

MOTOGP, APRILIA'S NEW CHALLENGE

Milan, 5 March 2015 – **Aprilia's** new challenge is called **MotoGP**, the top world motorcycle racing category.

This is a Championship the Italian brand decided to return to in the 2015 season, moving the début up a year with respect to the initial plans. This is a brave choice, in line with the character of one of the most victorious racing divisions in history. In fact, in its brief history in motorsports - from 1992 to 2014, Aprilia has managed to win an impressive **54 world title wreaths, 28 of which were earned from 2006 to the present**, after joining the **Piaggio Group**. The Manufacturer from also Noale skilfully demonstrated its competitiveness in the Superbike challenge, where it quickly became a genuine dominator, earning an impressive seven world titles in the last five years.

The Aprilia 2015 season was presented today by the Piaggio Group CEO and Managing Director, Roberto Colaninno, along with Romano Albesiano (Aprilia Racing manager) and the riders in the three specialities the Aprilia V4 bikes will be participating in: Alvaro Bautista and Marco Melandri for MotoGP, Leon Haslam and Jordi Torres for Superbike, and Kevin Calia and Lorenzo Savadori for Superstock.

The Aprilia project steps in MotoGP include a first year - the 2015 season - dedicated entirely to development, even and especially in race conditions, before introducing a **Full Factory** configuration prototype bike on the track in 2016. This is an ambitious checklist but well within the capabilities of the designers, technicians and structure of **Aprilia Racing at Noale**, who in turn can depend on the **Piaggio Group** R&D centres, one of the major global players in the two-wheel sector.

Romano Albesiano, Aprilia Racing Manager: *"We have already been on the track for the first testing sessions of this new adventure that officially starts today. We chose to move up our start date, getting into the mix in the 2015 MotoGP World Championship because we believe that this is the solution which is certainly the most risky but also the best one to become competitive as quickly as possible. We certainly could have avoided the pressure and waited until next year, but that's not what Aprilia wanted. In terms of development we are starting on a solid foundation which is the result of our winning experience in Superbike and the ART project, the only CRT that was able to show potential close to "real" MotoGP bikes. For us this will be a year of testing, development and in some ways even sacrifice, to be taken full advantage of as we look toward 1016 when we will be able to ride a real Aprilia prototype bike onto the track. We do not underestimate the difficulties of this effort but we have all the elements we need in order to take it on successfully: a solid technological platform, a top shelf racing department and a partner to support us in this new challenge."*

The two riders who will be accompanying development of the **RS-GP** are a part of Aprilia's victorious history: Italian **Marco Melandri**, already a World Champion on his Aprilia in 2002 (250 Class), MotoGP runner-up champion in 2005 and one of the stars of the World Superbike scene; and **Alvaro Bautista**, Spaniard, world champion in 2006 in the 125 class, also on a bike from Noale, and busy in the MotoGP class for the last five years.

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Alvaro Bautista: *"I like this new challenge. It gives me new stimulation and great motivation. We are well aware that we have a lot of work to do and we are also aware that this will be a season marked by development, so we aren't setting any goals for ourselves except to improve race by race, working hard. I was very pleased with the first two test sessions in Malaysia. It was nice to see a lot of people working hard to improve and listening to my requests. All of our mechanics are top notch and they all have a drive that makes for an excellent atmosphere in the garage. We are all very confident and this is an important factor in order to make progress and take on this difficult challenge with maximum energy."*

Marco Melandri: *"Following Aprilia in its ambitious return to MotoGP is a brave choice, especially after the decision to move the plans up. I am very motivated. I am confident and I know what this racing department is capable of, although that doesn't change the difficulties that we will inevitably have to face. There are also some advantages, like being able to "tailor" myself to a bike, something that I have never been able to do until now in my career, helping the guys in the development process and giving them my indications. For now it is just a matter of acquiring a feeling with the bike-tyre package, much different than the one I used last year. We have a long road ahead of us, but I believe that with patience and determination we'll be able to achieve a good level, realistically in the second half of the season."*

It is an exciting challenge which has been taken on thanks to partnership with **Gresini Racing**, a structure founded and led by two-time World Champion **Fausto Gresini** that boasts an extraordinary presence in Grand Prix Motorcycle Racing, where it has been a key player since 1997 without interruption, having won two world titles and taking home 40 race wins.

Fausto Gresini, Team Manager: *"The Piaggio Group has given us an opportunity that we could not turn down to work in close contact with a manufacturer with a trophy case that speaks for itself. This exciting adventure, which for Aprilia is a return to the top world motorcycle racing category and for Gresini Racing opens up an important new chapter, is being officially introduced today, but it is a project that we have been working on already for some months. We want to be as prepared as possible for a challenge which promises to be difficult, but exciting at the same time. After all, I couldn't have imagined anything more stimulating for someone like me who lives and breathes racing passion. I agree one hundred percent with Aprilia's choice to jump straight into the mix. Racing against adversaries who are already extremely competitive is without a doubt a difficult task, but it is also the quickest way to develop. We can also count on two expert riders we know very well. This is another factor that will help us to streamline the growth process even more. This collaboration with Aprilia opens up new technological possibilities for us. For every Grand Prix race it will be satisfying and exciting to assess the technical innovations available to us and how much progress we are making, the result of the whole team's efforts."*

Aprilia's history in Grand Prix Motorcycle Racing, as extraordinary as it is (boasting a total of **38 titles**, 19 Manufacturer and 19 Rider, won in the **250 and 125cc classes**) only began relatively recently.

In fact, the début in the 250 class dates to 1985, a class which would soon be monopolised both in terms of numbers and results by the Italian bikes. The first win, on the other hand, came in 1987 with **Loris Reggiani** at Misano, followed by a 1992 season with an Aprilia leading the standings in the 125 Class, won by **Alex Gramigni**. This launched a streak of domination for the manufacturer from Noale in the Grand Prix Motorcycle Racing junior classes, accompanying the rise of all the great champions in the category: from **Valentino Rossi** to **Loris Capirossi**, from **Max Biaggi** to **Jorge Lorenzo**, **Casey Stoner**, **Sylvain Guintoli**, the unforgotten **Marco Simoncelli** and many

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others. An endless line of promising youngsters who developed into victorious riders with Aprilia, such to dominate the history of motorcycle racing. And let's not forget - as proof of the entire Piaggio Group's extraordinary technical level - that even the youngest star of MotoGP, **Marc Marquez**, began winning on one of the Group's bikes: in fact, the year was 2010 when Marc won his first world title astride a **Derbi 125**.

For a racing department which initially embraced 2-stroke bikes, the definitive consecration as large 4-stroke racing bike manufacturer came in **Superbike** with the **Aprilia RSV4** making its début in 2009. An extraordinary bike, it has unique technical characteristics for the segment that have made it the leader on the track and on the road, winner of **7 World Superbike Titles from 2010 through 2014**.

Gresini Racing heads into its 19th season in Grand Prix Motorcycle Racing, having won two world titles (**Daijro Kato** in 250 in 2001 and **Toni Elias** in Moto2 in 2010), 40 wins in GP and MotoGP runner-up World Champion titles in three consecutive seasons, from 2003 to 2005 with **Sete Gibernau** and **Marco Melandri**. Gresini Racing has also been home to top calibre champions such as **Alex Barros**, **Loris Capirossi**, **Colin Edwards** and **Marco Simoncelli**. The Gresini Racing organisation is currently involved in all the Grand Prix motorcycle racing classes. In fact, they will be also key players in the 2015 season in Moto2 and Moto3.

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