up ninth on the grid on his Repsol Honda, and the 16 year old again finished best of the Honda runners, this time in seventh, after a tight tussle with Italy's Raffaele De Rosa.

Bradley said: "This has been a very complicated weekend. I was racing at home and wanted to do a good job. As it went, with the weather and everything, it's been very difficult, because it rained sometimes and then it didn't, and in the end we haven't been able to really set the bike up."

"Things went okay yesterday afternoon, but the rain showed up this morning again. I got onto the grid and it was still raining,

but we didn't really know what to do. I finally chose a soft tyre and it didn't work out. I wasn't able to push at 100% and I'm a bit disappointed, because I felt that I was able to do a bit better. But, anyway, we've learned from this mistake, and the good part is that we're going to be back on the track next Thursday."

English youngster Luke Jones was best of the 'wild card' entrants in 22nd, with 18 year old Belfastman Nikki Coates 27th on his KRB Honda, a week after he scored his maiden British 125cc Championship victory at Mondello Park.

Faubel now leads the 125cc World Championship by three points from his Aspar Aprilia team-mate Gabor Talmacsi, who was forced to retire from the race.

Virgin Media Cup R6 Challenge
The Virgin Media R6 Cup runners made their annual visit to the British Grand Prix as one of the support classes, for the two legs Virgin Media R6 Cup Challenge.

B. J. Toal currently leads the Virgin Media R6 Cup going into this weekend's next round at Knockhill in Scotland, but it was a disappointing Donington for the Omagh lad.

He crashed at Craner Curves midway through the first 12 laps race, but salvaged fourth position in Sunday's second leg.

Midge Smart won both races to pick up a new Yamaha Aerox scooter, with James Webb twice runner-up — his elder brother Danny earlier finished 25th in the 125cc grand prix.

The MotoGP world championships continue with the Dutch TT at Assen on Saturday, for which practising and qualifying takes place today (Thursday) and tomorrow.

Local hotshots dominate in Wales

Local hotshots Michael Pearson and Kirk Jamison dominated racing at the superb new Anglesey circuit in Wales on Sunday, where Pearson beat Jamison to the chequered flag in the premier event of the day, but Jamison had the considerable consolation of being the first winner at the new 2.1 miles track, and also set a new outright course record.



Michael Pearson won the main event at Anglesey, ahead of local rival Kirk Jamison, who took the new outright course record. Photo by Deek McCoubrie

Ulster riders swept the board at Anglesey, as Carrickfergus man Alistair Seeley enjoyed a stranglehold on the Supersport 600 class, and Antrim's Chris McAloran scored back to back wins in the 250cc races.

Over £5 million has been spent on re-developing the circuit, which hosted the opening rounds of the Nantwich and Cheshire Championships, and ultimately hopes to successfully bid for a round of the British Superbike Championship, within the next couple of years.

Moneyreagh man Pearson and Jamison, from Newtownards, are separated by just four-and-a-half points in the quest for the Irish Superbike Championship, which continues at Aghadowey on July 14, and the short trip across the Irish Sea was a welcome diversion for both.

Pearson leads the ISB title chase by half-a-point from Corkman Declan Swanton, with Jamison hot on their tail, and Anglesey provided an opportunity for both local riders to have a shakedown before the ISB battle resumes at Aghadowey on July 14.

Jamison won the Nantwich and Cheshire Powerbike Championship last year, having won the Supersport title the previous season — a title which he stayed in Ulster last term, when it was won by Lurgan's Edward Haddock.

Brimming with enthusiasm after sampling the delights of the new track for the first time, Jamison said: "The circuit is what superbikes were built for: fast, sweeping corners, steep climbs and descents, with a wide, grippy and smooth surface."

Wayne Griffiths, from Preston, has decided to retire from racing after a big early season crash, and has loaned Kirk his Honda CBR600RR for the remainder of the season, and the bike will run in Jamison's Jim Angus Contracts/Feckin Irish Whiskey livery for the rest of the year.

Alan Finlay of Nice Bike pulled out all the stops to repair and repaint the petrol tank of Kirk's Suzuki after his prang at Mondello Park several weeks ago, and Alan also painted a new top fairing for the Suzuki, together with a complete set of new fairings for the 600 Honda, so thanks to the Carrowdore man the bikes sat side by side in 'Team Jamison' livery!

appeared, so second place was still an option. One marshal ran over and refused to let me restart, instead bringing out a red flag. Whatever the reasons were, I was given the win and put on pole for the final."

Johnston was credited with second, 12 seconds adrift of Jim Angus, with Ballywalter's John Colling an excellent third on his ex-TAS Suzuki GSX-R1000, just a fifth-of-a-second behind Johnston.

