

MetLife Race Report - Team MicroBilt PRBC East Rutherford, NJ



KENNESAW, Ga., May 3, 2017 / In sports, it is often mentioned how beneficial it is to have “home field advantage” – competing on your home turf in front of your home fans. But when you’re racing Monster Energy AMA Supercross, an FIM World Championship, in a different city for 17 weeks, it’s not often that you find yourself with any sort of “home field advantage”. But for MicroBilt PRBC Yoshimura Suzuki Racing Round 16 in East Rutherford, NJ was more than just “home field advantage”. Team rider, Ronnie Stewart hails from New Jersey, not far from MetLife Stadium, and it’s no secret that “New Jersey Loves Ronnie Stewart” and loves to cheer on their hometown hero. The stage was set for Round 16, adorned with a more than 400 person fan section as well as multiple MicroBilt/PRBC clients, employees, and other VIP guests.

The “home race” is not only exciting for riders, but generally means added responsibilities and appearances as well. This year, MicroBilt PRBC Yoshimura Suzuki Racing had the opportunity to visit Princeton Academy of the Sacred Heart (PASH) to speak to students about what it means to be a professional racer and how it’s possible to set goals and go after your dreams. The team not only had riders Ronnie Stewart and Cheyenne Harmon present, but also were able to showcase the team rig and bikes as well – making for an exciting and informative experience for the PASH students, one they will never forget. In addition to the school visit, Ronnie and Cheyenne were invited to participate in the weekly Press Day riding sessions on Friday, which allowed them an advanced look at the track as well as riding time prior to qualifying and practice sessions on Saturday.

It’s hard to believe that we’re already approaching the end of the Monster Energy Supercross season, but what a day of racing it was in East Rutherford, NJ at MetLife Stadium. We had an unusual day race to accommodate TV scheduling that allowed the race to be aired live on FOX, rather than Fox Sports 1 – with opening ceremonies beginning at 4:30PM EST. The thing about racing in New Jersey in April is that it’s either going to be Winter or Summer as the weather is most unpredictable this time of year, and for Round 16 we were graced with intense humidity and nearly 90 degree temperatures. But that didn’t stop the Ronnie Stewart fans from coming out in full force. Dressed in their yellow Ronnie Stewart t-shirts, waving their yellow rally towels, and showcasing their posters adorned with “NJ Loves R.Stew” artwork, the 400+ fan section was hard to miss. Sure, riders drum up a larger fan-base at their “home” race, but for Ronnie and all of the MicroBilt PRBC Yoshimura Suzuki Racing team, his immense fan section is a testament less attributed to his riding accomplishments and more to his

ability to connect on a personal level with fans of all ages. Adding Cheyenne Harmon to the team has also been beneficial to the overall MicroBilt PRBC Yoshimura Suzuki Racing team as he brings another great personality to the roster – someone who is also able to interact with fans on a personal level.

As we prepared to drop the gate on Round 16, Ronnie Stewart found himself in a qualifying position of 21st, with Cheyenne Harmon rounding out the top 30. Ronnie qualified just 5.619 seconds of the pace of fastest qualifier, Ryan Dungey, and Cheyenne paced himself only 2.379 seconds behind Ronnie. Both team riders easily found themselves qualifying for the “Night Show” and were ready to show the home team their fastest laps on the track. In Heat Race 1, Cheyenne would finish in a hard fought 16th place, racing against Marvin Musquin, Jason Anderson, and Eli Tomac, to name a few. Ronnie would race in Heat Race 2, racing against fastest qualifier Ryan Dungey and others, only narrowly missing a transfer position into the Main Event with a 9th place finish. As the sun set and it finally started to cool off in MetLife Stadium, racing was just getting heated up. Every single lap that Stewart and Harmon rode were met with overwhelming cheers and excitement from the MicroBilt PRBC Yoshimura Suzuki Racing fan section – easily the loudest cheering section in the stadium. Cheyenne lined up for Semi Race 1, ready to earn a spot in the Main Event for his RM-Z450. He raced hard, but barely missed a transfer position to the Main Event with a 7th place finish. Harmon would get one more chance to make it into the Main Event the DC Shoes Last Chance Qualifier. The gate dropped on Semi Race 2 and Stewart was up near the front of the pack early, easily sitting in a transfer position. Ronnie would briefly drop back to 7th after AJ Catanzaro and Dakota Tedder passed him. But, just when it looked like we would see Ronnie join Cheyenne in the LCQ, Catanzaro tried to pass Tedder on the final turn of the race, causing both Kawasaki riders to end up on the ground, with Stewart sneaking by for the final transfer position. The sea of yellow shirts erupted in cheers so loud that they could probably be heard from Manhattan as their hometown hero earned a spot in his second Main Event of the season. Ultimately, Cheyenne Harmon would finish his evening in 12th place in the LCQ while Ronnie Stewart went on to finish in 20th place in the Main Event, matching his season best finish.

After the race, Ronnie had this to say about his Round 16 experience: “It’s unreal to see the enthusiasm they have coming around every lap. It makes the race a very memorable one for me. The fact that I was able to make it really interesting moving into a transfer position (in the Semi) thinking that I had it, then I didn’t have it, because I got punted off the track, which was ok because we’re aggressive out there... it’s part of it. I tried to catch up to them (Catanzaro and Tedder) and I couldn’t quite make it happen, and then they took each other out, 5th and 6th, in the last turn, so I was able to sneak around. Seeing 606 on the board in 5th and my wife coming over... it was definitely the best thing that I’ve seen and that I’ve felt all year. To look up in the fan section and do a fist bump and they all go crazy – it’s something I’ll never forget.” What a storybook ending for MicroBilt PRBC Yoshimura Suzuki Racing in East Rutherford. We look forward to another great outing in Las Vegas this weekend as we conclude the Monster Energy Supercross Season!

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