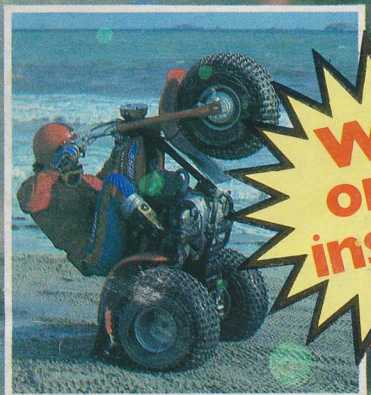


DIRT BIKE

Rider

A Motor Cycle News magazine
July/August 1982 85p



**Win
one-
inside!**

**ATCs-
Are
they
here to
stay?**



**Hudson
should never
have won-Jobe**

**Dave Thorpe-
Exclusive
colour feature**

COMMENT

IT used to be the case that if something was running smoothly and successfully you left it alone. Nowadays it seems that the men who govern our sport have a different philosophy - if something is running smoothly and successfully for the benefit of the majority then it must be time for a change.

Both the ACU at national level and the FIM at international have recently taken giant backward steps for moto cross by messing around with systems and procedures which even if they had thrown up problems, at least worked to the good of the majority.

This year, the ACU's moto cross committee introduced a new scoring system for British championships with the intention of: a) making downfield racing more intense and b) easing the problem of selecting candidates for relegation to the support series.

What they have succeeded in doing with what is undoubtedly the most complicated score-system in use anywhere in the world is to reward consistent mediocrity at the expense of race-winning talent which might not exhibit the same consistency; make sure that no-one injured early in the season can get back into the reckoning; and make points chart keeping an almost impossibly-confusing task.

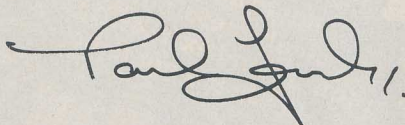
What they have failed to do is make

downfield racing more intense though it must be admitted they have made it easier for themselves to decide who goes down to the support series and who stays up. But most importantly the new system is well on its way to producing final championship positions which bears, at least in the middle ranks, little or no relationship to the true standing of the riders.

The series is only half over but the ACU should admit they have made a mistake and return to the system that served them well since 1978. The riders don't like the new system, the fans don't understand it and it hasn't achieved what it set out to do.

The ACU isn't alone in experimenting with changes this season. The FIM has changed its system of qualification for grands prix to almost universal condemnation.

They are looking into the possibility of bringing in a new scoring method for the GPs which will give points down to 15th position. One of the plans they are looking at is a French idea but the other is more interesting. It's a British system - the one we abandoned at the start of this season. Interesting eh?



