

## Texas two-step: Ben Spies easily sweeps both World Superbike races at MMP

By [John Coon](#)

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TOOELE — Feelings of horror and anger gripped Ben Spies when he saw a red flag drop five laps through the first of two World Superbike races Sunday.

Spies shot out like a rocket from his pole position at the start line and started pulling away from the pack on the first turn. When the red flag forced all riders to return to the pits, he feared he would have to rebuild his lead of more than 4 seconds from scratch.

"I just thought they restarted everybody. I didn't know about aggregate time, so I was pretty upset about it," Spies said. "But then they told me I still had a 4-second lead, so I was pretty happy about that."

Even if Spies' worries had proven to be accurate, it probably wouldn't have made much difference anyway.

The Texan picked up where he left off on the restart and coasted to victories in both main 21-lap races in the seventh round of the Hannspree FIM Superbike World Championship on Sunday afternoon at Miller Motorsports Park.

It is the second time Spies has swept both races during a round of the World Superbike series. He previously pulled off the same feat in the second round at Qatar in mid-March.

Spies beat '08 winner Carlos Checa past the checkered flag by 9.394 seconds to win the first race. There never seemed to be any doubt that the Texan would stay in front once he grabbed a 2-second lead by the end of the first lap. He increased that advantage to 4.060 seconds after only five laps.

On the second lap, Spies set a new track record with a lap time of 1:49.197. He wasted no time besting that mark with a time of 1:48.965 on the seventh lap.

His well-documented ability to crank out fast laps helped Spies widen the gap between him and the rest of the grid in both races. In the second race, Spies gained 7 whole seconds on Michael Fabrizio during the final six laps to win by 9.080 seconds.

The pair of victories helped Spies make up major ground with series points leader Noriyuki Haga. He is now second with 212 points, compared to 265 for Haga. Spies leads in overall wins as well, with seven victories in 14 races.

"It was a weekend we needed," Spies said.

For Spies, putting together a dominant weekend was good therapy for a tough outing during the previous round of World Superbike racing in South Africa two weeks ago. There he finished third in his first race, but a mechanical failure took him out of the running in the second one.

Spies hopes all of the momentum he gained in Utah can be a sign of good things to come for him and his Yamaha factory team.

"We did what we could do here and we're getting back into it," Spies said.

Fabrizio set the stage for a runner-up finish in the second race when he rallied to grab third place in the 20th lap of the first race and held onto it through the final lap. That finish was better than the Italian racer expected after a bumpy start left him fighting to claw his way back into the top three. "The (first) 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."

Checa could sympathize with that feeling. After coming in second in the first race, the Spanish rider did not even finish the second one after a collision sent him and his superbike barreling off the track in just the fourth lap.

But Fabrizio avoided any similar problems when he put enough distance between himself and the rest of the grid in the second race to allow him to focus on catching up to Spies. Fabrizio did close the gap, coming within 1.469 seconds on the 11th lap. But Spies built the gap back up to 2.233 seconds by the 15th lap and pulled away from there.

E-MAIL: [jcoon@desnews.com](mailto:jcoon@desnews.com)

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