

BENNETTS BRITISH SUPERBIKE CHAMPIONSHIP

ROUND 13 – Brands Hatch Indy – 14 October 2007 – RACE REVIEW**British Superbike**

Brands Hatch Indy circuit played host to the 13th and final round of the 2007 Bennetts British Superbike Championship this weekend (12-14 October). High hopes were placed on local rider, Tommy Hill at a circuit that has historically proved to be his nemesis. Unfortunately, despite all of his concerted efforts, Tommy suffered rear tyre grip problems in race one forcing the 22-year old to retire from the race with four laps remaining. Race two proved more fruitful, with Tommy claiming crossing the line in 13th to consolidate 10th in the final Championship standings.

Team-mate for the final two rounds, Marty Nutt proved his worth yet again and the repaid his selection by Rob McElnea with another two strong performances. Race one saw Marty run on top ten pace around the Kent circuit, locked in battle with Ian Hutchinson and Tristan Palmer for the majority of the 30 laps. Starting from his highest grid position of the year, Marty claimed 13th. Race two saw a similar battle unfold but on this occasion Marty was left with a position just outside of the points.

Team NB's Tommy Bridewell made another emotional return to the British Superbike scene. A spirited ride in race one gave the Wiltshire based rider 15th in race one. The 20-lap re-start in race two saw Tommy elevate his Suzuki GSX-R1000 up to 21st.

Crossing the finish line in third place in race one, was enough to hand Ryuichi Kiyonari his second British Superbike Championship in succession. Gregorio Lavilla on the Airwaves Ducati took the double win for the second time this season at Brands Hatch.

Race 1**Race Standings**

	Rider	Bike	Team	Race time
(1	Lavilla	Ducati 999 F06	Airwaves Ducati	23:35.208)
13	Nutt	Yamaha YZF-R1	Virgin Media Optoma Loans Yamaha	24:01.241
15	T.Bridewell	Suzuki GSX-R1000	Team NB	24:09.756
DNF	Hill	Yamaha YZF-R1	Virgin Media Optoma Loans Yamaha	DNF

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Race 2

Race Standings

	Rider	Bike	Team	Race time
(1	Lavilla	Ducati 999 F06	Airwaves Ducati	15:22.873)
13	Hill	Yamaha YZF-R1	Virgin Media Optoma Loans Yamaha	15:41.587
17	Nutt	Yamaha YZF-R1	Virgin Media Optoma Loans Yamaha	15:45.522
21	T.Bridewell	Suzuki GSX-R1000	Team NB	15:58.269

Season Review

The 2007 Bennetts British Superbike Championship proved to be one of the most fiercely contested in recent history.

The 2007 season started well with Tommy Hill gaining pole position for Virgin Media Optoma Loans Yamaha and Pirelli at Thruxton. The 22-year old posted the fastest ever two-wheeled lap of the Hampshire circuit. With the clock ticking down at the end of the 50-minute session, came the astonishing 1:14.433 lap that would secure Tommy his and Pirelli's first ever British Superbike pole position, ahead of the two 22-lap races.

Pirelli had proved in just the second meeting of the 2007 campaign that they could provide competition for the more established makes already serving the majority of high profile teams in the paddock. Development on a World level had paid dividends and was beginning to filter down to national domestic championships.

The relationship within the British Superbike Championship with Rob McElnea's Virgin Media Optoma Loans squad would provide a season-long programme of development. McElnea was also developing the 2007 Yamaha YZF-R1 in tandem with Pirelli. On the World scene, Troy Corser and Noriyuki Haga had proved the partnership could work. However, without the use of traction control at British level, Tommy Hill and his team-mates James Haydon, Hudson Kennaugh and finally Marty Nutt, would find themselves fighting for the lower echelons of the top ten.

To his credit, Tommy Hill raced for a third of the season on his own during which time he posted some of his best and most consistent results of a tumultuous campaign. Tommy's drive and determination would see him secure a World Supersport ride for the factory backed Yamaha squad, scoring three fifth placed finishes in four rounds. Back in the British Superbike Championship, and despite a few end of season crashes, Tommy would eventually claim tenth – the highest placed Pirelli rider.

