

Motorcycling with John Savage



Kirk Jamison in action at Kirkistown a couple of weeks ago, before he 'chucked the Jim Angus Contracts BMW at the scenery'.

Ryan Fegan

Jamison bids to regain ISB lead

Ardsmen Kirk Jamison bids to regain the lead in the Irish Superbike Championship, when the series resumes at Bishops court on Saturday.

The Greyabbey based rider trails Australian Cameron Donald by nine points in the standings, but with Donald making his 24 hour race debut, as part of the three man Honda TT Legends team at the Le Mans round of the World Endurance Championship at the famous French circuit this weekend, Jamison effectively has a 35 points advantage over Randalstown's Matt Percy, with Coleraine man Mark Johnston a further 26 points in arrears, but ruled out of this weekend's action, as he is sidelined by injury.

Lisburn's Davy Haire will hope to leapfrog the unfortunate Johnston in the points standings, and close the gap on the series front-runners, while the other leading contenders should include Ballymena's Denver Robb and Irish Senior Clubmans' championship sensation Nico Mawhinney.

It's a similar situation in the Ulster Superbike Championship, however, with only two races remaining in that series after Saturday, Jamison could wrap up the Ulster title this weekend, and he already has one hand on the Irish Superstock Championship title, as he enjoys a handsome points cushion.

Kirk has been preparing meticulously for Saturday's event, and enlisted the expertise of former grands prix ace Jeremy McWilliams to help tweak his Jim Angus Contracts BMW S1000RR.

Jamison explained: "After two mediocre rounds, where I struggled to lowly top six positions, I had a test session at Mondello Park last Monday with Jeremy. Despite a hurricane trying its best to spoil it, I had a superbly beneficial day all round.

"We had changed the length of the bike for the Clubmans round at Kirkistown the week before and whilst I made a complete pig's ear of it by chucking the bike at the scenery, we were consistently faster than we had been on our previous visit there in July.

"At Mondello, Jeremy and I took turns riding the bike and we changed a number of things, which improved grip, stability and also my chances of getting off the line, which has been a major problem so far this year. I am looking forward to challenging for outright superbike wins again at Bishops court."

'Handy' job for 'Hopper'

Ahead of this weekend's penultimate round of the British Superbike Championship at Silverstone, series leader John Hopkins has undergone further surgery to the hand injury he sustained when he crashed at last month's Czech MotoGP at Brno.

Hopkins beat the pain barrier to win both BSB races at Donington Park two weeks ago, then flew to his native California for surgery on the middle finger of his left hand.

He explained: "The X-rays showed that my finger wasn't locating properly in the second knuckle. Fortunately the bone area that had previously been crushed was now nicely healed, so

my surgeon was able to put in screws and plates to stabilise the finger.

"I could feel straight away that the finger was much stronger and it's improved every day since. I'm now very confident I'll be able to ride at near enough 100%."

Samsung Crescent Suzuki rider Hopkins leads the championship by three points from Tommy Hill.

Kirk quipped: "I have also been knocking my pan out in the gym, which is a first for me, so I am confident we can get back to winning ways for the championship run in."

He analysed: "Matthew Percy has been consistent all year and is only 35 points behind me, so I can't afford to make too many mistakes. I will be going for the win though, to try and have the ISB title wrapped up before the Sunflower, and a good day should see me almost crowned Ulster Superbike champion, as there will be only 50 points available after this weekend.

"I have a 116 points advantage in the Irish Superstocks, so another double would see me lift my first championship of the year with five races remaining."

Kirk concluded: "The following weekend, we are off to Mondello, where I hold a slender 27 points advantage in the Adelaide Masters series. With three races and 75 points available that weekend it is by no means over. I will just have to ride with my head and hopefully luck will be on my side. So, in reality, there are two massive weekends ahead, the biggest nine days of my racing career. Four championships up for grabs, let's hope they all come back to Greyabbey!"

Saturday's Bishops court fixture features a packed 20 race programme, with two races per class: Superbike, Supersport, Supertwins, Supersport 400, 250cc, 125cc, Moto 450 and Sidecar, together with two non-championship Clubmans' races.

The meeting, promoted by the Motor Cycle Road Racing Club of Ireland and supported by Walter Bell & Son Oil Fired Heating, Charles Hurst Hyundai Dundonald and nuttravel.com gets underway with practice from 9am and racing from 12.30pm.

Meanwhile, entries close on Saturday for Hillsborough and District Motor Cycle Club's end of season Sunflower Trophy races at Bishops court, the final round of the Irish Superbike Championship, on Friday/Saturday, October 21/22.

Regulations and entry forms can be downloaded from www.sunflowertrophyraces.co.uk or obtained from Derek McWhirter on 028 9062 9016.



Finger looking good: an X-ray showing the screws and plates supporting John Hopkins' finger.

Pearson and Martin miss Gold Cup

Lisburn based Ballygowan man Michael Pearson and Lincolnshire's Guy Martin missed out on last weekend's Steve Henshaw Gold Cup meeting at Scarborough.

Former Scarborough 'Cock 'o the North' winner Pearson was unable to make the trip, due to torn ligament and muscle damage to his right elbow, as a result of a spill at last month's Ulster Grand Prix at Dundrod.

