

Motorcycling with John Savage



Kirk Jamison's Yamaha R6 cartwheels into the gravel trap, as Kirk (on left), and Jason Blacklock both bite the dirt. Photo by www.power-images.co.uk



As Kirk's head is buried in the gravel, he is whalloped by Blacklock's bike. Photo by www.power-images.co.uk



'Are you alright mate?' Concerned Blacklock comes to Jamison's assistance, as a trackside marshal does a Scots jig to help! Photo by www.power-images.co.uk

CRASH, BANG, WALLOP FOR ARDS ACE...

In his previous trip across the North Channel to Scotland at the end of April, Ards ace Kirk Jamison was virtually unbeatable in the Scottish Championship fixture at East Fortune, where he scored four Superbike wins, won two Supersport races, and finished second and third in the other two.

But his tartan tarmac return last weekend wasn't quite so fruitful, and a lot more painful, as the 27 year old crashed spectacularly on the second day of racing at Knockhill.

Pearson, plus road race ace Keith Amor and Perth's Jimmy Storrar — who has notched two fifth places in this season's British National Superstock Championship, in back to back rounds at Brands Hatch and Donington Park.

Astride his Suzuki GSX-R1000, Storrar qualified in pole position in the Superbike class, but Pearson and Jamison were second and third fastest respectively.

Storrar stamped his authority on last Saturday's first Superbike race, in which he romped to an eight seconds victory over Jamison, aboard the Jim Angus Contracts Honda Fireblade CBR1000RR, while a last lap mistake forced Ballygowan man Pearson to drop out, on Davy Greer's Carryduff Forklift/Boost Drinks Yamaha R1.

Jamison recounted: "I hung onto the back of Michael [Pearson] in the early stages, as

I struggled to get sections of the track right. As the race progressed, I gained more and more confidence and was right on Michael's back wheel, when he had a massive moment, which sent him through the gravel trap. That left me to finish a comfortable second, as Michael retired."

Storrar won Saturday's second race by a similar margin, but this time Pearson got the better of Jamison for the runners-up berth, by just three-tenths of a second.

Kirk explained: "Jimmy Storrar was head and shoulders above the rest. Michael passed me in the early stages, leaving me on his back wheel. There was only really one place where I was sure I could make a move stick, but I knew if I tried too early Michael would come straight back into the hairpin, where he was especially quick, so I saved it for the last lap.

"It all worked well. As I came

alongside and had the inside line as we braked side by side for the last turn, Michael let his brakes off, but I was sure he wouldn't make the turn, so set myself up to drive underneath him on the exit. Fair play to him though, he hit the apex and turned it, beating me to the line for second."

Keith Amor impressively qualified in pole position for the Supersport class, with Jamison down in eighth on the Jim Angus Contracts Yamaha R6, and Amor predictably won both races, last Saturday.

Falkirk flier Amor won the first race by 17 seconds from fellow Scots John MacDonald and Lewis Farrow, with Jamison sixth, and Amor had ten seconds in hand over Farrow and MacDonald in race two, in which Jamison slid off — Amor also won the Superstock Championship race by a comfortable margin from Bruce Birnie and Storrar, with Michael Pearson tenth.

Kirk, who scored back to back wins in the most recent round of the Irish Supersport Championship at Bishopscourt a couple of weeks ago, reflected: "Keith Amor was always in the lead, but I felt, as the day went on, that second place was a possibility. In race one, I struggled with the front guys, and when I got through to sixth there was too much of a gap in front of me, so that's where I finished.

"After a battle with Kenny Edwards, I finally got through to fourth in race two and started to slowly catch the two men fighting it out for the Scottish Championship — Farrow and MacDonald, who were contesting second place. Again it was too late, especially after a backmarker balked me with two laps to go.

"With drizzle starting to fall, I eased off to coast home on the last lap for fourth. Unfortunately I made a pigs ear of things, as I just touched the white line on the exit from the hairpin and high-sided, with the chequered flag a handful of yards in front of me. The bike got a few scratches and I was a bit sore, but neither compared to the looks I got on returning to my pit crew.

"It's hard to find a place to hide in a caravan!" Saturday's racing took place in dry conditions, but rain arrived that evening and in typical Knockhill fashion, the wet weather remained throughout Sunday, which meant very wet races on day two.

Storrar stormed to a 25 seconds victory in Sunday's first Scottish Superbike Championship race, in which Jamison lost out to Kenny Edwards by half-a-second for the runners-up berth, with Pearson close behind in fourth — Pearson also placed seventh in the second non-championship Superstock race the previous afternoon.

Jamison summarised: "Storrar was away with it, but this time Michael and I had Kenny Edwards for company in the battle for second. Kenny and Michael swapped positions a few times, as I sat behind, learning where the grip was — or wasn't.

"I got alongside Michael a few times, but he was always excellent into the hairpin, so I knew I needed good drive out of Clarke's, then try and block the inside line on the last lap. As I lined it up, Michael made a mistake and lost the back end out of the chicane, approaching Clarke's, which allowed me through one corner early. As Michael lost all his drive, I held on to finish third, just behind Edwards."

