

MAG Sport's Alex Gault on the up at British Super bikes

It has been an eventful few months for MAG Sport-supported racer Alex Gault. Since the last issue of 'The Road' the Scottish youngster has hit highs and lows in the National Super Stock 600 Championship. There have been three rounds held since our last up-date along with a reshuffle in the team supporting Alex.

Round 5

Round five of the National Stock 600 Championship was held at Donington Park and it was becoming evident that the lack of track knowledge and testing time on the bike was proving to be a big disadvantage for the youngster. He would have profited from visiting the tracks before hand like other riders. 'Free Practice' is used for bike set-up and gearing selection, which should all be done before arriving to qualify for a race. The value of this is borne out by the fact the youngster Gault goes quicker every session he is out on track.

Gault on his ASTRO Kawasaki ZX6R posted a time in free practice of 1.41.60, then in qualifying set a time of 1.41.00 seconds while pole sitter South African Allan Jon Venter on the factory backed Triumph 675 set a 1.38.97. That two second deficit saw Gault line up in 28th place on the grid. Qualifying for the 600 class is so competitive that only three seconds separated the top 40 places available for Monday's race; from the 52 riders vying for them. In the race Alex got his times down to 1.40.0 more than three seconds faster than he ever went round the track previously.

A rain soaked track for Sunday's 2nd qualifying session scuppered a chance of improving on Q1 times. It also gave Gault the chance to familiarise himself with the conditions and make adjustments to the settings of his bike as the forecast for race day was more of the same.

The Race was held on Bank Holiday Monday and was set under threatening skies with Donington Park right in the middle of the North / South split in the weather front. As it happened, it stayed dry for the National 600 race although high winds caused the 125Gp race to be cancelled. Alex did exceptionally well. From his start position of 28th, he had passed 12 riders by the 3rd lap just before there was a race stoppage due to a fallen rider. The restart of the shortened race took place some 15 minutes later but Gault did not make such a good start with

forty riders involved in a mêlée at the first corners. He did make speedy progress throughout the race however, eventually finishing in a remarkable 10th place with a fastest lap of 1.40.0.

Round 6

The Norfolk track of Snetterton hosted round 5 and Alex took the chance to meet up with the MAG Sport Junior Moto KL Race team project. (www.motokl.org.uk/) He was very impressed with the way things were run but after a few hours it was back to concentrating on the job in hand and back to business as usual for Gault.

Things didn't go well and Gault struggled with set up for the whole meeting down in 36th place for **Free Practice** after being sent out with the incorrect final gearing.

Alex had the Astro Kawasaki at around 165 MPH which must be the fastest speed he has every done on a motorbike

That aside it was very close between the times set by riders. There are only around eight corners on this track with two very fast straights. Alex had the Astro Kawasaki at around 165 MPH which must be the fastest speed he has every done on a motorbike though we don't run speedometers. that speed is estimated but we know for sure he was going through the speed trap which was placed in the braking zone for 'The Esses' at 153.2 MPH!

First qualifying

Now he had the proper final drive fitted, suspension problems thwarted Alex' efforts, finishing the session in 26th place from the 55 riders fighting for the 40 places available for Sunday's race!

Second Quali'

At last a chance to improve as it was to held for only the second time this season in better weather conditions than Q1. Now I don't like to dramatise this by saying it was a disaster, knowing the

circumstances, Alex put in what I think was a remarkable performance to scrape onto the very last slot of the grid in 40th place since he had ridden the full session with broken suspension. So close was the field at this meeting that only 1.7 seconds separated 1st to 40th on a lap which takes around 1.min 12 seconds to complete. Mixed emotions: disappointed with the result, proud of the performance he had put in to get there.

Morning Warm up

I guess this is why so many people are addicted to racing! With the suspension problem fixed Alex went out and in only 4 laps put in the 4th fastest time of 1.11.48. This was almost a second faster than he went in qualifying. If he he'd done this the day before it would have put him in 11th or 12th place on the grid for the start of the race.

The race

It was nothing special for us. We knew at this track Alex could do nothing from the back of the grid. He did make it up to 23rd place by lap 10 before red flags stopped a race that was planned for 14 laps. He did win the Metzler Tyres 'Merit Award' for his performance however, which gives him a pair of free tyres, saving us around £200.

After this result it was all change for a future that would see Alex reunited with his old mechanic for the rest of the season. It could be said that this put the team back to almost square one regarding bike set up. Luckily there were no Super Stock races to take place at the next round of The British Super Bike Championship. This gave us time to hurriedly arrange as much testing as financially possible, there were three meetings and one test day we could use.

Scottish Championship Knockhill

Alex entered into his own class of Super Stock and we also took the chance to enter Alex into the Super Sport class for extra track time. Things went well, netting a 7th 2nd 4th and a 2nd from the four races. The 7th place finish was after a mistake on braking in to the hairpin. While he never left the track he did run very wide and fell back to 11th place.

Test and race at Mallory Park

We used the East Midland Racing Association's championship round at

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Picture : Wullis Photos

Mallory Park for more testing and again Alex managed some stunning results. Again we had taken the chance to enter Alex into both Classes, Super Sport and Super Stock. The super sport class allows tuning, better tyres and quick shifters. Alex won both his Super Stock races by a country mile and had two very good 3rd place finishes in the Super Sport class. His performance won him 'The Rider Of the Day' Award and also the 'The Richard Jones Trophy.' Richard was an ardent supporter of racing at Mallory and since losing him, his family have donated the trophy and prize in his honour. Alex was whisked away to the presentation in the Hailwood Suite in front of around 60 family members and friends of Richard.

Scottish Championship Knockhill

The weekend before we were due back at the British Championship we took our last chance to try out some new suspension at the Scottish Championship. Here we only entered Alex into Super Sport class in the hope it would push him harder. It did, although only finishing in 7th 4th 5th and 6th places from the 33 riders in each of the four races. It was a stunning performance when you consider Hudson Kennah (sitting second in British Super Sport Championship), David Paton, European Super Stock contender and a

host of local experts were his opposition. Alex' lap time would have broken the Super Stock 600 lap record if he had been in a Super Stock race. Now we knew we had the set-up but would it be good enough to get a result at the British Championship? We didn't have to wait long as the following weekend we made our way to Oulton Park in Cheshire for round seven.

Round 7

In a change to the normal format for this round, our race programme was scheduled over two days. In **Free Practice** on Friday morning, Alex put in a stunning performance. He was 3rd fastest out of the 58 entries and we were very pleased. There was still a long way to go but Alex had never been so close to the front since the first round at Brands.

First qualifying

Again I am glad to say he was still at the front. He has for one reason or another, not qualified well in any of the preceding rounds, so to see him finish the session in 8th was very satisfying. He was pleased as punch as he thought he could still go faster.

Second Qualifying

This was wet so there was no chance of improving on his Q1 time but it did give us the chance to dial in the wet setting I now have for the bike and try it out. Again he was at the front in the damp conditions. Although only out for five laps he was twice fastest in session. I pulled him in as the track was starting to dry and there was nothing to be gained from wrecking a set of wet tyres, we watched to see if the times came down to anything like the times posted in Q1 but they didn't, so we just pushed the bike to the holding area, (after every timed session the bikes are held in an area for half an hour to be checked for any technical infringements).

The race

When the flag fell Alex did not get the perfect start. He was back into 12th place by the first corner but he had a fantastic race, making his way up to 6th by the finishing flag, his best ever result in the championship, making his way past some very good and experienced riders. In the later stages of the race he had an exciting dice with Leon Hunt, Ex European STK contender. We were very pleased with the way things had gone over the weekend and are hopeful of improvements at the next round,