

Brad JONES
TWELVE

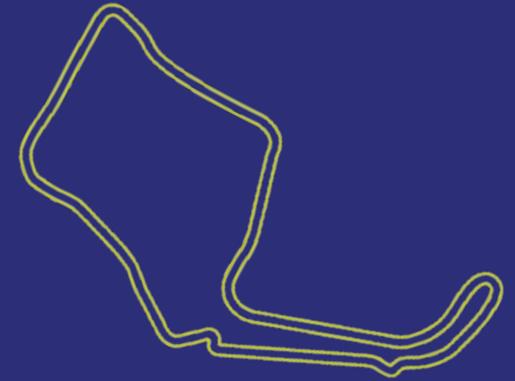
12

**ROUND 2 //
OULTON PARK**





For round 2 of the British Superbike Championship we headed to Oulton Park in Cheshire, a favourite for many riders and that's me included. Oulton has many unique features with lots of climbs, rises, positive camber and negative cambers which always makes for great racing but also very challenging!



We had a test at the circuit a week ago which gave us a great opportunity to get the bike dialled in round the technical track. When we tested here, we had both wet and dry conditions and we were competitive in all conditions. This set us up well for the race weekend whatever the weather!

Going into the weekend I was feeling eager to get on track and continue where we left off at round 1 and the test. Being a more challenging circuit it was going to be harder than round 1 but myself and the team as always were prepared to put the work in and reap the rewards.

With the weekends forecast looking a changeable across the three days it made it hard to plan for each session.

The first free practice on Saturday started off damp, Oulton Park is a track of two halves when its drying. One half which is exposed to the wind dries rapidly and the sections under trees hold the damp for a lot longer. Throughout our 25 minute free practice the track rapidly improved and it allowed us to get some decent laps in. Coming from the test the week before we thought we had a great set up which wasn't far away, but for some unknown reason the bike felt very different. The bike became bit of a handful to ride, I described it as very 'loose'. The change of direction in the chicanes was fast but unstable, this was then loading the front and making it hard to steer. From our post session debrief, we could see from the data that the bike was handling differently, myself and my suspension technician, Garry, worked hard between the two free practice sessions to find a direction and make the bike easier to ride.





Come into free practice 2 I was eager to get out for another 25 minute session and see how the bike felt. Immediately I could feel the improvement, a lot more stable and it would then do what I wanted it to do. However, I was still struggling to turn it. Mid-session I entered the pits to make a change on the engine braking.

// I ASKED MY CREW CHIEF FOR MORE ENGINE BRAKING MID CORNER TO HELP ME PULL THE BIKE DOWN TO THE APEX. //

For example, if you go around a 3rd gear corner in your car in 5th gear, it will be harder to keep control and turn. But if you go around it in 2nd the car becomes very responsive and more controllable. The engine braking changes the characteristics of the bike in a very similar way. In addition, those changes did make a good improvement. I ended up the session in 3rd place with a time of 1:38:7.

Into qualifying with some minor tweaks to the bike. For qualifying we start the session with a new set of tyres in the bike. We use the first 12 minutes of the session to set a 'banker' lap and get a feel for the bike to see where we can improve it. 12 minutes complete; we enter the pits. A new rear tyre only goes in. Whilst this is going in it gives me chance to chat with my suspension tech and crew chief. We generally always make a very small change. This weekend we just took some preload off the front which would enable me to turn the bike a little easier. 10 minutes of the session remaining, this now is where I really dig in and give it all I've got. The bike felt a lot better and we made some great improvement. Qualifying 2nd was brilliant place to set myself up for the race, but I was happier with my new personal best lap time of 1:38:0.

// FROM QUALIFYING TO THE RACE, THE BIKE STAYED VERY SIMILAR. WE HAD FOUND THE 'SWEET SPOT' IN WHICH THE BIKE WAS WORKING WELL. THE NEW YAMAHA R6 MACHINES HAVE A SMALL WINDOW IN WHICH THEY WORK BEST IN, BUT ONCE YOU FIND THAT WINDOW THE BIKE HARDLY CHANGES FROM SESSION TO SESSION.

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Race 1 from 2nd on the grid. Getting a great start and to lead out of turn 1 was the plan, and I did just that. My teammate, Jack Kennedy, had great pace. Therefore, I wanted to be in front of him so when he got by me and I could tag on and try run his very hot pace. Lap 2 he slipstreamed me down the back straight out of turn 2. I then knew I had to dig in and stick with him. Hanging on to his rear wheel for three laps was tough. However, I did manage to break in to the 37's with a 1:37:7, another PB. After 4/5 laps Jack had just broke me by about 2.5 seconds. This left me battling with the hugely experienced Alistair Seeley. He slipped by me and all race I just tried to weigh up for a pass, but he was so strong on the brakes. Another 3rd in race 1 was a great result and great to back up my Silverstone performance with some more silverware.





// 6 X BSB CHAMPION SHAKEY BYRNE SPOKE TO ME ON THE GRID AND TOLD ME 'IF YOU WANT TO BEAT SEELEY, YOUR GOING TO HAVE TO PASS HIM WHERE HE ISN'T EXPECTING IT'. SOME WISE WORDS FROM THE MASTER! //



Race 2 I knew I had to try something different. Listening to his advice, I was sat in P3 right behind Seeley and I stuck in a hard but fair move, he wasn't expecting that one as I lifted him off this knee. However, pulling that move I just knew would fire him up. True enough, a lap later he lifted me off my knee in similar fashion. It was game on; I was loving it! Lap after lap we are pulling some great moves on each other and still putting in a decent pace, my teammate again was around 3 seconds ahead of us, but he was putting in a very similar pace therefore we couldn't catch him.



With 11 laps of 14 complete, things were just about to get intense with it coming close to the end of the race. Unfortunately, as we entered the final sector at the end of lap 11 the red flags came out because of an incident meaning the race stopped and it was declared a result. Frustrating as it meant I couldn't put my last assault on Seeley, but as the saying goes 'that's racing!'. Another double podium was nice to round the weekend off with though.

**THANKS
FOR
ALL
YOUR
SUPPORT!**

**NEXT UP
ROUND 3 //
DONINGTON
PARK**

