



Turned out that Dave Wood's injury was just the first setback of what proved to be a very challenging weekend for the team. During the opening practice session on Sunday, ahead of a bank holiday Monday race, both Lea on the BikeTrader bike and his teammate Alex Gault, a 20-year old rookie from Scotland, binned the two remaining Stratstone bikes while pushing for competitive times. This was a big blow to the team since both riders had consistently been lapping in the top four. But with Lea and Alex fortunately uninjured, Stratstone Harley's mechanics pulled an overnight stint to rebuild the bikes and get them race-worthy.

And they excelled themselves, completing the work in record time and readying both machines for a 9.45am qualifying session on Monday morning. Both

riders immediately found their groove despite the setbacks of practice, putting in stunning lap times that would see them place second and third on the grid. Excited team manager Martin McIlwaine sensed a real opportunity to get both boys on the podium in the first race of the season.

But it wasn't to be. As the TV cameras rolled, both our riders screamed off the line only to have a coming together mid-way through the first lap. Red faces all round then... And although neither fell off, Alex was forced back to 14th and out of contention. Meanwhile Lea on the BikeTrader branded machine was up to third place and pushing to hold on to the leader, aforementioned ex-Moto GP superstar Jeremy McWilliams. He busted the lap record for the XR1200 class on lap four, putting in a time half a second

quicker than the leader. But disaster struck when the bike downshifted unexpectedly mid-corner, throwing Lea off. Meanwhile Alex was fighting hard to get back from 14th place and nearly came off himself, eventually settling for sixth. "We're a bit gutted," said team boss McIlwaine "both boys were right up there with the front runners, we just have to keep it a bit cleaner!"

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