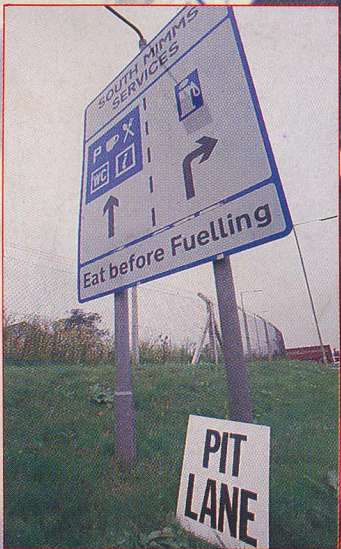
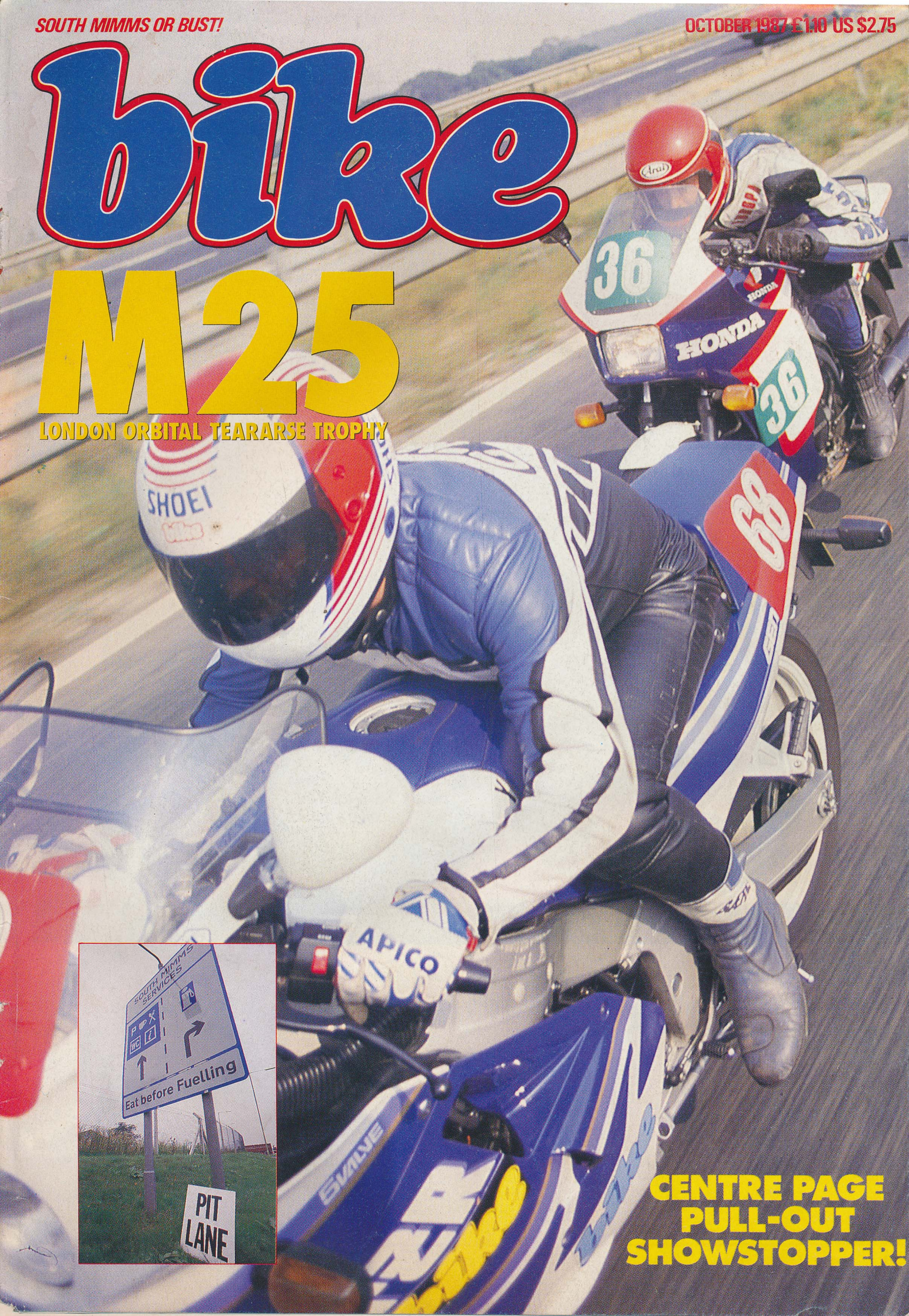


