

Phillip Island, 1 marzo 2009

SBK, RACE 1: BIAGGI FINISHES IN ELEVENTH PLACE, ONE POINT FOR NAKANO

Everyone was concerned about the weather at Philip Island for Race 1 of the Australian round of the SBK. The sky was as grey as lead with rain falling intermittently and the unpredictable weather forced the race officials to declare Race 1 a Wet Race at the end of the warm-up laps, despite the fact that the track was still dry. Fortunately it didn't rain and the Japanese driver, Haga, on the Xerox team's Factory Ducati, sprinted to the lead with a 32 thousandths of a second advantage over Neukichner, Suzuki Alstare, and Kagayama's other Suzuki at 5:347.

Max Biaggi finished in eleventh place at 12:609. After a good start the Roman driver fell behind the leaders because of contact during the third lap that forced him into ninth position. He then fell back one more spot when Checa managed to pass him. Max began to find a good pace and recover during the ninth lap, along with Skykes, moving up from the rear against his competitors who were in the lead up until the last lap, when four drivers battled it out for eighth place in a sprint that saw Corser manage to maintain position against Smrz, Skyes and Biaggi himself.

Instead, after a rough start Nakano came in at number fifteen, never managing to find the right pace, conducting the entire race on the edge of the points zone.

"We can confirm the same feeling we had during the test runs," declared Biaggi. "In fact, with the hard racing tyres, where you need a very stable bike when you enter the curves, we suffer from strong vibrations at the back end of the bike; therefore I have a hard time going into the curve and consequently opening up the gas when I need it. The motorcycle is still very nervous and I have to work hard to maintain the rhythm of the first ones and in any case, I face a lot more risks than the others. Eleventh place is a bit disappointing for us and we're going to make some changes to the bike now. I'm not certain that we'll do any better in the second round."

"I didn't start off well," said Nakano. "And I fell back quite a few spots. I tried to recover, but the bike had a lot of chattering at the back and this prevented me from pushing the limit. Moreover, during the final laps it became very difficult to manage to control the motorcycle, so I was forced to lose a point. The colder weather with respect to the last few days penalized me a bit because I couldn't choose the tire I wanted. I hope the track has warmed up a bit now and that the changes we'll make to the bike will improve the situation, at least in part."

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SBK, RACE 2: BIAGGI FIGHTS FOR THE PODIUM TO THE END, NAKANO FINISHES IN TWELFTH PLACE

Race 2 of the first round of the SBK on the Australian circuit of Phillip Island took place under more stable weather conditions and with a grey sky still looming above, but the probability of rain unlikely, race officials declared it a dry race and therefore, in the event that it would begin to rain, the new flag-to-flag rule would have been enforced.

The passionate Australian public was able to watch an exciting Race 2, which saw drivers battling it out up until the very last metre. Vince Spies who also won yesterday's Superpole, was the top finisher, 1:286 ahead of Haga's Ducati and 4:312 ahead of Haslam's Honda.

Biaggi finished in fifteenth place with a star's race. Max, who started off well from second position, immediately took the lead and after a few curves he was in the lead along with Spies and Haga. The three drivers tried to break away, with the American and the Japanese drivers vying for first place, and they managed to place a fair amount of distance between the other drivers. The race went on this way up until the fourteenth lap with the two leaders battling it out for first place and Max glued right behind them; in the following lap Fabrizio managed to catch up to the lead group and began to battle it out with Biaggi, who he passed three laps later. The race became even more intense during the final three laps with the arrival of Haslam and Laconi. Just a few curves from the end, however, in order to avoid hitting two of his competitors after they made contact, Biaggi ended up in the gravel, re-entered the race and finished in fifteenth place.

Instead, it was a twelfth place finish for Nakano who began well this time, unlike during the first rounds, and immediately set off to take over the leading positions, continuing to battle Neukirchner, Rea, Smrz and Kagayama for sixth place. Halfway through the race, Shinya began to lose ground because of irregular wear and tear on his rear tire, and he was passed by Sykes and Xaus during the last lap.

"I'm quite satisfied," declared Biaggi. "We had a good race, using a different, softer tire, risking a lot and knowing that it would only last for half of the race. In fact, during the last ten laps, the tires were worn out and I did everything I could to fight for a place atop the podium up until the very end. During the last lap, at the Siberia curve, the two who were in front of me made contact and they took some strange trajectories. I sped up so I wouldn't hit them, but I had to brake and I ended up in the gravel. There's not much space there and I stopped on the tire barrier. Fortunately I managed to keep the motorcycle running, re-enter and finish the race, taking home at least one point, even though I certainly deserved more. We still have some problems to resolve, but I don't exclude the possibility that it may occur quickly. I would like to see how the bike handles when it will be 100%, considering its potential, but I have a lot of faith in Aprilia technicians, and it was also for this reason that I decided to return here after so many years."

"I started off well, arriving in sixth position," said Nakano. "We mounted another tire and the chattering diminished significantly. Halfway through the race, the tires were worn down and I couldn't push as much as at the beginning, so I slipped back into twelfth place. We must improve the engine set because when the grip decreases, it becomes difficult to handle the motorcycle's power. The positive aspect is that when the feeling is good, I can say in the lead to battle it out for first place."