

# cheap thrills

Who says racing bikes has to cost a packet?  
The No Budget Cup proves that you can have  
all the thrills without suffering the big bills...

WORDS: SIMON 'ROOTSY' ROOTS PICS: MARK MANNING & FLOW IMAGES

**Y**ou wait for a round of the No Budget Cup to come along for ages and then two fly by – just like that. Yes, the 2011 NBC season has been and gone; prepared for over months and competed for over hours. The two races at Anglesey and Cadwell Park were held in contrasting weather, but come rain or shine, the one constant was red hot action.

The first round saw the series return to Anglesey, site of last year's inaugural round. The 2010 race was held in balmy conditions, but the return couldn't have been held in much worse weather. Bright skies greeted the 38 teams – if they'd got out of bed early enough. By the time practice kicked off the rain was lashing the UK's most interesting track. But that didn't stop a soul, with everyone out to qualify well during the morning. The rain teasingly stopped and the wind started to dry out the track, giving each team plenty of tyre

changing practice, swapping the Bridgestone wets over for a set of RS-003s.

But with 30 minutes to go, the rain returned with a vengeance, setting the tone for the next four hours of racing. Given the conditions, the attrition rate was surprisingly healthy and the red flag mercifully stayed in its sheath. The racing was tough at the top, with Team Fossil (GSX-R750), The Muppets (R6) and Track Projects (R6) proving to be the cream of the crop. After four hours of racing, less than a lap separated Team Fossil from The Muppet Show, both pressing on with decent lap times as the rain eased towards the end.

After three weeks of drying time, the paddock headed to Cadwell Park's awesome ribbon of road. At least the weather was on the NBC's side, with fluffy white clouds replacing Anglesey's angry black ones. A paddock full of bikes, motorhomes, tents, and an ex-F1

Bridgestone tyre truck made the NBC really look the part, further cementing its popularity with the teams involved.

44 teams turned up on the day, with many looking scarred from Anglesey – or just taking the NBC's cheap and cheerful ethos to their heart. And that's the point about this series; it's all about the go – no-one cares about the show. The more you spend on the bike means less beer to buy!

Racing replicated qualifying – tight. As Team Fast Bikes, running a 1996 ZX-7R, was closer to the pointy end we'll tell the story of the race (and look back on Anglesey) through our eyes. You'll have read Moby's columns regarding the team's preparations, so this is about the racing proper. While we hardly covered ourselves in glory at Anglesey, at least we didn't cover ourselves in mud. And as for Cadwell, well, read on... ►



Above: Rootsy's Josh Brookes impression isn't the greatest  
Below: The weird and wonderful array of the NBC racers

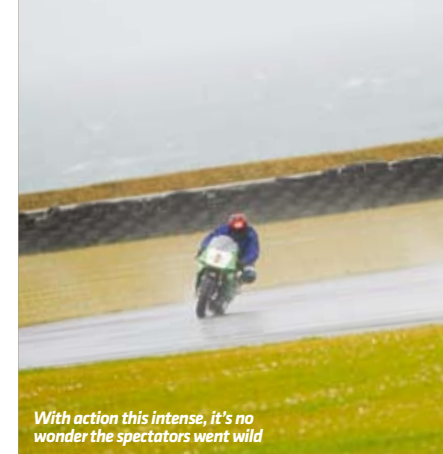




If it's not raining at Anglesey, chances are it's not far away...



There were lots of men at work, but the sign was pitboard!



With action this intense, it's no wonder the spectators went wild



BJ took to a wet Anglesey like a tiger to water. It wasn't pretty...



While BSB at Oulton Park was called off, the NBC kept it nailed

## ANGLESEY

### ROOTSY: QUALIFYING

Why do I get the short straw? I don't particularly want to go out in the pissing rain, but the bike needs checking over, and it looks like I'm going to stay wet all day, so I guess what's the point in prolonging it? This is my first ride on the ZX-7R, and although I'm hating the weather, I quickly start to love the bike. The front end is great, there's plenty of midrange and I can't think of any adjustment I would do in these conditions. This is sorted. Shit, now we don't have an excuse.

### BJ: QUALIFYING

Doing the NBC last year was about the best thing I've ever done on bikes and NBC 2011 was the one thing I was most looking forward to this year. Things felt OK in warm-up, but I only did ten laps, just to bed myself in. I knew my way around Anglesey, so figured out that any longer in the rain risked ruining the rest of the day.

