

PRESS RELEASE

**WORLD SUPERBIKE 2011 TAKES OFF FROM AUSTRALIA
MAX BIAGGI AND THE APRILIA ALITALIA RACING TEAM ARE READY TO DEFEND
THEIR DOUBLE WORLD TITLE**

Twice World Champions: the Aprilia Alitalia Racing Team takes on the 2011 Superbike championship season picking up where they left off with the double triumph from last season and two titles to defend. The RSV4, the true "trump card" last season, evolves, confirming the peculiarities which made it the bike to beat.

Phillip Island, Australia, 24 February 2011 - For the Aprilia Alitalia team last season was one of triumph and records: Max Biaggi was the first Italian in history to earn the World SBK Champion wreath and the Aprilia RSV4 brought the Manufacturer Championship home Noale even though it was only in its second year. A triumph on all fronts which allowed Aprilia to update its extraordinary collection which now includes 45 world titles earned in the various disciplines of motorcycle racing.

The Italian team's structure has remained unchanged: the five time World Champion Max Biaggi and Englishman Leon Camier are the riders who will race the Aprilia RSV4 from the Italian livery. Gigi dall'Igna is confirmed in the dual role of Technical and Sport Director. Francesco Guidotti is Team Manager, head technician for Max Biaggi is Giovanni Sandi, while Emanuele Martinelli coordinates the activities of Camier's team.

The riders can count on the 2011 evolution of the Aprilia RSV4 Factory which maintains its extraordinary strong points unchanged, such as the V 4 cylinder engine and the aluminium adjustable frame. The power of the engine and above all the incredible biking qualities which it demonstrated in 2010 were refined during the winter tests.

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INTERVIEWS

Max Biaggi (ITA), rider, # 1

As world champions you and Aprilia will be the reference point for the adversaries. Are you ready for this new challenge?

Our success in 2010 will certainly put us in everybody's cross-hairs. But we can't allow ourselves to be intimidated by the pressure. The right road is one of hard work and calm. The stakes are high. Winning is very difficult but proving yourself at the top is much, much harder. We are aware of this and so, first and foremost, we will not underestimate our adversaries. We have a great team, a beautiful bike, I am feeling great and I try not to be lacking in motivation.

Speaking of the bike, how did the RSV4 seem to you during the pre-season tests?

Quick, but that's nothing new by now. The feeling is excellent; we just need to refine those little things which need improvement while maintaining the strong points of a bike which is undoubtedly competitive. Our strategy is pragmatic: it calls for small steps, continuous evolution without radical changes. The guys on the track and at Noale (Aprilia headquarters in the province of Venice - editor's note) work nonstop to provide us with the best material and then my job is to use it as best I can.

Marco Melandri arrives in Superbike, Leon Haslam will certainly want a rematch: how do you see your opponents?

It's difficult to judge worth on the field and it will stay like that even after the first race. Only about halfway through the season will we really be able to tell who made the right choices and did the best work. Undoubtedly there are various riders, besides Melandri and Haslam, I think Rea as well, who have great potential and excellent bikes. And don't forget about a couple of old foxes like Checa and Haga. It will be truly difficult to defend the title, but we'll have fun - that's for sure.

You are the first Italian to ever have won the World Superbike championships, but before achieving this historic milestone – and what's more, astride an Italian bike – you have always said that you loved the WSBK competition.

I confirm all of that. I liked it straight away, also because I adapted well to the riding style which these bikes demand. The levelled playing field and the great competitive spirit which distinguishes Superbike do the rest. It's not by chance that the enthusiasts consider ours to be the most spectacular championship on two wheels. Brawling on the track and a relaxed, friendly atmosphere in the paddock: this is the right spirit.

And yet after the championship, when everyone expected an automatic renewal of your commitment in WSBK with Aprilia, you "gave" your fans quite a bit of suspense: in the fall there was explicit talk of retiring from racing. How much of that was true?

After such a hard season and after having achieved such an important milestone, I think it was only right to stop for a moment and think... reflect. To see whether deep down there was still the motivation, the strength to face another season. I never have and I never will do things halfway, just for the sake of doing them. A championship like the one that awaits us must be taken on with absolute motivation and dedication. I needed to have my family close to me, my affections, to understand what I needed to do. It was the right thing to do and now I have no doubts about the choice I made.

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Besides being a point of reference on the track, you are also the rider who is on TV the most, the most photographed and the most sought after by fans and journalists. How do you live this side of your work?

I can't help but be pleased by it because if you are sought after then it means people admire you. I have always welcomed contact with the public, especially with my most passionate fans who often prepare surprises for me after the chequered flag. Our fans are our true strength. It is what pushes us to give our maximum even in the most complicated situations.

Leon Camier (GB), rider, # 2

After your “learning year” it’s time to demonstrate how fast you can go. Ready?

Yeah! Last year has been very important for me. New bike, new championship, every race was like the first time for me. Now I think I’m ready to show my real potential, for sure. The pre-season tests have been very positive; the feeling with the bike is getting better and better so I’m very confident about this season.

What do you think about the WSBK championship? Is it a challenge that suits you?

I like to fight on equal terms with fast riders, and according to that the World Superbike is the best place to be. Every race is harder than you expect, there are a lot of riders that want to reach the top and they don’t surrender until last lap. I like that, next season will be stronger than ever and I’m definitely ready.

Some English riders have written the story of World Superbike. You are English, so...

...I have to do my homework! Seriously, also this kind of challenge gives me motivation. Foggy and Hodgson were winning when I was a kid watching TV, now I’m here with the right bike and the right Team, trying to repeat their success. There are a couple of guys that want to do the same; we’re a great group of English riders. Let’s see who is the fastest.

