

Road Race
WSBK, Phillip Island, Australia

Sykes And Kawasaki On Top As New Season Dawns

Tom Sykes took his Kawasaki Racing Team machine to top spot on the combined testing sheets at Phillip Island, heading up all his rivals with mere days to go until the start of the new 2012 SBK season.

Like many of his fellow SBK riders Sykes had tested at PI last week, and used that knowledge to help his set fast lap times and set them with a high degree of consistency at this test, in cool or hot track conditions. In the final analysis of the time sheets Sykes set the leading 1'31.648 lap time in the morning session today to stay above Carlos Checa and Jakub Smrz in the rankings.

Joan Lascorz was happy with his race pace on the second official Kawasaki Racing Team Ninja ZX-10R and in setting a personal best of test 1'32.540 lap time he was 11th out of 23 riders on show. The Spanish star is confident he can improve on that when the racing starts for real on Sunday 26th February.

Pedercini Team Kawasaki regular David Salom had a tough test after confirming that he had broken his wrist in a recent test crash, only riding for a short time in each morning session over these two days to save himself for the start of the season proper on Friday 24th, in the first official practice session of the year.

Local star and regular Pedercini Superstock force Bryan Staring rode the other Pedercini Kawasaki Superbike in these tests, as he will in replacing the injured Leandro Mercado for the opening race weekend itself. He finished 20th on the timesheets but knows more is to come in true race trim.

The 14-Round/28-race SBK season kicks off with two races on Sunday 26th February. The 4.445km long Phillip Island circuit is a popular starting point for the season as the race weekend is held in the Australian summer months. So far ambient conditions have varied between mild and firmly hot and a repeat of the recent dry weather would make for a perfect start to the season for all involved.

Tom Sykes: "We were fast this morning and also this afternoon in hot conditions and we even improved our time compared to yesterday's hot track conditions. Overall we did quite a bit more testing today and certainly stumbled across a couple of good things. At the end of the sessions we did 14 laps on race tyres and it was very consistent, with the times coming easier than they were doing with previous settings. Honestly speaking, this is not one of my favourite circuits, in fact it is one of my least favourite ones, so I am happy that we are towards the front at this track because I know that the performance should increase at the other circuits. I do not want to get too carried away because I like to keep my feet on the ground, so we'll keep working and see what happens on race weekend."

Joan Lascorz: "We have a good rhythm but to do faster single laps is a little more difficult. I can put in a new tyre but lap times are the same. I think it is a lot of things together, but every time we try anything else we come back to the same kind of settings. The bike works best in small, slower corners, in the fast corners and over the bumps it feels very hard. It turns very well in the slower corners but the line in the fast corners is critical. The plan for the first practice in Friday is more gas! But seriously, we will make a plan to find out the best settings for race weekend."

Bryan Staring: "I am happy with it in general but I wanted to put in a bit better lap time. Some of the guys have been here testing for three days last week but I was not. The real important day is next Friday. I am happy with the motorbike but we can still improve a couple of small things. It is only on the one flying lap that I have not been able to do so well, but we put in a reasonable time. I think we are in a bit better position than the timesheets suggest. It is a good motorbike and I think we can do a pretty good job with it, I just hope to get a strong lap time out of it on Friday."

David Salom: "The problem is that I have had an pain-killing injection to allow me to ride this morning, but after an hour the pain came back and it was too much. I did not try this afternoon. It is not necessary to try for another good lap time today but save myself for first practice on Friday. For the race I can run with the injections in my wrist but I am not sure how things will be. I hope for the best and aim for the best. After Phillip Island it is possible to have an operation on my wrist but it is not decided yet as I already have a pin inside the scaphoid from an old crash."

High resolution images are free to download at press.kawasaki.eu.