### ANDY: QUALIFYING

I was bang up for this race, I loved popping my cherry last year. That said, I may as well have been a ginger during practise. I had no idea what to expect with the wet hoops, nor what I could get away with, so you could say it was steady away. Al told me to just go out

and ride, but I was holding back a bit. With that in mind I just concentrated on getting to know the bike and the lack of brakes. The old gal felt good though, just as the sun came out.

### ROOTSY: QUALIFYING

There's a dry line out there – but we're still on wets, about the only team that is. I've been sent out to boost us up the rankings, but as the bike is moving around on the wets in the dry, I doubt that's going to happen. In the end we get up to 17th. Pretty shit, but given we didn't have time/couldn't be arsed to change tyres, that's the result we're stuck with. 30 minutes from the race start, it chucks it down again...

and try and sort a rhythm out – and fail in the wet. There are some really dodgy sections out there and look as if they could catch me out at any point. I get called in after 18 laps, and though I don't feel like I've overtaken that many people, we're up to fifth!

### ANDY: RACE SESSION ONE

Rootsy rolled in and I felt like puking in my lid. But one corner was enough to settle the nerves, now I just needed to feel the grip. A red flag brings us in early and I find myself fourth in the queue for the restart. Knowing this was the time to get out in front, I just go for it. My knee touches down in the wet and

“I WAS HAVING A BALL. IN NINE YEARS OF RIDING THIS IS THE MOST FUN I'VE HAD”

### ROOTSY: RACE SESSION ONE

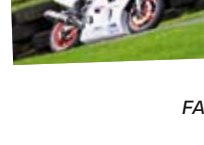
I enjoyed myself at last year's race, starting at the back, picking people off, but the pressure was on now as we were on a proper bike, and not the trusty Road Scalpel. The two laps behind the pace bike were frustrating because the guy in front couldn't keep up in the wet, meaning by the time the green flag is waved I'm already half a lap down. Still, I keep cool and pick the first five riders I'm up against off quite easily. Then it feels that I'm out in no-man's-land for ages. So I get my head down



Beaky absolutely loved the Bridgestone wets and finished the race a changed man



There's no tougher battle than the one against the same bike



then I'm away, doing people all over the place. Early on the crap brakes, quicker guys would get me into the hairpin, but the bus had the undoing of many on corner speed and exit.

### BJ: RACE SESSION ONE

A crash a few days before Anglesey had fried my head and when it came to racing in the rain I was more nervous than I ever have been before! Two laps in, trying to force myself into a rhythm, a coming together with another rider passing me saw my right bar taken from my hand by his seat unit. This left me momentarily tankslapping towards the grass before grabbing hold, noticing a conciliatory wave. Shit happens, but that was me done for the day. I carried on doing enough to stay alive then gladly pulled in.

### ROOTSY: RACE SESSION TWO

The rain's eased off a bit, but that's like saying the Arctic is a bit warmer. What is immediately apparent is that I'm having some visor issues. In the first session, my yellow visor was mint, but this session is shocking. There are times where I really can't see. I nearly come in early, but it turns out that I've somehow gone two seconds quicker even though I couldn't see where I'm going. Maybe that's the key.

### ANDY: RACE SESSION TWO

My second stint felt even better, brimming with confidence, even a slide out of the final turn didn't deter me. Rounding riders through turn one was where this party was heading. I was having a ball. In nine years of riding this is the most fun I've had.

### BJ: RACE SESSION TWO

After a quick rant and rave at my own uselessness, I dumped the waterproofs and this did make me feel better for my final run. Things were much better, and though I left a lot in reserve I had more fun and thus, cheered up quite a bit. But I'm sorry to report that I let the side down and we missed out on a top ten and a podium in class. Sorry chaps. ►



### MOBY'S NBC

As I stood on the pitwall at Anglesey and watched Rootsy pulling out on to track, I felt a strange mix of emotions. I started second-guessing everything I'd done with the bike. Had I done everything up? Had I fitted everything properly? What had I forgotten to do?

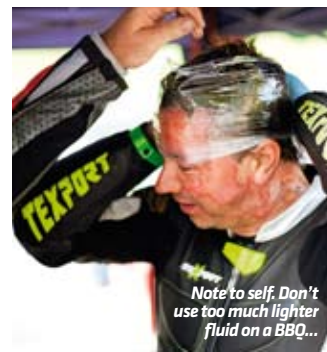
When he came back in and declared it to be pretty good the relief flowed through me like a dodgy Ruby. Then I started worrying about the pitstops. We hadn't practiced, and we didn't have a quickfiller, so I knew it might be a bit messy. It was, too. The filler cap seized in place every time, wasting us ages trying to fumble it off and on again. It sounds silly, but that lost us third place in class, and 10th overall. Obviously I fixed it for Cadwell. But the sense of pride as Beej took the chequered flag after four hours of team racing was immense. Now we just had to do it all again – but better – at Cadwell Park.