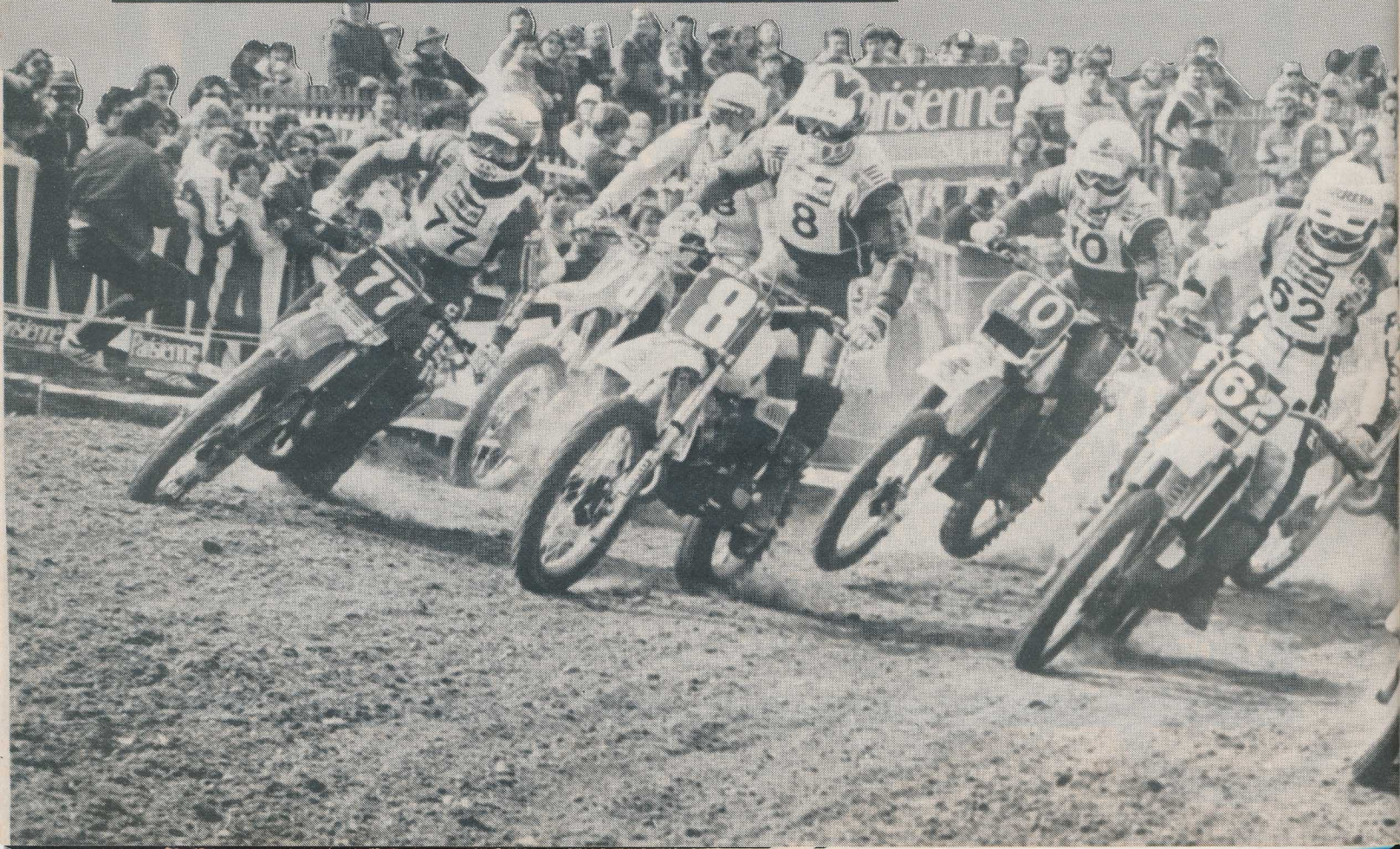
EDITOR

COMPETITION WINNER



Lucky winner of our recent 'Win a Yamaha' competition is Neil Titterington, seen receiving his prize here from Jim Tyrer of Tyrer Brothers Motorcycles, Preston.

Neil, 26, from Ingleton, Lancashire is married with one child and works as a fork lift driver.



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“JUST look for the crane,” said the lady on the telephone. “You can’t miss it.” And from two miles away, the spidery structure of a geodesic creation towers above the leafy Hereford countryside. The sign says Wilcox and Sons.

If you scratch the rural surface hard enough you find the bedrock of dirt bike building – a group of experienced men committed in a big way to getting a new British crosser to match the form of the front runners.

In the six-acre site that is used to house their sawmill conveyor business, Tom Wilcox and sons Brian, Mike and Steve are getting their first production run under way after a long wait for suppliers to meet delivery dates. Setting up is not like drawing a quick lager – you have to convince people that you mean business and that deliveries have to be made to time if bikes are to be made on schedule.

The three Wilcox boys have all done their bit in the dirt and eldest offspring Brian was supplied with factory 250 Ossas way back in the mid-'seventies. The idea of the Wilcomoto was born then when he wanted a bigger bike for the British championship and the factory said it would take two years to come up with something as radical as that. When they found out that Brian had taken their joking

suggestion seriously and fitted a big Maico engine and started to get on the leaderboard, they took his bike back and said whatever the Spaniards say for “goodbye”.

