

Motor cycling with John Savage

THREE PODIUMS FOR JAMISON IN SCOTLAND

Newtownards man Kirk Jamison scored a win and two second places, in his first visit to the East Fortune circuit, in Scotland, last weekend.

It was the first time Kirk has raced in Scotland and his latest success brings his tally of race wins in Northern Ireland, the Irish Republic, Scotland, England and Wales to 22, since 2003.

Practising last Saturday was dry, but the track was quite dirty and slippery, having been resurfaced during the winter.

It began to rain before qualifying started, nevertheless, Jamison put the Jim Angus Contracts Suzuki GSX-R1000 in pole position.

He recounted: "I just tried to learn the track lay-out, ahead of qualifying. Before race one, the only problem was that I didn't have any braking points etc in the dry and on lap one, after getting the holeshoot, this was confirmed, as I went straight on at the end of the back straight!"

"I got pulled up, but had lost the lead and the tow of the quickest guy there. Without his lines to follow, I had to just settle down and learn the track, getting faster as the race went on. Not a bad start to the weekend, to finish second."

Warm-up on Sunday was in very wet conditions. However, the track was drying quickly for the first race, but with a lot of damp patches remaining, Kirk opted for intermediate tyres. He explained: "There was a

dry line the whole way round, and unfortunately a lot of the locals knew the track dried quickly and had put slicks on, so I was going to struggle.

"I got the holeshoot again and tried to build up a lead before my tyres would overheat. At the midway stage, I was spinning the rear the whole way round the track and I looked over to see a lead of only a couple of seconds, which I knew wouldn't be enough. I tried to keep my nose in front, but I could actually smell the tyre burning and was caught with a lap to go, having to settle for second.

"When I returned to the pits, my rear tyre was completely melted and torn to pieces. It would not have survived another lap."

With the sun shining for his

final race, Kirk opted for the slick tyres he had used at Kirkistown on Easter Monday, to see how long they would last. The tyres did the job, and Jamison led from start to finish, to win comfortably.

Reflecting on the weekend, he said: "The weekend was to be used for a couple of things. Firstly, to get some track time on the new 16.5 inch wheels, which I struggled with during Easter. I needed to change my riding style to get the best out of them. Secondly, to test the tyres to see how many laps you can do on them before they go off. And thirdly, to give myself and the rest of the team a break away from the Irish Championship to enjoy the racing."

Kirk concluded: "It was a great weekend. We learnt a lot about the new tyres and how to adjust my riding style for the different wheels. I have a few more things to try at the non-championship meeting at Bishops court on May Day (Monday, May 7), to ensure we head to Mondello in great shape."

The leading quartet in the Irish Superbike Championship are separated by just seven points, ahead of the fourth round of the series, at Mondello Park, on May 26/27, with Ballygowan's Michael Pearson leading Londonderry-based Australian Cameron Donald by two points, and Jamison 3.5 points behind Donald, and 1.5 ahead of Coleraine man James Dickson.

Bangor man Kevin Briggs also made his East Fortune debut and scored a brace of commendable ninth places in the second round of the hotly competitive Scottish Supersport Championship, astride his Alan Wallace

Contracts Suzuki GSX-R600.

Briggs, who has made an impressive start to the Irish Clubmans' Supersport Championship, competed in England and Wales last year, but this was his first visit to Scotland.

Kevin was happy with the set-up of his Suzuki during Saturday morning practice, but qualifying wasn't without its problems.

He explained: "The rain started before qualifying and I went to put my wet tyres on for the first time on the new bike and was missing spacers required for the front wheel, due to bigger brake discs.

"I had to go out in qualifying with dry tyres and, of course, the bike had no grip and I just had to be smooth and managed to put the Suzuki on the third row of the grid in 14th place."

Briggs got off the line well in Saturday's race and slotted into 11th place. Despite the fast pace, he worked his way up to ninth by the completion of the 12 laps, to secure his first points in a UK national championship.

In Sunday's first race, Kevin got an even better start and ran seventh for a couple of laps, before he was forced back to ninth, repeating his result of the previous afternoon.

Second time out on Sunday, he was running in the top ten, but Kevin made a minor mistake, after the first couple of laps, when he ran wide out of a corner.

He recounted: "Two riders passed me and, keen to get them back, I out-braked myself and ran off the track after catching another rider's rear wheel and my right clip-on bent and I could take no further part in the race."