With the brakes having been a significant weakness at Anglesey, I set about trying to fix that for Cadwell. The problem was trying to get them to bleed up properly. Despite hours of bleeding, and all sorts of tricks, we couldn't get the lever firm. I was baffled. As it was, we had to go racing with a soggy lever. Thankfully the Galfer discs, Brembo pads and Motul brake fluid had a good effect despite the soft bite.

With Cadwell being bone dry, I was worried that the ZX would behave differently. Would it overheat? Would the suspension be pants on a dry, sticky track? Had I left the gas on at home? It's strange how everything worries you when people have trusted you to put a bike together for them...

It performed fantastically though – as did Si, BJ and Andy. They rode brilliantly. Me and Al got our shit together on the pitstops (although they'd have been quicker if I'd realised we could get a quickfiller for £45). And the end result was incredible. Proud of the boys. Proud of the bike. Roll on 2012.





Rootsy on his way to securing pole position. You should see the watch he didn't get...



## ROOTSY: RACE SESSION ONE

I wish I hadn't put us on pole. With P1 comes a massive expectation, so Moby and Fags are talking strategies about me going out first and building up a lead. Eh? What do you mean, build up a lead? Pole was surely some sort of fluke, and now I've got to go out and rescue some dignity for the magazine. To top it off, we stuck a new set of Bridgestone BT-003s in for the race, so these were unscrubbed. Great. At least Team Bunford, in P2, were also on fresh tyres, but the next few aren't. So I tried to do what scrubbing I could following Beaky on the pace bike for the obligatory two laps behind it.

When Andy pulled in, I was expecting to be passed going in to turn one, but it didn't happen. It didn't happen through Charlies, so I was expecting a bigger bike to rocket past down Park Straight. That didn't happen either, and by the time I got to the mountain (and, therefore, the spectators), I was well chuffed that everyone could see I was still in front. I even made it down the start/finish straight in the lead, so at least I could tell my

grandchildren that I led a race one day.

I didn't want to look back, but I can see why riders do. There was no signal from the pits (it was Al's lunchbreak) and the first six laps were tough, but I got into a decent rhythm before I suddenly thought about the bike's fuel consumption. It would need a stop soon, so I indicated to Al that I was coming in, after two easy out laps and 26 knacker racing ones.

## ANDY: RACE SESSION ONE

It felt good from the off, Rootsy's monumental effort only saw us slip to third after pitting. I rode my arse off to a rhythm, while teams

highsided, shat my pants, carried on, only for it to happen again at the same spot the following lap. A cold left-side tyre is likely the reason, but enough willies were put up me to think a lot about what I was doing.

## ROOTSY: RACE SESSION TWO

By now it was clear that we needed to do a long stint to avoid stopping again later, so I said to Moby that I was going to drain a tank, and that's what I set about doing. I left the pits in fourth position, and rode trying to preserve my energy rather than set any blistering times. And somewhere after about lap three I found a zone, which was a very nice place to be in. I can't really tell you much about it, because I just tried to ride smoothly, get overtakes done efficiently and just try to make every move repeatable for as many laps as I could. After a while my knee really started to ache (the effects of an old accident – or old age), so I had to move that about, but I kept on telling myself 'one more' each time I crossed the line. I saw P3, then P2, and then P1! Man, that's a good feeling. I wanted to try and build on this, so stayed out as long as I could. I then stuck a

# “AFTER ABOUT LAP THREE I FOUND MYSELF IN A ZONE – A NICE PLACE TO BE”

ahead pitted, sticking us in P1. Somehow the pit board kept growing in time, eventually coming in on + 54. I felt like a racer for the day, I was shaking from my effort, grinning from ear to ear – I think Al fancies my ass!

## BJ: RACE SESSION ONE

Riding third, I decided to go out and ride as hard as I could, but for a shorter span than either of the lads. Two laps in, I almost

move on a bike going into the Gooseneck and no doubt nearly got rear ended as the ZX coughed on fumes. I fumbled around for the reserve tap, and then brought the Kwak back.

## ANDY: RACE SESSION TWO

My second stint was no different to the first, but despite my best efforts I could only get us back up to third. I felt well within the groove, wanting to keep my head down and chalk up

## AL'S NBC

Due to injury, my role as pit-bitch was fairly non-eventful at Anglesey. My main task was chief fluffer – essentially an Uccio for the boys. Other roles included pit signalling, feeding (myself) and any admin duties. But big shouts out to all the boys for racing in torrential conditions, particularly Andy who had never ridden on wets and was only in his second ever race. It looked like my advice that riding as fast in the wet as he does in the dry worked out...