By then, Brian and father Tom were busy getting busy on the milling machine and lathe to produce their own big lump. When the Ossa went, the matter became urgent and 18 months of evenings and early hours saw the first Wilcomoto.

The biggest piston they could find was an 85mm slug from Yamaha and that was used in a 420cc six-speed stoker that Brian raced with fair success, learning a lot in the process: like how to beef up gear clusters which then proved unable to cope with the power of the 490cc motor that came with an 87mm piston.

With the big power, they were stripping the gear teeth in half a lap of angry use. Change to a five-speeder saw only the upper four cogs being used, so a four-speeder it had to be. That way they got wider gears with almost double diameter

The



For his latest British Bike examination **JIM REYNOLDS** looks at the Wilcomoto enterprise.

Sparkler from Cider Country

29

All magnesium motor castings include provision at front of barrel for power valve development. And they've never broken a kickstart so far - thanks to good design and forging.



Sparkler...

into the same space as the original six-speeder occupied. Apply acquired knowledge about gear form and heat treatment and you have a bullet-proof trans.

In March '81 the decision was made to enter the bike market, which meant taking on the 'Gang of Four' plus Europe and whatever else got sat on a set of knobblies and offered to the buying public.

Tom Wilcox explained: "We get bits from local moto riders that have broken. We have them tested to see what the others are doing wrong."

Every casting on the Wilcomoto except the alloy rear brake lever is in magnesium. It puts about £150 on the price of each bike, but it means strength with lightness and longer life for components – and that equals less of the hand in wallet habit. Kent Automotive Castings of Sittingbourne do the castings and all machining is done at Wilco on some of the best automatic tools in the industry outside of Japan.

The central machine shop is under the control of Mike and the investment there totals some £250,000.

Star of the show is Churchill V50 Machining Centre, the first one to be bought in Britain outside the aircraft industry. It takes a barrel casting and in the course of a single computer programme it bores the barrel, faces head and crankcase joints and drills the holes for the barrel to crankcase bolts. It faces off the inlet and drills and taps for the carb, plus drilling and tapping for the head to bolt on, boring the exhaust port. All that takes about six and a

half minutes: to half a thou accuracy.

All the tuning work emerges from behind the protective cover of a CNC – Computur Numerical Control – lathe which takes a forging in EN24 steel from Alpha of Dudley and seven minutes later offers one flywheel and mainshaft.

The machine is programmed by Wilco's own computer processor, which produces control tapes to feed in the machine. The programme can go into the memory for future use on a regular item or be used once and then wiped off. If it ain't right, the machine operator can feed a correction back to the computer terminal and a revised tape is issued – a bit like doing a 'World of Sport' action replay showing you elbowing Noyce off line when in fact he's stomped all over you.

Walking around the Wilco factory, the fact that impressed itself on my mind was the ability to produce all the major components themselves. The bought-in components are very few: tyres, cables, Del' Orto carb, Motoplat ignition pack, wheel rims by Akront, brake shoes from the same place, Renthal bars and Doherty levers with a Brembo brake reservoir up front.

The rest is made or fettled in deepest Herefordshire, where the cider come from.

The current 498cc motor uses an 87mm Omega piston on an 83mm stroke crank. The crankpin is mighty meaty – 33mm in diameter with rollers 1½mm bigger than any rival they have seen so far. Since they built the first 420 motor in 1978 they haven't had any breakages down there.

The piston is of 12% silicon alloy, which some self-styled experts will tell you ain't right. On the Wilco testbed it's been held at 9,100rpm on the Heenan and Froude water brake and not suffered any damage. Peak power is developed at 7,500rpm and the best reading to date is 57.8bhp. Production bikes will be checked on the testbed and will reach at least 52bhp before they leave for the shops.

