

The Chequered Flag



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Jorge Lorenzo claimed his third British Grand Prix victory after a superbly judged performance at Silverstone.

The Spaniard's victory was his fourth from the opening six races and saw him open a commanding 25 point championship lead over Casey Stoner. The manner of his victories have varied throughout the year but having qualified on the second row and spending the early laps mired in a midfield battle this race allowed Lorenzo to once again show his ability to nurse his tyres and maintain his pace better than his rivals.

On a day when Stoner complained that he "struggled with the left hand side of the tyre. Every time I went into a left corner the rear wanted to come around and I couldn't get any traction," Lorenzo majestically moved through the field.

At the beginning of the race Lorenzo was unable to maintain the pace of the leaders but he refused to panic and instead waited for the race to come to him. At half distance, and riding with far more confidence, he was hot on the heels of Stoner and pounced at the final corner. The pair battled and traded places back and forth for five corners before Lorenzo eventually asserted himself and took a lead that he would not relinquish.

While Stoner tried his best to stay in contention Lorenzo was able to ease away and open a lead. Not even a mistake in the closing laps put the race result in doubt and for the final laps the battle behind the race leader was far more competitive.

With Stoner hampered by tyre wear his Repsol Honda team-mate, Dani Pedrosa, was hot on his heels. The pair were fast in different parts of the track so Pedrosa would close dramatically in the slower sections of the lap. With better tyre grip Pedrosa was able to put the reigning champion under severe pressure but ultimately he thought better of forcing a move and risking a crash.

After the race Pedrosa joked that "I tried again into the chicane but I was too far back and I saw the image of the two Repsol's on the ground! So I went to the outside so as not to hit him and settled for third."

Brave Crutchlow battles to sixth
Another podium of Lorenzo, Stoner and Pedrosa was far from unexpected but the biggest cheer of the day was reserved for Cal Crutchlow. The Englishman crashed heavily in qualifying and suffered ankle injuries that left him in severe pain. He grimaced through the race and battled through the pain barrier to finish sixth and add to his championship tally.

The day however belonged to Lorenzo with the Spaniard admitting that he has a "near perfect start to the season." His success is continuing to echo of his dominant 2010 campaign when he claimed his first premier class championship.

That year Lorenzo won races with a similar dominance to what we have seen so far in 2012. Having just secured his future by signing a two year contract extension with Yamaha his confidence is high and he looks ready to consolidate his championship position at the next race at Assen in two weeks time.

"Assen is a track I like," said Lorenzo. "It's one that is very good for my riding. I think that with Brno it is the track I won at most times so in theory we must be there fighting for the win again."

With Lorenzo ready to keep fighting he has fired a warning shot across the bows of his Honda rivals but with Stoner and Pedrosa having complained about the new construction Bridgestone tyres at various times over the weekend it is clear that time is running out for them to challenge Lorenzo.

Post race reactions...

The fight for victory at the British Grand Prix saw Jorge Lorenzo and Casey Stoner go wheel to wheel in a thrilling overtaking manoeuvres that gave the Spaniard the lead. The riders battled from the final corner all the way to turn five with each making daring moves to lead the race. Speaking afterwards about the battle it was clear that Lorenzo enjoyed the wheel to wheel element of the fight but with a championship always in his mind it was an anxious moment for the championship leader.

MotoGP Round 6 British Grand Prix

Lorenzo cruises to Silverstone success

"Fighting [like this] and trying to win the world championship you don't enjoy a fight like this! One part of you is enjoying it but the other part is very tense and nervous!"

Even so the respect that Lorenzo holds his rival with was clear when he went on to say, "Casey didn't give up very easily to let me take the position so I like to race with this kind of rider." With Stoner hampered by severe rear tyre wear he felt that it was impossible to defend against Lorenzo.

"In the middle of the corner it was easy for him to turn up the inside of us and get past," said the Australian. "It was almost impossible [to keep ahead of Lorenzo], we got to the first left hander and that was it, game over. He just pulled straight away and I couldn't do anything. For the first few laps I tried to brake deep and push hard but every time I'd do that I'd lose the rear."

Tyre wear proved costly for Stoner

Casey Stoner was in damage limitation mode once again during the British Grand Prix with the reigning world champion once again hamstrung by handling issues with his Honda.

The Australian spent the opening stages of the race chasing Ben Spies but was unable to attack the American because of the Yamaha's superior traction and grip.

"Ben worried me from lap one," said Stoner.

"When I saw how hard he was getting on the throttle and how much lean angle he had but still going round the corners and not going wide, I didn't have that confidence and I couldn't lay the bike down and get on the gas like he could."

When Spies ran wide at Brooklands Stoner was able to move into the lead but even then it was clear to the Australian that the race would be exceptionally difficult and all he could do was try to keep his riding smooth and brake as late as possible around the 5.9km Silverstone track. After the race Stoner admitted that, once again, tyres were the limiting factor for the Repsol Honda rider with rear tyre wear plaguing him throughout the race.

"Very early on, when I was behind Ben, I started to struggle with the left hand side of the tyre," commented Stoner. "Every time I went into a left corner the rear wanted to come around and I couldn't get any traction so we started struggling a lot and Jorge started to catch us."

Once Lorenzo was close to Stoner the pair enjoyed a hard fought battle but once the Yamaha rider moved into the lead he started to pull away from Stoner immediately.