Kirk takes up the story of Sunday's Supersport race, in which he crashed heavily, after Jason Blacklock high-sided in front of him, at Duffus Dip: "The Supersport race just wasn't meant to be. First of all, after much deliberation I bought a wetsuit, which I had never liked, but agreed to wear to keep me dry. On lap one I peeled into the first right-hander and slid clean off the inside of the bike —



Kirk Jamison leads Michael Pearson and Jimmy Storrar at Knockhill last Saturday. Photo by www.power-images.co.uk

the wetsuit was causing my backside to slide all over the seat, which was a nightmare, and I dropped to seventh.

"The red flags came out and I whipped the wetsuit off and headed out again, only for the red flag to come out again on lap one of the restart.

"Start number three, and I was confident I could give it a go, especially with Saturday's double winner Amor a non-starter. I got a good start and into turn one was fourth and running right up the back of third. Unfortunately the guy in third high-sided, taking me with him.

"I'm not sure what I speed I dived head first into the gravel at, but I think it was about 80-90mph, and it certainly felt like it. A good few cartwheels later and I was starting to feel like going home!

"I was taken to Dunfermline Hospital with neck injuries, but after enough X-rays to leave me glowing in the dark, and some of every crashed riders' best friend (morphine), the doctors were happy there was no fracture in the neck and I was just happy about life in general — morphine again! — so I was released."

Kirk added: "I have to say a big 'thank you' to all the doctors and nurses in Dunfermline. The scissors were out, but I finally managed to persuade the doctor that I could get out of my leathers, whilst strapped to a stretcher, with a neck brace. It took six staff over 20 minutes to do it, but they persevered and the leathers are in one piece.

"Unfortunately, the same can't be said for my Nolan X-lite helmets. Paul Lindsay of Irish Racer Magazine sorted a deal for me to wear their new lids and I really thought I should track test them. Believe me, they do work!"

He grinned: "Paul and Nolan have been fantastic and have confirmed that two new X-lites are on their way for me. Paul just asked me not to test these ones so quickly!"

After a somewhat traumatic weekend, Kirk remains in good spirits. He said: "Knockhill has been a circuit I always wanted to race at, due to its character and challenging appearance. When I cycled round the track last Friday night I wasn't disappointed. Television does its gradient absolutely no justice and I couldn't wait to get out and try it. Saturday was dry, but with only two short practices it was quite difficult to learn the track and qualify at the same time."

He went on: "Despite my

mishap, I was happy with how it went. I set lap time goals for each bike after qualifying and achieved both. I was also enjoying the challenge of the circuit and, to be honest, I was having a ball scrapping with Michael [Pearson]. It was nice to be able to go out and have a good fight with someone you know for nothing more than a bit of fun — no championship pressure or expectations, just enjoyment."

Kirk concluded: "I have already put my parts order in to fix the R6, which got pretty banged up, so it will be back on the grid for the Irish Superbike Championship meeting at Ballykelly, as will the Fireblade, which will be fitted with pipe and power commander for the first time, so I'm looking forward to that."

Jamison and Pearson weren't the only local riders in action at Knockhill, where Ards sidcar racers were also strutting their stuff.

Newtownards man Alex Johnston currently trails Lisburn's Seamus Killough by just five points in the Irish Sidcar Championship, and the Ardsman was in action at Knockhill.

Johnston placed seventh on Saturday, and followed that with an eighth and a fifth place on Sunday, partnered on both days by Kyle Young.

Meanwhile, George Kennedy switched from driving his own outfit to acting as passenger for John Clarke, from Banbridge, and the pair followed a second place on Saturday, by finishing runner-up in the first race on Sunday and seventh in race two.



Currently second overall in the Irish Sidcar Championship, Newtownards man Alex Johnston and passenger Kyle Young were in action at Knockhill last weekend. Photo by Deek McCoubrie

International classic moto cross

Ballygowan rider takes showpiece trophy

Saintfield was the venue for the 2008 International Classic Moto Cross, hosted by the Northern Ireland Classic Scrambles Club.

A fortnight of preparations produced a superbly manicured track and some of the best racing the club has seen for quite some time.

Blistering sunshine greeted competitors and spectators last Friday afternoon, for the evening session of the two day event, as visitors from Scotland, Republic of Ireland and as far afield as Australia joined the local men to give the event a truly international flavour.

Right from the off, the racing was full of action, including a rare red flag incident in the first corner of the first race, such was the desire to make that all important holeshot.

The showpiece of the evening was the running of the Twinem Jess Memorial Race, which honours the first local rider home on a British machine, and the trophy was awarded to Nigel Milligan, from Ballygowan, aboard his BSA Metisse.

Grade A was extremely fast, with Holywood's Davy Johnston and Husqvarna rider Thomas McKeown, from Kells, setting the early pace. Richard Murdoch was also going, aboard his 490 Maico, but a broken gearshaft ruined any chances the Comber man had of making the podium.

Grade B was a closely fought contest, dominated by Co Down riders, Mark Brown and Willie Stevenson, from Newtownards, together with Phil McKee, from Bangor; all put in fast lap times, but it was Yamaha-mounted Stevenson who fared best over the six races, with McKee runner-up on the Johnston KTM.

