



For Release: May 8, 2017

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Defying All Odds...BMW HP Race Engineer Steve Weir Provides The Backstory On Nate Kern's Spectacular Podium Finish In Round One Of WERA's Triple Crown On A Stock BMW S 1000 RR

Woodcliff Lake, NJ – May 8, 2017... Last weekend, BMW Motorsports Advisor, test rider and Boxer Cup Champion Nate Kern defied all odds by winning third place in the WERA Superbike Class in Round One of the WERA Triple Crown at Road Atlanta in Braselton, Georgia. His ride? A completely stock BMW S 1000 RR, that had been in storage and awaiting pickup by a friend. Read on as BMW HP Race Engineer Steve Weir shares the backstory.

"I knew of two BMW racers coming to Road Atlanta, but little did I know a third would crawl from the darkness and propose the unthinkable," says Weir. "Nate approached me after Sylvain Barrier completed qualifying practice 2 in 6th position at a track he had never been to. Kern had that look in his eye, one that only a racer knows. He put his hand on my shoulder and said, 'Dude... I wanna race the WERA Superbike class but I'm gonna need your help.' I didn't laugh or blink an eye because I knew he was serious, so I asked the obvious, 'Uhhh okay, what are you going to ride?'"

"This is the point where things got weird. He told me about his friend Alan who bought his bike but hadn't picked it up. The kind of stories we have all heard before. He would go on to tell me the bike was in storage, wasn't race prepped was completely stock with DOT tires, kickstand, horn and license plate to boot. I went over the typical check list in my head of race prepping a bike and the time it would take to get it done. I also balanced the fact that Friday's WERA practice was long gone and all that was left was Saturday's qualifying round, which meant he would be jumping right into the fire, putting his head down and making something happen, on a completely stock bike. My first thought was good luck with that, but it's Kern, fully capable of stomping the competition on an R nineT with no electronics, crazy torque and cylinder heads that scrape the ground when you turn. I told him I was in.

“Kern started blowing up phones enlisting the help of BMW Motorcycles of Atlanta Service Manager Bill Walls. Walls liked the idea of racing a stock BMW S 1000 RR so much he put a team together to undertake the tedious task of drilling and safety wiring the bike. Next up, James Bock and Oscar Solis of Pirellis Tires liked the idea so much they told Kern they would provide him tires to race on.

“We picked the bike up Friday at about 9:30 pm parked behind BMW Motorcycles of Atlanta complete with clear tape for the headlights, taillight and the big number 8 for N8 (Nate). This was my first look at the bike. I noticed a full Akrapovic Exhaust. I asked Kern about it and he said the bike had an HP Power Kit. The kit is purchased through BMW HP and comes with full exhaust and an ECU enabling code that changes the parameters of the air fuel ratio, ignition timing and traction control for better race prowess. Bonus!

“I asked if the Race Calibration Kit 3 was installed, which would allow me to balance the traction control for the track, tires and conditions to which a disappointing ‘No’ came from Kern. I was still comfortable with the plan as the parameters within the HP Power Kit are expanded from stock and work extremely well.

“Saturday morning came quickly and we were back at the track with a near complete race- prepped bike. All that was left was to remove the head and taillight plugs, cover them with clear plastic and put a big #8 on the front and rear of the bike. DOT tires were replaced with Pirelli slicks. Last, but not least, the kickstand was safely wired into place.

“As luck would have it I always keep a spare HP 2D Race Datalogger with me in case a customer’s bike doesn’t have one, as this allows me to log rider data and bike output – 32 data channels total – covering throttle position, suspension position, lean angle, traction control interventions and a multitude of other parameters. The HP 2D Race Datalogger allows me to make changes to the bike without all the guess work.

“I started Kern off with a base set up on the bike utilizing the DDC (Dynamic Damping Control), which easily adjusts at the flip of a switch on the handlebar. I also set preload on both the front and rear springs. Kern went out for a couple of sighting laps, came in for a quick change in spring preload then went out and completed a 1:32.5. This helped grid Kern 5th for the race...something with which we could definitely work.

“With my expectations happily exceeded, I read the data from the HP 2D Datalogger and spoke with Kern about the current bike set up. With Kerns’ feedback and the information gathered from the datalogger, we decided on a geometry change that would help Kern flick the bike from side to side and corner with better front end feedback. We also found that Kern was getting a vibration in the front end of the bike that turned out to be a bent rotor, possibly from sitting in the overfilled storage unit. Between the bent rotor and brake pads with over 3,000 miles on them that were glazed over, we were bound to have problems in the race and safety was a huge factor. I told Kern we were in dire need of a set of rotors and pads. Kern said he had a spare set of wheels in storage but was concerned they were not the BMW HP wheels he was currently running on the bike. On our way home, we drove by the storage unit and picked up the front wheel. The wheel was not a BMW HP wheel. It was the standard BMW wheel with Galfer rotors. Kern stated he wanted to run the bike in complete stock trim but after some conversation, safety outweighed desire.

“Sunday was upon us before we knew it and we still didn’t have a set of stock brake pads. Kern spoke with SBS Brand Manager Chris Jensen about getting a set of brake pads that were the same as the stock BMW pads. Jensen provided us with a set of SBS 870DS Dual Sinter pads that he said were similar to the BMW HP pads.

“Kern was lucky to get a warm up practice and a chance to test the changes made to the bike. He went out for a couple of sighting laps to get a feel for the changes, returning to hot pit for additional preload on the front forks. Kern told me the changes allowed him to put the bike where he wanted it and was happy with the direction we took. The morning was cool and damp with high humidity and, on his first hot lap, he matched the previous day’s qualifying time with less effort and better feel. Kern came back in and said, ‘I can definitely race this...The bike is really good.’

“Leading up to the race, weather and track conditions changed several times. At one point it started to rain, but eventually it cleared and the track dried out for the race. Kern went out for the sighting lap and lined up on the grid in 5th position. Utilizing the launch control, he got off to a beautiful start into turn 1 where he was in 4th place. Several battles took place, but the race would settle into Kern in 4th place and Brad Burns in 5th. Burns made several attempts to pass Kern but none would stick. Tim Bemisderfer had a mechanical issue, leaving Kern and Burns to battle it out for the 3rd place podium finish.

The battle would come down to the last turn where Burns attempted to pass Kern under heavy braking but he failed to make the turn, leaving Kern with a clean run to the finish and a hard-earned 3rd place finish.

“After the race, Kerns’ pit was filled with BMW enthusiasts and fellow racers who came to get a good look at the bike after hearing it was being raced in stock trim. It was poked, prodded and questioned with total disbelief. Now, the question still remains... Do we continue forward with this project and go for a championship?”

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