



FORMULA TWO

The 100-Mile Dash

Nineteen-eighty-two marked a change in the AMA's traditional "lightweight" classes. The two old lightweight classes—for 250cc-mounted Experts and Novices—were scrapped, and recombined under the banner of "Formula Two." In the new system, the rules grouped all riders together, provided heat races to order the starting grid for the final, and offered a consolation race for those who didn't make the first cut. Segregating lightweight riders on the basis of heat races at Daytona rather than license status made sense: first, many AMA "Novices" in past years weren't real Novices anyway—witness Freddie Spencer in 1978; second, many Expert-licensed 250 riders

were such droners that gifted beginners with 100 miles of experience could summarily smoke the experienced slow-pokes; and third, heat races would divide the field the way licenses did 10 years ago: by speed and ability.

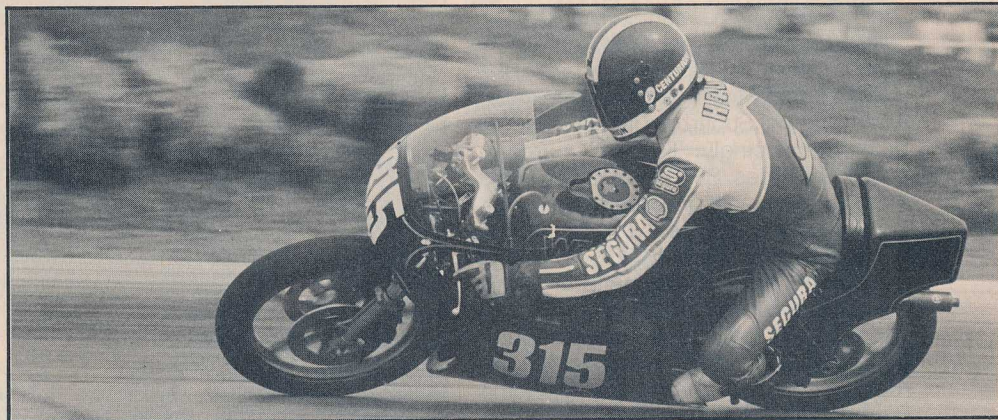
While Formula Two rules permit air-cooled two-stroke twins up to 430cc, standard battle iron remains TZ250 Yamahas—H and Powervalve models. Yes, the innovative builder could piece together an extremely good 350 Yamaha, based on older air-cooled cylinders (updated via a porting tool) and the latest Europe-only crossover expansion chambers, the kind fitted to late-model water-cooled TZ350 racers built for Europe; and, yes, a bright fellow could mate the

"standard" top-end of a 430 club-type production racer (TZ700 pistons running inside punched out RD400 cylinders) to an older TZF or TZG chassis and fit appropriate expansion chambers; and, yes, some tried these approaches and will be back later in the year to perfect their 350/430 air-cooled weapons. Formula Two rules encompass air-cooled four-stroke 500 singles and 425cc twins, but the joy of such things seems to be in the building rather than the racing. Serious racers in Formula Two stayed with TZH-TZJ armament; the stuff isn't cheap, but it's race-proven, and serious guys use Daytona as a racecourse rather than a testing station for new ideas.

Two-fifty kingpin of 1981, Eddie Law-

son, and his distributor-curried KR250 were conspicuous by their absence; Lawson's Superbike and F1 duties (KR500 two-stroke square-four) filled Eddie's Daytona agenda. Two-stroke tandem twins were found in the Daytona line—the Armstrong (Rotax-powered) and the Waddon-Ehrlich (WE), a Brit-Bike using modified Rotax engines with top-ends developed by Dr. Josef Ehrlich, a two-stroke whiz from the 1960s who, after a long absence from motorcycle racing, surfaced as a principal at the re-organized Waddon concern in England. WE brought over three bikes, spear-headed by British racer Tony Head. WE claims something like 70 horsepower from its version of the Rotax, up considerably from the 58–62 horsepower claimed by Rotax, the Austrian engine-building subsidiary of Bombardier, the manufacturer of Can-Am motorcycles. Rosy optimism surrounded the black and gold WE camp, but track performance suggested that about 10 horsepower must have been left back in England. Still, Rich Schlachter, among others, was impressed: "You know, that WE-Rotax is fast; it has enough power to win here." Which could be taken to mean something on par with the power of a good to excellent TZ—low- to mid-sixties.

Almost every year, the 250s produce the closest racing, from green flag to



at Daytona in packs, which poke holes in the air more efficiently than a single machine, riders are ever mindful of staying with the group, and the fastest and quickest in-crowd is right there at the front.

The composition of the final fast congregation was expected: Jimmy Filice had won the quicker of two F2 heats over Sam McDonald, and Rich Schlachter had edged Martin Wimmer, the German National 250/350 champion, in the second. In winning the first heat Filice had run at least one 2:14-and-change, while Rich and the German had been in the fifteens. Head had brought the WE home in the first heat in fourth, behind evergreen Craig Morris.

