



Ben Warden	Honda CBR1000	Tony Stegmar (leader)	Suzuki GSXR1000
Misho Zrakic	Honda CBR1000	Steve Mudford	Suzuki GSXR1000
Paul Southwell	Honda CBR1000	Glenn Aspden	Suzuki GSXR1000
Pina Garasi	Honda CBR600	Graydon Jackson (1 st ride)	Suzuki GSXR1000
Jesvin George	Honda CBR600	Chris Pointon	Suzuki GSXR1000
Roman Biarozza (rear)	Honda CBR600	Rob Langer	BMW F700 GS
Cindy Lee	Triumph 675	Geoff Dick	BMW 850R
Cliff Peters	Kawasaki ZX10	Rob Kolbeck (2 nd ride)	Aprilia RSV1000
Michael Srb	BMW S1000RR		<i>17 bikes, 17 people</i>

After Dargo I couldn't do much riding except for last Sunday's Mt Baw Baw ride where I only completed the first leg due to family commitments. So I was itching for this Sunday's ride. With Tony Stegmar leading and 495km door to door, it was worth every curve.

After the pre-ride brief at Officer South we headed off. Soon after I saw three motorcycles going in the opposite direction down the freeway, one riding on the rear wheel. That person might be saving a lot of money on toll charges: fewer wheels means less toll charges, as a rule of thumb.

Turning off the freeway heading for Koo Wee Rup we passed through a few small towns. I felt like I was riding in a rally, following the flock. But I knew I would soon be riding in my usual no-man's land where I keep riding for kilometres, not seeing anyone in front or behind, wondering multiple times if I have missed the corner markers.

Soon after the roads became less crowded and most of us started to open up the throttle. Woosh...there goes Misho Zrakic and Steve Mudford, determined to mark the next corner. Vroom vroom...changed down to third gear, full twist of the throttle to redline at 15000 rpm before slightly rolling off the throttle. I upshift to fourth, ignoring that lever on left side. I start feeling the blistering speed accompanied by exhilaration as the next corner is approaching fast. Speeding! Corners!

Not too far ahead on the medium to tight corners I caught a glimpse of Misho's yellow bike rounding up someone. I take the left hand corners with confidence but I'm not comfortable leaning in right hand ones. Should I push or not? Half of my brain is telling me to trust the bike while the other half is sending me warning messages. Damn it! I back off as soon as my brain emails me pictures of Andrew Newbury and Tim Emon's bikes. Anyway, the riders I was following are now long gone, so I have fun chasing other riders for the next six corners...er, two corners, before they disappear.

At the first break I realised the new rider with the white leather jacket is none other than Cliff Peters. A white Suzuki has been added to his garage and that explains the new leathers. Now Cliffy needs a white helmet, gloves and boots and he can be the MSR *Stig*. With the addition of first time rider Graydon Jackson, aka Mono Jacko, Suzukis are gaining in numbers. What could possibly be my next bike which is neither a 600 nor a 1000?

With the weather warming up, we started the next leg. This time I decided to observe riding styles in detail. Rob Langer, on BMW F700GS, is punishing the bike's tyres. What are they? 160 or 170 section at the rear? On the corners the rear tyre is grinding at its edge. Later when I mentioned that I hadn't seen him riding much on his new Kawasaki ZX10, he replied that this Beemer is his new favourite and he has clocked up a lot of kilometres on it. I kept riding behind others...

Glenn Aspden occasionally shifts his body sideways while Cliff Peters doesn't even breathe or move his eyelids – a technique used by top notch racers so as to not upset the machine dynamics mid-corner. Ben Warden leans slightly to the front whereas Graydon Jackson leans backwards as the monos demand it. Steve Mudford, from the rear, looks like his feet are placed on the pillion pegs. Paul Southwell moves his shoulders side to side on corners but I have no clue what Tony Stegmar is doing. Was he leaning to the front on corners, or sideways, or both? No matter what, he is very fast on tight corners. Different riders. Different techniques. And all very interesting to watch.

While we stopped for lunch Pina Garasi complained her helmet was whistling due to a screw missing on the visor. Somebody suggested taping over the hole but I had a better idea. I took some wax out of my ears and filled the hole. Not really! I had a spare silicon earplug which neatly filled the hole. I remember a few people asking me what those things I put in my ears are. My new patented discovery! I am not comfortable with foam ear plugs getting pushed into my ear canal, but silicon ear plugs fit nicely in the outer ear and occupy only a little of the ear canal - roughly 5mm. With body heat the plugs get soft but tight enough and with no pressure on the ear canal. They suit any size ear and provide adequate noise suppression.

After lunch we rode up to Balook, Tarra Bulga National Park and then down almost to Yarram. The roads were wet and narrow though most of the crew didn't seem to mind. On the steep and narrow downhill section I ended up gripping and weighting the handlebar, though I know it is not the ideal way to ride.

We stopped and took photos at the bottom near a cafe where the scones were really good. Tony fed the local cockatoo. The place is very scenic and I want to visit again with friends and family to camp. After a photo shoot we rode back uphill and this time the ride was okay as I had more traction at the rear.

After regrouping at Tyers it was decided not to corner mark at the freeway entrance at Longwarry North due to the danger and obvious signs indicating Melbourne. This third leg was mostly fast corners with signs advising 60 to 70 km/h. But hey, that is for four wheeled automobiles.

Just after Tyers I saw Pina and Graydon and followed them for a while, waiting for a safe place to overtake. We were betting around \$140-\$160 and here comes a straight stretch. I started overtaking them 'slowly' and realised my pace is not enough and did the vroom vroom, gear shift exercises to

\$210 on the other lane of the road. The front wheel hit an uneven surface and started wobbling. Phat - phat phat - phat feeling on handle bars four times and then it abruptly stopped much to my surprise and relief. HESD (Honda Electronic Steering Damper) taken from MotoGP RC211V came to the rescue. I was expecting a gradual reduction of wobbling though. Anyway, I happily realised that the safety features listed in the brochure work in the real world and one of the reasons for me to choose the Honda was because of the HESD functionality as described in the September 2012 article 'Machine of Choice'.

With a silly grin I finished overtaking and continued on. Later Graydon and I were following Tony and ended up corner marking at Neerim South heading for Jindivick. We waited for around 10 minutes and no other riders passed after Pina and Rob. We presumed there was a crash or breakdown. Luckily, neither was the case. Paul Southwell informed us, in military fashion, that he was the new rear rider. I followed the first rule in the military 'first obey, then ask'.

We moved on and later found out that rear rider, Roman Biaroza, had gone missing and a search was underway. Roman later that week informed everyone via Google Group that he had headed straight to the freeway from Tyers. A slight mash up in communication at Tyers about not corner marking at the Freeway entrance.

I hadn't had a chance to speak with new rider, Graydon Jackson, and I thought I would do so at the ride end but he waved and continued his freeway ride to home. The search crew was yet to arrive so I left for home after a satisfying ride with the bonus tank slapper experience.

Jesvin George