Grade C was very entertaining with a large field of entrants. Honda-mounted James Thompson, from Carrickfergus, was best of the bunch, followed by Callum Wilson from Scotland, aboard the big XT Yamaha, and third place went to Newtownards debutant Paul Donaghy, riding a Husqvarna

Paul, aboard his Suzuki, closely followed by Callum Wilson on the XT, with Phil McCann from Comber picking up third place aboard the BSA

The Pre-70 event was contested entirely by BSA-powered machines and was won by Phil McCann, with Nigel Milligan second and Groomsport's Billy Keenan third, despite riding in a lot of pain from an injury sustained in the red flag incident at the start of the event.

The 500cc class was won by Davy Johnston, again on the Maico, with Scotland's Ian Robertson second and Ardsman Mark Brown a brilliant third 250cc honours went to the very fast Ryan McKeown on his 250 Honda, with Scot John Stokes runner-up and Phil McKee, aboard the rapid Johnston KTM third.

The club thanks the McNair family for the use of the land and their co-operation throughout the event; St John Ambulance for medical cover; and all competitors, especially those who travelled from across the water.

The club's next race meeting is scheduled for Armoys this Saturday, and further information about the NI Classic Scrambles Club can be obtained from the Clubline on 9187 2958, secretary Davy Buckley on 07775 653940, or from the website www.nicsc.net

Results

Twinem Jess Memorial Trophy: N. Milligan (BSA).

Grade A: 1, D. Johnston (Maico); 2, R. McKeown (Honda); 3, I. Robertson (Yamaha).

Grade B: 1, W. Stevenson (Yamaha); 2, P. McKee (KTM); 3, M. Brown (Maico).

Grade C: 1, J. Thompson (Honda); 2, C. Wilson (Yamaha); 3, P. Donaghy (Husqvarna).

Pre-70: 1, T. Paul (Suzuki); 2, C. Wilson (Yamaha); 3, P. McCann (BSA).

Pre-70: 1, P. McCann; 2, N. Milligan; 3, B. Keenan (all BSA).

500cc: 1, D. Johnston (Maico); 2, I. Robertson (Yamaha); 3, M. Brown (Maico).

250cc: 1, R. McKeown (Honda); 2, J. Stokes (Maico); 3, P. McKee (KTM).

David Jefferies Memorial Supermoto

On Saturday, for the second successive year, Lagan Valley LeisurePlex will host the David Jefferies Memorial Supermoto.

Promoted by Temple Motorcycle Club for the past four years the event is staged in memory of Yorkshireman David Jefferies, who was tragically killed during practising for the Isle of Man TT races, but was also a popular visitor to Supermoto events in Northern Ireland.

The inaugural winner at Nutts Corner in 2004 was Davy McKee, who also triumphed in Lisburn last year, and will be bidding for a hat-trick of victories this weekend.

The 2005 winner was Englishman Sam Warren — now a front-runner in the hotly competitive Henderson Yamaha R1 Cup Championship, in the Bennetts British Superbike Championship, having finished runner-up in the most recent round at Snetterton — while the 2006 winner was another English visitor, Matt Winstanley.

The event is being staged with the continued backing of Lisburn City Council and additional sponsorship from AQ Skip Hire and Bobby Morrison Limousines.

The Grade A races should see Ulster Championship contenders providing most of the excitement, with defending champion McKee joined by the likes of David Farmer, Alan Morgan, Declan Hoey, Alan Marks and Sam Clarke.

There will also be Grade B and Grade C races, together with Grade A and Grade B Quad races.

Practice commences at 9.30am, with racing from noon, and admission to the circuit is free.

Ballykelly ISB

Entries for the inaugural Irish Superbike Championship meeting at Ballykelly, Co Londonderry, will close next Tuesday, July 1.

The fixture will be promoted by Coleraine and District Motorcycle Club, on Saturday, July 19, with two races each in all Irish Short Circuit Championship categories: Superbike, Supersport, 250cc, 125cc, Isaac Agnew Van Centre Mini Twins and Sidcars.

The grid at the new 1.5 miles circuit can accommodate 36 riders.

Road racers head south for the summer

This weekend witnesses the traditional start of the southern Irish road racing season, with Athea road races in Co Limerick, followed by racing between the hedges south of the border throughout July.

Practice takes place at Athea on Saturday, with roads comprising the three miles course closing at 11.30am, and roads close at 10am on Sunday for a ten race programme.

Dungannon's Ryan Farquhar headlines the entry, together with Ballymoney pair Adrian Archibald and William Dunlop.

Archibald had an abortive debut at Bush road races last weekend, when he retired the AMA Racing Suzuki GSX-R600 from the Open race and his other two races were cancelled, due to deteriorating weather conditions.

22 year old Dunlop will have his first outing aboard Randalstown man Chris Dowd's R1 and R6 Yamahas, which he will also campaign at the following weekend's Skerries 100, together with Saintfield man Paddy Flynn's 250cc Honda, astride which he scored a second place in a support race at the British Grand Prix last weekend.