

Brad JONES
TWELVE

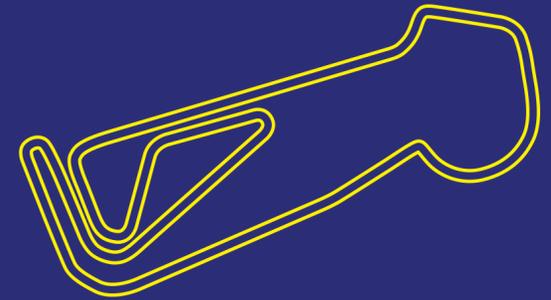
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SNETTERTON //
ROUND 6





For round 6 of the British Superbike Championship we headed for the east coast to Snetterton. The 3-mile circuit holding 2 very long straights and some technical corners makes for good racing and close action.



My goal for the weekend like every other weekend was to be on the podium and rack up some big points. However, I was very hungry for the win and raring to give it everything in the 10 and 15 lap races. With the weather looking iffy for the duration of the weekend we knew before we started that we had to really capitalise on our dry track time and carry out some longer runs to get an idea on our drop in grips levels across a race distance. With that in mind, that was our plan going into FP1 and the focus was on the longer run rather than the one lap pace.

FP1- carrying on from Donington WSBK round we decided to use a similar geometry and set up to start this session on, then build from there. As I said previously, the plan was to carry out a longer run and do a race distance on one set of tyres.

As the 30 minute session commenced, I headed out and built into it on my opening laps. However, the track was 'green', meaning slippery, as British Touring Cars had been on the circuit during the week carrying out some tyre testing. You would think that them laying down loads of rubber would increase grip levels but it has the adverse effect. Therefore, the lap times weren't great straight away and it took some time for the lap times to come down.

Rattling out 10 laps from the off gave me a good idea on how the bike would change across a distance and highlighted some areas for improvement. The main area being rear spin, this also made it hard to finish the turns. With 7 minutes of the session to go, I entered the pits and explained that feeling to my tech guys. We made one small change to try and improve this, the change being less preload on the rear shock. Effectively, making it softer. Minutes to spare, I got two laps in and we had reduced the spin which was great, however it made the bike a little bit more lively and generated more movement on the exit of the turns. End of the session saw me finish P4 with some areas to work on going into FP2.





FP2- fortunately we escaped any rain for this session, just! After a productive post FP1 de-brief we made many changes to the bike. We dropped the centre of gravity of the bike by 1mm. This doesn't sound a lot but the R6 is very sensitive to any geometry change and a minor adjustment can have a big impact. We changed compression and rebound on both front and rear so the bike would manage bumps etc more efficiently. Similar to FP1, distance on the tyres was important for this session. Starting the session on a new set and using them for the duration was the plan. 2 laps in to my first 8 lap stint I could feel the benefit of the chassis changes and immediately lapped quicker breaking straight in to a 1:52:8, that was 1.1 seconds that my fastest FP1 time. From this point onwards I just kept rattling the laps off and chipping a tenth off my lap time each time until I felt I needed to pit to make some minor adjustments. 8 laps complete and 12 minutes of the session remaining saw me enter the pits. Few minor tweaks on the front and rear to help turning and straight back out for another 5 laps. Getting down to a 1:52:4 put me fastest with only a few minutes remaining. I then backed that up with another 1:52:4. My teammate pipped me to be top of pile by 0.174 of a second at the end to put me P2 at the end of day 1. A solid end to the opening day and I was comfortable and confident that my pace was good on used tyres.



Quali- going into qualifying we made a few changes, the biggest one being the oil levels in the forks. We done this because in the free practice sessions I felt the front end was stiff at the bottom of the stroke and the oil was holding it up too much. A 25-minute session to post my fastest time commenced. The strategy for this session was to begin on a new set of tyres, complete 5 fast laps to secure a decent time, enter the pits for a final rear tyre and then that would give me 8 minutes to really dig deep and post my best time. From the get-go I was feeling strong, immediately posting my best time of the weekend with a 1:52:2 to put me top of the pile at this stage. I then followed this up with some consistent laps just before I entered the pits and took my second rear tyre. During the pit stop we stiffened the rear shock by adding some preload and just opened the compression slightly to aid the bike over the bumps.

