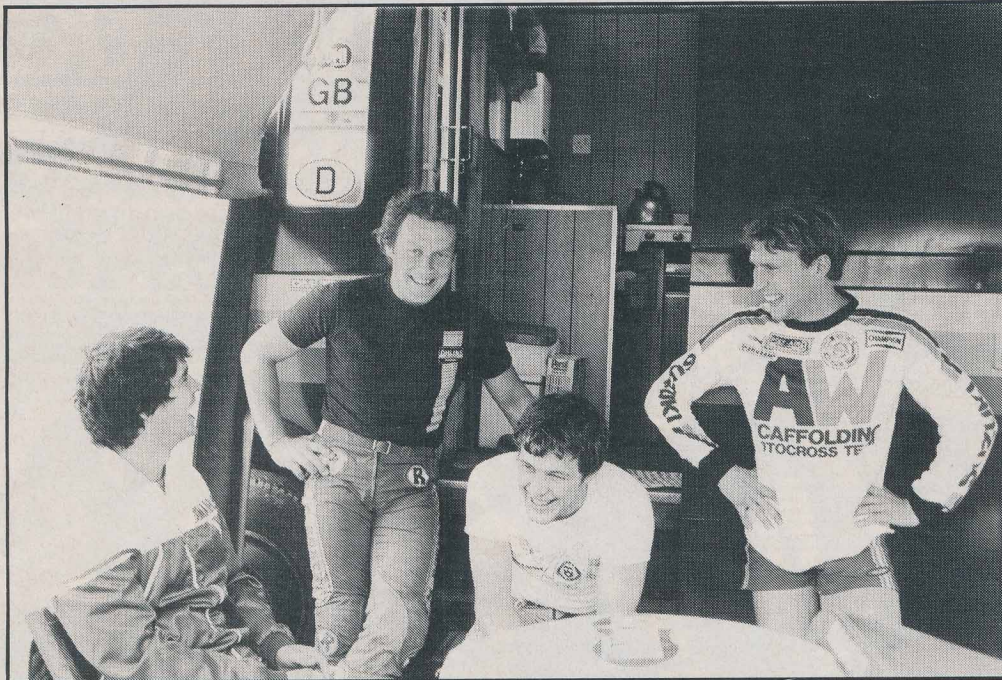




**Dave Watson in vivid action at the Swiss grand prix. But the Gloucester flier feels he should have done so much better at the GPs. Turn the page to find out why in our exclusive Dave Watson column . . .**

# I'VE THROWN SO



Me and my long established grand prix mates Willie Simpson and Stephen Russell were delighted when Steve Harrison joined us for his first GP in France. The atmosphere in the British camp is specially enjoyable this year.

**A**T the halfway stage of the GP season I'm feeling a bit annoyed with myself, despite holding fifth place in the 250cc world championship, because of points I have thrown away.

At the opening round in Switzerland I crashed during the first race when in the lead. In Spain a week later I got two flying starts but couldn't get to grips with the conditions, and when I should have easily been in the top three I ended up scoring sixth and seventh placings.

Then in Belgium I was fastest in timed training before starting badly in 25th place and making only seventh.

But the second race was the highlight of my season so far when I beat 1980 champ Georges Jobe on his home territory to score my first grand prix victory.

The Belgium crowd were doing everything they could to distract me in the closing stages when Georges was catching up. They signalled me to slow down, crossed the course in front of me and a

# SCORE SYSTEM DOESN'T

**T**HE third round of the British championships at Newbury was a day I'd rather forget.

But the Fox and Hounds fixture has raised a few interesting points about the series.

I'm not usually one to go telling other people what to do but I think the ACU must think again about the new system of scoring used for the British championships. Far from doing what they wanted - to get better racing - the system has resulted in very poor racing and that's not the way to get the crowds back.

The new method of scoring gives points to every finisher in every race. Starting at the top, first placeman gets 55 points, second 50, third 45, then it's down in three point gaps until the ninth man gets 27 and tenth 26. From then on there is just one point between placings.

This means that after three rounds the leaders - Neil Hudson

and Graham Noyce have scores of 297 to 296 while I, in fourth, have 224.

All of this makes it virtually impossible for anyone other than Noyce or Hudson to win the title. They don't have to win races to win the crown - just put together a steady string of top five placings. I, on the other hand would have to win every race to stand a chance.

Dave Watson and myself are now out of the reckoning as far as Graham and Neil are concerned. All each has to do is concentrate on finishing in front of the other.

Good racing comes from 35 men trying to win races but why bother if the people in front of you are out of the reckoning?

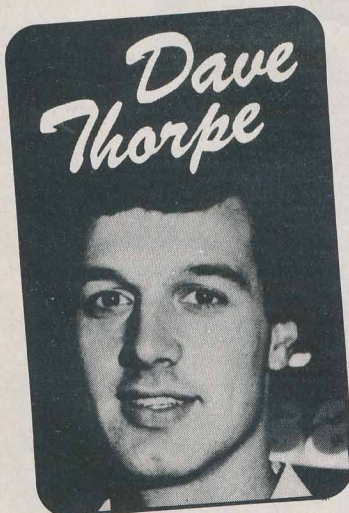
The first race at Newbury was a real choker for me. I led the thing right until the final half a lap when a soldered wire on the coil came adrift and that was that. It was one of those things that's never happened before - no-one's fault.

