

# Petrucci Perfect In MotoAmerica Superbike Opener At COTA

The MotoAmerica Medallia Superbike Series round at COTA gets underway on Sunday in Texas. Photo by Brian J. Nelson.

Danilo Petrucci made his debut in the Auto Parts 4 Less MotoAmerica Championship a perfect one with his second victory of the weekend coming on a breezy Sunday afternoon at Circuit of The Americas in the MotoAmerica Medallia Superbike class.

Petrucci won his first-ever MotoAmerica race on Saturday and came back on Sunday to match that performance. Although Sunday's race featured a larger, 5.1-second margin of victory than Saturday's race, it was actually the tougher of the two races for the Italian as it featured a heated battle early on with Westby Racing's Mathew Scholtz. Petrucci and Scholtz traded the lead on several occasions until the South African started having moments sketchy enough for him to say enough was enough, and he opted to make certain of his second runner-up finish of the weekend in what was the season opener at COTA.

Behind the lead duo came defending MotoAmerica Medallia Superbike Champion Jake Gagne, the Fresh N Lean Progressive Yamaha rider finishing third to salvage 16 valuable championship points after a miserable weekend for the Gagne side of the Yamaha rig. Yesterday's race one was a disaster for Gagne and crew with his bike failing to start the race with another engine failure. On Sunday, Gagne rode his backup bike but suffered from a lack of track time due to the mechanical ills that plagued them all weekend. He will take his third-place finish and move on to Road Atlanta in two weeks for round two of the championship.

Fortunately, the Cameron Petersen side of the team fared better with the South African finishing third on Saturday and fourth on Sunday. Petersen hounded Gagne for the duration, coming up just a 10th of a second behind his teammate at the finish.

Vision Wheel M4 ECSTAR Suzuki's Richie Escalante didn't botch the start of today's race

as he did in Saturday's 14-lapper, and it made for a much better result. Escalante turned the tables from yesterday on his teammate Jake Lewis, passing him toward the end of the race and holding on to finish fifth. Lewis, who was sixth on Saturday, ended up matching that with a second sixth-place finish.

Tytlers Cycle Racing's Hector Barbera was just off the back of Lewis and finished seventh, well clear of eighth-placed Hayden Gillim on Disrupt Racing Suzuki GSX-R1000.

Tytlers Cycle/RideHVMC Racing's Travis Wyman was ninth for the second straight day with Cycle World/Octane/Chuckwalla Racing's Michael Gilbert rounding out the top 10, a day after the Californian crashed out of race one early on.

Petrucci's perfect weekend puts him at the head of the championship point standings with 50 points, 10 more than Scholtz's 40 points. Petersen is third with 29 points, nine better than the three riders tied for fourth with 20 points: Escalante, Lewis and Barbera. After his rough weekend, Gagne is seventh with 16 points.

## Danilo Petrucci – Winner

"Definitely I have to be happy for this weekend. I didn't know what would be my level. The only thing I knew was this track. Fortunately, our bike is really good on braking and on maximum speed. I can carry that speed in the corner. I need to brake hard and pick up the bike in the straight. Definitely have to say thanks to all my team because we had really quite few chances to ride and to make experience. The bike was better now. It was really great to fight with Mat (Scholtz). As I told you yesterday, we go to Atlanta, which is a completely new tack for me.

## Mathew Scholtz – Second

"I think Danilo (Petrucci) on lap two or three, I could see I was a little bit stronger in the middle part of the track. I just tried to kind of pass him in the corner. I just tried to make sure that he couldn't drive and get me back. I thought Cam (Petersen) and (Jake) Gagne were a lot closer to us. I think Danilo maybe passed me



at the halfway point. I'm really, really happy to be back. Two second places, I couldn't be happier. Both of these guys are extremely talented motorcycle riders and I'm honored to be up here on the podium with them.

## Jake Gagne – Third

"Just hats off to the team. It wasn't an easy weekend for them. After the warmup, we did a couple of sighting laps. The bike was running okay, but I knew the race would be tough. Figured out what I could to kind of roll in this. I'm just glad I got on the podium. It was a tough weekend. Good to get a couple points because these guys are going to be working. Keep the ball rolling.

"I kind of sat at my pace and just rode how I could. I could see those guys go back and forth. I'm like, 'come on, let's keep roughing these guys up, make it interesting.' There was one of

the laps I saw Danilo (Petrucci) started pulling away because he had the pace. Mat (Scholtz) was trying. Mat had some big moments. It was good to get out this weekend again. Just keep on fighting."

## Superbike Race Two

Danilo Petrucci (Ducati)  
Mathew Scholtz (Yamaha)  
Jake Gagne (Yamaha)  
Cameron Petersen (Yamaha)  
Richie Escalante (Suzuki)  
Jake Lewis (Suzuki)  
Hector Barbera (BMW)  
Hayden Gillim (Suzuki)  
Travis Wyman (BMW)  
Michael Gilbert (Suzuki)

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