

REVIEW: Honda CBR600 C-ABS



What do you call a machine that almost every middleweight scooped Best in Class crown from industry experts? Easy: Honda CBR600RR. Or simply "The benchmark is set. Again."

Honda's winning tradition continues for 2010, as a return to the CBR600RR unbeatable combination raised MotoGP-tech, power, light, and handling, highlighted by Honda's revolutionary Combined Anti-Lock Braking System (C-ABS), the first time on a bike production Supersport motor. And with three new colour scheme tricks to choose from, you'll not only be in the best 600 sportbike class, you will be on the best-looking machine, too.

Skilled sport riders have historically been quick to discount the safety merits of an anti-lock braking system, viewing it as an unnecessary luxury feature best suited to the sport-touring set. Honda now aims to convince us otherwise, offering optional C-ABS (combined anti-lock brakes) on its 2010 CBR600RR and CBR1000RR models.

Having sampled a wide variety of bikes over the years that offered ABS, linked brakes or a combination of both, I could be counted among the sport-minded community content without the added cost, weight or, often, intrusive operation of previous assisted braking implementations.

During my ride to Richmond and back scattered showers and damp roads provided ideal conditions in which to gather first impressions of a C-ABS-equipped CBR600RR. There's no sudden front-end dive when lightly applying rear brake at low speeds, allowing riders who dab the rear brake when making U-turns to do so without ill effect.

My years spent developing feel and finesse through my right fingers and foot have been rendered obsolete by this system. Grabbing a handful of brake or standing on the pedal results in nothing less than a strong, controlled braking action. Although a momentary initial release in braking force is detectable, pulsation is not felt through the controls once the system detects impending wheel lock and enters an anti-lock state of operation. Neither does the chassis buck like a rocking horse, another characteristic of many slow-cycling, grab-release-grab ABS setups. The CBR's ECU-controlled plumbing makes extremely quick and near-seamless adjustments in system pressure.

Although Honda makes no claims regarding the system's effectiveness beyond straight-line use, trail-braking performance is a natural question on the minds of many sport riders. I found the smooth nature of the CBR's ABS and its combined brake effect allow fairly aggressive rear-pedal application mid-corner without unsettling the chassis. I used this technique in a series of left-hand bends up to Richmond and was able to confidently check my speed and tighten my line. Another experiment I tried was trail-braking deep into corners, easing off the front lever while remaining on the pedal down to the corner apex. Although I came away unscathed, I advise readers looking to try this to carefully ease up to this technique, this is not a fail-safe system; it does not rewrite the rules of physics.

The standard bike, with no ABS weighed less than the C-ABS model; both bikes produced 102hp and 66Nm of torque. On the street, with the C-ABS model, I sensed the feeling of invincibility that this system imparted. I found myself actually seeking out slick surfaces, such as paint lines, oil spots or loose sand, to brake across. I was amazed by how transparently the system adjusts to variations in grip.

So, I conclude, this is a great bike for both street use and track; it tips the scale neither left nor right for me. I, not once, had a moment of doubt about the 600s ability; it is an undeniable extension of the rider in any condition.

Price: R112 999.00 - Incl. 14% VAT



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