

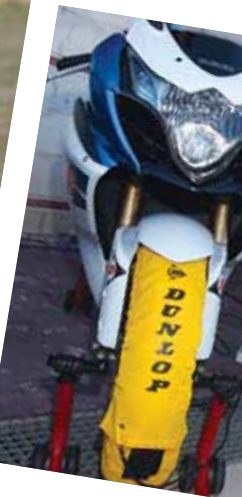
DUNLOP

D212 GP PRO

WHAT BETTER WAY TO LAUNCH A RACE TYRE THAN A LIVE TEST INVOLVING EUROPE'S FASTEST RIDERS?

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DUNLOP
125TH
ANNIVERSARY



In 1888, a chap called John Boyd Dunlop invented the first pneumatic tyre made from canvas bonded together with liquid rubber. Roll the clock on a century and a bit and Dunlop is celebrating its 125th birthday by launching all-new race rubber at the firm's annual racer test at Albacete, Spain.

Dunlop has been a little shy when it comes to pure track rubber in recent years, certainly for the trackday consumer. The D211 GP Racer was an excellent, durable fast road tyre but its super-special racing compounds and derivatives were harder to get hold of than a kilo of pure Colombian.

But the British firm's Motorsport department has farmed out some of its manufacturing duties to its French factory in an attempt to reduce costs and increase circulation in dealers. Hand delivering the clandestine recipes for tyres previously manufactured in Birmingham is a big step forward for the boys in black and yellow.

The D212 GP Pro is Dunlop's all-new road legal race tyre, sitting at the upper echelons of the range and using clever new tech to boost performance. Racing technologies are vital to

the road-based rubber me and you shred. The single tyre ruling in many championships around the globe hasn't fazed Dunlop or halted development – it still has factory teams in most domestic championships, bosses the World Endurance series, and is sole supplier to Moto2/3. The Isle of Man TT is the ultimate tyre testing facility, and Dunlop filled every single possible podium placing at last year's TT. 2012 was also the first time the D212 GP Pro made a public appearance.

Meanwhile, back in Albacete, the first day of testing was a write-off thanks to the rain in Spain falling mainly on the Dunlop plain.

We're spoilt with today's rider aids-infested bikes, tidying up any mechanical grip issues and over ambitious right hands. With that in mind, Dunlop gave us some undiluted Fireblades and GSX-R600s to sample the D212s, and test the tyres properly, rather than traction control capabilities.

There's no real merit in moaning about the

D212's warm-up time and how shit they feel when cold. This is a competition tyre designed for the track, made road legal just to pass racing homologation. Complete with Dunlop's patented NTEC technology, which allows stupidly low pressures and a massive footprint, we wouldn't recommend riding without warmers...

The big news is the front tyre, which boasts an all-new profile and added tech. Many like an obvious tyre shoulder to provide feedback at big lean and evident notification before you roll off the side of the tyre, but Dunlop has binned that ethos with a super-racy profile.

Despite the lack of silica (the secret ingredient to wet weather performance), the D212 excelled in damp conditions, as long as either end wasn't subjected to excess load.

► Granted, tyre warmers are critical to generate initial heat, but there were no nasty moments on a cold, damp track.

According to Dunlop, the tread pattern is largely irrelevant, yet necessary to pass the land/sea ratio ruling for racing – 96 per cent land and 4 per cent sea – but the tread has to be aesthetically pleasing. As the track dried out, confidence to push rushed in.

The D212 GP Pro is the closest road-legal hoop you'll get to a competition slick, in terms of outright grip. After all, the D212 brags an identical construction to that of the KR106/108 slicks, with the addition of necessary tread – and this translates to insane levels of grip.

The new profiles will liven up any bike's steering without causing stability issues, yet it

simply isn't enough to exploit the potential, and standard suspension hasn't got the minerals to cope with the grip, but the new Dunlops far from ruin the handling – it's just pointless fitting the rubber in the first place.

Dunlop's are renowned for their stiff carcasses, so much so, that the race tyres are pre-warmed in cold temperatures to stop cracking. The obvious upshot is supreme stability in most areas, and the GP Pros felt sublime over Albacete's bumpy sections.

By Dunlop's own admission, the rear's full-lean grip isn't class leading. The D212 is very stable (despite the low pressure) and is far from unpredictable, but the grip has been concentrated on when the bike is driving under hard acceleration at mediocre angles.

THE D212 GP PRO IS THE CLOSEST THING YOU'LL GET TO A COMPETITION SLICK

remains perfectly controllable. A 'Blade, with OE rubber fitted, feels lethargic and slow to steer. The D212 GP Pros made the Honda feel much lighter and had it dancing on track.

It's during braking, corner entry and mid-corner heroics where the D212s really excel, with the ability to take a shoddy road bike and transform its capabilities. Nothing legal matches the side grip, or ability to push the front off the throttle of the new GP Pro. The ability to trail brake and load the front tyre heightens confidence, too.

Unless you're riding with trackday mods, the bike will become the limiting factor with D212s fitted. Ground clearance on a road bike

Electronics can control slip and misdemeanours mid corner – it's hard acceleration where there's no substitute for manual control and grip.

I really struggled to get any movement from the rear tyre, even after abusing a tyre for 30 minutes, and grip levels rarely diminished. You can feel the rubber digging into the Tarmac and projecting momentum forwards.

If you're a trackday hero or part-time racer god, it's hard to fault the D212GP Pro. Outright grip and stability is class-leading, as is handling. Available in five different compounds to suit track surface and temp, there's a tyre in the range for you. ☐



DUNLOP DISH OUT THE TREATS

Tyre launches are usually just a chance to sample rubber on various bikes, but this Dunlop test was slightly different. Being part of their racer test, we shared the track with SERT (world endurance champs), superbike teams from all over Europe, and the Honda TT Legends team, who were testing new Motec parts and preparing Michael Dunlop and John McPint for the 2013 season. After a sneaky brown envelope changed hands, I managed a 15 minute session on the Legends' 'Blade. You'll be able to read the full shimmy at fastbikesmag.com... We also got the chance to test the new KR106/108 slicks that are now ready from dealers, and feature the same Multi-Tread Compound Technology as the D212. The KR series is a bloody good trackday/race tyre.

