

The ever popular World Superbikes Championship Series enters its 25th season and continues with 2 races per meeting. But there are important changes in the schedule for the WSBK race meetings this year: Superpole qualifying is on Saturday morning and race one early in the afternoon. Race two is on Sunday.

Chaz Davies and Davide Giugliano are in the Aruba.it Racing team on Ducati 1199 Panigale R. Xavi Forés is in the Barni Racing Team; Fabio Menghi is also to ride a Ducati; and in Australia Mike Jones rides a Duc with a wildcard. Matteo Baiocco joins the VFT Team from Thailand.

Main competition is to be expected from champ Jonathan Rea and Tom Sykes on Kawasaki; Michael van der Mark and Nicky Hayden on Honda; Sylvain Guintoli and Alex Lowes on Yamaha; Alex de Angelis and Lorenzo Savadori are on Aprilia and Leon Camier on MV Agusta.



The season starts at Philip Island at the end of February, where the Aruba Ducati riders qualify well, in 2nd and 9th, and in race one join the lead group. Chaz Davies takes a second place, and in race two has a chance of victory, but slips off on the final lap. He still finishes the race in 10th place. David Giugliano takes to the podium in 2nd, after missing the podium in race one by 0,6 seconds. Jonathan Rea takes the double victory and Michael van der Mark is on the podium twice: 3rd and 2nd.

In Thailand Davies takes 3rd place in race 2, and in Aragon, Spain, he takes a double victory.

So the Ducati riders come to the Dutch round at Assen on a high note. It is

unusually cold and windy weather, and a lot of rain, so wet practice sessions. It's Davide Giugliano who makes the most of Superpole, which is finally dry, taking 3rd position, so on the front row.

Race 1, the same day, is dry, but very cold conditions. Chaz Davies starts well from sixth and soon finds himself in a battle at the front amongst some 5 or 6 riders. Unfortunately Davide Giugliano does not feel at ease on the bike, makes a pitstop, but finally has to retire with 5 laps to go.

Davies battles himself to the front, leading for several laps, while Tom Sykes slips out of the race, and also local boy Michael v.d. Mark falls a few laps from the flag. Jonathan Rea catches up, takes the lead to win, as Davies struggles with front grip, but finishing 2nd. Nicky Hayden is 3rd. Davies: "I lost front grip even without pushing very much. Following proved easier, but as I nearly lost the bike in turn one, I could not attack to retake the lead. I tried as hard as I could, so happy with 2nd place and the points." Forés and Baiocco both finish in the points, 13th and 14th.

The next day, Sunday, race 2 is declared a wet race. A great battle at the front includes Chaz Davies, Xavi Forés and Davide Giugliano. About mid race most riders decide to pit to continue on slicks or intermediates. It turns out best for the Kawasaki team, Rea and Sykes take the lead, and win, with a popular 3rd place for local boy Michael v.d. Mark. Davies and Giugliano finish 7th and 9th, Forés 11th. Baiocco retired mid race.



Thanks to DOCC Euro-correspondant Philippa Keyser, ongoing reports to follow.