

After a long winter full of preparation we started our 2016 campaign at Silverstone and what a good season opener it was.

Building up to this weekend the weather was looking patchy so we knew we were going to be challenged with iffy conditions throughout parts of the weekend.



Free practice was wet but drying, we done the session on full wet tyres. The aim for this session was just to get a feel for the track again and make sure the bike was good. After I had completed some laps I entered the pits to give some feedback to my crew chief John 'Crocky' Crockford. We wanted to try and make good use of this session as it was quite likely we could have a wet session again some when throughout the

weekend. With the changes made I could feel a massive difference so I was feeling confident that we had a good wet setup. As the session ended I finished up 12<sup>th</sup> which was ok as pushing for a result in this session was not in the plan.

Qualifying 1- the conditions for this session were very iffy, half the track was dry and the other half was very damp. Deciding what tyres to use was massive gamble but we chose to run a wet front tyre and a dry rear tyre. The reason for this is the wet front would give me confidence over the damp patches and we had to use a dry rear as there was

just too much dry track and wet rear tyre would just get destroyed. This combination was working well for 15 minutes of this session but the remaining 10 minutes the track was too dry and the front wet tyre was being



asked for too much which affected the handling of the bike. We ended the session in 6<sup>th</sup> which wasn't a bad start but I was hoping for dry weather for qualifying 2.



Qualifying 2- with the sun shining and a bone dry track I was raring to go. With no proper dry laps we ran a base setting that we knew wouldn't be too far away. For the first 10 minutes of the session I was using my laps as valuable laps to feel what the bike was

doing. We had planned a pit stop with around 12 minutes of session left, in this pit stop I had a new rear tyre go in and some changes to the front end as I was still struggling with the handling. With the changes made and new tyre the bike was a massive improvement straight away. So I had around 10 minutes to put a lap in and the make the most of it. Immediately I went much quicker and felt that there was more left in the tank. I did my quickest lap 3 laps from the end with a 2:14:047 and went on to try and better that in my last two laps. Unfortunately I did not better that lap, however that was good enough to put me pole position. I and the team were made up and didn't expect that at all, perfect start to the year and race!

Race- from pole position was a great feeling and seeing no one in front of me was awesome. So the aim was to get a good start and then just take the race as it came. As the lights went out I had a very good start and leading in to the first turn. The team told me not to ride defensive in the

opening lap which is what I did. I lead the first three quarters of the lap until someone came underneath me. I sat behind this rider just to see what his pace was like. After lap 3 I made the move to take back the lead. I had told myself after I made the move to just get my head down and rattle off some quick laps to try and break the pack. This strategy worked well and with a few laps to go I could see I was pulling out a bigger gap every lap. With one lap to go the gap was big enough for me to be able to relax, this was a great feeling and taking that chequer flag was such a good moment as it showed everyone's hard work had paid off.



The best feeling of all was rolling into that winning enclosure to see all my teams faces with grins from ear to ear.

So after a great first round of the season I am now the championship leader and would like to thank all my sponsors for their support as I wouldn't be able to do it without any of them! I now can't wait for Oulton Park on bank holiday weekend but first I have a test day there on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April.

If you missed the race on TV click on this link to see the highlights! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7QI3TsQz6bl>

All photographs courtesy of Kerry Rawson Photography