



2008 MRO CHAMPIONSHIPS OULTON PARK, 15th – 16th August



Grant Whitaker produced his best performance of the season so far to take overall and Junior class runner up spots in the latest round of the Pirelli-Metzeler MRO Stocksport 600 Championship at Oulton Park, writes Terry Howe

Whitaker, the former MRO SuperTeen rider, struggled with his performances in the early rounds, but now the Halifax based teenager is well on top of his game and powered the HWW/Ferris Yamaha R6 to his best results of the campaign; and has set himself up for major awards in the Stocksport and Junior competitions.

In a day of mixed fortunes for the championship leaders, both Pat Sheridan and Ben Lightowler (no 5) let their grip on the head of the Stocksport series slip. Lightowler powered his K2 racing Yamaha R6 to victory in the opener and edged ever closer to championship leader Sheridan, who departed the race on lap six. With the Junior

class title in the locker the opportunity for Lightowler to embark on a serious assault for the main title was lost when the Harrogate based Lightowler and Sheridan failed to finish race two. With a race win under his belt and the advantage for Sheridan at the head down to 19 points there was a great opportunity for Lightowler to take over the series leadership with a round to go. But with a few spots of rain starting Lightowler succumbed to the conditions and slithered out of the race at Shell Oils. 'I had already backed off the

pace so as not to make any errors in the tricky conditions,' explained Lightowler, 'but it was the lightest touch on the throttle and the rear end slid out from under me.'

Connor Behan, Yamaha R6, was third placed rider in race one while in race two Nick Clark grabbed the win from Whitaker and RAF Technician Tom Gazzard.



In his own back yard Mark Cheetham grabbed two impressive overall finishes, which resulted in the Chorley rider taking charge at the head of the TDG Cup section of the Triumph Triple Challenge. Jack Sim, the Tunbridge Wells racer, is Cheetham's main rival and led the series going into this round. But on the day it was London shop proprietor Ben Cater taking a class victory, his first of the season, and Brazilian Rhalf Lo Turco who prevented Cheetham from taking a race win double, and therefore only minor control of the over 25 Championship as Jack Sim for once failed to score big on his SS Racing 675. Manxman Mark Cringle remains on course to take the Michelin Young Guns title despite finishing a frustrating fifth in his second outing. Cringle's immediate rival Josh Wainwright did marginally better in the points' stakes, but Cringle will take a healthy points' advantage with him into the next round as a result of his opening race victory.



Ely schoolgirl Stephanie Waddelow (pictured) clinched the 2008 MRO SuperTeen Championship following another stylish display in the penultimate rounds of the series. Fifty points were on offer and the 16-year-old collected 45 on the SS Racing Aprilia, and the title was hers. County Antrim's Andy Reid snatched the second race from Waddelow and Alex Olsen; but 15-year-old Rochester rider Olsen had another inspired weekend and his first race second spot has helped lift him into second position in the standings in Jack Blake's absence.

A top ten result of some sort would have given Sam Bishop (no 23) a good chance of winning the Pirelli-Metzeler MRO Superstock 1000 title, and on his first ever visit to Oulton Park the Norwich rider secured fifth in race one, giving the 21-year-old his first title since he won the BMCRC Open 400 crown in 2004 and followed by 2005 accolade BMCRC-MRO Rider of the Year. Manxman Gavin Hunt grabbed the opener from Kierran Blair and Mark Lister, while Bishop's



main rival Peter Baker brought his Morello Suzuki GSX-R home to an exasperating eighth, thus kissing goodbye to the crown which the King's Lynn rider once had a hand on.

Now equipped with the number 1 plate Bishop powered the Kester Cunningham John Yamaha R1 to a race two fourth spot behind Lister, LCS/Orwell Motorcycles Yamaha R1, Hunt and Blair. The battle for the final finishing positions couldn't have been tenser. It all centred on the outcome of a mid-order clash between Lee Hodge, Lynn Racing Suzuki GSX-R, and Baker. The silver spot went the way of Hodge, whose fifth place gave him a championship runner up position from Baker by a solitary point.



Rob Hoyles and Billy Mellor (no 87) dominated the two Dyna Pro MRO Supersport Championship races.

Hoyles, well on top of his game, won both well supported races on his Yamaha R6, and with a little luck on his side this year may have challenged this season's champion Liam Lyon for the title. In both races Chase Collyer, MST Yamaha R6, got the better of rival Thomas Dean, Yamaha R6, which has cemented Collyer's runner up final placing.

From the three suspects challenging for the Clubman Cup title Sy Langford scored the better. Former Rookie 600 champion Langford quickly got to grips with the Cheshire circuit, but on both occasions was forced to defend his position with great determination from Derek Pickett and series leader Paul King. Now the series is delicately poised when the final round takes place at Snetterton in September.

Words & stock pictures Terry Howe
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