The RSV4 demonstrated a great potential. What do you think about the Aprilia V4?

It’s a good bike; very fast on the straight but with a good handling too. Now I know how to take the maximum from this bike, the feeling is improving and I worked hard with my Team preparing for this season. It’s also a small bike, last year we’ve been struggling to find the best position because I’m taller than the “typical bike rider”, now we’ve reached a good compromise and I feel better on the RSV4. I’m starting to fall in love with her, and that’s good!

What does it mean to have the world champion as your team mate?

When you’re racing on the strongest team in the championship that can happen! All joking aside, it’s a great opportunity. Max deserves maximum respect, not only for his sports history but also for the results he achieved last season. And it isn’t difficult to predict that he’ll be an absolute key player this year as well. On the track he’s a point of reference, a continuous stimulation to do well; it’s up to me to take advantage of that and to continue the growth trend that began in 2010.

Gigi Dall'Igna, technical and sport director of Aprilia Racing.

Aprilia in Superbike is an extraordinary fairy tale which came true ahead of schedule. Now, however, we need to prove ourselves.

In all actuality we had expected to achieve maximum competitiveness in the third year after our début in 2009. Last year the team gave its all to support Max, a champion who could have been expected to provide that spark just the way it happened. But already the day after the championship celebration we were hard at work preparing for the 2011 season with every intention of confirming our position at the top.

The RSV4 has grown in a way that is astonishing even for those working on it. You followed the project personally: did you expect such a quick growth?

Our bike was born under a lucky star. The teamwork between the racing division, the design department and production has generated a particularly pleasant project. We are proud to have shown Aprilia's technological capabilities in the competition which is closest to the factory product. I am always cautious with predictions, but I also have maximum faith in the work of the Team and Aprilia Racing. Last year's results, surprising as they were, are in line with the great commitment that was applied on the field.

Factory derivatives, that is, racing bikes which are closely related to the street product. Does this force some compromises?

The track is the best test bench ever for a super-sport bike. The stress caused by such a fiercely battled championship puts every single aspect of the bike to the test. More than compromise, I would say optimise, because to win in Superbike you need to have a very reliable and fast starting place which you can work on within the limitations of the rules. The Aprilia RSV4 – in this case I'm talking about the factory street bike – is an extraordinary bike which took its place immediately on the market as a leader in the opinion of specialised magazines and comparative tests. It can be defined, without any false modesty, as the most innovative offer in its segment. Riding it to victory in SBK guaranteed first and foremost an extremely important technological spill over which improves and increases the value of the factory product, a fundamental process for a Group which competes in the global market.

Speaking of that: at the end of January during the Piaggio Group convention which again this year in Monte Carlo brought together more than 2,000 dealers from all over Europe, a further responsibility was announced for you - head of the Group's "2 Wheel Product Innovation" department. Now you have a dual role with the challenge of emphasizing the "spill over" of technology from competition to factory products.

After all, this is precisely the great challenge which we face, even in our adventure in Superbike: transferring to the factory bike - and therefore making available to our customers - all of the extremely high level experience that for years we have promoted in racing. It is precisely the experience that we have gained in the genesis of the RSV4 which has made us realise how important the fusion of knowledge and skills between the racing and factory departments is.

Getting back to the SBK championship. What aspects have you worked on the most in view of the 2011 season?

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We haven't radically changed anything. That would have been counterproductive considering the competitiveness which was demonstrated last year. Our refining of the RSV4 concentrated on the most critical aspects which came to light in 2010. It is not by chance that we chose to ride on a track like Phillip Island which was difficult on our bike last year. In 2010 we rode the pre-season tests at Misano and we harvested a full crop later on in the race on a track which was critical for us. This confirms that our philosophy of development brings results.

The new rules force Aprilia to abandon the gear-driven cams which generated a lot of controversy last year, but which brought you great results.

And we, obviously, have adjusted to the new rule. But I want to remind you that Biaggi and the RSV4 dominated even when we had adopted the original configuration with the chain drive. The double win at Portimao and Monza - a track where the engine really counts for a lot - and even the final victory at Magny Cours were earned without the much protested gear-driven cam. This seems to me to be that this rule change does not frighten us.

You reconfirmed both riders. Here as well, you don't change a winning team?

Max earned our trust on the field, developing a project which was completely new and taking it to an extraordinary victory. His merits in the growth of the RSV4 are clear to everyone; his great experience and uncommon professionalism allow the team to work at its best with reliable reference points.

Leon is young but has demonstrated grit and determination. Don't forget that 2010 was his first year in the World Championship. This season he will certainly demonstrate his worth.

APRILIA RSV4 FACTORY SBK - TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Engine	Aprilia 4 longitudinal 65° V4 cylinder, 4-strokes, liquid cooling system, double overhead camshaft (DOHC), four valves per cylinder
Engine capacity	999 cu cm
Maximum rpm	15,000 rpm
Maximum power	~ 220 HP.
Fuel system	Variable-height intake ducts controlled by engine control unit, electronic injection with 8 injectors and latest-generation Ride-by-Wire technology.
Compression ratio	14.5:1
Gearbox	Six speed cassette gearbox.
Clutch	Multiplate wet clutch with slipper system.
Electronic management	Aprilia Racing ECU managing ignition, injection, variable-height intake duct control, Ride by Wire system and traction control.
Chassis	Adjustable, aluminium dual beam with pressed and cast sheet elements.
Suspension	Öhlins.
Brakes	Brembo.
Weight	165 Kg

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