A 20-lap race round Donington Park is tough for any rider, but I was ready and raring to go. Lights out, I got a perfect jump and charged into turn 1 holding my own and coming in 4th place hot on the heels of Jules Cluzel. All I could think about at this stage was hanging on the three lads in front of me and gain some world class experience from them.

As the first 5 laps went by I was still hanging in there and posting some very fast lap, my best being a 1:31:4 which turned out to be 0.5 of a second off the fastest lap of the race! Lap 10 and I could feel the drop levels dropping. But more annoyingly, I was beginning to struggle turning the bike followed by many front-end slides. This was I began to slip back and battle for positions from 6th-9th.



P2 and this stage with a 1:51:9 as the target. Out lap to scrub the rear in, then it was hammer down! Clipping all my apex's and hitting all my marks saw me cross the line with a 1:51:7, with 3 minutes 30 seconds to go this was the pole time. My last two laps unfortunately got blocked by slower riders meaning I couldn't improve. More annoyingly, my team mate just beat my time by 0.2 to go pole meaning I would start the 10-lap sprint race from 2nd. Obviously, I was frustrated not to get pole. However, it was positive that I was feeling comfortable on the bike and was confident that I had good pace.



Race 1- sitting on front row with a clear view down into turn 1, I was feeling confident that a win was possible. Lights out, a great jump, as I planned, a clean run into turn 1 but I couldn't quite pip my team mate to get the holeshot. Knowing Jack also had good pace, I decided for the opening stages of the race I would follow him so we could break away from the rest of the pack. This would then put me in the position to try and challenge Jack without having any threat from behind. 4 laps in, the pace was hot lapping quicker than we went qualifying. I felt I was suffering on the exits of the corners; the rear shock was too soft meaning when I was driving hard off the turns the rear would squat then make the tyre spin meaning I wasn't getting a great drive off the corner.

Lap 6 and Jack had broken me by about 1.8 seconds, but more worryingly Seeley was catching me. He then made a move on lap 8 but I soon responded and passed him back...the final laps were set up to be spectacular! The start of the final lap and Seeley was back in front of me, I was not letting him beat me! Throughout the lap I took some good looks at passing him, but he rode so defensive making any out breaking moves very difficult. So, I had to think of something else. The final turn and I was still 3rd, I had left it late! However, I broke early into the final turn whilst Seeley rode defensive. This allowed me to get a sling shot off the final turn and tuck right into his slipstream, the slip stream effect worked great and I pipped him to 2nd by 0.03 of a second.





Race 2- overnight we had worked hard to improve the rear end feel and spin for this race, we done this by using a stiffer spring to give me more support on the exits. Lights out, and I got the best jump off the line that I've had for some while. Grabbing the holeshot and charging into turn 2 I went a bit defensive just to try and defend myself so I could get a clean first lap. With the slipstream effect in full force Seeley got by me down the start straight to lead the beginning of lap 2. My game plan was to get back by him immediately, then follow that up with some fast laps to try and break him.



I did just this, Jack had the same idea and he also got past and tried to break me. I hung in there and chased him down, posting some very fast laps we managed to break Seeley. As the race progressed, I began to lose touch with my team-mate as he continued the hot pace. I dug deep but had a few front slides, this told me I was on the limit. Rather than crash out the race I settled into a pace I felt comfortable at but also a pace that was still quicker Seely, I done this by managing the gap that I was being given on my pit board. From a spectator's point of view the race panned out a little boring. However, for me it was another solid 20 points for the championship followed by another fastest lap of the race with a 1:51:1, this was a massive 1.8 seconds faster than my previous personal best. This just shows how hard we are riding and also showed our great improvement.

**THANKS
FOR ALL
YOUR
SUPPORT!**

**NEXT UP
ROUND 7 //
THRUXTON**

