



BRIDGESTONE

BT-003 Racing Street

TYRE LAUNCH

Words: MIKE SWANN

OVER blind crest, third gear and braking hard into a second gear flip flop chicane, the Repsol liveried '09 Blade in front gets on the gas lightning fast and early. I peel right feathering the throttle to keep it in touch, drifting wide towards the double apex right to maximize a late corner entry and exit; we lift slightly, then on the knee again aiming for the apex, back on the gas building speed, then hit the last apex, picking the bike up on the pegs and heading for the long curving exit. ◻



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BATTLAX
BT-003
RACING STREET

SWANNY had his knee down almost from lap 1 on the BT-003 Racing Street Tyres



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(Above): SWANNY and JEZZA riding shotgun for some video footage

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BATLAX
BT-003
RACING STREET

The blade in front howls as the pilot turns a black tyre line into a plume of smoke, the rider lifting his left hand off the bars as he turns back, chin down, shoulders hunched and gives me the thumbs up as we head off on another lap. It's the familiar style of my old mate Jezza McWilliams. We're exiting the last turn on to the back straight at the Almeria Circuit in Spain and we're having a ball.

No it's not a race, we're ending the day at Bridgestone's launch of the new BT-003RS to be exact, and such is the performance of this 'street come track-day tyre', it merits this

hectic pace. Between chasing the Ed on pints of Guinness and

Desperados beers the night before and now McWill round the track, it was a hard few days, but hey... someone's gotta do it.

Derived straight from the very successful BT-003 race tyre, launched in the middle of 2008 and superseding the BT-002RS, Bridgestone is aiming this tyre at the Hyper Performance market. A fast road rider and track-day addict can now, legally and safely, ride the same bike shod with BT-003RS tyres on road and track at a very capable pace.

An important market it is too, with 50% of all 3.56 million radial

motorcycle tyres sold in Europe falling into the Hypersport category. Wouldn't you just love a piece of that business?

Launching out of pit lane, it was quickly apparent that 'warm up' for the BT-003RS is outstanding, with less than a lap needed before your knee can grace the tarmac. As everyone knows by now, Bridgestone do not rest on their laurels and this tyre is no exception, oozing layers of GP technology.

The BT-003RS boasts Bridgestone's now traditional multi layer compound: three in fact (3LC), front and rear, with a soft layer on the shoulder and a harder band around the centre. In this case boasting fifteen percent greater mileage than its predecessor the BT-002. Whilst being derived directly from its racing brother [003], the 003RS features a slightly less radical profile on the front to accommodate stability and lean transition on the road.

On track this produced a comfortable and reassuring feel through Almeria's flowing back

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(Right):
MIKE enjoyed the
high performance
of the BT-003 RS at
maximum lean angles

(Below):
SWANNY posing for
the cameras



section, making for light work and an easy shift from full lean, right to left. Tread percentage is up from the BT-003 race, with the shoulder grooves extending closer to the edge of the tyre to further improve wet weather grip, not that we had any dampness on this trip. I'll leave wet grip to a later test in 'sunny' Ireland!

The first thing I noticed from every bike on the test – and we had a full selection of 600 and 1000cc machines – was the excellent front end grip and relatively neutral but confident steering. Entering Almeria's many turns, it really inspired confidence with no fear of braking as deep and late into a corner as I wanted. Straight line braking stability was good with only one overshoot where I had to take to the gravel. That was more to do with Honda's ABS System, but that's a story for another day. I'm just glad I wasn't heading into Coleraine or Portrush during a Newcomer's session at the North West 200 on that bike!

At full lean, the tyres gave ample predictable grip, with the 600 supersport machines excelling as usual. It was only when riding the superbikes, I

needed to remind myself [frequently] that we were on street based tyres, such was the grip. Later as the cobwebs cleared we exploited the full acceleration of the superbikes, and even on extreme provocation forcing the rear wheel to power-slide, feedback was linier, predictable and certainly lots of fun.

Changing from bike to bike and with the advice of McWilliams, it was interesting to experience how crucial tyre pressures could be on a street tyre. So before you sample the delights of the BT-003RS make sure you have checked for the correct application. If you are in any doubt ring Jeremy on 077...

Now the Almeria Circuit is a nice spot, but still has its share of bumps to test the comfort of any tyre. On this occasion, they were soaked up with ease thanks to Bridgestone's Mono Spiral Belt and HTSPC construction and for those who didn't know it, yes the tread pattern as well (apparently tread shape aids comfort also). All of today's technology is derived from MotoGP but I'm sure it'll pass the comfort test of the Cookstown 100 Road Race!

Another improvement over the 002 was noise reduction, again due to the tread pattern, so the squiggles on these black hoops aren't just for cool looks, although I can't say I've ever heard the noise of my tyres over the howl of a screaming sports bike... but hey, it takes all sorts of journalists!

Cresting Almeria's few tricky rises and drops is enough to take any dubious handling bike to the limit, but even the mighty R1 [which Swanny blew to bits leaving a cloud of smoke around the circuit – Ed!] and ZX10 couldn't provoke a shake, proving the combination of BT-003RS with the correct set up, meant stability was never questioned.

The BT-003RS is undoubtedly a superb performance tyre, more than capable of anything you could request of it. Experienced riders will appreciate the 003RS's broad scope. This baby is equally at home on the track as it is on the road, albeit with way more ability than most riders who purchase them.

The BT-003RS will be available in all 17" sizes for sports bikes over 250cc. Why not get out on the track and find out for yourself amigos. ●

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