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VFR timeline

Five model changes began with a class- leading superbike

1986: Designed to compete against Yamaha's FZ750 and Suzuki's GSX-R750 in '86, the first VFR was a successor off the original V4 VF750 Interceptor of 1983. During a CC test the VFR was the fastest 750 of the bunch, pulling 240 km/h at Transport Canada's speed oval, and the quickest around Shannonville. Still called an Interceptor, the first VFR had little in common with its VF750 ancestor. With a twin-beam aluminum frame, gear-driven camshafts, a detachable aluminum sub-frame and Dymag-style three-spoke wheels, the stock VFR looked racy, and HRC race kits were available for superbike versions. Weighing a claimed 202 kg (445 lb) dry, the VFR made 87 hp at the rear wheel on Brooklin Cycle's Patraco dyno in CC's first-ever dyno test (claimed output was 102 hp). Sales were poor in Canada's slumping market thanks to a late-season arrival and premium \$6,799 price.

1990: This model marked the switch from hardcore sport bike to all-purpose sport tourer. The redesigned '90 model had higher bars, lower pegs, more spacious passenger seating and 16 kg (35 lb) more weight. Engine output remained the same, but suspension was greatly improved. A beefier 41 mm cartridge fork replaced the previous bike's limp 37 mm damper-rod unit, and a new shock and single-side swingarm providing 20 mm more wheel travel replaced the previous oversprung rear suspension. Wheels of 17-inch diameter replaced 18/16-inch sizes stock. This version established the VFR's reputation for refinement.

1994: Styling cues lifted from Honda's flagship oval-piston NR750 were the most noticeable change to the third-generation VFR, and the flashy bodywork was an



Rosemarie Wodchis, who formerly raced a sidecar with her twin sister, now runs solo on a VFR.

indication of the '94 model's considerably improved performance. A new exhaust system, intake porting and flat-slide carbs helped make 96 hp at the rear wheel, 8 hp up on the last model, and aided by a 10 kg (22 lb) weight reduction, the third-generation VFR wasn't far off the pace of the pure-sport 750s. A bigger 21 L tank also increased fuel range.

1998: A complete redesign produced the VFR800, based on a larger 781 cc, fuel-injected engine. Power and weight remained very similar to the previous model, yet the bigger engine gave more low-end power. Fuel-injection response was close to perfect. The new engine was based on Honda's RC45 superbike, but the street bike kept the 180-degree firing order all VFRs have used, and the boomy exhaust note, rather than the superbike's 360-degree crank. A 2 mm increase in stroke increased displacement, narrower valve angles and reshaped combustion chambers allowed higher 11.6:1 compression, and fuel-injection and coated cylinder sleeves replaced carbs and iron liners. The camshaft drive moved to the side of the engine. This was the first VFR with linked brakes.

2002: Dramatic new look with underseat exhausts. Revised V4 engine has chain-driven cams and VTEC valve-opera-

tion that switches between two-valve and four-valve operation at 7,000 rpm. Linked brakes modified to add emphasis to front lever control. Fuel capacity enlarged to 22 litres. Available with ABS option and remote hydraulic preload adjustment. **cc**