With Cheshire's Tim Poole fourth, Edward Haddock took fifth on his Suzuki GSX-R600, and another Ulsterman, Robert Woods, completed the leading half dozen.

Michael Pearson had to ride the wheels off his newly acquired, ex-Ryan Rainey, Carryduff Forklifts 1000cc Yamaha R1, to win the second Powerbike heat, finishing less than half-a-second ahead of British National Superstock Championship regular, Craig Beggs, from Crewe, aboard his Enviro-Strip UK Yamaha R1.

Reigning Irish Superbike and Supersport champion Alistair Seeley was four seconds back in third on William Watt's 600cc Yamaha R6, however, the Carrickfergus man decided not to race the Supersport machine in the Powerbike final.

Peter Newell from Cookstown was fifth, ahead of Belfastman Steven Tittertoning, with Irish Supersport championship leader, Matthew Percy from Randalstown, eighth on his Slemish Water Coolers Suzuki GSX-R600.

Jamison grabbed the holshot in the Powerbike final, the premier race of the day, but he warily ran wide to avoid a damp patch on the

opening lap, and Pearson dived through to grab a lead he was never to lose.

Michael went on to win by one second, although Kirk had the consolation of the new outright lap record at 84.383mph.

Kirk explained: "I almost hit Michael's back wheel as I turned in and lost all drive on the way out. After that I pushed to catch him again, as he had a second or so gap, but he was riding brilliantly and I could only steal a tenth or two, and finished in second place, with Beggs six seconds back in third."

"Such was our pace, however, that Michael and I lapped in 1 min 29 sec — two seconds faster than Beggs."

Mark Johnston finished an excellent fourth, with Edward Haddock a creditable fifth, and John Colling continued his fine form with a good seventh place.

Robert Woods, Steven Tittertoning and Matthew Percy filled tenth to 12th respectively, with Peter Newell 13th.

Supersport 600
After he won his Supersport 600 qualifying heat by nine seconds on William Watt's Yamaha R6, Alistair Seeley was hot favourite for the final.

Taking the opportunity to gain track time ahead of this weekend's British National Superstock Championship round at Knockhill in Scotland, Seeley was in a class of his own in his qualifier, in which Matthew Percy finished runner-up.

Tim Poole won the other heat, in which Edward Haddock placed fifth, just ahead of Jamison.

With the bonus of a lap record at

82.64mph, Seeley won the Supersport final by a convincing nine seconds from Englishman Jay Dunn, with David Bath third and Poole fourth.

Percy was fifth, with Haddock seventh and Jamison 11th — Banbridge man Marty Lennox placed 13th on his Kawasaki, one place ahead of Clifty Hamilton.

Jamison was happy enough with his Supersport efforts: "With no practice on the 600, I struggled to sixth place in my heat, struggling to get it out of a corner. Again I lacked any grunt out of a corner in the final and I finished a lowly 11th, but I really enjoyed my first time back on a Supersport machine."

"The bike needs to be set up to suit my style and to improve it's bottom end, hopefully something we can get done before Aghadowey in three weeks time."

Chris McAloran dominated the 250cc races, in which he scored a brace of wins on his Honda.

He won the first race by a convincing 22 seconds from Englishman Steve Green, with Irish duo Paul Minahan and Gavin Clarke third and fourth respectively.

McAloran upped the lap record to 79.28mph in the second race, which he won by ten seconds from Englishman Nathan Pallett, with Green third, in front of Clarke and Minahan.