There's more than one brake to test engines and Brian has one in his own development shop. Reed valves in the crankcase were tried, but gave no more power than the 41mm carb with 16-petal reed in the inlet tract. What he has learned is that setting up a bike in every respect is critical. "You can lose four bhp with a slack chain," he explains.

Drive from motor to gearbox is by straight-cut gears, which don't give the slight flex that a chain allows but do mean longer life. If you have the rest of the trans beefed up to match. And gears cut from EN36 are big and beefy enough to take every horse the motor can pump out. Six-plate cork clutch runs in oil. Problems recorded – nil.

Swinging arms legs are aluminium extrusions with minimum wall thickness of five mm – check that against some of the gear currently getting out there in the berms and you realise it's quality we're looking at. Putting a slight bend in each leg takes eight tons on the press. Brian is particularly pleased with the way these extrusions have been supplied – he gave a description of what he wanted over the 'phone and the drawing came back 100% accurate.



The Wilcomoto team: from the left Steve Wilcox, Mike Wilcox, father Tom Wilcox, rider Neil Griffiths – who has since left the team – and Brian Wilcox.



SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE: 87mm bore x 83mm stroke = 498cc two-stroke single, 16 petal reed. Compression ratio 8:1. Valve induction with Del'Orto 41mm carb. Output: 57bhp @ 7,500rpm. All engine castings in magnesium. Foam air filter. Motoplat ignition. Premix fuel/oil.

TRANSMISSION: Four-speed constant mesh, with six-plate cork clutch running in oil. Primary drive by gear 4:1.

SUSPENSION: Front teles hydraulic/air. 42mm diameter hard chromed stanchions. Magnesium sliders and yokes. 13 inches (33cm) travel. Rear swing arm in aluminium with Wilco remote damper unit. 13 inches (33cm) travel. Needle roller bearings front and rear.

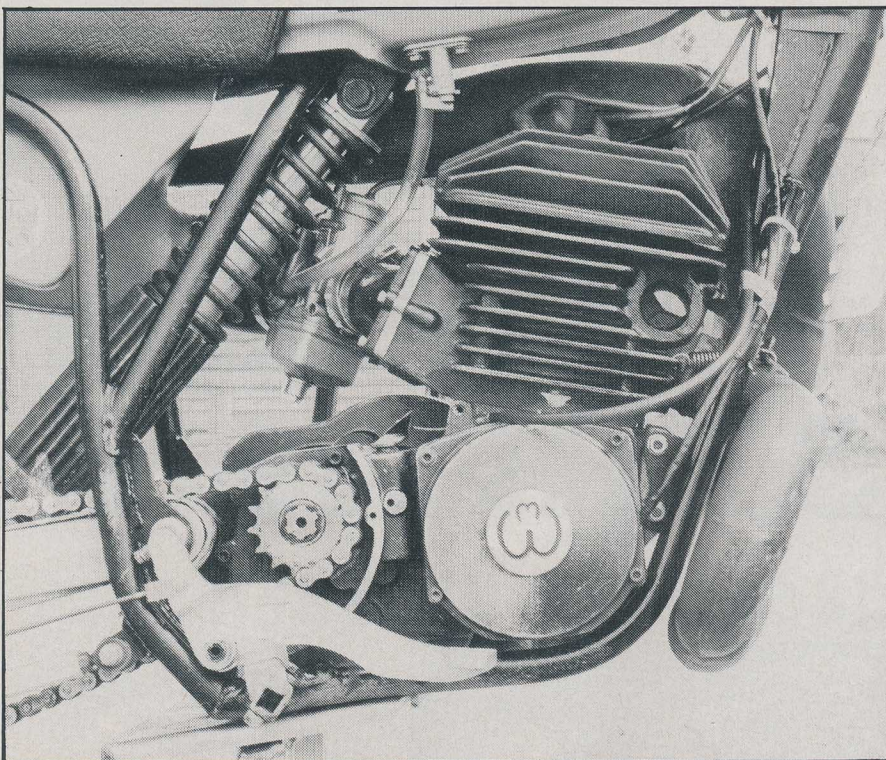
BRAKES: Front; ten inch (26cm) alloy disc, hard chromed. Wilco magnesium caliper with Dunlop wet-weather pads. Brembo fluid reservoir. Rear; six inch (15cm) magnesium drum, fully floating, rod operated.