bike

M25

LONDON ORBITAL TEARARSE TROPHY

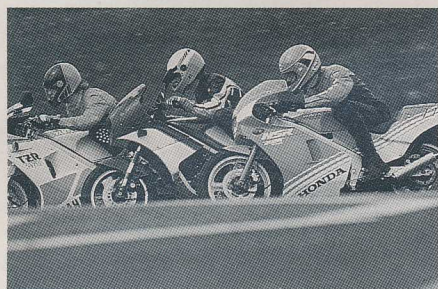


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SHOWSTOPPER!**

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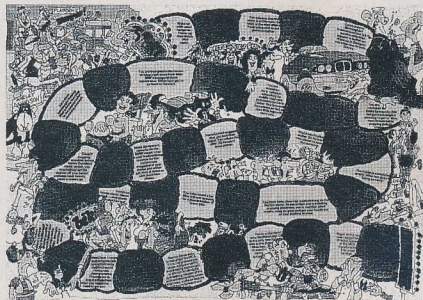


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Ron-replica John Gainey mimics Haslam's horizontal cornering style...



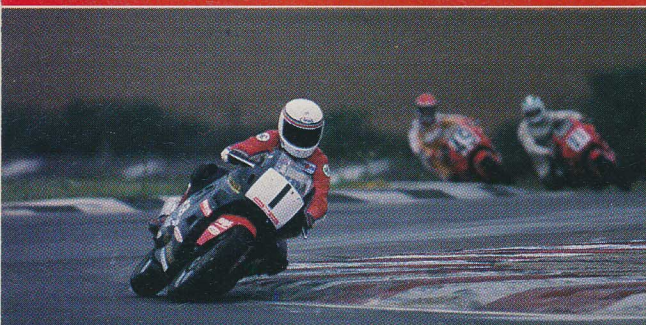
... but gets it wrong and takes a dive instead...



The leading Challengers at the front of the Thruxton grid: Johnson, McFarlane, Brenneck, Waine



... while Chris Brenneck steers both bikes towards the sandpit



Geoff Johnson, of course, took second with no such drama



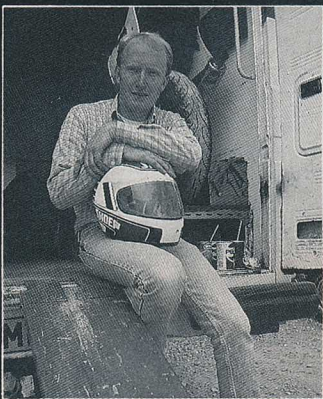
Local boy Brenneck shows northerner Waine the Hampshire hot line

FACES

HONDA *bike*
CBR
Challenge

and face-offs

With seven different winners in the first seven rounds, the Honda *Bike* CBR Challenge is proving mighty tough at the top. Roland Brown meets the four who've been fastest so far



CHRIS BRENNECK

After five consecutive fastest laps in the CBR series, Southampton rider Chris Brenneck had been hoping to make a big impression at Thruxton, his local circuit. Instead my first sight of him was when he outbraked two riders into the chicane early on and suddenly one of them, John Gainey, had fallen and was sliding while his bike tangled with Brenneck's. Chris was heading off the track, his bike being penetrated from the rear by the other CBR, and they hit the kerb and Brenneck was tipped onto the ground and out of the race. He jumped up and beat the air in frustration but at least, unlike the injured Gainey, he'd jumped up.

Of medium height and build, his blond hair thinning a little

at 24, Chris Brenneck looks more like a bank clerk than a motorcycle racer. In fact he's a car salesman, having started his own business dealing in secondhand motors after being given the age-old ultimatum: give up racing or give up your job. He hadn't much wanted to be a mechanic anyway.

Brenneck's uncle was a bike racer called Barry Seaward and it was while following him on the road that Chris crashed, wrote off his Yamaha RD250 and decided to try racing instead. After striking success early on he's not ridden a bike on the road since. He made his track debut with a couple of rides on a 350LC in 1981 and the next season won the North Gloucester club's newcomers' championship on a TZ350, following that by taking second in the 350cc class and fourth in the 250s (on a Rotax Armstrong) in the 1983 Marlboro Clubmans series.

