

1959 – A snapshot review first published in '50 Years of Cycle Speedway' by The British Cycle Speedway Council in 1996.

1959

First for Swindon Juniors

Swindon Eagles created a little piece of cycle speedway history in 1959 when they became the first side to win the national junior team championship. The Wiltshire side easily accounted for Dorset's Tatnam Tudors in the final at Whitley (Warwickshire) winning by 31 points to 23. Unfortunately the full scorers from this match are lost in the mists of time but it is known the Swindon team included Frank Garlick (captain), Robin Morse, Bob Thomas, Freddie Gilbert, Jeff Rawlings and Wally Pointer.

Wroughton Hat-Trick

Wroughton Racers won the Wiltshire county championship for the third year running defeating Swindon Eagles by 60 points to 36 on their own track. The Racers gave a good account of themselves in the first round of the national team championships. Without top rider M Arkell, they lost by one point to Whipps Cross Comets at Southampton.

COUNTING TIME

Officials at the 1959 national junior individual at the War Memorial Ground, Hungerford, Berkshire had difficulty counting the laps. Although Tatnam's Roger Nicholson was accredited with the fastest time, a speedy 44.6 seconds in heat six, the records show that Ray Lewis (Whitley) and Pete Saunders (Brickett Wood) recorded times of 35.8 and 35.0 in heats eight and ten respectively. The explanation? The flag marshal miscounted the laps and the races were really held over three laps! Referee Mr Gordon Davies (Hampshire) decided the results should stand. In fact Nicholson's time was faster than all the seniors who took to the track later. The best time was recorded by Bill Punter in heat nine when he raced home in 44.8 seconds.

Dutch Celebrations

To celebrate the sport's twelfth anniversary in Holland, the Hollandse Welpen club put on a special exhibition on the 7 and 8 February 1959. The stand comprised over 200 photographs, a display of trophies and racing bikes, a model of the club track complete with floodlights and a selection of press cuttings from England and Sweden as well as Holland.

The special exhibition was opened by the Director of the Sportspark, Mr C J de Jong. Press and representatives of Hilversum Council attended the opening and many former riders were present to celebrate the occasion. The Wibic factory presented a large silver cup to the club for future competition.

Moston Does it at Last!

Never has there been a more popular national champion! As Brian Moston crossed the finishing line in his last race in the 1959 final to take the win that assured him the title he has sought for so long, cheers rang out all around the track. He won the championship with only 12 points. The only thing that marred his victory was the fact that Pete Fraser who scored 11, was disqualified when in the lead by the steward Mr Watts for crossing over an opponent - a dubious decision and one which undoubtedly cost him the title.

Moston had won just about every honour there is in cycle speedway except the national individual championship. He made his first appearance in 1951 as a 20 year old riding for Chorlton Aces but despite a number of final appearances since, this is the first time he has taken the national title. He was County champion in 1951, 1952, 1955 and 1956. Moston has captained England and won countless other individual events.

Successful Tour for Lupset

Yorkshire side Lupset Aces broke new ground in 1959 when they travelled to Middlesex and Leicestershire on the club's first ever tour. It proved a tremendous success with Lupset winning seven of their ten matches. The club's big four, Dave Johnston, Roger Holmes, Mel Vickers and Nick Bedford rode extremely well throughout the tour and Johnston gained a very creditable third place in the Middlesex Grand Prix.

The scores were Brickett Wood 36 Lupset Aces 60, Harefield Pirates 50 Lupset Aces 46, Harefield Lions 26 Lupset Aces 46, Wembley Hawks 49 Lupset Aces 47, Raynes Park Tigers 45 Lupset Aces 49, Raynes Park Stars 39 Lupset Aces 54, Tooting Tigers 50 Lupset Aces 45, Blackbird Monarchs 32 Lupset Aces 62, Belgrave Red Devils 31 Lupset Aces 65, Leicester Combined 40 Lupset Aces 56.

Hawbush Troubles

Hawbush Hammers had their problems in 1959. Tommy Chubb was forced to retire following an operation. Despite having Pete Chubb back from the Forces, Hammers also lost Brian Cousins, Paddy McGrath and Johnny Cox and were forced to withdraw their junior B side from the junior league.