Team NB onboard the Suzuki GSX-R1000 in the form of Wiltshire based brothers Ollie and Tommy Bridewell fared well for the majority of the season against vastly more experienced riders. Tommy had moved up into the premier class of after a season cutting his teeth in the British Supersport class in 2006. Ollie by contrast was in his second year on a Superbike and relished the opportunity to race against his younger sibling. The two were tied over the opening rounds, often qualifying and finishing alongside each other.

Then came Mallory Park, and the second fatality of the season. The charismatic and much loved son of the British racing scene, Ollie Bridewell, tragically lost his life during free practice at Mallory

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Park in July. The riders lined up on the grid for an emotional send-off on race day prior to the afternoon's subdued events. As a mark of respect, the number 46 would be retired in Ollie's honour.

The death of his older brother and team-mate hit the teenage rider hard, and it would be three rounds before Tommy and Team NB made a welcome and emotional return to the series at Donington Park.

Superbike Cup

Marty Nutt offered the main axis of competition to the dominance of the Honda's in the 2007 Superbike Cup. Before his deserved promotion to the senior Virgin Media Optoma Loans Yamaha team for the final two rounds, the NuttTravel.com/T+G Yamaha rider had recorded 11 podiums and five race wins including a double at Snetterton. Marty would eventually claim fifth in the Superbike Cup title race.

Championship Standings

	Rider	Bike	Team	Points
(1	Kiyonari	Honda CBR1000 RR	HM Plant Honda	433)
10	Tommy Hill	Yamaha YZF R1	Virgin Media Optoma Loans Yamaha	138
14	Ollie Bridewell	Suzuki GSXR1000K6	Team NB	56
19	Tommy Bridewell	Suzuki GSXR1000K6	Team NB	28

British Supersport

AIR HUMIDITY	%	AIR TEMPERATURE	°C
TRACK CONDITION	Dry	TRACK TEMPERATURE	°

Race Report

For the second time this season at Brands Hatch, the Virgin Media Yamaha pairing of Billy McConnell and Tom Grant lined up on the front row. With runners' up places to ride for, Billy McConnell proved that he was the inform rider of the moment. Hobbs took the holeshot as the field snaked it's way through the first few circulations of the 1.1986-mile Indy circuit.

However, by lap four McConnell was on the move, laying his Yamaha YZF-R6 underneath McGuinness into Paddock Hill. The following lap McConnell posted a repeat move on race leader Hobbs and would not look back until a red flag incident signaled the end of the race on lap 23 of 24.

With results taken back one, Pirelli riders would occupy three of the top four positions. Championship winner, Michael Laverty aptly joined race winner McConnell on the podium for the final season celebrations.

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Race Standings

	Rider	Bike	Team	Race time
1	McConnell	Yamaha YZF-R6	Virgin Media Yamaha	17:33.977
2	Hobbs	Honda CBR600 RR	Padgetts Motorcycles	17:34.263
3	Lavery	Suzuki GSX-R	Relentless by TAS	17:34.368
4	Grant	Yamaha YZF-R6	Virgin Media Yamaha	17:34.876
5	Brogan	Honda CBR600 RR	Bike Animal Honda	17:36.773

Season Review

Michael Lavery proved what a formidable force the Relentless by TAS Suzuki GSX-R K7 and Pirelli package would be from the first round at Brands Hatch GP circuit over the Easter Weekend back in April. Claiming his first win of the season in a two-part race, the Toombridge rider would head the leader board for the entire 13-round season. Despite continual pressure from team-mate Ian Lowry, Dennis Hobbs, and the Virgin Media Yamaha pairing of Billy McConnell and Tom Grant, Lavery claimed the British Supersport title in style with 25 points and the race win at Donington Park, with one round left to play out. By the time Lavery took his place on the third step of the podium at Brands Hatch (14 October), the Suzuki rider had scored two pole positions and ten podiums including no less than six race victories.