Sensing he could go far, Brenneck took to nationals in '84 and scored several top-six placings, finishing the season by winning the televised Marlboro final at Silverstone and placing fifth at the Brands Powerbike meeting. Things looked good but the next year, 1985, was a disaster from the first meeting, when Chris broke a collarbone in a crash at Donington. "Up until then I thought I was definitely going somewhere but '85 was a lean year. After that I thought well,

I'll just enjoy the racing and if I can get on I will. I still believe I can do it — you look at the people who are successful in grands prix and they're 27 or 28 so there's time yet. And I know I'm learning all the time."

He's tried some endurance racing, crashing out of last year's Bol d'Or on someone else's oil after finding the whole thing too tiring to be enjoyable, and last season rode in the Honda VF500 Cup with mixed results. "I finished seventh or eighth but didn't get on too well with the VF — I never got cracking in the timed practice. But Ryes of Southampton helped me with a CBR600 for this season and it's been great. The CBR's more of a race bike and the tyres we're using are better."

Brenneck's racing ambition still burns fiercely but with Chris Brenneck Cars to consider he's not about to overcommit himself. "I'm keen to get on in racing and I'll do what it takes. I'd like to step up next year, maybe try the Superstocks or something. But I won't go full-time until I get the right bikes. One thing I have learned is that it's pointless to do things you can't afford. That's the good thing about the Honda series — it's relatively cheap. I was mad keen to race a 250 this year but that costs at least ten grand. I'm glad I didn't and I think I've got more out of the Honda anyway."



GEOFF JOHNSON

By his own admission an old man among the CBR series headbangers, 35-year-old Geoff Johnson has once again proved that consistency and experience are what bring you championships. He's won just a single round but in seven CBR races has yet to come lower than fourth. A Thruxton second place while his closest challengers all failed to score stretched Johnson's championship lead to a comfortable 16 points with three rounds to go. He won Honda's VF500 Cup last year, too. He'll probably win the CBRs next year if the rules aren't changed to stop him entering.

Married with two daughters, the man from Richmond in Yorkshire can't afford not to ▶

HONDA *bike* **CBR** *Challenge*

be consistent — unlike most riders in the series Johnson relies on racing to pay his wages. He turned professional three years ago, after being made redundant from his job as a bike shop manager, and has since thrived on the increasing popularity of road-bike racing. He won the revived Production TT in '84 on a 900 Ninja, and amazed many people by repeating the feat next year on a Honda GB-provided VF1000

Honda entrusted him with their VF750-based 6X special for last year's TT, and he thanked them with a couple of second places, but Johnson's bread and butter is the cheaper-to-run production machinery. As well as the CBR he has a Suzuki GSX-R for this year's Metzeler Production series, and a Yamaha FZR1000

Johnson has come almost full circle with his proddy bikes because until the age of 22 all his riding was done on the road. "I did a lot of rallies and used to go to race meetings a lot on my Honda CB750 K7. One day I jumped on it and went down to Bill Smith's in Chester, saw a Seeley Suzuki 500 racer — one of the old aircooled twins — in the window and struck a deal for my Honda. Bill put the Suzuki on his truck, took me to the train station and I had to phone my old man up to pick me up at the other end."

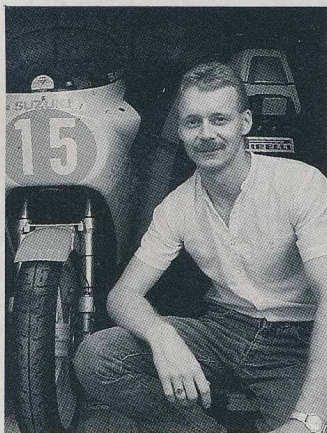
Geoff is a plumber by trade but had already given that up one summer to work as a redcoat on Butlin's Bognor Regis holiday camp. He came back to Yorkshire, took up bus driving as a winter job and ended up doing that for six years. On the track the Suzuki was replaced by a Yamaha TZ350B, and later a new monoshock 350C. "I progressed from club racing to nationals but I took a long time to get results at national level because I didn't have the money to do it properly and I was trying to run two bikes instead of one."

