

# Race Meeting Report

## NG Road Racing – Donington Park – 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> June Rounds 6 and 7 of the 14 round championship series

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### “...if you can keep your head, when all about you.....etc”

As the old adage goes “...if you can keep your head whilst all around you are losing theirs...”. That was certainly the case here as day one had dry conditions for most of the day, but as the day went on there was fine drizzle that drifted in to make tyre choices difficult. Day two however was a very different story... it was wet...very wet. And that allied to Donington Park's notorious surface when wet caught out rider after rider, with McLeans and Coppice causing the most trouble. It has totally changed the face of many of the Clubs class championships as front runners Michael Blank...Duncan Gibson...Max Alexandre...Josh Jones...Dale Thomas...Dave Manley...Michael Hobbs...Gary Johnson and Chris Richardson all tasted Donington gravel. There were many more but the aforementioned riders really have suffered in the championship standings. Some however revelled in Sunday's wet conditions, in particular Ben Cole, who took wins in the Pro Bolt 600 on his 675 and the Mini Twins on the SV. David Mitchell too on his Suzuki blitzed the rest in the Streetstocks. The same can be said for Arnie Shelton on his 125, and Peter Baker in the Superbike classes.

#### **The Phoenix Motorcycles Open**

The NG Road Racing's premier class the Open was this weekend once more the story of two men, Phil Bevan and Peter Baker. After Baker had to follow Bevan home four times at Pembrey, here he wanted revenge. The Open grid had some of the worst weather of the weekend and in their first outing an astonishing fifteen riders failed to turn out to the grid, either deeming the conditions to be to their liking, or due to wrong tyre choices. Pole sitter Peter Baker on the Morello Services GSXR 1000 set off and toughed it out into Redgate for the first time with Paul Shook on his ZX10. Baker got there first and proceeded to set consistent fast laps to open up a gap over the perusing riders that were headed by Bevan, Shook, Michael Blank, before he fell, and Chris Pope. Duncan Gibson was quickly catching them on his brand new Panigale 1199. Gibson had benefited from plenty of laps here at the WSB round as he was in the support Superstock class. As the final lap flag came out Paul Shook had dispensed with his rivals and set the fastest lap of the race, but it was all too late for the win though as Peter Baker had built up a 5-second lead. A mistake from Bevan in the later stages at the Fogarty Esses had him drop to fifth as Gibson swept through to third on the big Ducati. Sunday was well and truly wet and Baker was in no mood to sit in anyone's spray and just checked out at the front. Bevan and Chris Pope swapped places in the early, but Phil eventually made second place his and Pope had a lonely ride for third after Duncan Gibson and Michael Blank retired. Gibson after throwing his Panigale down the road at Coppice and Blank with his gear linkage coming adrift of his Kawasaki. Kevin Davies grabbed a fine fourth place to add to his sixth on Saturday on his racing return with the Tim Gittos GSXR. So Baker got the revenge he was after, after a very difficult couple of days racing

#### **The CSC Sidecars**

Top British crew Sean and Mark Hegarty turned up at Donington intent on a bit of testing and to have some fun, and in the good conditions on Saturday they took the race in by over 20 seconds from Stuart Muldoon and Stuart Graham. The Hegarty boys with the LCR Suzuki voluntarily gave up pole position to start from the back of the grid... even waiting a few seconds to give the club regulars a head start. Within two laps they were through everyone and away at the front, setting a new NG sidecar lap record in the process. Of the season long runners Paul Corfield and Ritchie Bleakley got the better of Jim Hamilton and Mick Fairhurst for the first time this year. Sunday saw some really poor conditions for the chairs, and the Hegarty's decided not to risk things, thinking of the upcoming British rounds. That left the way open for Corfield to take his first Open class victory of the year and get the Ballard BIS teams championship back on track.

In the F2 class John and Jake Lowther rode faultlessly in Saturday's dry conditions to lap all of the other 600cc outfits. But the Scunthorpe pairing were forced to make some changes to the LCR Honda after an exhaust problem reared its head robbing them of some power on Sunday. That meant that Simon Gilbert and Jeb Pilmor-Brady on the immaculate PG Gas/Xerxes LCR Yamaha stormed to the win lapping consistently 3 to 4 seconds a lap quicker than the rest.