East Ham Wolves also had their worries. Alan Risley only made one performance in the year. Although Peter Bromley and Jimmy Morris were about, Stan Stevens concentrated mostly on motor speedway and the Wolves missed him badly. Meanwhile the Gladiators had an upturn in fortunes. Following the retirements of Knight, Stepney, Ayres and Alan Stevens, they were hit again when Sandy McGillivray, the national champion, announced his retirement. Despite this, the Gladiators, persuaded Taylor and Barker out of retirement and welcomed back Stone, Sutton and the Robinson brothers from the Forces to give the team more punch.

When Ernie Lamacq left East Hams Stars and England to emigrate to Australia, many locals feared his best mate Ted Walker would retire too. Far from it. Ted appeared regularly and brought back Johnny Halloran into the sport. Top news in the south-east was that Terry Greenaway had signed for Whipps Cross Comets. Last year Greenaway rode his heart out for Walthamstow Wolves, especially when they beat Tolworth Tudors by 53 points to 43 to win the national team title.

Things were going well over at Thurrock Stars. George Siddons returned to full time racing and despite the fact that veterans Bluey Waterson and Alan Wood did not ride to their full ability and Johnny Blatch's appearances were few and far between, the Stars had a reasonably successful season.

Team Trophy Goes Missing

There was consternation in the ranks when the national team trophy disappeared somewhere between London and Swindon. East Ham Wolves were requested by NACSA to send the trophy, valued at £90, to Hungerford so that it could be displayed in a local traders shop window. It was despatched by British Road Services but never reached its destination. Although the national archives do not record what happened next, clearly this story had a happy ending as the trophy eventually turned up. Today the trophy, one of the finest in amateur sport, is valued at £10,000.

Varnish Double

While Brian Moston achieved his life-time ambition by winning the national individual title, the silver medal spot went to Johnny Varnish from Staffordshire. He beat Pete Fraser (Essex) in a run-off. This event had particular relevance in the history of cycle speedway because 25 years later, John's son, Jimmy won the national crown to become the only father and son combination ever to finish in the top three at national level. Of course, Jim Varnish went on to even bigger acclaim winning the world championship in Australia in 1985 and the British again in 1991.

AUSSIE MARATHONS

In early May 1959 the Salisbury club in Adelaide, staged a 50 lap scratch race over five miles. Peter "Grassy" Green added yet another trophy to his growing collection by winning in just over 13 minutes. The trophy was filled with Pepsi-Cola and shared by the finishers - just five out of 16. Later in the year another two and a half mile race was won by John Vitetch (CCS) from Barrett (Salisbury) and Jenke (Woodville). 1959 also saw the formation of a South Australian Skid-Kid Association, fore-runner of today's Australian Cycle Speedway Council.



*Action from the late Fifties.
Bert Whitten of Linthouse Lightnings leads Hugh Brannigan
during a league match at Govan Rams' track in Strathclyde*

1959

Southend Revival

After being in the doldrums for some time, cycle speedway in Southend was back on an even keel. Following a meeting at the Castle tea rooms, Great Wakering on Thursday 27 August, a new club Estuary Eagles were formed. Main movers behind the plan included George Bridge (ex-Southend Skulls), Alan Hockley (ex-Southend Skulls and Southend Lions) and Den Winch (ex-Prittlewell Pirates and Barling Brigands). Among those joining the new club will be Stan Whitton, Stan Thompson, Dave Terry, Roger Rolph, John Berry, Pete Chilton and Pete Moss.

OPENSHAW WALK-OUT

Following a controversial decision by steward Nobby Collier, four members of the Openshaw club walked out of the North of England Trophy match. The Yorkshire team went on to win by 46 points to 49.

Southern Premier

Eight teams completed in the Southern Premier League in 1959. They were Edmonton Monarchs, Hellingly Lions, Raynes Park Stars, Raynes Park Tigers, South London Hunters, South London Rangers, Thornton Heath Cobras and Tooting Tigers.