He'd done well in the Isle of Man from his first visit, though, and in 1980 made a few headlines with a Senior Manx

TT win on a Fowlers Yamaha TZ500. Geoff bought the bike but it was not a success and a variety of machinery followed, including a TZ750 — "some reasonable results on that" — and a Formula One 997cc Suzuki on which Johnson came fourth at the TT and ended the year fifth in the 1982 World F1 Championship. The Yamaha RD500-based F1 project that followed was less successful.

By now Geoff was managing John Wilson's bike shop in Stockton but after two years the shop was closed. "Being made redundant pushed me into turning professional. I would never have given up my job to go racing because it's such a risky way of making a living, but having said that I've done very well out of it in the last couple of years. The TT is the biggest payer — this year I picked up just short of ten grand there. The short-circuit stuff doesn't pay much; I would really be on the borderline if I had to rely on that, even though I'm very well sorted with deals and bits and pieces."

Johnson admits he's "looking 'round all the time" to set something up for the future but the bad news for rival proddy racers is that he won't be retiring for some time. "I'm riding better now than I was last year. When I stop improving or getting results or earning money or enjoying racing I'll pack it in, but not yet. I'm looking to race maybe until I'm 40. I don't see why not."

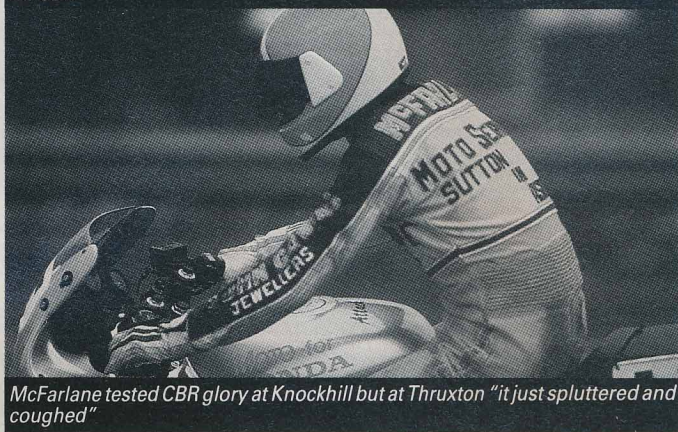


ERIC McFARLANE

"He's not infallible but he rides with his head. If he'd been a bit younger and a bit more harum-scarum I'd have said there was a chance but after today it's getting to the point where barring bad luck or incidents on Geoff's part, I'm struggling," admitted Eric McFarlane, in a soft Scots



Geoff Johnson pays his mortgage with a GSX-R750 and an FZR1000 as well as the CBR



McFarlane tested CBR glory at Knockhill but at Thruxton "it just spluttered and coughed"

accent, of Mr Johnson and of his own CBR Challenge chances. A persistent misfire had forced the slim, fair-haired McFarlane out of the Thruxton CBR round, costing him points and — more importantly — prize money.

As the country's newest professional racer, that hurt. Currently working out his notice as a sales rep for Pirelli Tyres, there'd be no new job for Eric McFarlane when he finished at the end of the month. "Once I sign on the dole in September I'm going to apply for the government's Enterprise Allowance to set up as a full-time racer — I've been in and enquired and they cannae see why not," he said confidently. "When you're unemployed they're always looking to send you for interviews and I just don't want another job. I think if I did nae go full-time now the chance would pass me by and I'd never know if I could have made it, so I thought I'd give it a go. I've sat down and worked it out and I think I can make it pay. I'm hoping to spend the winter racing in New Zealand."

It was a big step to take for an obviously intelligent 25-year-old from Dunfermline who admits to having little luck with sponsorship before moving down to England 18 months ago. After starting racing on a production Ducati

900, Eric rode a Suzuki GSX1100 to the Auto 66 and North East club championships in 1981. Then he turned to nationals and, with fellow Scot Howard Selby, made a bit of a name for himself on a Katana in the Streetbike production series.

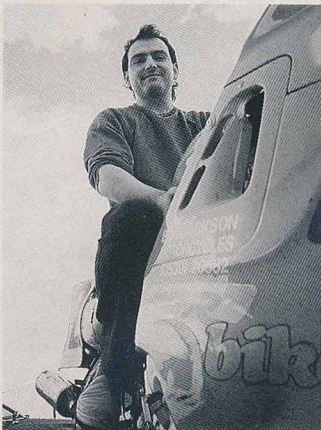
"We were consistently the first two Suzuki's and encouraged by that I jumped in at the deep end with a TZ750 Yamaha. But I just didn't have the finance to run it; I was buying secondhand tyres and crashing all over the place. I ended up doing myself in at a Mickey Mouse little farmyard circuit called East Fortune — the bike high-sided and landed on the back of my neck.