In the first 10 miles of the 100-miler,

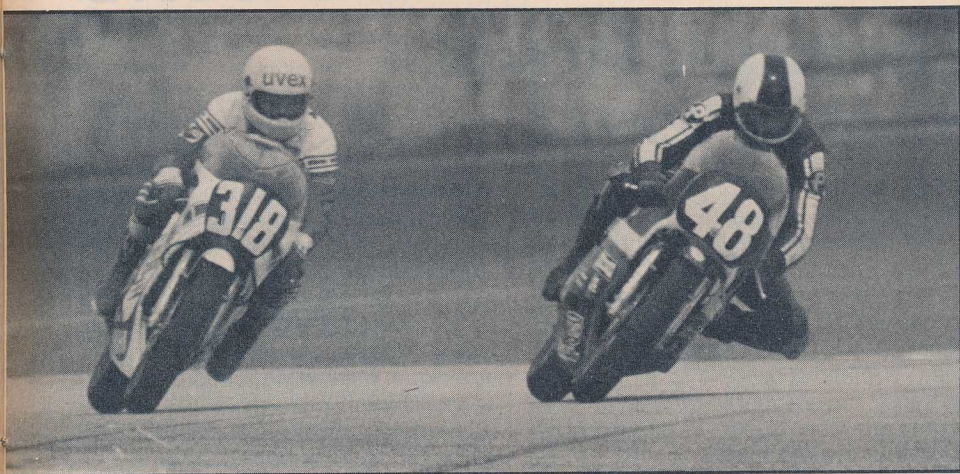
the chicane and a kinked throttle cable.

Fifty miles into the race, the German-American scrape continued about seven seconds ahead of McDonald, who in turn had 30 seconds on Head, who had been running in splendid isolation. A tight threesome composed of Canadian Alan LaBrosse, West German Jurgen Schmid and Californian John Glover steadily closed on Head's WE-Rotax. Behind this trio, Craig Morris slipped backward, eventually yielding to Don Greene—last year's Novice champion—but still ahead of tenth-placed Hugh Humble.

Up front, Schlachter understood that Wimmer was going to be around at the finish, either slightly ahead of Rich or a nip behind. Lightweight racing becomes the saga of the last lap—and, in particular, the drama from the chicane to the finish line. Schlachter considered his options. He had spent about 80 miles with Wimmer, whom he knew well from European racing last year. Rich understood that Wimmer's bike was a bit stronger in the mid-range than his own, though the top-end speed was a draw. If Wimmer understood that as well, then Schlachter couldn't tolerate Wimmer getting into the chicane first on the last lap, balking Schlachter there, then accelerating harder out of the chicane, getting space on Rich out on the wall, and outrunning the American to the finish line. The Schlachter game plan read: dive into the chicane ahead of Wimmer at full sweat, get through there and the hell out in one big hurry, open a gap and hope all of the following: that Wimmer couldn't close up out of the chicane, draft in behind and zip by at the finish.

The Schlachter plan worked—and Rich won, with Wimmer inches in arrears. Sam McDonald cruised in third; Head finished fourth, holding off LaBrosse in fifth, who had the best of Schmid and Glover. Don Greene collected eighth, Craig Morris ninth, and Hugh Humble tenth. In the Dunlop garage there were cheers because Dunlop had broken the Goodyear hold in 250 racing at Daytona. Four out of the first five were on Dunlops, and in a race where little things can make a big difference, the Dunlop switch was big news indeed.

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checked, seen at Daytona. The reasons are few and obvious. First, since nearly everyone uses the basic, current 250 Yamaha, there's an equipment parity rarely known in other classes. While some bikes may have double-disc fronts, others titanium parts, and still others special chambers, the fundamental hardware is identical, and creative-types often modify themselves back a few places—or miles. Second, 250 racing is a 100-mile dash, without pit calls to break up the field. Third, since 250s are easier to ride well than 750s, more riders can be competitive on the smaller bikes, even though the very best Formula One riders don't ride lightweights anymore. Fourth, since 250s run harder and faster

Schlachter started slowly and followed the Filice-McDonald-Wimmer trio the distance of a long gulp. Filice, ready to break out on his own, succeeded in tossing his Yamaha away in turn two on the fourth tour: maybe oil, maybe water, maybe enthusiasm, but surely not enough traction. This incident left Sam and Wimmer dueling in front, clicking off fifteens and sixteens, soon to be joined by Schlachter, who inched his way up, having given fourth-placed Tony Head and the WE the slip. As Schlachter came to grips with Wimmer and McDonald, things warmed up, with Rich nosing ahead and McDonald losing tooth-to-cuff contact with the leaders in about lap 10, after he was slowed by hay scattered in