Ian Lowry proved his mettle in the Relentless By TAS Suzuki squad. With eight podiums including a dominating win at Snetterton, Lowry's strong run of results pushed team-mate Lavery almost to the wire in the search for the title. Claiming second at the final round, Lowry is looking forward to stepping up to the premier Superbike class for 2008.

Virgin Media Yamaha's Billy McConnell's second half season form produced four podium finishes including two race wins (Croft, Brands Hatch Indy), to elevate the 20-year old Australian into fourth in the Championship. His qualifying form was unsurpassed, lining up on the grid in P1 on five separate occasions. Billy will reflect on a job well done this year but also with the knowledge that had he not posted a DNF at the opening round in April he could have made a stronger onslaught for overall title honours.

Team-mate, and 2006 Virgin Mobile Cup Champion, Tom Grant proved to be one of the rookie sensations of the year. Battling throughout with the vastly experienced John McGuinness, Grant secured two podiums and seventh overall on the Pirelli-shod Rob McElnea-run Virgin Media Yamaha.

The Supersport Championship suffered an immense loss at the Mondello round with Gearlink Racing's Guy Sanders involved in a fatal on-track incident. Guy had started to show his true potential as a serious contender for Supersport honours with an excellent fourth placed finish at Oulton Park.

As the chequered flag signaled the end of the season, Pirelli riders would show their season long dominance of the Championship. Relentless by TAS Suzuki riders, Michael Lavery and Ian Lowry claimed first and second respectively. Virgin Media Yamaha Supersport debutants Billy McConnell and Tom Grant, came home in very respectable fourth and seventh.

A late season flourish by Aaron Walker on the TJW Racing-backed Honda CBR600RR, saw him

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battle for a podium place at Donington Park, only to lose out in the final stages to Billy McConnell. As the season drew to a close, Aaron would finish one point shy of fellow Pirelli runner Paul Young.

Supersport Cup

Craig Fitzpatrick (BLDS Yamaha) and Christian Elkin (BBR Racing Honda), closed impressive season accounts at Brands Hatch Indy circuit. Claiming second and third respectively in the Supersport Cup, the pair amassed no fewer than 12 podiums between them. Fitzpatrick visited the top step of the podium on three occasions at Mondello, Knockhill and Donington Park.

Championship Standings

	Rider	Bike	Team	Points
1	Lavery	Suzuki GSX-R	Relentless by TAS	231
2	Lowry	Suzuki GSX-R	Relentless by TAS	179
3	Hobbs	Honda CBR 600 RR	Padgetts Motorcycles	173
4	McConnell	Yamaha YZF-R6	Virgin Media Yamaha	161
5	Robinson	Honda CBR600 RR	Margal / Bykerbabe	128
6	McGuinness	Honda CBR600 RR	Padgetts Motorcycles	117
7	Grant	Yamaha YZF-R6	Virgin Media Yamaha	103
8	Hutchinson	Honda CBR600 RR	Virgin Media Yamaha	96
9	Westmoreland	Honda CBR600 RR	Centurion Racing	69
10	Easton	Kawasaki ZXR600 RR	Isilion MSS Discovery	66

Virgin Media Cup

Race Report

2007 proved to be the swansong for one British Championship. After five years of fantastic racing and unsurpassed youth development, the lights were going out for a final showdown for the Virgin Media Cup at Brands Hatch Indy circuit (14 October).

The four main season-long protagonists – Toal, Smart, Paton and Webb – were finally joined in the celebratory aspects of race wins by 18-year old Robbie Brown. With the Championship sewn up at the previous Donington Park double header, BJ Toal elected for safety rather than taking the opportunity to go out in a blaze of glory.

While all eyes were trained on the intense battle for second place in the title race between Midge Smart and David Paton, Robbie Brown used the final 18-lap race of the Virgin Media Cup era to stamp his own authority on the Championship and to ensure his name went down in the annals of history. After securing his debut pole position on the Saturday afternoon, Brown took the holeshot, and despite the momentary deployment of the safety car for a Haire/Billard incident on lap one, never looked in jeopardy of securing his maiden victory in the class.

