

## Superbike: A Spies slam dunk

American rider Ben Spies dominates rivals by scoring a two-race sweep at MMP.

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**Tooele** » About the only thing Ben Spies didn't do Sunday was sing the national anthem.

Former Utah Jazz forward Thurl Bailey did the pre-race singing and, during the ensuing four hours, Spies did the all the winning.

The only American who rides full time in the Superbike World Championship series, Spies scored a two-race sweep on a cloudy but rainless afternoon at Miller Motorsports Park.

Talk about dominating the competition.

Spies' combined winning margin in the two races was 18.474 seconds -- a lifetime when racing bikes that reach speeds on the straightaways of 190 mph.

The results were popular, too, judging by the enthusiastic reaction of hundreds of fans during a public post-race press conference in the MMP paddock.

"It was a tough weekend," Spies said. "There was a lot of pressure on me with all the fans rooting for me."

The crowd roared.

"It was a weekend we needed," Spies continued. "... We did everything we could do."

Even Michael Jordan seemed impressed. The former NBA mega-star and part-owner of the Charlotte Bobcats, he attended the races and met with Spies after his Jordanesque-like domination.

In the second race of the day, Spies built a 1.425-second lead after only three laps. Following a crash on the fourth lap that ended the race for Luca Scassa and Carlos Checa -- a double-winner here last year -- Spies became locked in a two-man battle with Michel Fabrizio. After leading by only 1.756 seconds after 13 laps, however, Spies gradually pulled away that left his rival shaking his head.

"I pushed hard," said Fabrizio. "... But I was unable to get to Ben."

Third-place finisher Jonathan Rea told the crowd: "I don't think you appreciate how fast those guys were going."

In the first race, Spies also burst from the pole and went flag-to-flag for his sixth win in 13 starts this season. He led by more than two seconds after the first lap and owned a four-second lead after separate crashes involving Shinya Nakano and Karl Muggeridge brought out a red flag on the sixth lap.

A rookie in Superbike World Championship racing, Spies thought his comfortable lead would be erased on the re-start.

Not so.

In world superbike, a red flag does not wipe out what happened earlier in the race. So Spies maintained his cushion.

"... I just thought they re-started everybody," he said. "I didn't know about aggregate time, so I was pretty upset about it. But then they told me I had my lead, so I was pretty happy about that."

On the first lap after the re-start, Ryuichi Kiyonari passed Spies, but his advantage lasted only a few moments. Spies quickly returned to the front of the pack and increased his lead.

After 10 laps, he owned an aggregate 6.323-second advantage over Kiyonaru and 6.517-second lead over Checa.

Neither got close the rest of the way. In fact, Kiyonari ended up losing his place on the winner's podium when Fabrizio made a late pass for third place, after the Italian overcame a rough start.

"The race went really well," Fabrizio said. "But, at the start, I felt like a ping-pong ball. I was getting knocked all over the place."

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