#### **Steve Lynham Formula 125**

With current championship pace setter Joseph Thomas absent it was an opportunity for Mark Clayton or James Nagy to peg back some points on the so-far-unbeaten Thomas. Nagy on his RS125 looked in fine form on Saturday and after early leader Matthew Rangeley retired his Metrakit 80 it looked plain sailing for Nagy, however he was very nearly caught in the latter stages by Keenan Armstrong on his Replicast Aprilia. Clayton suffered for top speed on his Metrakit but still salvaged a third place. Sunday however was very different with very wet conditions, and Armstrong was head and shoulders above the rest heading home Rangeley by almost 30 seconds. Title rivals Nagy and Clayton could only manage fourth and sixth respectively..... result Thomas still leads the series.

#### **125GP**

Arnie Shelton was never headed all weekend and took a fine pair of wins on his Pateman Racing RS125 Honda, with Sam Burman on her WNT/Burman Honda second each time. In fact the top four were unchanged both days with Andrew Fisher consolidating his series lead with a pair of thirds and defending champ Jamie Ashby collecting two fourth placings.

#### **450cc Open**

Saturday's 450 open win was taken by Jon Stamper on his File Tuning TZ250. Stamper, was back on the grids after a year off in 2011 due to illness. The win was almost snatched away from him despite going into the final lap with a 4-second advantage over Arnie Shelton. Shelton on the 125 Honda set the fastest lap on the final lap as Stamper eased the pace.... There was less than half a bike's length in it at the line. Shelton scored another runner up spot on Sunday, this time though behind Michael Hose on his TZ250.

## **A and R Racing Formula 400**

Winning honours were even between Shannon Hale on her Black Lion ZXR 400 and Max Alexandre with the Midland Ladders Kawasaki. Alexandre took a relatively comfortable win in the dry on Saturday and was looking good to repeat that on Sunday in the wet as he rapidly closed to within 1 second of race leader Hale. However his pace was just a bit too hot for the conditions, and was another to crash at Coppice. Defending champion Hale continues to look odds on to defend the F400 crown

## **Simon Consulting Powerbikes**

The top two riders on the grid this year are undoubtedly Peter Baker on his Morello GSXR and Phil Bevan on his Bevan Track Days R1. They have been trading wins all year and it was the same here at Donington, with a win apiece. Also to run with the formbook Michael Blank came through in third both times. Blank and the new ZX10 can hang with the top two in the early stages, but Blank is still trying to adapt his style of riding to get the best from the big Kawasaki allowing him good race long pace.

## **The Pro Bolt 600cc**

Teenage BSB 600 Supertock rider Scott Pitchers and Richard Connell traded places for the win in Saturdays dry 600 final. Connell really has come-of-age this year and he and his Challenge Motor Company R6 were worthy of fight the with the BSB rider. Sunday and the awful wet conditions were the perfect platform for Ben Cole and his Triumph to show what they could do. Cole just seemed to find speed and grip as others struggled as he controlled things at the front, holding off Tom Smith and the other fast rain-man David Mitchell. Saturday's fast men Pitchers and Connell could only manage 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> in the very different conditions.

## **Performance Red Sound of Thunder**

With just 1 single second covering the top four at the flag, it still doesn't do justice to how close the first outing for the sound of thunder class was. There was barely a corner during the whole 9-lap race that the lead didn't change. Chris Richardson (1098 Ducati), Paul Willis (KTM), Greg Wright (675) and Darren Rumley (KTM). Dave Manley had also been part of the scrap early on too. After it looked like Rumley would grab his first win, Richardson used the extra grunt on his 1098 to pass in the final stages. Paul Willis despite still suffering a cracked pelvis followed him through, then Greg Wright using the superior handling of his 675 also capitalised.....and all of a sudden Rumley was fourth albeit only 1 second back. Sunday's wet race saw the red flag come out for Chris Richardson's crash, still pushing of despite holding a 4 second lead... again it was at Coppice. The restarted race had Greg Gibson and Shane Smith fighting for the win, with Smith grabbing it on the last lap on his Woodlands Environmental 675.