Kirk Jamison scored a win and two second places, in his first racing visit to Scotland last weekend. Photo by Steve Freeburn



Kevin Briggs notched up his first points in a UK national championship, with two ninth places in the Scottish Supersport Championship last weekend. Photo by Deek McCoubrie

'Tired' tyre costs Eugene



Eugene Laverty in action during Sunday's Turkish Grand Prix in Istanbul.

Laverty and Toal aiming for trebles

High flying Ulster duo Michael Laverty and B. J. Toal will be aiming to continue their unbeaten records, when the British Superbike Championship resumes at Silverstone on Sunday.

It's fair to say that good fortune has smiled on 25 year old Laverty, who has won the opening two rounds of the British Supersport Championship, at Brands Hatch and Thruxton, while 19 year old Toal has been in superlative form in the Virgin Media Cup series, in which he has a 100% record, after back to back wins.

Astride his Relentless Suzuki by TAS GSX-R600, Laverty hauled himself off the tarmac to win the opening Supersport Championship race at Brands Hatch, after it was red-flagged, when he was high-sided and luckless Dennis Hobbs hit his fallen machine.

Then the Toomebridge man impressively won at Thruxton, despite having to switch to his spare bike for the second race in succession, after he flooded the engine of his number one machine on the grid.

Ominously for his opponents in the Supersport class, Brands Hatch and Thruxton are Laverty's least favoured circuits, so the former British Superbike Championship rider should again be the man to beat at Silverstone.

Laverty's Relentless TAS Suzuki team-mate, Ian Lowry, will be hoping for a change in fortunes at Silverstone.

The 20 year old Moira man was felled at Thruxton, when he couldn't avoid hitting Tom Grant, who crashed his Virgin Media Yamaha R6 immediately in front of him, nevertheless, Lowry has been in excellent form, and a podium finish is a distinct possibility.

Omagh's B. J. Toal is chasing his third Virgin Media Cup win on the trot, astride his JB Plant Racing-backed Yamaha, although he will again ride the Pirelli Diablo-liveried R6 at Silverstone — the machine which sets the series leader apart from the rest.

After mixed fortunes at Thruxton, where he suffered from rear tyre degradation, much is again expected of Ballyclare's Jonathan Rea in the premier British Superbike Championship, in which the 20 year old will be hoping to return to the podium, aboard his factory HM Plant Honda Fireblade CBR1000RR.

Spaniard Gregorio Lavilla has recorded a perfect four wins from four races, on his Airwaves Ducati, as he strives to wrest back the BSB crown he lost to Rea's team-mate Ryuichi Kiyonari last term.

Kiyonari was in excellent form at Thruxton, after struggling at Brands Hatch with the after-effects of injuries he sustained during pre-season testing, back home in Japan, so he could be the main to seriously challenge Lavilla.

Championship positions

British Superbike Championship: 1, G. Lavilla (Ducati) 100 points; 2, L. Camier (Honda) 67; 3, R. Kiyonari and J. Rea 49; 5, S. Byrne (Honda) 45; 6, L. Haslam (Ducati) 43; 7, T. Sykes (Honda) 40; 8, M. Rutter (Kawasaki) 28; 9, C. Walker (Suzuki) 26; 10, K. Harris (Honda) 25.

British Supersport Championship: 1, M. Laverty (Suzuki) 50; 2, J. Robinson (Honda) 40; 3, S. Easton (Kawasaki) 22; 4, J. Westmoreland (Honda) 19; 5, I. Hutchinson (Honda) and A. Walker (Honda) 17; 7, I. Lowry (Suzuki) and B. McConnell (Yamaha) 16; 9, D. Cooper (Honda) 13; 10, J. McGuinness (Honda) 10.

British National Superstock Championship: 1, G. Richards (Yamaha) 50; 2, S. Brogan (Honda) and H. Kennaugh (Yamaha) 36; 4, L. Quigley (Suzuki) 23; 5, L. Jackson (Yamaha) 20; 6, B. Wilson (Suzuki) 17; 7, A. Coates (Yamaha) and J. Laverty (Ducati) 16; 9, H. Mainwaring (MV Agusta) 15; 10, J. Rose (Suzuki) 10.

Virgin Media Cup: 1, B. J. Toal 50; 2, L. Morris 33; 3, M. Smart 27; 4, D. Hipwell 21; 5, D. Frear 19; 6, D. Haire 18; 7, R. Brown 17; 8, B. Howell 16; 9, A. Fagan and D. Paton 13 (all 600cc Yamaha R6).

