

Tony Stegmar	Honda CBR1000	Kevin Walmsley (1 st ride)	Suzuki GSXR1300
Damir Djikic	Honda CBR1000	Dean Bonthorne (1 st ride)	Suzuki GSXR750
Ian Payne (1/2 rear)	Honda CBR1000	Byron Morrison (1 st ride)	Suzuki GSXR600
Paul Southwell	Honda CBR1000	Mark Copeland	Kawasaki ZX10
Paul Simonson	Honda CBR1000	Marc Marais	Kawasaki ZX10
Mick Canny	Honda CBR1000	Michael Zrb	Kawasaki ZX10
Ron Johnston (1/2 rear)	Honda CB400	John Willis (leader)	Kawasaki Z1000
Ben Warden	Honda CBR954	Roland Anthony (1 st ride)	Kawasaki Z1000
Pina Garasi	Honda CBR600	Jason Wilson	Kawasaki ZX9
Leo Zhang (1 st ride)	Honda CBR600	Rob Langer	KTM 990
Kathryn Sket (1 st ride)	Honda CBR600	Frank Hutchinson (1 st)	Yamaha R1
Pierre Ong	Ducati 1098	Nick Webb (1 st ride)	Triumph 675
Ken Goederee	Ducati 1098		<i>25 bikes, 25 people</i>

An unusual sight greets me at the Yarra Glen on this sunny Sunday morning: a lot more unfamiliar faces than familiar ones. Spring has sprung and so has the number of riders showing up for the first time. A total of 25 bikes! I thank Ronny for riding his old-style Honda and volunteering to rear ride as I feel a bit out of my depth doing the job with so many new comers.

First casualty is halfway between Kinglake and Glenburn. A first time Club rider on a Repsol 600 failed to negotiate a tight corner and ended up on the side of the road. "Minor cosmetic." The bike was duct-taped back together and the rider farewelled to enjoy the day more sedately elsewhere.

I'm having a little fun today, after a long time, and smile to myself as I watch the two "bears", Damir and Jason, "playing together", having a jolly good time. Ken Goederee brought out his Italian (Ducati) beauty today and was resplendent in his leathers which were waiting for just the right occasion for "la bella figura"... an Italian saying which translates to "looking good".

A disciple of Ron Solomon, "Deano", made an appearance today, riding with a sporty style, having fun speeding past me as if I was standing still. I got a fright the first time, not hearing him coming. I kindly asked him to refrain from alarming me any further.

The Mt Donna Buang road was the best I have seen it for a while. It was not too damp, but still had a couple of shiny patches, as well as gravel which we had to watch out for. I did the obligatory climb up the stairs to the lookout but somehow couldn't convince the group to come up. I got varied responses to my invitation such as "shit no"... "no way"... and "hell no". I gave up and only a couple of us ascended to the top. Once down, it was off again to do the Reefton run.

Today was so nice on the Reefton, all smooth, no cars, no police, no gravel and... no usual MSR boys overtaking me... Hmm. Very strange, I thought to myself. At Cumberland Junction first-time Club rider in white race leathers and riding a Hyabussa informs us that Ben has crashed on Mt Donna Buang. My initial reaction was "This guy's got his information all wrong". But alas, the sad truth is confirmed with the arrival of Jason and Damir shortly after. Disbelief and glumness descends upon me. No, not Ben... 10 years with no incident and now this... Why?

The small group of riders who had made it this far continued on to Maryville and then farewelled each other at Healesville. Damir kindly lead on the way home. I was feeling so preoccupied with thoughts of Ben's crash, I decided to go directly to his house. I found him in good spirits but in pain, particularly when he walked to the garage to show me the bike and gear. What a sad sight, especially the thermal plastic pants which were shredded with all the white fluffy polyester stuff poking out. The king of duct-tape had well and truly benefited from this brilliant all-purpose accessory, as our illustrious President and rear rider (after lunch), Ian Payne, had used many metres to tape Ben's damaged clothing to his body, as well as all the loose broken bits of the bike so that they could get him and Honda home in one piece.

Ian followed Ben all the way to his home (100km) to ensure he arrived safely. What good hands Ben was in. Our President displays all the archetypal traits of a great leader: calm, practical, decisive and supporting of his constituents, both physically and emotionally. Many blessings to you, Mr President of our beloved MSR Club.

Despite his injuries (shoulders, toe, ribs, concussion) Ben felt it more important that evening to watch the MotoGP rather than attending hospital. Ok, Arnica Homoeopathics, delivered to Ben's via Misho, would have to do in the interim. I administered the recommended dosage accordingly.

Monday saw a visit to the Royal Melbourne Hospital which revealed the injuries... four broken ribs and a torn rotator cuff. He was very lucky, considering our chosen sport. All other administrative stuff as a result of the crash to follow: police report, TAC claim form, GP referrals to physio, insurance claim, bike assessment, new gear, new/repaired bike, new insurance, everything required to get two wheels back on the road again. May the process proceed swiftly and smoothly like his inimitable riding style.

My best wishes to Ben for a most speedy recovery. Be assured that we will help in any way to get you back riding with us again... it just isn't the same without the Ben-master.

Pina Garasi