

SPORTSBIKE OF THE YEAR

Ten bikes, four riders, one circuit. This is the BIG one

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Forget the General Election and footy World Cup. 2010's event of monumental proportion is our annual Sportsbike of the Year test – a mammoth trip abroad with the gathering of this season's elite for two days of truth, knowledge and knackered sliders. We say it every year, but the choice of participants and the selection process gets harder as the quality flourishes. Naturally, the protagonists from each group

biggy, the £20k Ducati 1198S Corse gets a second chance.

There are also a couple of debutantes. The awesome new Aprilia RSV4 R gets the nod over the Factory version, purely down to price and relevance after missing out on last year's action because of a late launching.

We were due to be collecting MV Agusta's revised F4 1000, but at the eleventh hour, MV recalled all of the bikes due to a sticking

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test qualify, so that includes Kawasaki's ZX-6R and the Triumph Daytona 675 from the 600s. The big boy's corner is taken care of courtesy of BMW's all-new S 1000 RR; a sure pre-match favourite. Joining ze German is the reigning SBOTY champion, Honda's Fireblade, and fellow podium-hopper, the Yamaha R1.

Then the tickets get trickier to handout. The SBOTY gentlemen's agreement and unwritten ruling gives the GSX-R750 the nod. The KTM RC8 R romped the big-bore twins test and because only the best will do for the

throttle. That left us one short for this ten-way thrash-fest. As the 2010 R6 has blown us away, we shoved my longterm in the van and set the Garmin for España.

A fair test means control rubber. Again, Bridgestone's BT-003 RSs were fitted to all ten bikes and allowed some to thrive with an upgrade over OE hoops – like both of the Yamahas. That's the beauty of SBOTY; it allows strugglers to shine in a different environment with sticky rubber and a few tweaks. 984 laps later a champion was crowned...