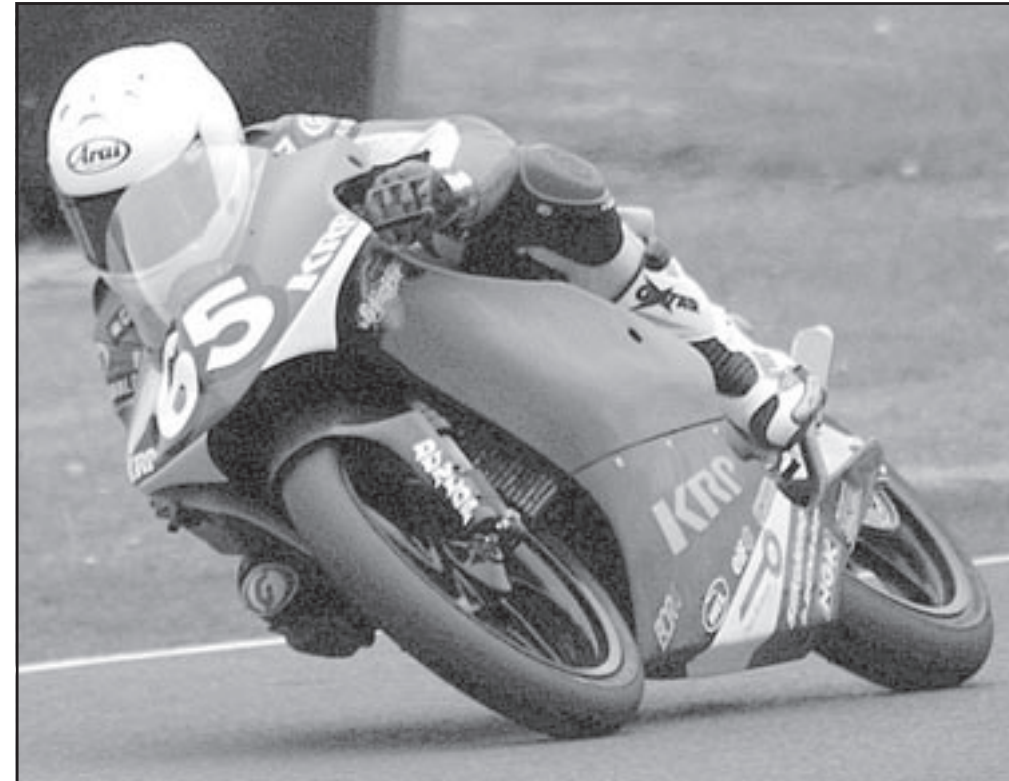
Results
Powerbike: 1, M. Pearson 83.02mph; 2, K. Jamison; 3, C. Beggs; 4, M. Johnson; 5, E. Haddock; 6, J. Dunn; 7, J. Colling; 8, D. Bath; 9, R. Woods; 10, S. Tittertoning. Record lap: Jamison 84.383mph. 1st heat: 1, Jamison 80.88mph; 2, Johnson; 3, Colling; 4, T. Poole; 5, Haddock; 6, Woods; 7, Bath; 8, D. Walker; 9, E. Delaney; 10, C. Hawkes. Fastest lap: Jamison 82.69mph. 2nd heat: 1, Pearson 81.39mph; 2, Beggs; 3, A. Seeley; 4, P. Whiteside; 5, P. Newell; 6, Tittertoning; 7, Dunn; 8, M. Percy; 9, A. Williams; 10, D. Wright. Fastest lap: Beggs 82.48mph. Non-qualifiers: 1, S. Meally 74.29mph; 2, J. Simpson; 3, C. Gibson; 4, P. Worthington; 5, S. Hill; 6, D. Jones. Fastest lap: Simpson 76.55mph.

Supersport 600: 1, A. Seeley 81.41mph; 2, J. Dunn; 3, D. Bath; 4, T. Poole; 5, M. Percy; 6, M. Cheetham; 7, E. Haddock; 8, P. Whiteside; 9, K. Hankin; 10, S. Mort. Record lap: Seeley 82.64mph. 1st heat: 1, Poole 78.63mph; 2, Whiteside; 3, Bath; 4, Mort; 5, Haddock; 6, K. Jamison; 7, Hankin; 8, C. Hawkes; 9, D. Walker; 10, C. Hamilton. Fastest lap: Poole 80.24mph. 2nd heat: 1, Seeley 80.72mph; 2, Percy; 3, M. Cheetham; 4, Dunn; 5, D. Wright; 6, W. Davidson; 7, G. Winstanley; 8, V. Grimmer; 9, H. Disley; 10, D. Jackson. Fastest lap: Seeley 82.04mph.

250cc, 1st race: 1, C. McAloran 77.98mph; 2, S. Green; 3, P. Minahan; 4, G. Clarke; 5, D. Murphy; 6, S. Hall; 7, J. Shipley; 8, D. Allen; 9, S. Wright; 10, S. Livingstone. Fastest lap: D. Welch 79.12mph. 2nd race: 1, McAloran 77.84mph; 2, N. Pallett; 3, Green; 4, Clarke; 5, Minahan; 6, P. McConaghy; 7, Hall; 8, I. McClenaghan; 9, C. Dean; 10, Shipley. Record lap: McAloran 79.28mph.



'Team Jamison' at Anglesey. From left: Robert Griffiths (Wayne's father); Wayne Griffiths, with son Scott; Kirk Jamison; Jim Jamison; Norman Jamison; and Jim Angus.



After he scored his maiden British 125cc Championship victory at Mondello Park seven days earlier, 18 year old Belfastman Nikki Coates qualified as a 'wild card' entrant for Sunday's British 125cc Grand Prix and finished a creditable 27th in his world championship debut. Photo by Philip Campbell