Cadwell Park was far more exciting. For starters I was walking unaided, which meant being able to be more involved. Thankfully, the weather was nicer and I found the atmosphere in pit lane was much better due to the close proximity of all the teams. And the quality of NBC WAGs was far superior – me and Beaky, the only boys with taste, were all over several cougars/MILFS. Rootsy didn't need much fluffing. He's nearly a god darn pro, cool as a cucumber that's been in a fridge over the weekend, and nothing fazed him. He even wiped his own arse, which is far from the stereotypical egotistical racer. That lap time that put the team on pole at Cadwell was special. Our supposed number two rider, Beej, was his usual nervous wreck. I can totally sympathise with the braking issues he had – learning to four-finger brake or coping with crushing your digits against the bar is a tricky decision. I can't four-finger brake, end of. But Beaky's attitude was exemplary. Although the junior of the team with the least experience, he instantly had a boner on in both races as soon as we left the respective hotels. He confided in me for a few tips. I said, "If there's a gap there, go for the pass. And if there isn't a gap, go for it anyway." Now, I didn't expect him to saturate himself with such an extreme view, but he did, which ended in tears – and nearly an innocent third party knocking his massive nose into his brain. Saunders is my hero. Results, lap times and competitiveness are all immaterial. The spirit of the NBC is what it's all about, and the one outstanding moment for me was when one team running a CBR600 finally got it running after burning the midnight oil, before the whole paddock and pit lane erupted with applause.



# CADWELL

## ROOTSY: QUALIFYING

I was first out, mainly because I'm the designated responsible adult to bed in the new brake discs. I've been to Cadwell four or five times before, so at least I know my way around and I quite like it. Eight or so laps later I come in, bedding-in done.

## BJ: QUALIFYING

I still hadn't got the crash out of my system, and Cadwell Park is far from my favourite circuit. I've really tried to love the place but I can never help holding back. With that in mind, I was pleased enough with qualifying even though I only was only able to do a handful of laps with any meaning.

## ANDY: QUALIFYING

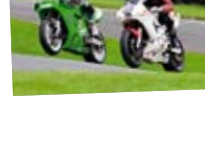
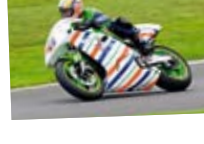
I'd been here once before when I was a real novice – and crashed. I wobbled round frustrated, but a chat with Fagan on lines saw things improve later. I knew I could find more speed still and the front end was amazing.



Everyone has a different budget – a Ducati 888 may be No Budget to some...



Cheap racing doesn't mean boring – everyone can have a blast





► the laps. That's when it went wrong. I took a line down the outside of the pit straight to get past a pack of bikes. As I pulled alongside the rear end of the beautiful Ducati 888, he changed his line, which nearly put me on the grass. I did what I could, but I was already committed to the pass and I clipped his bar with my knee. Metres past him I tipped in up the hill and after the next right I turned to offer a hand – he wasn't there. The red flags came out and I felt like crap, my heart was in my mouth. Lining up in the pits was awful, but then in rolled the Ducati, I was relieved that he was OK. It turns out the race was stopped as a marshal had a funny turn. As soon as I got off I went to find the rider I nerfed. He was pissed off, but we settled it well, which left me happy again and able to finish the day smiling. I'm already looking forward to next year.

## BJ: RACE SESSION TWO

The boys were sympathetic to my rediscovered uselessness and the short runs, to the point that when the chequered flag was waved it was only my 17th lap. Still, we won our class and took third overall! Cadwell may not have been the experience I was hoping for, but the rest of the NBC was. The sense of fun is palpable, the formula works and all because of the people that take part. I can't wait for next year now, so long as I get back in the groove...



## CONCLUSION

The No Budget Cup has achieved exactly what it set out to accomplish. This really is no hassle racing on a shoestring. The winning bike at Cadwell (which was then disqualified – long story), cost £1,100, and then £700 to turn into a racer – and this is an unexceptional story. Throughout the paddock there were tales of rescued, donated and converted bikes all done on the cheap, but all capable of delivering the one thing the NBC aimed to do – to have fun. The riders out there weren't hardened racers,



“THE LAST I SAW WAS THE BIKE I'D HIT  
DISAPPEARING ONTO THE GRASS AT 80MPH”



## OUR KAWASAKI ZX-7R – WITHOUT WHOM...

These companies, and the lovely people who work there, were invaluable in our assault on the podium – many thanks one and all.

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