

BMW S 1000 RR teams taste victory at Barcelona 24 Hours

Two BMW S 1000 RR teams have celebrated great results at the '*24 Hores Frigo de Motociclisme*' endurance race that took place on 18-19 July at the Catalunya circuit in Spain, finishing in first and second place in the Superstock class, and fifth and sixth place in the overall rankings among a field of over 40 teams that included Endurance World Championship regulars and many riders on full factory superbikes.



Two BMW teams, consisting of four riders each, travelled to the famous circuit located north of Barcelona, where Valentino Rossi and Jorge Lorenzo were separated by just 0.095 seconds at the chequered flag in last month's MotoGP race. Representing the Spanish Busquets dealership were Josep Maria and Alex Busquets, BMW Motorrad Germany's Gerhard Lindner, and Camille Hedelin, who works at BMW's test centre at the Autodrome de Miramas in the south of France. Campaigning the BMW S 1000 RR for the Scratch dealership in this legendary day/night endurance race were Pere San Martin, Josep Mas, Raul Gurri and Pedro Balaguer.

In 2008, the Busquets team brought the HP2 Sport home in fifth place overall, and third in the Superbike class, making it the first time in almost 50 years that a BMW team had finished on the podium in Barcelona. Twelve months is a long time in motorsport though, and for 2009 it would be two BMW S 1000 RR machines that would take on the challenge of racing against a multitude of four-cylinder Japanese opposition, as well as several teams on twin-cylinder machinery from Ducati and KTM.

For BMW Motorrad's Gerhard Lindner – a former racer and *Motorrad* journalist, who is now responsible for the durability and reliability testing and development of the company's series production motorcycles – it was a dream come true to not only compete at Catalunya on the new S 1000 RR, but to achieve the best possible results on its debut in this prestigious race.

“For me, this is a very special result for lots of different reasons. I started out as project manager with lots of ideas for the development of the S 1000 RR. Then we have been doing lots of extensive testing of this machine, so to finally see two bikes on the grid in this race and to actually finish the race in the top two positions in our class is as good as it gets – we couldn’t have asked for anything better!”



Interestingly, the motorcycle used in this race had already completed 25,000 kilometres of hard use by Gerhard’s team of riders, who are tasked with finding a machine’s limits in a variety of riding conditions out on the road, including autobahns, in the city and on poorly maintained roads. Their job is to find – in a very short time – any weaknesses and stresses there might be to the engine and chassis, and factor these into a new model’s ongoing development. As you can imagine, 25,000 kilometres by the test team equates to around 80,000 kilometres under ‘normal’ usage by a customer – and then they decided to take the same bike racing!

“Yes, the race added another 4,800 kilometres of the most punishing riding you can imagine over a 24-hour period, but the S 1000 RR didn’t miss a beat,” enthused Gerhard. “For me it was a completely different experience compared to last year on the HP2 Sport. With the S 1000 RR I had the kind of top speed I’d never experienced on a BMW before and I was amazed at how many riders I was passing on the back straight every lap at Catalunya. Our top speed was measured by GPS at around 293 km/h (182 mph) but for me what really made the most impression was the race ABS and traction control. I’m convinced that these ‘safety features’ will actually make 99 per cent of riders much faster on the track.”

By entering the Superstock class of this race, only minor modifications are allowed such as the fitment of a 24-litre fuel tank, an Akrapovic race exhaust and some small parts to make wheel changing easier. However, having to run

the standard axles meant that it was taking up to one minute and 40 seconds to change tyres in the pits, whereas the Superbike and Endurance World Championship machines were able to do this in less than 15 seconds, therefore making it impossible for a Superstock bike to win the overall race. However, the two teams still managed 709 and 711 laps respectively of the 4.7-km circuit – some 15 laps more than Lindner's team managed last year on the sports boxer – so for Gerhard, the overall experience has been extremely positive and encouraging, given the imminent start of production of the customer S 1000 RR machines.

“This was a fantastic result for all of us, especially as we had no mechanical problems whatsoever during the 24 hours of racing with these pre-series production bikes and you can't ask for more than that! Everyone is excited about the S 1000 RR project and of course the fact that series production starts in September. Alongside that there will be the development of racing parts, which naturally takes time as we have started from zero, but our focus is very much on having everything prepared to support the various markets in their race activities in 2010.”



While on the subject of other race activities, Belgium's Werner Daemen has enjoyed his first double win on the BMW S 1000 RR at rounds 9 and 10 of the IDM (Internationale Deutsche Motorradmeisterschaft) German Superbike Championship that recently took place at the Salzburgring. These impressive victories move him up to second place in the overall series, with six rounds left to challenge for the overall championship win, but that's another story...