Once Stoner realised that catching Lorenzo was too risky he made some adjustments to the engine mapping and his riding style and managed to hold off Pedrosa to finish second.

"Long list" of work to improve Honda

With Jorge Lorenzo dominating the championship standings after six races both Repsol Honda riders, Casey Stoner and Dani Pedrosa, admitted that they need to make significant improvements to their bike if they are to challenge for the championship.

When asked about the issues affecting his bike Stoner commented that "it's a long list."

The Australian went on to elaborate on this by saying that the team still needs to find a solution to the chatter problems they have endured throughout the current campaign.

"We made an improvement in Catalunya to improve the rear chatter but we know we have front chatter from earlier races. Now its extreme with this front tyre, said Stoner."

The new construction Bridgestone front tyre has come under fire from both riders over the course of the weekend and Stoner went on to comment in more detail about the cause of his team's problem with the new tyre.

"We developed this whole bike around the old tyre and one third of the way through the season they've put a new tyre into it. It's really put us into a difficult situation. We thought we'd be able to set things up around it but we haven't



Yamaha's Jorge Lorenzo overcame an early race battle with a host of Hondas to claim victory at Silverstone

been able to so far but it's a long season."

Pedrosa also commented on this but said that with the chatter issues affecting the Honda it has been very difficult to battle with Yamaha's which can get on the power much earlier because they have confidence in the handling of their bike. The Spaniard commented that, "in mid-turn and exit they are quicker." It's clear that if Honda are to halt the charge of Yamaha they need to rectify the chatter problems that have been ever present with this bike since winter testing.

Silverstone victory was far from easy

From the outside it seemed that Jorge Lorenzo had once again judged a race to perfection as he moved through the field to claim victory at Silverstone for the second time.

With his fourth race win of the season Lorenzo has struck a rich vein of form to open the 2012 campaign but following a difficult weekend at Silverstone, where changeable conditions made finding the perfect set-up all but impossible, Lorenzo knew just how difficult it was to claim victory.

"Today I struggled a lot to keep the pace of the first group [Spies, Stoner, Bautista and Hayden] and I was a little behind them [at the start]," said Lorenzo. "I needed to keep my concentration for lots of laps to not make a mistake when I was behind that group."

Once Lorenzo found his rhythm and closed on the leading groups he had a challenging time trying to find his way past as the quartet battled hard in the early stages of the race.

"Alvaro [Bautista] was braking very deep, and so was Ben [Spies], so I didn't want to make any mistake. I wanted to wait until the race went on to see the pace of each riders. I realised that I had a little more speed when the tyres dropped a little bit and that they were slowing down quite a bit. My pace was slower in the beginning but not so much [later] so I feel every time better and better."

Once Lorenzo had moved past Nicky Hayden, Bautista and Spies the Spaniard found himself chasing down Casey Stoner.

The pair have enjoyed thrilling battles in recent years but at Silverstone they offered the British crowd a fight to savour with the pair trading places for one third of the lap before Lorenzo asserted himself in the battle.

"I got the second position and Casey was trying not to let me past for some laps but finally I see the to pass him in the last corner and I think we made a good show for the spectators! Luckily for me I had a little more [pace] than him in this race so I tried to push 100% to open the gap."

Once in front Lorenzo was not headed again and opened a two second lead at the chequered flag.

Lorenzo looks for engine improvements

Having started the season in near perfect form

Jorge Lorenzo has compared his current bike to his 2010 championship winning Yamaha.

The Spaniard has claimed four race wins from the opening six races and finished second in the other races. With such a dominant start to the campaign Lorenzo has opened a commanding early season championship advantage of 25 points to his nearest challenger Casey Stoner. Speaking after the British Grand Prix Lorenzo was asked to compare the two bikes and race victor said, "This is the fastest one because its the 1000cc! In 2010 I had a good bike compared to the others and it won us many races." Even after such a great start to the campaign the 2010 world champion stressed that his YZR-M1 still has some flaws that his team need to correct if he is to maintain his championship momentum.

"We need to improve somethings," said Lorenzo. "Especially the engine as it is not fast enough. The corner speed is quite good and that's why we are able to be with them [the Hondas]."

Stoner unconcerned by title deficit

Following Jorge Lorenzo's British Grand Prix victory the Spaniard holds has opened a commanding 25 points championship lead over Casey Stoner.

With six races completed in the season, and 12 remaining, it is far from what had been expected from the reigning world champion but Stoner was keen to stress that it was far too early to view the championship momentum as having swung decisively in Lorenzo's favour.

"Its too early [to worry about the championship.] I'm more worried about our pace to be honest," said the 26 year old. "That's the thing that has disappointed me a lot. Championships can turn around in one race, definitely the way Jorge is going it isn't going to happen but one DNF and a win for myself and we're equal on points and its game on again."

With the Silverstone race weekend having been run in changeable conditions Stoner was keen to stress that second place was a strong result after a difficult practice and qualifying build up to the 20 lap race.

"Today could have gone either way and I could have lost a lot more points than we did so Im happy to have held on for second. Things could have gone a lot better too so we've got to turn ourselves around," concluded the Australian.

Pedrosa improves handling

Speaking after the weekend it was clear that Pedrosa was happy with the progress that his team had made with his bike following a difficult weekend at times.

"I improved my feeling today and the lap-time was a little faster," he said. "I could be closer to the fastest times but at the end I am happy with the improvement and I think that we can make small steps and make the front feel a little better."