## **MPH Bikes Mini Twins**

18 year old Newcomer Dale Thomas took Saturday's Mini Twins final in impressive form after being involved in a three-way battle early on. Reigning champion Ben Marsden and Jody Hayes along with Thomas swapped places early on before the Thomas made a mistake and lost contact. It took him 3 laps to get back on terms setting the fastest lap and new lap record in the process. First Marsden then Hayes were dealt with. Hayes tried to up his pace to keep with the teenager but in doing so made a mistake and fell at McLeans. Sunday's very wet race had a start to finish victory for Ben Cole who revelled in the conditions on is Steve Dolan SV. Marsden again was runner up with this time Thomas settling for third, not willing to push things but picking up more good points for the championship that he now heads.

## **Pirelli UK GP45**

Peter Carr took his second double of the year by taking both GP45 wins. His high corner speed, smooth style perfectly suited to the little 450 single and this Donington track. RMZ Suzuki man and 2011 champion Matthew Andrew is usually within striking distance of Carr, but this weekend it was all about "Pistol Pete" and the little Kawasaki, as Andrew and fellow RMZ rider Gary Moran had no answer.

## **Metzeler and DTR Streetstock**

We have three streetstocks classes on the programme and in the 400cc class Josh Jones, the double race-winner, last time out seemed to have carried his fine form over to here at Donington, taking a convincing win on Saturday. Sunday and it was all Jones again in the very wet conditions but after stretching out a comfortable lead by lap three he slid off at Coppice. That handed the lead to Luke Collins, all he had to do was keep it tidy for the last couple of laps, but Collins only knows one way to ride....on the edge!. Two mistakes on the final lap allowed Mark Ireland to come through on his ZXR to rack up his third win of the year. Dean Richards and David Mitchell shared the wins in the 700cc division Mitchell rode immaculately all weekend on his Suzuki....it doesn't seem to be the quickest bike on the grid, but his fast starts allied to the wet conditions gave him the formula for points here. The 1300cc class saw Mark Skinner take a pair of wins on his Cardiff M/C's ZX10 both times over Simon O'Donnell. Skinner was lucky to get away with the points on Sunday after his Kawasaki slowed dramatically in the final couple of laps.... Water in the works....not surprising really !.

## **Pre Injection**

Nick Colley on his Auto Electric R6 and Alexander Jones shared the win in the new-for-2012 700cc pre-injection class. In the bigger 1300cc division it was a weekend to celebrate for R1 rider Tom Palmer, he took two wins both over Paul Harlington, and now heads the season long championship. On the other hand it was certainly a weekend to forget for Michael Hobbs. Hobbsy fell from his aptly named Bin Club Racing R1 in both outings !!

## **April UK Newcomers**

In some difficult conditions for the Newcomers to cope with the formbook went out of the window. Christopher Baker grabbed the win in the 500cc class on his WC Racing VFR Honda from Simon Wilkins, while Mark Labudek on his SV650 took maximum points in the Mini Twins division after Dale Thomas...then Anthony Porter..... then Sean Montgomery all lead, only to crash. In the Open class Michael Hobbs racked up his second win of the year on his Bin club/DCI R1 after holding off Thomas Cook and Tom Smith who after a poor start made life too hard in his fight through, despite setting the fastest lap in the latter stages.

## **Wayside Garages Performance of the Meeting**

There was not too much discussion that was needed to decide the winner of the Wayside Garages performance of the meeting. Ben Cole took two emphatic wins on two different bikes. He took his first ever 600cc class win on his Triumph Daytona and then backed that up with another podium topping position on Steve Dolan's SV650..... and all this in the worst and wettest conditions of the weekend..... and still recovering from a broken wrist....Well done Ben.

**Russ Gardner**

Images for NG Road Racing Meetings are available from NG official supplier :

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