

# REVIEW - HONDA CBR1000RR

## REVIEW BY HEIN JONKER

2006 Honda CBR1000RR - Features & Benefits

New for 2006:

- New cylinder-head • New cylinder-head combustion chamber shape • New intake cam • New intake valves
- Intake valve springs • Redline increased • New transmission gears • New clutch needle bearings
- Redesigned ram-air intake screen grid • New exhaust system • New chassis geometry • New, larger full-floating 320mm front disc brakes • Revised front suspension settings • Revised rear suspension includes new linkage
- All-new bodywork • Improved seat foam • Exciting new colours.



Though none of the numerous changes made to it aren't especially radical, they do add up to make the new Blade even more of a complete package. Only time will tell whether the Honda will be able to ultimately match or beat its superbike opposition. But I'd stick my neck out and say that the vast majority of riders will be able to get more from the Blade than the others - simply because it's so useable and friendly. The new bike doesn't look too much different, retaining a very similar overall shape to the current bike. Changes to the engine and chassis are just as subtle.

Weight paring on stuff like the cams, radiator and engine covers, along with a lighter exhaust, and ECU help account for the claimed 3kg saving overall on dry weight. And changes to the intake and exhaust ports, combustion chamber shape, and two, rather than a single inlet valve spring, contribute to the claimed boost in midrange power and a 550rpm-higher red-line.

With a very slightly steeper head angle, and marginally shorter trail and swingarm lengths reducing wheelbase by 10mm, the Honda engineers told us to expect a sharper turning motorcycle. And while they were at it, they also pointed out a stiffer crank and redesigned gearbox for greater reliability, some bigger brake discs for extra stopping power, and lower gearing to make acceleration a bit brisker. None of those changes suggest a very different bike to the current model. But believe me, the new Blade is noticeably improved.

For starter's it's a bit lighter up top, and you can notice that just from hauling it up from its stand. And it's definitely got sharper steering too. I hadn't even gone around the second bend, before I could tell the response was sharp. And this trait was something I was going to notice a lot more throughout the day.

The boost to the midrange and torque is evident, and that combined with the higher redline, means the power is now more broadly spread, easier and more forgiving to use. This means you can hang onto the same gear for longer and the new bike definitely doesn't need the same number of changes to keep the pace as high.

Now the most debatable point is whether, as Honda claims, the new bike can keep up with a GSX-R1000. But, and it's a very relevant but, feel isn't necessarily good enough to assess the actual acceleration and speed an engine gives. A smooth and linear delivery like the Blade's can sometimes disguise its true potency, and give the impression that it's slower than it really is.

Where it will compete closely with all other superbikes however is round corners, the Blade's chassis has always been up there with the competition, and the latest bike's is the best version yet.

The slightly reduced weight, and sharper steering really paid dividends round the M7 bends. The 2006 bike's steering is lighter and sharper and it can hold a line perfectly no matter what the speed or sharpness of the corner. It's amazing just how much small changes in geometry can make such a difference, but that's just what they've done.

It's a similar story with the brakes and the increased disc size has added extra power while retaining the same levels of feel and progression. I certainly never wanted any more stopping power whichever of the bends I was charging into.

It was an excellent way to find out just how good the Honda was under pressure, and the Blade passed the test superbly.

The final verdict on the bike's handling is quite simple. It's a lot better than me and it never got anything less than my full approval.

And that's the story of the bike overall. It's better by being grunter and sharper, making it quicker and easier to go faster on. The changes to the engine and chassis might be subtle but they do add up to give a noticeable improvement.

The latest Blade is even more well-mannered than its predecessor and all the more rideable because of it. And that's a very good thing when you've got so much power and speed on tap.

It doesn't feel as fast or thrilling as it is. Not everyone wants the more refinement and civility from a superbike.

PRICE: R105,000.00 Incl. 14% VAT



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