

McQuaid makes victorious start

MOTOCROSS

HAROLD McQuaid began the defence of his Ulster trials championship title with a stunning win of Saturday's Bann Cup at Finnis near Dromara.

There was an encouraging entry of 81 riders for the organising Banbridge club's Ulster opener which was all too easy for McQuaid who checked in with just 10 penalty points.

"Thankfully the rivers were low," said Clerk of the course Mervyn Hanlon.

"But the ground conditions were soggy.

"Still, it was an enjoyable day and some of the results reflect a host of serious battles in the various grades."

Teenager Jonny Lunney filled the runner-up spot for a loss of 46 marks while Philip McLaughlin was third on 61.

Ryan Sailes who is still a youth competitor elected to ride in Grade B where he had the satisfaction of beating the favourite Willie Dickey.

For Sailes, who had 34 penalties, this was his first win at this level.

Dickey incurred 40 penalties with Andrew Gault a close third on 41.

Matt Miller was a worthy Grade C winner but in Grade D just two marks covered the leading trio of George Robinson, Richard Moore and Robbie Jennings.

The Youth Division winners were Jake Hanlon, Curtis Brown, Andrew Dunlop and Ross Morrison.

RESULTS:

Grade A H McQuaid 10 marks lost; J Lunney 46; P McLaughlin 61.

Grade B R Sailes 34; W Dickie 40; A Gault 41; G Mackey 48; R McCrory 50; D Kinkaid 85.

Grade C M Miller 5; R Davidson 11; N McComb 34; I Scott 36; S Pyper 36; A Moore 36.

Grade D G Robinson 10; R Moore 11; R Jennings 12; S McKee 16; G Smith 17; T Scott 18.

Veterans: R Wilkin 27; C Grieve 40.

Youth Division (Class A) J Hanlon 16; S



MAN TO BEAT: Harold McQuaid made a perfect start to the defence of his Ulster trials Championship title on Saturday in the Bann Cup

McClurg 18; J Caldwell 27; A Turner 39; K Turner 62; M Fay 66. (Class B) C Brown 25; J Hanlon 33; A Lennox 37; M Miller 51; E Evans 52; F Morrison 72. (Class C) A Dunlop 27; G Taylor 33. (Class D) R Morrison 72; R Dugan 80; J Pyper 139.

■ THE Irish trials championship continues on Saturday with the Knock club's third round Shaw Cup at Moneyscalp near Bryansford.

The Killinchy club intend staging a marathon team motocross as a replacement for a Supermoto event on October 9 at Downpatrick.

This will be a three-hour event restricted to 60 teams of two, three or four riders.

The proceeds will be split between the Mid-Down MS Support Group and the Ulster Cancer Foundation.

Jamison edges closer to career-long dream

GREYABBEY'S Kirk Jamison put himself in pole position for the Irish Superbike crown with a brilliant double at Bishopscourt on Saturday.

Jamison won both races from Matthew Percy to increase his championship lead over the Randalstown rider to 45 points with five races remaining.

He also wrapped up the Irish Superstock and Ulster Superbike titles yesterday on the Jim Angus Contracts BMW S1000-RR, but admits the ISB and Adelaide Masters titles are his prime objectives.

Jamison, who also had the privilege of setting a new lap record of 55.034 seconds at Bishopscourt, has yet to achieve his ambition of being crowned ISB champion but admits he's never had a better opportunity.

"I struggled a bit with machine set-up at the last couple of rounds but my dad found a solution and the bike was fantastic on Saturday," he told News Letter Sport.

"Jeremy McWilliams helped me find a set-up for the bike so thanks to him as well and also to Bridgestone, because the tyres have been awesome.

"I can't wait to get back out on it at Mondello Park this weekend for the next



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round because I just feel so confident on it.

"I knew I had the pace to win and I just pushed to the front and went from there," he added.

"Fair play to Matthew Percy because he's been consistent all season and he finished second twice, so I only took 10 points out of him and he'll be in there until the end."

Jamison won the first race by four seconds from Percy and Stephen Thompson third and Richard Rea fourth.

He increased his advantage in race two to win by over five seconds from Percy with Thompson again third and Mark Glasgow fourth.

Jonny Buckley and Gary Jeffers had a win apiece in the Supersport races, with Conor Parkhill a double winner in the 125GP class and Nico Mawhinney sealing a brace in the 600-1010 Clubmans races.

Jamison also leads the Adelaide Masters series, which concludes this weekend and incorporates the penultimate ISB round of the season ahead of the finale at the Sunflower Trophy meeting on October 21/22.

