

Bernie's in...

AS THE worst weather for 15 years put a chilling damper on preparations for the Scottish Six Day trial, Bernie Schreiber said: "Right now my main aim is to win the world championship. I'm not really ready for the Scottish."

Six days later, with blue skies over the highlands he became the first American, the second SWM rider, and the third non-British competitor to win the Edinburgh club's international assault on the formidable rocks close to the Caledonian Canal.

At only his third attempt, Bonny Bernie had beaten the odds and snatched a last grasp victory. Eddy Lejeune, the Belgian who looks poised to win the world crown for Honda, had led for the first three days. Schreiber inched ahead on the fourth day but slipped to second on the fifth. Then, after a showdown on the slopes of Ben Nevis, Lejeune slumped to third behind Toni Gorgot, who, despite early time penalties scrubbed and reinstated, had staged a magnificent recovery to become the highest-placed Spaniard in the history of the SSDT.

After the highest scores in Scottish history Schreiber said: "I thought I could win one day, but I didn't think it would be this year. My worst ride was on the fifth day. I am glad for SWM but I'm not sure I will be back next year."

Though organisational short comings did not affect him as much as Lejeune or Gorgot, Schreiber is no lover of an event which enjoys prestige comparable to TT or ISDE. He hates cold and wet weather. But SWM trials team chief Pietro Kuciukian wanted him to do the Scottish and Schreiber did his stuff in no uncertain manner.

An extraordinary Italian, who runs a dental practice in Milan and acts as SWM trials manager in his spare time, Kuciukian has developed an almost parental relationship with Schreiber since the American asked him for the loan of a bike for an indoor trial in Turin last November.

After an unhappy season with Italjet, Schreiber had been invited to compete for a £500 first prize. With intense rivalry between Italian factories fighting for a share of the trials market, Kuciukian was happy to oblige and Schreiber, a former world trials champion with a flare for stunt riding, chalked up his first SWM success.



Battling Bernie Schreiber, the first American to win the Scottish Six Days trial, talks to Peter Howdle.

A dab for winning Schreiber but in the highest scoring Scottish he could afford a few mishaps.



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As world champion Gilles Burgat was in the throes of being tempted away from SWM by a fat contract with Fantic and SWM development rider Charles Coutard had been lured back to the Bultaco fold, Schreiber was the rider Kuciukian valued most. But the situation with Leo Tartarini, the boss of Italjet, was very delicate.

In January 1982, after more successes in Italy and French championship trials, where he was ineligible for national points, and at home in the USA, Schreiber signed the contract for the SWM factory before coming to Britain for Michelin tyre tests with Martin Lampkin who promptly tipped him as favourite for the world crown.

"Last year I had Pirellis. All the riders who beat me had Michelins, except Ulf Karlson, who has them now anyway. I would be happier if everybody could have the new tyres but, as the top ten in world trials are using them Michelins are no advantage to me. Those who are not in the top ten would not really notice the difference," said Schreiber.

"The SWM was the development bike for the new Michelins so their special tyres are not necessarily as good on other machines with different handling and power characteristics. The tyres are good in everything but the variety of compound available for both front and rear wheels has started a new guessing game between riders.

"The Scottish is the only trial where I have lost knobs. The problem was due to comparatively high speed on low pressures on the roads between sections. I rode sections for a month without visible wear but 100 miles of Scottish road works played havoc with them.

"The bike I rode in Scotland was previously ridden by Giovanni Tosco it was

ABOVE: A hater of adverse weather Schreiber nevertheless won his first world round, in France in 1979, in this mess.

BELOW: Snow this time hampered the American who became 'unofficial' winner of the 1979 Southern trial.

virtually standard, with 26mm carburettor. I used it in Spain and Belgium but I wanted a new bike for Italy where my dad came along to watch. He had never seen anything like it. But he did not come to France because it clashed with a car race in the Monte Carlo he wanted to see before flying home to the States."

Though Schreiber has consistently finished second, after winning in Britain and regards his start in the 1982 world series as "my best ever", he has reservations about his chances of stopping Lejuene from taking the title. He thought Lejuene might win at home in Belgium, and that Burgat would do the same in France, but defeat in Germany did nothing to boost Schreiber's morale.

Conscious of his responsibilities to the factory for whom exports of trials bikes are a key to survival, Schreiber calculates that he can clinch the eight-round American championship if he can win the five rounds his world commitments permit him to contest. But his ambition is to win back the world title he gained with Bultaco in 1979 and to beat Yrjo Vesterinen's record of 16 wins in world trials.

Until Burgat was champion last year, at 19, Schreiber was the youngest rider to win the world title. At 23, the big friendly six-footer from California has a real fight on his hands to beat a bunch of younger Europeans. "Still a long way to go but the FIM should be prepared to offer the final Polish round to another country," he concluded.



TRAGEDY

... for Eddy Lejeune as the Scottish Six Day lead slips from the Honda star's grasp. Two fives at Camp Hill, the first of the Thursday sections put paid to the Belgian ace's advantage and he lost the lead for the first time.



and TRIUMPH

... for battling Bernie Schreiber as the SWM star became the third foreigner in as many years to take the Six Day crown overseas. As early leader Lejeune faded, Schreiber's challenge strengthened and from Thursday, when Eric Kitchen took this shot at Meall nam Each, the first American victory looked more likely every day.

