

MOTOGP

THE MIRACLE WORKER

There are no miracles at Honda, just Casey Stoner. That is the simple formula that will make Honda a real championship threat in 2011, according to Jeremy Burgess, MotoGP's winningest crew chief.

And Burgess has dismissed commentary that a supposedly radical seamless-shift Honda gearbox is an advantage.



JB says moving to Honda is Casey's best career move

"It is not rocket science," Burgess said in advance of Sunday's opening race in Qatar.

The final model of Honda's 800cc RC212V is very fast but only a refined evolution of the bike that was winning races with Dani Pedrosa in the second half of 2010.

"Honda hasn't done anything special except hire a new rider [Stoner]," Burgess said.

"And I don't understand the fuss on the Honda gearbox; it is totally standard engineering these days. The Honda is going well but the bike is very similar to what it was at the end of last year, there are no miracles there."

"Dani would not be going as fast as he is now if Casey wasn't fast."

"I think Honda hired Casey to be champion, the guy who has been number one for a few years hasn't

performed.

"That is what you have to do when you have a good bike, eventually you have to hire the right rider. I've been in that position at Honda, a rider used to get two years to perform."

"Moving to Honda is the best move of Casey's career. At Honda he doesn't have to worry about the bike, just winning races."

Burgess worked for HRC for 21 years playing a key role in world championships won by Freddie Spencer, Wayne Gardner, Mick Doohan and Valentino Rossi.

He remains drinking mates with HRC boss Shuhei Nakamoto and has no doubt that Stoner's talent will be a force this season.

In five seasons with the factory team Pedrosa has not delivered a championship.

Colin Young



GEARBOX THEORY

Burgess has just come off seven years at Yamaha to join Ducati with Valentino Rossi. Together the duo has won seven championships.

"All this talk about an advanced seamless shift gearbox will not be the

reason Honda will win races," Burgess said. "I can tell you that you would be a mug to think that the Yamaha YZR-M1 gearbox is not something special."

"If anyone thinks Honda now has cutting-edge technology it might be because they have come from behind."

"Yamaha has a very smooth, advanced system. I know how it works and I've been privy to the inside of some of the trick F1 gearboxes with the top teams."

"Seamless shifting is not an engineering marvel. You might save one

hundredth of a second, and that's only on an upshift, although it is nice feeling for the rider."

The 2011 championship will be Burgess's 32nd season in grand prix racing now having worked with Suzuki, Honda, Yamaha and Ducati.

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YAMAHA 1000 ON TRACK

Yamaha is the first MotoGP team to begin track testing a factory prototype for the new 2012 MotoGP regulations.

The 1000cc M1 has been running at Yamaha's private test track at Fukuroi as part of a development program that includes dyno and computer simulations.

Although details are closely guarded the bike is tipped to be an evolution of Yamaha's highly successful 800cc M1 family that has won three consecutive MotoGP titles, shared by Jorge Lorenzo and Valentino Rossi.

Rival teams Honda, Ducati and Suzuki are at various stages of design and production but not at the testing stage.

"Mostly we are testing on the dyno but sometimes we want to see how the bike is going on the track at Fukuroi. We are also doing a lot of simulations in the factory," said Yamaha MotoGP engineering boss Masao Furusawa.

"We have learnt a lot from the M1 in recent years and I don't expect we will move too far from that. Our goal is to continue winning."

Ducati is planning to begin track testing its GP12 this month, although there is still no confirmation on the engine capacity which may be less than the 1000cc maximum. This could provide some bore/stroke and fuel consumption options.

"I think later this month we will be on track for the first time with the GP12, at Mugello for sure," said Ducati team manager Vito Gueschi.

"When the bike is safe and the performance is good, I think that Valentino Rossi will want to be on the bike to work for next year."

During 2011, factory teams have been granted an additional four days of testing for their MotoGP riders on the new 1000cc bikes for 2012.

Lin Jarvis and Masao Furusawa are already looking to 2012

Yamaha has confirmed that world champion Jorge Lorenzo will test the 1000 as soon as it is ready, but that the 2011 championship is a priority.

Honda is well advanced with design and planning, but does not yet have a complete bike ready to run. Suzuki claims to have begun planning for a 1000cc bike while it awaits management confirmation that it will be in MotoGP next year.

Colin Young



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ROSSI: NO EXCUSES

Valentino Rossi wants no excuses as he faces the biggest challenge of his career – winning the championship with Ducati. An eighth title, with Ducati, would give Rossi the triple crown alongside championships with Honda and Yamaha.