Michael explained: "The elbow is taking longer to heal than we first thought. In fact, the elbow is not really the problem, it's just that I cannot grip very well with my right hand, obviously due to the muscles and ligaments healing, which would make braking a big issue for me.

"The last thing I want is to cause an accident, where I might hurt myself even more, or in a worse case scenario, hurt someone else. The decision not to go was an easy one to make really, although I was disappointed not to be there."

Michael hopes to have a final run out this year on the D&GW Racing BMW SS1000RR at next month's Sunflower Trophy meeting at Bishops court, but before that he has a diary date he cannot miss: his marriage to fiancée Diane Lindsay.

Best wishes to them both.

Guy Martin's aspirations to win a record eighth Gold Cup, having collected the trophy in consecutive years from 2003-2009, were thwarted when he was hospitalised with a leg infection, although he was

spectating at Scarborough on crutches.

Martin, who rides for father and son Hector and Philip Neill's Moneymore based Rentless TAS Suzuki team, explained: "I thought I was only going to hospital for a check up and they kept me in for four days on an IV drip. I still didn't think it would keep me out of Scarborough, but when I tried to ride my push bike I couldn't even push the pedals round one revolution."

His team manager Philip Neill shrugged: "It was hugely disappointing for us all, as we were really looking forward to taking Guy to Scarborough and hopefully adding a Gold Cup win to our team CV.

"It's a tough circuit at the best of times and you have to be at your very best to win around there, never mind just compete, so it was the best decision for everyone, despite the disappointment."

Also spectating at Scarborough, his home circuit, was Yorkshireman Ian Hutchinson, who was denied the opportunity to defend the Gold Cup he won last year.

Hutchinson is continuing his recovery from the serious leg injuries he sustained in a British Supersport Championship race at Silverstone last September, a couple of months after he won a record Isle of Man TT races in one week.

'Hutchy' is planning to return to action next season, with the Isle of Man TT top of his agenda.

Rea and Laverty enjoy Misano shakedown

Ulster's World Superbike Championship duo, Jonathan Rea and Eugene Laverty, enjoyed a useful two day shakedown at Misano, on Italy's Adriatic Riviera, last week, in preparation for this weekend's 11th round of the series, at Imola.

24 year old Rea, who has renewed his contract with Honda to contest next year's World Superbike Championship, returned to Misano for the first time since the crash there in June, which left him with a badly broken wrist and sidelined him from action until the German WSBK round at Nurburgring three weeks ago.

But returning to the 'scene of the crime' left no mental scars on the Manx based Ballyclare man, who explained: "Going back to Misano was no problem for me and, in fact, I was going through the corner where I crashed faster than I did during the race weekend in June."

Rea's Castrol Honda team and Laverty's factory Yamaha team spent much of the two day work-out, staged in air temperatures of over 30 degrees and track temperatures in the mid-40 degrees last Tuesday and Wednesday, testing new Pirelli tyres.

With three rounds of the championship remaining, the Castrol Honda team has been working on developments to the current Fireblade CBR1000RR, and Rea was happy with the progress made.

He said: "It's been a real proper test and we had a lot of stuff to work through. On top of that, Pirelli also brought along some new rubber to try, so, in the end, we actually ran out of time. We probably needed the rest of the week to get through everything, but we can definitely see the potential of the ride-by-wire throttle



Jonathan Rea testing at Misano last week.

Castrol Honda Team

system that I tested for the first time last Wednesday. Also, I'm able to ride a lot more in my comfort zone with this new package and it helped with engine braking."

Jonathan concluded: "Pirelli brought a lot of soft rubber and we could have used a qualifier to try for a time, but we had to keep our heads down and keep focused on the work we had to get through. The lap time is probably about where we are at the moment, but we know that the next step forward will push us back to the front."

Toomebridge man Eugene Laverty and his Italian team-mate Marco Melandri worked through a variety of different settings, making adjustments and advancements to the chassis, electronics, engine braking and geometry of their Yamaha YZF-R1s, reporting immediate improvements, before proceeding to improve on lap times on race tyres.

Although Yamaha has announced the factory team's withdrawal from next year's World Superbike Championship, leaving Laverty and Melandri job hunting, both riders also tried the new tyres Pirelli has prepared for the final phase of the championship and gather important data for the development of new 2012 tyre compounds.

25 year old Laverty, who clocked up 190 laps, recounted: "We got a lot of work done over the two days. It's possibly the best test we have done so far this season. The first day we worked mainly with Pirelli on trying solutions for next year, which should be useful. In the remainder of Tuesday, and then on Wednesday, we tried a variety of different settings and gathered plenty of useful data.

"We discovered some interesting things about the geometry of the bike, which should help me improve my turning and

will be a benefit to me in the last three rounds of the season. We definitely made a big step in the right direction and I'm quite pleased with the two days overall."

Melandri completed 172 laps and recorded the fastest time over the two days, an impressive four fifths of a second faster than the record lap set in the June race by championship leader, Spaniard Carlos Checa, who was also testing his Althea Ducati at Misano, with Laverty notching the second quickest time, just a fifth of a second behind Melandri.

Ominously, however, Checa reported: "We spent maybe 80% of our time working with the tyres and the rest trying some different things with regard to set up, all very positive. We even closed a little early, because we worked so well on Tuesday and Wednesday that we finished ahead of time."