Race Standings

	Rider	Bike	Race time
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1	Brown	Yamaha YZF-R6	15:33.616
2	Smart	Yamaha YZF-R6	15:36.177
3	Hellyer	Yamaha YZF-R6	15:36.431
4	Toal	Yamaha YZF-R6	15:36.650
5	Hipwell	Yamaha YZF-R6	15:40.027

Season Review

In a fitting tribute to the fifth and final Virgin Media Cup season, no fewer than 29 riders played their respective parts in one of the most hotly contested Championships of the British Championship.

Irishman, BJ Toal, in his second season with the Cup set an early pace that would see all other riders battling to play catch up. With a 100% record after two rounds, BJ looked to be in control. However, the delayed return of 2006 contender, James Webb to the series for round three at Silverstone offered another point of attack on the Irishman's title aspirations.

Webb rode in just six of the scheduled 12 rounds but converted three of his five pole positions into race wins, elevating himself into fourth in the Championship before catching the eye of British Supersport team, Isilon MSS Discovery Kawasaki. Webb went on to acquit himself admirably in the senior 600cc class as a replacement for the injured Stuart Easton for the remaining four rounds proving the caliber of the talent that the Virgin Media Cup could provide.

Israeli Yaron Salinger and South African double act, Dane Hellyer and Ronan Quarmby provided a truly international flavour to proceedings. Dane Hellyer impressed greatly with both his ability to learn new tracks and to crash spectacularly! Quarmby, a latecomer to the series, amazed everyone with his wet riding skills at Oulton Park in July. Starting from 19th on the grid the sixteen year old led the race by the close of the first circulation, his pace leaving the chasing pack breathless. Unfortunately it would only last until lap 3 as the conditions got the better of his youthful aggression and he crashed out at Hizzy's Chicane. However, by the close of the season, both Quarmby and Hellyer had offered a glimpse of future stars in the making.

As the season reached the mid-point, David Paton was evolving as the most improved rider of the series. As the Cup reached the young Scot's home round of Knockhill, Paton had moved into third but was still somewhat off Smart and Toal at the head of the table. Unfortunately for Paton, who dominated free practice and qualifying at Knockhill, the torrential downpour on raceday saw his first chance of a race win in 2007 evaporate as the race was cancelled for safety reasons.

With the Cup riders enjoying an extended summer break as the rest of the British Championship headed to Mondello Park in Ireland, Paton was determined to make amends at Oulton Park. The rains came again as expected, but after taking the lead on lap 3, Paton would claim victory by almost 10 seconds at the flag.

The second half of the season saw a close four-way battle unfold. BJ Toal remained in constant control, retaining the Championship leader's Pirelli Diablo Yamaha YZF-R6 machine on race day for every round. By the time the Championship reached Donington Park in September, his lead had narrowed but it was still his Championship to lose. Midge Smart posted the double victory, his first wins of the season, but it would not prove to be enough and BJ was pronounced Champion.

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Moving onto the final round at Brands Hatch and although the title had been decided, Smart and Paton still had second place honours to play for. A problem with his no.1 machine left Paton starting from a lowly 14th while Smart lined up next to Toal on the front row, Despite his best efforts, Paton could not climb any higher than 8th, while Smart sat comfortably in second to claim his ninth podium of the season and second in the Championship.

As the curtain came down at the end of twelve enthralling races, the history books would show five race winners, 11 different visitors to the podium and a deserved title winner in BJ Toal who had led the series from day one. Throughout the course of the season, the Cup was hit by uncharacteristically treacherous conditions most notably at Mallory Park, Knockhill, Oulton Park. The entire field demonstrated mature riding capabilities in the face of adversity, in the main down to the excellent wet weather riding properties of the Pirelli Diablo Corsa III control tyres used by all riders.

BJ Toal will now move up to the British Supersport class for 2008 where he take his berth with the Virgin Media Yamaha Supersport team.

Championship Standings

	Rider	Bike	Race time
1	Toal	Yamaha YZF-R6	189
2	Smart	Yamaha YZF-R6	180.5
3	Paton	Yamaha YZF-R6	162
4	Brown	Yamaha YZF-R6	103
5	Webb	Yamaha YZF-R6	98

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