The nine-time champion has dug deep for answers to his lacklustre pre-season pace.

In the lead-up to the opening race in Qatar he has intensified his fitness program and

committed to changes to his riding style for the GP11.

"Everyday I have been in the swimming pool and the gym to work on movement and power in my shoulder," Rossi said. "The work is easier because I could not work on the power with no movement. Now the movement is close to 90 percent and I can tuck more behind the fairing, this is a big step."

"Now I just have to ride the GP11 in a different way. I have

changed my style 50 percent, it is a mistake to try and make this bike like the Yamaha M1."

Among the set-up changes Rossi has instigated a move to improve the performance of Bridgestone's hard compound rear tyre, an issue with the GP11.

"We are putting more pressure on the tyre with the rear shock, we need the hard tyre in the long races," he said.

The first of those is Sunday night in Qatar, a race Rossi won last year aboard the Yamaha M1, the silky smooth bike that carried him to four world titles.

One more title on the Ducati would seal Rossi's claim as the greatest of all time.

CY



Rossi needs to find a balance between his style and set up

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THE OTHER GUYS

Ben Spies is hoping that a new era of teamwork will enable him and world champion Jorge Lorenzo to keep Yamaha at the top of MotoGP.

Spies is fit, fast and ambitious but has no interest in the festering acrimony that hung over the Yamaha garage when it was inhabited by Lorenzo and Valentino Rossi.

With Rossi now at Ducati there is a new calm at Yamaha. The competition is intense but Spies wants to work alongside Lorenzo, not against him.

"I think the team is definitely going to be different from last year, there will be a lot more working together on development," Spies said. "I've said that to Jorge and I'm sure he is open to it."

"On track he's the first person I want to beat, but if we make the bike better together it will make being at the front that much easier for both of us."

"We need to find the balance but come race time I won't race him any different

from anyone else and he's the same."

Spies has even picked up some tips from Lorenzo's data – now allowed at Yamaha – and says he is working on picking the bike up quicker on corner exit, "I was leaned over longer than Jorge."

Over at Honda, Andrea Dovizioso has the unenviable task of being in the factory Repsol Honda sandwich between two aliens – Casey Stoner and Dani Pedrosa.

Being number one at Honda is the toughest job of the season but one that will bring its rewards. Stoner has staked an early claim that does not surprise Dovizioso. "This is Casey's style, to be fast early, he is a really fast rider," Dovizioso said. "And for the future it will be important to be number one in Honda."

"When the new 1000cc bikes come for 2012 the fastest rider will have more influence for the development. Also it is better to have internal competition to make the best results."

CY



Above: Spies wants only healthy rivalry at Yamaha
Below: Dovi flips the bird to his rivals – with a smile



THE GO SUPER DILEMA

The current state of the Australian Superbike Championship's premier class is a real concern. The type of concern that if we don't see thoughtful refinements implemented soon, the Superbike category as we know it could become extinct.

With just 12 riders on the Superbike grid at the second round of the series in Tasmania – that's one less than the first round a week prior at Phillip Island – you could say the ASBK is in crisis.

The series itself is showing promising signs with a decent amount of sponsorship-logo placement plastered around the racetracks, and the entry numbers in the support ranks are good – enough, all things considered.

Having just 12 riders in the Superbike class is appalling for what is supposed to be Australia's premier motorcycle road racing category. Even worse, I'm not convinced anybody is actually taking steps to fix it.

When you combine Superbike (12) and Prostock (18) the overall numbers at 30 are quite good for 1000cc entrants. So why not make the Superbikes a Prostock (aka Superstock) spec of sorts? Surely more privateers will feel like they have a chance to compete with the factories, promoting larger grids potentially at less expense.

If they do, our riders may not have experience with electronics if they head overseas, but there's a heck of a lot more to learn about international racing than a high-quality TC system anyway – including up-spec suspension and brake components that the ASBK currently doesn't feature.

Some are worried the BMW will blitz the field in 'Stock spec. I don't necessarily agree – let teams add quick-shifters for parity, plus whatever other minimal modifications that Prostock allows, and lets go racing to find out.

Externally the difference between Superbike, Prostock – or Formula Xtreme FX-Superbikes for that matter – is minimal.

The rule making process is up to IEG and MA to get right, as is the series' calendar once and for all.

My advice is to get cracking now and prove there are solutions by mid-year, otherwise it might be a case of too little, too late.

Alex Gobert