

The CB1100R was the first road bike built by Honda specifically to win a race! The Australian Castrol 6 hour race in 1970 became the world gold standard for production races, so much so that all the manufacturers wanted badly to win the race. "What wins on Sunday sells on Monday" had never been more apt. Honda had not won since the second year with the CB750, and missed out narrowly in 1978 with the magnificent CBX 6, and again in 1979 with the new CB900F. Incensed, Soichiro Honda, who was first and foremost a racing fanatic, set up a team in early 1980 specifically to build a limited edition bike to win that most important race, even bringing Australian Honda gun Dennis Neill up to Japan to work with the team and test the bike.

Based on the CB900F, but with much improvement and parts "borrowed" from their own superbike racers, the engine was enlarged to 1062cc. Much improved

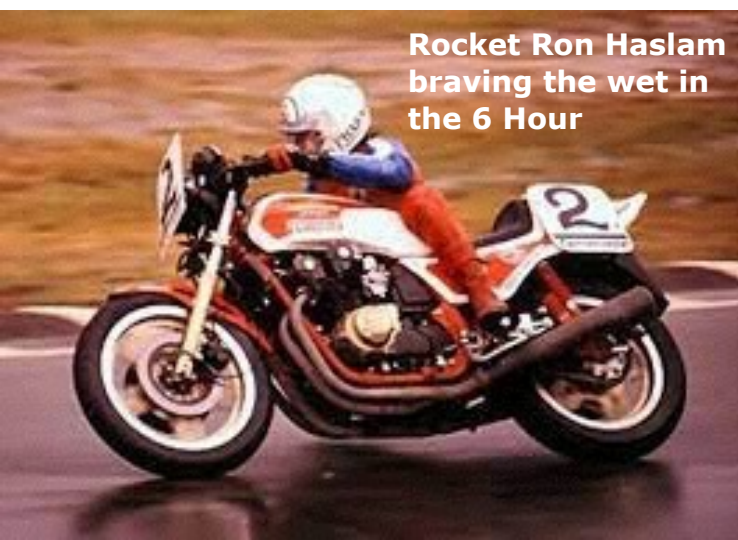
suspension and brakes were also thrown at the race special, and, critically, ground clearance was significantly improved through special engine cases. Importantly, as the 6 hour was an endurance race, a massive 25 litre tank was employed to ensure fewer pit stops. Completing the obvious race emphasis, the bike only came as a single seater, with no pillion seat or footpegs, and was painted in early 60s Honda F1 race car colour of red on white (the Japanese flag was used on the F1 cars). The result was a drop dead gorgeous machine which is as gorgeous today as she was 40 years ago! A timeless classic much in the Vincent mould, and becoming as sought after.



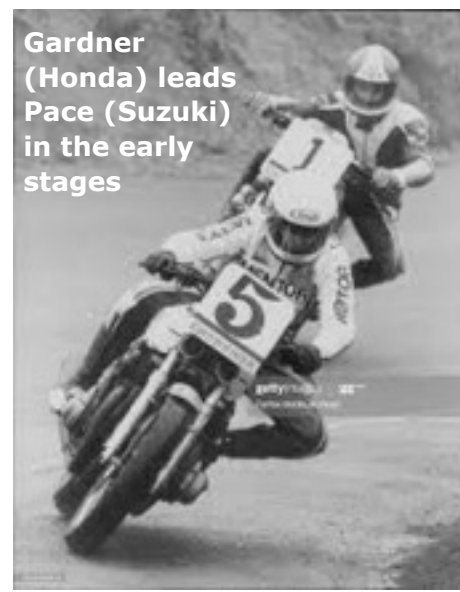
110 examples of the new CB1100 were built and rushed to Australia in September 1980 in time to meet the homologation requirements of the race. Those were all naked bikes with no fairings. Honda then built a further 900 examples for British and European sale, and in a move still not entirely understood, with a half fairing.

Despite appalling weather wreaking havoc with the best laid plans, and an unexpectedly fierce challenge by Suzuki with their own new

1100, the Honda did indeed win the 1980 Castrol 6 Hour. But not with the heavily fancied official Honda team led by Dennis Neill, instead a relatively unknown local lad Wayne Gardner rose



**Rocket Ron Haslam braving the wet in the 6 Hour**



**Gardner (Honda) leads Pace (Suzuki) in the early stages**



to prominence with a brave and fabulously committed ride to win this race (*left*).



1981 saw the half faired model released in Britain and Europe (*right*).



In 1981, the CB1100RB entered the British MCN Street Bike series for unmodified road production bikes. Unlike Australia, where indicators and lights are removed for racing, the British series even kept those on, albeit taped up, so the bikes looked even more stock! Rising English star Ron Haslam (*left and below*) took on the lead ride, along with Isle of Man TT specialist Joey Dunlop.

Ron was to absolutely dominate the series,

winning all bar the last race, where he fell, and still remounted to finish second. In a supreme irony, Aussie Wayne Gardner had earned a ride with Moriwaki in Britain in 1981 courtesy of his 1980 6 hour and Australian championship last round win on the 1100R (*below*). His astonishing speed and bravery attracted the attention of Honda Britain, who signed him up for 1982, and thus he rode the last round of the 1981 street series on an 1100R, and duly won! Both Ron and Wayne were to go on to distinguished careers in GP, where Wayne won the 1987 500cc title (on a Honda), and Ron finished 4<sup>th</sup> while developing the Elf Honda special. It all began with the CB1100R.



Unlike their Australian counterparts, New Zealand still regarded the 1100R as a genuine production bike, so the (naked) 1100RB Honda also won the 1981 New Zealand 6 hour.

