Fighting at the front at Oulton - Round 2 - Race Report

Well Guys, I am back from the ace weekend at Oulton Park – Apologies for not writing sooner, I was celebrating with the family! Obviously its a dream come true to get a race win at my home circuit. And to get the championship lead is just awesome!

Before I start, I just want to say a great big thanks to everyone involved with the team, and all who came and supported me at the weekend! A special thanks to AGB Transport and Len Manchester motorcycles, for making all of this possible for me!

Qualifying 1

So, after a mediocre start to the weekend, being mid field in free practice 1, I wasn’t expecting a miracle in qualifying, although I was hoping for a top 10 position. The session seemed to go very fast, I pulled in a few times, and changed a few settings with help from the guys at Ktech. I then went out and circulated trying to find some fast laps. Once I got clear ground I went as hard as I could, and somehow, from somewhere I managed to get pole on my last lap. I was over the moon because I even made a few mistakes and ran off track on my fastest lap. I knew I was able to go a little quicker had I not made the mistakes. I went back to the awning and made a few setup changes in the hopes that it would help for Q2.

Qualifying 2

Monday morning and the weather seemed brilliant, very overcast but dry none the less! The team and I had decided on a few tactics for the session in the hopes to keep pole position. Out I went on my bike and I was lapping in the mid 1m46s which was miles off my previous time. I couldn’t seem to get to grips with things. I got some clear laps and put in some good laps. I then pulled into the pits and made a few changes. I waited a few minutes and in the meantime dropped down to 3rd on the grid. By this time I was 0.5 of a second off pole position, which seemed a hell of a lot of time I needed to gain. Out I went and I had some clear track ahead. The changes we made were definitely for the best, and my first lap out put me back into pole with a blistering time of 1m43.98secs over 0.3 seconds ahead of the rest. Then my next lap was even quicker which managed to really secure pole position. Then I was on a real fast lap for the next lap, but the session was red flagged which was a shame. But none the less I was on pole which was fantastic! I was really excited for the race, both the bike and I were in good sted...

Race

After a manic day of showers, believe it or not, the sun was out for the race and the track was dry. I wasn’t too concerned what the weather was going to be like, I knew I would be ok in either wet or dry, the only thing I was worried about was if it was damp, because its hard to judge how quick to go!

I got an absolutely fantastic start, to take the hole-shot into the first corner. I put some of the fastest laps I could in the first few laps in the hopes of pulling a gap. I managed to pull a few tenths of a second and then....the pace car came out! My heart was beating hard and I was really worried about tyre temperature, and the people behind me! After 2 laps the car went in, and I took the first few corners very gingerly, which cost me dear! I dropped back to third position and people behind were also trying to get back passed. I tried not to panic and was able to keep in third. Then I went into second. I followed as closely as possible trying to learn where I was stronger than the leader. After a few laps I made the pass down cascades. It was a do or die crash cause I wasn’t too sure whether I would get around the next corner! Luckily I did! I then put the best laps of my life trying to break the chain behind, but I could still hear them. Come the last lap I was really panicking, I tried to go as hard as I could but nearly cracked under pressure, I braked too late into hizzys chicane and nearly missed it, giving AJ Venter the opportunity to pass, but I closed the door before it was possible. The last few corners were critical, I went as inch perfect as I could, over the line I came and it was unbelievable! All the hard work finally paid off!

Summary

I just cant believe how perfect the weekend was. I never believed I could win at Oulton. It has always been a “bogey” track for me and I have never quite been at the front, its great to finally prove to myself, and all that support me that I really can do it, and hopefully now we can head into the rest of the season knowing we are contenders for the title! To take the championship lead really was unexpected, I never even tried to work out whether I could do it – And I aim to keep it! Its definitely not going to be easy to keep the lead heading out of Brands this weekend, as I am starting from 21st on the grid. But I am really confident for the weekend ahead and I hope to pick up some valuable championship points! But for now, it’s off to the gym to keep my fitness tip-top ready for the rest of the season! Come on Brands!!!!!