REA BACK

Emotional victory at Imola following injury comeback

MOTORCYCLING

Kyle White reports



ULSTER'S Jonathan Rea showed his injury nightmare is well and truly behind him as he returned to the top step of the rostrum with an imperious World Superbike victory at Imola yesterday.

The Castrol Honda star's hopes of challenging for the world title this season were dashed when he suffered a complicated wrist injury following a morning warm-up crash at Misano in June.

The 25-year-old only returned to action at the Nurburgring in Germany at the beginning of this month, but yesterday he proved beyond all doubt that he is back to his best as he took a majestic win from Noriyuki Haga on the PATA Aprilia.

But it could have been so much better for Rea, who held a 3.5 second lead over championship leader Carlos Checa (Althea Ducati) in the second race before he was forced to pull into the pits after a connector on the battery of his Honda CBR1000-RR failed with four laps remaining.

In spite of the disappointment of his DNF in the second race, Rea - who is developing a new ride-by-wire system the team plans to use in 2012 - was thrilled with his victory earlier in the day, his second success this season following his triumph at Assen in April.

"Race one was pretty emotional, because it's been a long journey back," he said.

"Last season ended for me here, so it's a credit to all the people around me - my family, my friends, my girlfriend, and of course the team - who have got me back to the top step.

"I used last year's disappointment as a big motivation today and race two was looking really good, so it was disappointing not to finish.

"I know the guys behind me were pushing pretty hard but I felt quite comfortable at the front," added Rea.

"We've come a long way and I'm not going to get wrapped up in the negative of race two. What happened was a failure of a one Euro battery connector so in my heart I know we had two really good races today.

"The biggest result was the continued development of the new electronics system, so I can't thank the team enough for the faith they've shown in me to keep pushing with that development.

"We're still looking to improve in other areas, too, not just electronics, so that fills

me with confidence."

Checa finished third behind Rea and Haga in the first race and after inheriting the victory from the Northern Ireland rider in race two is now on the brink of the world crown.

The Spaniard leads Yamaha's Marco Melandri by 97 points with two rounds of the championship remaining.

Kawasaki's Tom Sykes was fourth in race one with the top six completed by Eugene Laverty and Sylvain Guintoli.

Haga again finished as the runner-up in race two behind Checa with Leon Camier third on the Alitalia Aprilia and the top six rounded out by Laverty, Leon Haslam (BMW) and Melandri.

Checa now has 417 points with Melandri on 320 and Max Biaggi - who missed yesterday's races through injury - in third position on 281 points.

Laverty remains in fourth place in the points standings on 256 points.

The 12th round will be held at Magny-Cours in France this weekend.



LEFT: Jonathan Rea on the podium at Imola in Italy with Castrol Honda boss Ronald ten Kate

Laverty rues costly error

SWAN Yamaha's Michael Laverty endured a frustrating day at Silverstone yesterday in the MCE British Superbike Championship.

Laverty (pictured) finished on the podium in second place behind winner John Hopkins (Samsung Crescent Suzuki) in the first race but was kicking himself after he failed to see the last lap flag, an error he feels cost him a potential victory.

The Toomebridge rider was desperate to make amends in the second race on his R1 Superbike but brake issues thwarted his plans and he had to settle for fourth place behind race winner Josh Brookes on the Relentless TAS Suzuki, his teammate Tommy Hill and championship leader Hopkins.

Laverty, who is now tied for fourth place in the Showdown standings on 568 points with Aussie Brookes, said: "Race one was going to plan and I was feeling comfortable with the pace and I followed John (Hopkins) for a few laps but I made a stupid

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mistake.

"I hadn't seen my pit board or the last lap flag and so I didn't take a punt to get past him.

"I was a bit frustrated with that and I wanted to make amends in the second race," he added.

"In the second one I took the lead on the first lap, but John Hopkins got past me and before I knew it I was back to third.

"I was suffering with some brake issues and the race was getting a bit messy as everyone was making lunges and it was all pretty hectic," Laverty added.

"I think if I had been able to get to the front I could have controlled the pace."

Brookes' victory in race two was his second of the campaign for the Northern Ireland-based Relentless Suzuki outfit and team boss Philip Neill, who saw Alastair Seeley take



over the lead of the Supersport title race at the weekend, was more than pleased with the performances his two riders.

"What a weekend," Neill said.

"When Josh races to his full potential it proves just how good a Superbike package we have here at TAS Racing.

"We have all worked extremely hard all season and everyone in the team deserves credit for this performance, not least Josh."

ON TOP STEP



FIRING ON ALL CYLINDERS: Jonathan Rea returned to winning ways at Imola on the Castrol Honda Superbike following his comeback from a long injury lay-off

OPINION WITH

KYLE WHITE



Seeley has unshakable self belief

YOU'VE got to take your hat off to Alastair Seeley.

