

Twistgrip

Winning Ways

By: Adrian Blake In 1987, the Honda Hurricane broke all the barriers as the quickest and most powerful middleweight sport bike ever built. It won every single AMA 600 Supersport race in its debut season and has since dominated the FIM World Supersport championship.

Jump ahead to the 2007 CBR600RR. It's taken Honda 20 years to develop this lithe and powerful new 600. A clutch of us motojournos were given a taste of what the bike can do during Big Red's winter press junket in Miami earlier this month.



Honda's 2007 CBR600RR is an all-round winner on both street and track.

For the purposes of this column, I opted to ride the CBR600RR off-track to test its street smarts. After all, that's where the majority of CBR owners ride this rocket. Except, they don't have to contend with gators crossing the road like they do in South Florida.

To redefine the CBR600RR, Honda engineers took a page from the HRC MotoGP design book to create a smaller and lighter racer. It was entirely redesigned, from the engine to the bodywork, for superior power-to-weight performance.

To begin with, the diecast frame is smaller and dramatically lighter than the previous model. Only four large castings make up the frame compared to 11 welded sections on the 2006 CBR.

In all, the middleweight shed a total heft of 16 lbs. (7.25 kg), slimming down to a respectable 345 lbs. or 156.5 kg

Included in that figure are almost four lbs. (1.67 kg) that were lopped off the engine, making it the lightest engine in its class. Engine size also shrank, giving it the distinction of being the smallest in its class.

A more compact engine meant that the wheelbase could be reduced for a total length of 53 inches (1,346 mm). Contrary to what you would expect, engineers gave the CBR600RR a steeper steering head angle and increased trail when they shortened the wheelbase.

The next-generation Honda Electronic Steering Damper (HESD) acts to stabilize the bike

and offer greater agility in the face of this technical reversal. It's designed to smooth out bumps and maintain predictable handling at high speed, which it does admirably.

Suspension up front is a 41mm inverted Honda Multi-Action System (HMAS) cartridge-type fork that's fully adjustable and provides smooth, responsive performance.

Out back is Honda's patented Unit Pro-Link rear suspension that originated with their RC211V MotoGP racer. It's integrated with a new, longer swingarm for greater stability. The advanced suspension works effectively to isolate the frame. Mirrors were stock still and I felt virtually no vibration through the footpegs at speeds upward of 120 km/h.

The CBR carves corners on triple-spoke cast aluminum wheels. A pair of radial-mount four-piston brake calipers and 310 mm rotors provides superlative stopping power in front while a compact single-piston caliper puts the squeeze on a 220 mm disc in the rear.

Performance-wise, the CBR600RR's power is up 5% over last year's model with an impressive acceleration that's closer to its CBR1000RR brother. That comes as no surprise since many of the new technologies developed for the latter were adapted to the new 600 engine. According to Honda, peak horsepower is fully realized at 13,500 rpm (redline is 15,000 rpm).

Helping to create this power is a new ram-air induction system that features a large air intake port built into the nose of the front cowl. That channels cooler, dense air directly into a larger-volume airbox.

The CBR600RR's two-stage fuel injection system ensures an immediate and smooth response with even the slightest twist of the throttle.

To control throttle chop on deceleration, there's a new intake air control valve (IACV) that tempers engine response by creating a more gradual transition between throttle settings.

In tandem with the CBR's new low-lash transmission, downshifting especially was far less clunky when compared with the 2006 model and made stop-and-go situations more bearable.

As for the CBR's ergos, handlebar comfort was improved with just a slight 0.7 inches (17.7 mm) rise in height. A reshaped seat that is narrower at the front and has slightly deeper padding than the 2006 CBR added enjoyment to my saddle time.

I found that I preferred the new LCD instrument panel appointed with a highly visible speedometer, odometer, tripmeters, fuel gauge and clock. Although, it would still be nice to have a gear indicator for the six-speed.

With its chiselled and aerodynamic good looks and re-engineered performance, whether on the track or street, it looks like Honda has another winner on its hands.

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