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CONTIROAD ATTACK 2

SEQUELS ARE PRETTY TRICKY THINGS TO GET RIGHT – AND VERY FEW SUCCEED. BUT WHAT ABOUT CONTI'S NEW ROADATTACK2?

We Brits view both Continentals (foreigners) and Continental (the German tyre manufacturer) in the same way – with deep suspicion. Subjective stereotypes and centuries old resentment drive our views on our 830 million continental cousins in Europe, but we've based our judgement on more objective grounds when it came to Continental's tyres, because frankly, they weren't that good.

Its Attack range (Road, Sport and Race) was neutered by beguiling performance tyres from the established players, leaving Continental as a wallet-friendly compromise – hardly a ringing endorsement to shoe your £10,000 superbike with. From the fourth biggest tyre manufacturer in the world we expect better, leaving us to wonder what its 135,000 workers actually do all day.

However, the firm is finally making headway on two wheels, supplying the Swedish superbike series with its control slick tyre, sticking its SportAttack tyre onto half of all new BMW S 1000 RRs (yup, really) and

winning new OE business with Honda. And now the small team that comprises Conti's two-wheeled department is hoping to put the firm back on the map, starting with the launch of the new RoadAttack2 sports touring tyre.

While the rest of the British press prejudged the product in the old vein, and summarily failed to turn up, Fast Bikes went to Hanover with an open mind and was treated to a dynamic tour of the astonishing Contidrom test facility that includes a 3.8km high performance handling course, high speed oval (think Daytona) and wet handling track for a thorough assessment of the RoadAttack 2.

OK, I didn't go with an open mind. I thought they'd still be crap. But I started to re-evaluate that idea after flying into a sodden right-hand kink in fourth gear with over 200kph on the clocks of a GSX-R750. I didn't give it a second thought when perhaps I should have; and that's some compliment for a sports touring tyre.

So what's new? Well, after Continental persuaded rubber supremo Tomas Zoeller to

stop making World Superbike tyres for Pirelli and join them, the team has concentrated on keeping it simple; so in tyre terms that means a focus on grip, safety and dynamics.

Keen to forge its own path, it has eschewed copying rivals and hence uses 'Continuous Compound Technology' rather than using multi-compound technology as so many of its rivals do today. By using different vulcanising temperatures at the middle and on the tyre's shoulder the compound mimics a multi-compound tyre, giving both long life in the centre and improved cornering performance through the tyre's more flexible shoulders. This also prevents any transition feeling, going from one compound to another in a turn, as well as offering consistent performance over the lifetime of the tyre.

Elsewhere, Continental still call its compound 'Black Chili'. Forget the naming nonsense, all you need to know is that it believes that silica is not the only solution for wet grip, and thus use expensive carbon black, as seen in F1 tyres, to cope with the demands faced. Continental also use 'Traction Skin Technology' that means the tyre doesn't need a release agent to get it out of the mould in the production process, and thus make scrubbing-in almost a thing of the past. Essentially, all this combines to offer more wet grip, more dry grip, more consistency and more mileage. Wishful thinking?

Now where were we? That's right, 200kph ▶

THE TYRE DOESN'T NEED A RELEASE AGENT TO GET IT OUT OF THE MOULD



The ContiRoadAttack2 loves the 'sports' part of its sports touring remit



► in the wet. I can't imagine going much faster on another tyre in the conditions. The track has a tight hairpin that stresses the front under hard braking and the rear under provocative acceleration. On both counts, the RoadAttack2 passed the test, with all the might of a GSX-R750 unable to break traction – even in first. With the profile of the front not as sharp as many OE options, the slower steering suited the conditions well, providing plenty of reassurance in conditions that shouldn't be conducive.

Next up, we moved to the Talladega Nights part of the test on the banking of the Contidrom – Shake 'n' Bake! Being pressed into the 58-degree banking on the 2.8km speed bowl is a unique experience; and a true test of high speed stability for the RoadAttack2s. Generating 2.5g at 240kph, the tyre has to support a lot of weight at very high speed, and only with the naked bikes did a slight speed

wobble occur. This was at around an indicated 140mph, so hardly an issue. The tyres on the faired bikes lapped it up.

With the performance track now dry, it was time to move to the wet track. Constant watering soaks the Tarmac and a series of tight, tricky turns tests any tyre's performance. Again, rear grip was excellent, only twatting about in first got the GSX-R750 and K 1200 S to spin. Front grip varied depending on the bike. With more weight over the front of a GSX-R750 this felt happiest in the conditions, more so than the K 1200 S and VFR1200, but all offered performance that I'd judge to be the equal of its rivals.

Thank goodness the high performance track dried for a second run at the end of the day. Without it, I'd have left satisfied that Continental had a decent sports touring tyre, that erred on the side of

“ THE SLOWER STEERING SUITED THE CONDITIONS WELL ”



The tread pattern looks similar, but the Attack2s have changed for the better



Shake 'n' Bake! Contidrom's banking offers thrills galore



Germans Faulty? Not any more they're not

touring. But with the track completely dry, the tyre transformed into a surprisingly capable track performer. My first few laps on a BMW R 1200 S were encouraging enough, but once the Continental test rider flew past on a Triumph 675 at an impossible angle, I had an immediate insight into what they were capable of, and quickly swapped the Beemer for something to join in with the real fun.

On both the 675 and a GSX-R600, the RoadAttack2 offered loads of lean and plenty of grip. Oh, remember that right hand kink in the wet? In the dry, 200kph in fourth turned into 230kph in fifth on the Gixer. Steering, naturally for a sports touring tyre, was slowed compared to OE fitment, but that hardly detracted from the tyre's ability to lap quickly. The front hasn't got the feel of sportier options, but then you can hardly expect this given the other roles it must fulfill. Understeer was the other largely banal evil, mainly due to the gentler profile of the front, but more than excusable given its remit. Despite back-to-back sessions, they hardly looked used, even though they'd been thoroughly abused.

A road ride to kill time before the flight home offered the chance to reflect on what the rubber had been through in the day. Fresh on, they gripped from the start, offered good performance in the wet, were caned on the high speed bowl and then used for effectively a trackday. And now they were serenely doing their job with no fuss on a tour round the country. That's some feat. Perhaps it's time to re-evaluate our view of these Continentals. □

Go to conti-tyres.co.uk for more information.