WHEELS AND TYRES: Dunlop tyres, 3.00 x 21 inch front and 5.00 x 18 inch rear. Mounted on Akront dimple-ess anodised rims.

DIMENSIONS: Tank capacity - 14 litres (3 gallons). Wheelbase 61 inches (155cm). Ground clearance - 15.7 inches (40cm). Seat height - 38 inches (96.5cm). Dry weight - 225lb (103kg).

PRICE: £1,753 including VAT.

MAKERS: Wilcomoto Ltd, Old Saw Mills, Holme Lacy, Hereford HR2 6LS. Tel: SD 0432-73-388 or 9.



TOP: The front end with the disc used since the Lawrence Spence days of development as grit-blasted forks testify.

ABOVE: The motor offside: Exposed rear chain is for ultimate weight saving. The enduro bike will have a cover as will the crosser if regulations demand.

Rear suspension movement is 13 inch - 33cm - with a special Wilcox shocker unit that uses a circulatory system. Brian designed this after looking at what else is on the market. He also designed and built the testing jig, which can simulate impacts from full rebound to small high-speed ripples. Normal testing is for one hour, but they left one unit on the rig for four hours! "It nearly cooked the compressor at 150 psi," recalls Brian with a quiet smile. "But the unit was still OK."

Up front the teles are another Wilco product, with 42mm stanchions plus magnesium sliders and yokes. They bought a Herbert deep hole borer just to process those forks - current secondhand price

around six and a half grand; everywhere you look there's evidence of commitment to the dirt bike scene. Front hub and ten inch - 26cm - disc are cast as one in aluminium, to give better heat dissipation. Hard chrome surface on disc ensures life - the bike we took pictures of had seen a lot of use and the disc was still good on the braking surfaces. They tried stainless steel discs, but to keep weight down it meant thin section and distortion in use. Disc caliper is a Wilco magnesium product and carries Dunlop wet pucks.

Frame is in 45-ton steel and the only area needing gussets in around the steering head. The rest of the chassis don't get strips of plate welded on to prevent it

collapsing in a hard moto - because they went for a higher spec steel tube than is usual on a standard production run.

Plastic mouldings were supplied by Ken Pearson, but there's an injection moulding unit going into the back of the factory so they can do their own thing there, too.

Their devotion can be counted in the thousands of pounds already spent. With 100 of each component ordered for the first production batch, plus all those modern machine tools, there's upwards of £350,000 splashed out.

This leaves them with too little of the ready to hire a big name runner.

Laurence Spence and Wilcox parted because their major sponsor had a cut-back, but Brian has a healthy respect for the development work Laurence did.

With the Wilcomoto 500 now on sale after a series of supplier delays there's the future to consider. You don't live with just one model to offer.

For this year, there'll be a 500 enduro with a 250 crosser to follow. That means a totally new motor and they are talking about a watercooled unit, possibly with a power valve, and using a five-speed gear cluster.

That will lead naturally to a 250 enduro, sometime in '83 and they got a bundle of enquiries at the Bristol Dirt Bike gathering for a British 125. "We wondered what we were doing talking to these people who wanted a bike for their kids, then we realised that there's a big market," recalls Tom. That will be coming along in '83 at the earliest and if it takes off there could be a road bike with the same motor.

If you look at the money they've laid out, you might be tempted to envy the Wilcox family the chance to commit so much. But it comes to them because they've staked most of what they've got and along the way they educated the bank manager enough to loosen the purse strings. They don't have the resources to hire Graham or Neil so they have to sell bikes by offering something that is a realistic long-term alternative. Just look at the amount of magnesium used in the thing and you realise that it's called quality.

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