It's funny really, if it had happened on the first lap we probably wouldn't have thought anything of it but coming when I was so near to victory was sickening. As my dad said at the time: God was too busy watching the Pope's visit to keep an eye on me.

My last lap misfortune showed up another anomaly in the system. I led the race easily until that last lap but didn't make it over the line, but because the scoring system means people can cruise round several laps adrift, I probably did more laps than some of the point scorers. Yet they got points and I got nothing.

The second race was a bit of a consolation but it is choking to see that someone who finished in 13th and 14th positions in the two races picked up as many points as me.

Conditions at Newbury weren't all they might have been but I've seen worse and it was the spectators



# MANY GP POINTS AWAY

marshal even waved the yellow flag when it wasn't needed!

I felt nervous thinking about what could go wrong to stop me winning, but everything turned out fine in the end and there were no mishaps.

Czechoslovakia couldn't be much different. I arrived in fine fettle but crashed heavily off a fast jump in timed training, damaging the base of my spine and muscles in my back and neck. I could hardly walk at first but the Czech club masseur did a good job on me and I managed to finish fourth in the first race.

Resting between races, however my spine stiffened right up and after three laps I had to pull out. This was doubly infuriating because that second moto at Holice was wide open, with points on the table especially when Jobe and Van der Ven retired. I flew straight home from Czecho for a week of intensive treatment from my osteopath-physiotherapist so that I could be in reasonable shape for Italy a week later.

There it was tale of bad starts

and steady rides into fourth and fifth places. I wasn't riding 100%, didn't feel good, and losing my face guard early in the second race detuned me a bit.

In France, however, I was the quickest man on the track and if I had got the start I would have won. I came from last to fourth in the first moto after being knocked off in the first turn. Then was brought down again by Heinz Kinigadner in the first corner of race two and crashed hard trying to make ground.

I'm looking forward during the second half of the season to not losing those points that I should be taking, the sand tracks are coming up and the sand guys must feel confident they can do well.

I did a lot of practising in sand during the winter months in Holland and hope that will help me mount a challenge though. At Appeldoorn last year I proved I could race fast in Dutch sand, lying third in the first place until I slowed up to help my team-mate Neil Hudson.

In atmosphere in the British camp at the 250 grands prix is

particularly enjoyable, with Willie Simpson and my long-standing friend Stephen Russell for company.

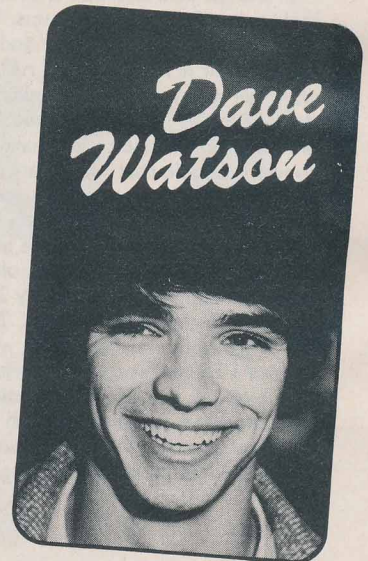
We are always interested in one another's fortunes and chivvy each other on as well as sharing walks round the track, countless cups of tea and constant cheery abuse.

In France we were delighted to be joined by Steve Harrison, experiencing his first taste of GP racing on a rough, tough track. Steve rode very well in the first moto, finishing 14th in the company of experienced runners Andre Massant and Magnus Nyberg.

Also in France, Willie scored his first points with a terrific eighth place in race two.

Between Italy and France, I hopped back aboard the 500 Yamaha for a brisk day out at the Newbury British championship round. It scared the hell out of me after so many weeks only racing the 250, but I was happy to finish twice in third place.

I can appreciate now just what Neil was going through during those years he spent leaping back and forth from the 250 to the 500!



## WORK

that I felt a bit sorry for. It couldn't have been a lot of fun for them watching racing like that.

You've probably noticed that I've changed my riding colours to an all-white strip with just Kawasaki green trimmings. The clothes and equipment I use are about the only things I'm superstitious about. I like to start out winning with any new stuff I'm to wear. It doesn't mean that if I don't win first time out that I won't use it again - I just feel happier if I can start in a winning vein.

I got the new gear from my sponsors M Robert at the Dutch grand prix but I had a feeling that I wasn't going to win there so I waited until the following day's 250 round at Lyng until I wore them in action for the first time. Now I feel happy with the gear because I won both races there. I hope it carries on.

Talking of sponsors it was nice to see Shell, one of my main



backers, had an involvement in the Italian GP with promotions and sponsorship and a couple of promotions girls that were attracting a few eyes. Mind you I didn't take much notice of them, with fiancée Sharron around, who wants to look at other girls?

With us three Brits doing so

well in the 500s I'm really looking forward to our home GP at Farleigh Castle. Wouldn't it be great if we could have a British one-two-three there. We'll do our best.

And I'll certainly be doing my best to see that first place goes to the right Brit . . .

**ABOVE:** Taking the flag first at the end of the second Newbury moto was consolation for the first race tragedy but I still only ended up with 55 points.