I took 1984 off but it did give me time to sit back and see who was getting the sponsorship. I'd always thought that if you could ride a bike you'd get some kind of help but there was obviously more to it than that."

McFarlane sold the TZ750 and in 1985 returned with a production GSX-R750 Suzuki and a Yamaha-powered F2 bike. After leaving Scotland — "it's taken a bit of getting used to, living down here, but I wish I'd done it years ago; there's no sponsorship up there" — Eric stepped up his efforts and finished 1986 in third place in the 750cc Metzeler Production series. This year he's riding four different bikes:

production and Superstock GSX-R750s, a GSX-R1100 proddy bike and the CBR600, the last two provided by dealers he'd met through the Pirelli job.

"I've been pushed into going full-time by the amount of time I've been working on the bikes. You get home at tea-time, work all night on the bikes, load up next morning to go off to Mallory or somewhere and by the time you get there your eyes are hanging out the back of your head. Now I'll be training three days a week, which will definitely help, and I'll be able to relax more and just do the racing, although there'll be a bit more financial pressure. It'll be worse for my wife. I'm alright, I'm getting the enjoyment - she'll be working full-time and just getting the bills. We'll have to see how it goes . . ."



IAN WAINE

Ian Waine's mates and girlfriend had been primed to give him pit signals of his position in the season's second CBR600 round at Brands Hatch but the board he saw at the end of the first lap was a bit superfluous - he knew he was winning, thanks very much. If they were surprised in the pits Ian was pretty stunned himself. A year ago he'd been getting used to winning club races on his Suzuki RG500 Gamma; now here he was leading a gridful of serious national types.

He finished second to Chris Brenneck that day. "If I'd been a bit more pushy I might have won it. There was just one corner where he was a bit slower than I was and now I might have tried nipping inside him. But I was a bit inexperienced so I thought I'd settle for second." He'd have to wait for the wet Cadwell round before winning but by then the short, stocky 23-year-old from the Lake District had proved his Brands result was no fluke with a couple of

seventh places and a regular bottle of champagne for being best 'young rider'.

Waine started racing five years ago after deciding that his wages as a car mechanic in his native Kendal wouldn't stretch to insuring his KH400 for the road. "I thought I'd try it on the track instead so I went to Cadwell, came last in every race and got lapped by blokes on LCs," he grins. "They were obviously the bikes to have so I went out and spent £500 on a dog of an LC that someone had put together out of bits. That was a bit better - at least I wasn't last all the time any more."

For the next season Ian had the Yamaha tuned by Stan Stephens. "It really flew. I was third in the Formula Five club championship until the last meeting, then it blew up and I dropped back to fourth. The next year I had it tuned again and it kept blowing up - I used to crash a lot and hardly finished at all, mainly because of poor maintenance. In the end it broke so much I had to pack in for that season but I saved up hard and bought an RG500 Gamma from Bob Jackson Motorcycles in Kendal."

By now Ian was riding fast enough to need more ground clearance than the Gamma could deliver. But the bike was fast and reliable, and he finished last season by winning the Formula Five's 500cc championship and coming second in the 1300cc Open and Production championships. This year's CBR600 racing was a different world, though, and Ian was as surprised as anyone by his second place at Brands.

His finest hour came at Cadwell, where Waine took the lead on the first lap of a streaming wet race and pulled away to win, setting the fastest lap and taking home a handy £450 in prize money. It's enough to make him dream of a career in racing. "I don't want to work in the garage all my life - there must be easier jobs for more money than that. I'd love to turn professional if I were good enough."

For now Ian is content to aim for a top-five place in the CBR challenge. "It's a great series - there's a lot of physical contact and it's made me ride a lot harder. If I'd stayed at club level I'd just have carried on at the same pace but there's a hell of a difference. At Snetterton I got tyre marks on my elbow where somebody came up the inside and put his front wheel on my arm . . . but I didn't let him past." And he grins like a true proddy racing veteran.

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