



Race Report

DEANO RUNS UP FRONT WITH THE NATION'S BEST

**Aust Superbike Championship – Round Seven
Phillip Island Circuit (VIC), 12th September 2004**

In his only 2004 round of the premier Australian Superbike Championship, Dean Bonthorne took his Superstock GSX-R600 to a sensational top 10 placing in the huge field of experienced riders from all over the nation. Freezing, rain-drenched conditions and being forced to use an unfamiliar, road-compound 'control tyre' proved exceptionally challenging over the weekend, but Deano came away stoked with the result. One that proved his skills can put him at the front of a race pack, not only in local club events, but also top-level national competition...while having a lot of fun along the way!



Image: Stephen Piper

QUALIFYING: 11th of 35, Best Lap 1:48.01

Only one short practice session was provided to Superstock competitors prior to qualifying, meaning Dean had very little time to explore the conservative limits of the control tyre used in the class. With a huge field all out on the to qualify simultaneously, he had great difficulty finding a clean lap without slower traffic, yet managed to run a flat 1:48. With the second qualifier soaked in teaming rain, his initial time retained his strong 3rd-row starting position.

RACE 1: 11th, Best Lap 1:53.54 (L4 of 6)

Saturday morning's torrential rain drowned Phillip Island forcing track closure for several hours whilst several on-track 'dams' were pumped out. Though the rain cleared for Race One, there were still half a dozen multiple-metre wide rivers of water running across the otherwise freezing but dry track. The result was an unnerving need to back right off as the bike would two-wheel slide sideways across the water before regaining grip. Surrounded by bikes on the opening lap Deano only just managed to save a huge front-end slide on mud and water bordering one of the 'rivers'. It was enough to scared him straight and ride for survival as the leading packs pulled away while he held his excellent 11th place with no close threat from behind

RACE 2: DNF (While in 6th), Best Lap 2:25.32 (L3 of 5)

Sunday morning greeted riders with heavy hail. Yes- hail. It stopped for Race Two but melted to a thick film of near ice-like water resting on the bitumen! While other classes had super-soft, warm and heavily treaded wet tyres, Superstock riders were forced to tip-toe around at incredibly slow speeds while trying to hold the bike vertical around corners and be oh-so gentle with the controls. Fortunately a good launch from the line (thanks Deano's quick-thinking burnout on the grid) meant that he worked his way to an astounding sixth place in the opening laps as riders slipped and slid all over the place. Unfortunately the conditions got the better of Deano with both wheels sliding out from under him on the 'fast' Hayshed corner. Rider and bike slid into the deep mud but fortunately were otherwise fine, lucky not to be hit by the trailing pack. Though this did not ease his anger at crashing!

RACE 3: 7th, Best Lap 1:49.35 (L6 of 6)

Although still shaken from the unsettling earlier races, Bonthorne was determined to show his true abilities in the final event. The track was dry, but still bitterly cold as Deano made a great start, overtaking the entire second row of the grid for 5th place through the first lap. Once place was lost under power at the end of the straight and another during braking for turn 4, though Deano did not let this one go as easily and re-passed several times before a missed gear allowed 6th place to creep out of range. The final three laps delivered an awesome battle with the 8th-placed rider, with elbow-rubbing passing maneuvers engaged several times per lap until an elated Deano took the chequered flag in 7th by a fraction of a second

NEXT MEETING: Interclub Series Round 3, Broadford (VIC) 19th September 2004.

TELEVISION COVERAGE: Network Ten, Sunday 19th September, 1.30pm. Check local guides.



PIRELLI - NGK - DAINESE - PTR - YOSHIMURA - OHLINS - JAG SIGNS - SPIDI