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2006 Yamaha YZF-R6: MD First Ride

By [Solo Moto](#) and [Sergi Mejias](#)



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We gave you the technical highlights and a preview of Yamaha's all-new 2006 YZF-R6 in our article on [September 1, 2005](#) following a private unveiling by Yamaha of this exciting new machine. We have now ridden the new R6 at the Losail Circuit in Qatar.

The super sport wars just ratcheted up a notch with the introduction of the best R6 in history. This report is a bit miraculous for a few reasons, not the least of which is the new R6 itself. Before that, is the story of the loss of my luggage on the way to the press introduction, including all of my riding gear.

No, I am not a shill for Yamaha Motor Corporation. Yamaha had riding gear to lend me at the introduction, while my luggage remained in limbo somewhere (courtesy of the airlines). The leathers did not fit particularly well (as you can see from the photos), but I was delighted to have them, because the opportunity to ride this 17,500 rpm R6 on the Qatar MotoGP circuit was something I could not miss at any cost.



The days when we dreamt that a stock, super sport 600 might break 100 wheel horsepower are not so far behind us, but the R6 takes us into a new era. With a fully believable 133 horsepower delivered at 14,500 rpm (including RAM air effect -- at the crank), this new R6 should deliver rear wheel horsepower equivalent to the healthiest stock 750cc machine available just a few years ago.

The new R6 features an extremely over-square engine, with a bore of 67mm and a stroke of 42.5mm. The compression ratio is high for a street-legal machine at 12.8 to 1. This 599cc DOHC 16-valve (titanium valves) engine transfers power to the rear wheel through a six-speed transmission aided by a slipper clutch.

The 41mm inverted fork is adjustable for preload, both high and low speed compression damping and rebound damping, while the rear shock also features preload, high and low speed compression adjustment and rebound adjustment.

At a claimed dry weight of 357 pounds, Yamaha brings the R6 to a halt with two 310mm floating discs up front gripped by radial mount, forged four-piston calipers. A single 220mm disc brake resides out back.



Frame geometry is aggressive with a wheel base of 54.3 inches, a rake of 24 degrees and trail of 3.8 inches.

When you first sit on the new R6, you notice a fairly radical "rider triangle". The ergonomics are clearly those of a sport bike/racer. Wind protection is clearly designed to be available primarily while the rider assumes a race tuck.

Instrumentation includes programmable shift light, digital speedometer, analog tachometer, dual tripmeters with miles-on-reserve function, odometer, water temperature gauge and lights for neutral, high beam, low fuel and turn signals.

Once underway, the new R6 handles superbly. Yamaha's great efforts to centralize mass coupled with the new suspension (which, as stated, features both low-speed and high-speed compression adjustment at both ends) and all-new frame result in handling characteristics that allow the R6 to turn in more quickly, steer more precisely, and remain more stable than its predecessor. A brilliant combination.

The new R6 simply felt like it was on rails circulating the Qatar track, while remaining stable and precise even under hard braking entering corners and hard acceleration



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exiting them.

A slight wiggle from the bars was felt exiting some corners, but nothing unusual, and nothing that dedicated racers would not automatically deal with by installing an after-market steering damper. Corner entry is obviously improved by the addition of the slipper clutch this year, it keeps the rear wheel from decelerating too quickly or suddenly while downshifting, allowing a smoother and more controlled entry to the corner. Although the feel provided by the new-for-2006, drive-by-wire throttle is a bit odd at first, I was able to adapt rather quickly. The acceleration produced by the new R6 on the long straight at Qatar is clearly impressive -- pulling very hard from 11,000 rpm through the peak horsepower at 14,500 rpm and still pulling with authority before flattening out at 17,000 rpm. A very broad spread of serious thrust. Although a high revving motor, the power is delivered smoothly and seamlessly, which was an important goal of the Yamaha engineers.

Yamaha's prior-generation R6 was a very capable machine. The new R6 is a large leap forward, however, with more power, more precise handling, and more stability. The addition of a slipper clutch and the drive-by-wire throttle are a step forward technologically. This was a track test, but it appears the R6 has moved more toward the race track, and away from practical, everyday street use. Perhaps this is why Yamaha now produces three separate 600s (and has left last year's R6 in the line-up at a lower price). On the street, the new R6 will surely be a scalpel in a world populated largely by blunt knives and hammers. If you are a surgeon, this could be the right tool. The 2006 Yamaha YZF-R6 should be available at U.S. Dealers in January, 2006. U.S. MSRP ranges from \$9,199 to \$9,499 for the 50th Anniversary Yellow/Black model. U.S. color schemes include Yamaha Blue/White, Raven and the 50th Anniversary Yellow/Black. The Red/White bike featured in this article is a European color scheme. Take a look at [Yamaha's web site](#) for additional details and specifications.



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