Just when he looked dead and buried in the race for the British Supersport title, the iron-willed Carrickfergus rider is heading to the final round of the series next month in pole position for the coveted crown.

Seeley is one of those riders who divides opinion among fans, but it could be that they mistake his remarkable reserves of self-belief for arrogance.

But however the diminutive 31-year-old is viewed, there is absolutely no doubt that he packs a major punch on the race track.

And Seeley has earned plenty of respect for his prowess on the roads too.

He sets the benchmark at the North West 200 and caused a few raised eyebrows in May when he won the Supersport race in the wet following an epic duel with Cameron Donald, proving his mettle to those who doubted he would be brave enough to cut the mustard in the treacherous conditions at the 8.9-mile Triangle course.

Last year, he restored Ulster pride as he became the first rider since Phillip McCallen in 13 years to win the feature Superbike race on the Triangle course.

The Northern Ireland ace grabbed his chance at the big time with both hands in 2009 when he joined the Relentless TAS Suzuki team, winning nine races on his way to the National Superstock title.

He was rewarded with a ride in the British Superbike class last year and finished on the podium at Brands Hatch at the beginning of the season before claiming his maiden BSB victory on the GP circuit at Brands later in the campaign.

Seeley made it into the top six Showdown last year, but he was tasked with a different objective in 2011 - to lift the 600cc title on Suzuki's all-new GSX-R600.

The championship looked beyond his reach as Gearlink Kawasaki's Ben Wilson held a 36 points advantage heading into the penultimate round at Silverstone, but Seeley's mental strength has often proved a prime asset and he kept his nerve as Wilson's world came crashing down.

You need luck to win championships and Seeley helped himself to a massive slice of fortune when Wilson was forced to retire from race two yesterday with a technical failure following his DNF in the first.

Seeley holds his destiny in his own hands as he prepares for the final round of the series at Brands Hatch in two weeks' time.

It's his to lose, but Seeley is right where he wants to be and you can bet he'll keep it together when the chips are down.

Success would bring his second British crown for Philip and Hector Neill's Relentless Suzuki team in three years.

If he achieves that goal, the reward must be another crack at BSB in 2012.

Super Seeley seizes initiative

RELENTLESS Suzuki's Alastair Seeley has sensationally taken over the lead of the Fuchs Silkolene British Supersport Championship following a faultless double at Silverstone.

Seeley (pictured) won both races to seize the initiative from long time leader Ben Wilson in the title race ahead of the final round of the series at Brands Hatch in two weeks' time.

The Carrick ace was battling for the lead of the race with Wilson on the final lap of the first race on Saturday until a mistake saw the Gearlink Kawasaki rider crash out, leaving Seeley to claim 25 points and dramatically close the gap.

And there was more misfortune for Wilson in the second race yesterday after he was forced to retire while holding second place with a technical fault.

Seeley won the race to secure a lead of 14 points ahead of the final round at Brands next month.

"That was a good job this weekend.

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It's nice to go from a big gap chasing the series lead just two weeks ago to be leading it after four race wins," he said.

"I've led championships before so I know what has to be done to get over the line and I've won races before at Brands so that should put me in the driving seat."

It was a terrific weekend for the Northern Ireland team as Aussie Josh Brookes won his second MCE British Superbike race of the campaign to move into third place in the Showdown standings.

Brookes beat Swan Yamaha's Tommy Hill and championship pace-setter John Hopkins in race two yesterday, with Michael Laverty fourth on the second Swan Yamaha.

"That was one of the most satisfying wins of my career," he said.



"I had the speed and the pace as the team gave me a great bike today and I just rode as hard as I could.

"I really enjoyed it and moving into third place in the championship table is a bonus."

The race was red-flagged on the

final lap after Chris Walker's machine suffered an engine blow-up.

American star Hopkins won the first race, beating Michael Laverty to strengthen his position at the top of the table with Laverty taking second place just 0.25 seconds adrift and Hill third.

Brookes finished fourth in the opening race.

Hopkins now has 609 points with Hill eight points behind and Brookes now third on 568 and Shane Byrne and Laverty tied on 565 points.

Reigning champion Ryuichi Kiyonari is off the pace in sixth on 521 points.

Newly crowned National Superstock 600 champion Keith Farmer edged out fellow Ulster rider Glenn Irwin to claim another superb victory by a few hundredths of a second.

John Simpson was 10th in the second Supersport race yesterday and William Dunlop 17th.

Portadown's Marshall Neill was 12th in the National Superstock 1000 race.

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