

Phillip Island Ride Day #1

It was an early start on Monday morning. I had to be at Phillip Island Race Track at around 7-7.30am, this meaning a 5.00 wake up call. Making my way down to the Island I headed to the main gate.

After signing in and a little wait I was allowed to enter and I made my way down to the back of the pits. First things first – Registration. The girls at the registration desk were great. I filled out the necessary paperwork and I was on my way.

Next it was time to take my beloved Triumph TT600 off the trailer, straight to Scrutineering. I was a little worried in case the Trumpy didn't pass, but all was good – a little bit of tape on the old mirrors and a nice little sticker on the windshield and I was off to the garage.

By this stage there were quite a few bikes arriving and I was getting pretty nervous. There was an announcement over the loud speaker about a safety meeting that everyone needed to attend. The meeting touched on rules, do's and don'ts of the track, flags, race control and let us know we could get tyres if we needed and a few other bits and pieces. Also we were reminded that it was a ride day and not a race day, to enjoy it and have fun.

Before the meeting had finished Louie from the California Superbike School asked all the guys and girls who was a first-timer and who hadn't been on a track in the last 12 months. There were a few of us who hadn't been before and around the same amount who hadn't been for a while. I was still a little nervous but felt better knowing there were some guys in my shoes.

All of us at the track were put into different coloured groups. My group was the first one up. We had about 5 minutes to get ready, I hopped on the bike and went up to the end of pit lane. I was starting to pack myself. Louie said he would lead us around for a few laps until we got used to the track. For the first lap or so I don't think I lent the bike over at all. After a couple of laps the flags went out and it was time to come in. I'm glad it was time, it was like riding for the first time - eyes everywhere, concentration through the roof! By the time I had stopped the bike the nerves calmed down a tad.

After a few heats I was starting to feel really confident on the bike, getting to know the corners and when to push that little bit harder. Corner 12 leading onto the back straight was by far my favourite, getting lower smoother and faster almost every lap.

The guys from the Superbike School took me through a cornering course out the back of the pits and looked at the way I went into and out of the corners. They then gave me some helpful hints, some of the things I didn't know I was doing.

The next few heats I put into practice what I had been shown. I felt a lot more confident, smoother... and to my surprise a fair bit quicker around the track. I found this out when I had a cracker of an exit and run a little too hot into the next corner, still a little more practice...

By the end of the day I was really starting to feel it. I found it harder to concentrate and not as easy to push the Trumpy around the track, and as much as I wanted the day to keep going I was glad it was coming to an end.

At the end of my first ride day I felt for the first time that I had really ridden and got to know my bike better than I have ever before... I wish I had done a ride day when I first started out!

I can't wait until next time.

Everyday Joe.