British 125cc Championship: 1, A. Beech, K. Coghlan and L. Mossey 36; 4, L. Jones 30; 5, N. Coates 20; 6, A. Rogers 16; 7, M. Wilcox 15; 8, J. Ford and R. Stewart 13; 10, L. Costello and J. Timmouth 10 (all Honda).

Kelly finds form at Oulton

After a disappointing and frustrating start to the season, Comber teenager Scott Kelly rediscovered his form, at Oulton Park in Cheshire last weekend.

During the Irish Superbike Championship fixtures at Bishops court and Kirkistown over the Easter holiday, the 18 year old's 1000cc Yamaha R1 was persistently plagued by an over-heating engine, for which he and his father Billy were unable to find a cause.

But Scott was back on the pace in the Wirral 100 Club Championship at Oulton Park last Saturday, where he finished runner-up in the first Powerbike race and fifth in the second.

The Powerbike and Formula 600 classes raced concurrently and in the first five lapper, over the technical 2.7 miles parkland circuit, Scott climbed the leaderboard from fifth at the completion of the opening lap to finish runner-up in the Powerbike class and third overall.

Formula 600 victor Rob Butterworth led from the start, until he was overtaken by Powerbike and overall winner, defending Wirral 100 Club champion Adrian Williams, on the last lap, and the leading trio flashed under the chequered flag virtually together, separated by just over a tenth of a second.

On his final circuit, Scott also had the bonus of posting the fastest lap of the race at 90.65mph, and Williams was the only other rider to top 90mph.

Dwyer Agnew, from Lurgan, was fourth on the opening lap, but he was overhauled by Kelly on lap two and then dropped out of the race.

Scott ran a consistent race second time out, to finish fifth, half-a-second behind fellow Yamaha R1 rider Paul Shoesmith, who is contesting this year's British National Superstock Cup, and a second in front of sixth home Kerrigan Read, as Gary Watts — the 2005 Champion of Oulton — grabbed a last lap win from Gary Johnston, after the pair cleared off at the front of the field.

Johnston is contesting this season's British National Superstock Championship, as is his Speedreak Racing Yamaha R1 team-mate, third finisher James Edmeades.

Incidentally, Speedreak Yamaha trio Johnston, Shoesmith and Edmeades will be contesting the Superbike and Superstock races at next month's International North West 200.

Dnf for Coates at Le Mans

The Suzuki Sweden team, for which Antrim's Adrian Coates was competing in the Le Mans 24 hours race in France last weekend, crashed out of the opening round of this season's World Endurance Championship, while running in 12th position.

Coates was partnered by English rider Andi Notman and Swede Tobias Andersson, astride a Suzuki GSX-R1000.

The team was running a strong 12th, until a crash ended their challenge during the latter stages of the race, which began at 3pm local time last Saturday, and ended at 3pm on Sunday.

Coates, British 250cc champion in 2001, is contesting this year's British National Superstock Championship, aboard a Dyer Crossgills Racing 1000cc Yamaha R1, and will be in action in the third round of the series, at Silverstone, this weekend.

The French-based factory Suzuki Endurance Racing Team (SERT) entries finished first and second at Le Mans, with the Number Two SERT team of William Costes, Guillaume Dietrich and World Superbike Championship runner Max Neukirchner completing 818 laps, to finish 1 min 19.938 sec ahead of defending world champions, Vincent Philippe, Matthieu Lagrive and Julien Da Costa.

Kawasaki France completed one lap less, to finish third with their ZX-10R, piloted by last year's double North West 200 superbike victor Steve Plater, exciting Spaniard Julien Mazuecos — who set a new lap record for the Bugatti circuit — and Frenchman Gwen Giabani.

The Irish team of Hilton Hincks, Roger Maher and Damien Mulleady managed to get to the chequered flag, on their Yamaha R1 — no mean achievement in their world championship debut.

The next round of the six rounds World Endurance Championship is the Six Hours night-time race, at Albacete in Spain on May 5.



Blast off! The spectacular start to last weekend's Le Mans 24 Hours race in France.

Michael Pearson Supporters' Club

The next meeting of the Michael Pearson Supporters' Club will be held in The Auld House, Moneyreagh, at 7.45pm next Thursday, May 3, and new members will be made welcome.

Michael's next race will be the International North West 200 on Saturday, May 12.

THE NEWTOWNARDS Chronicle AND CO. DOWN OBSERVER ALL THE LOCAL MOTORBIKE NEWS