



BIKETRADER GOES HARLEY RACING

In this must be one of the most unlikely race series in the world: Harley-Davidson has launched its XR1200 Trophy as a support round to the British Superbikes!

Far removed from Harley's traditional image as a builder of heavyweight, touring motorcycles, the XR1200 Trophy pits identical versions of the brand's relatively lithe entry-level bikes against each other on some of Britain's tightest and fastest tracks. And here at BikeTrader, we're particularly interested in the three-strong Stratstone Harley team, who we're sponsoring in this season's competition.

These XR1200s have been modified to go racing but they're not that far removed from the bike you can buy in a Harley showroom. The engines are

unmodified - although a racing ECU has increased the rev-limit - and for safety reasons the radiator has been moved from the side of the bike to just behind the number board at the front. The foot pegs have been adjusted and now wider handlebars fitted too, but it's the suspension and brakes that have received the biggest overhaul, with the addition of Brembo stoppers and Ohlins shocks.

This race series is a big undertaking for Harley, a brand that wants to be seen as more performance-orientated in Europe. It's even going to be televised at every round. And it's a big adjustment for the riders too, who are used to thrashing Japanese sports bikes. Already four of the XR1200s V-twin engines have been blown up in pre-season testing as they're stressed to the limit by the racers.

Despite the technical challenges, the series has attracted some big names, including former Moto GP ace Jeremy McWilliams. And Harley UK's marketing department is running two guest spots in each race so that other bike racing legends along with quick-biking celebrities and can have a go.

Meanwhile, our BikeTrader Stratstone Harley machine will be ridden all season by former KTM RC8 cup champ Dave Wood. At least that was the plan... but unfortunately he popped his shoulder in a crash the week before the first race and was ruled out by doctors. So, on this occasion teammate and classic bike racer Lea Gourley jumped into the saddle at the last minute. (Thanks Lea!)