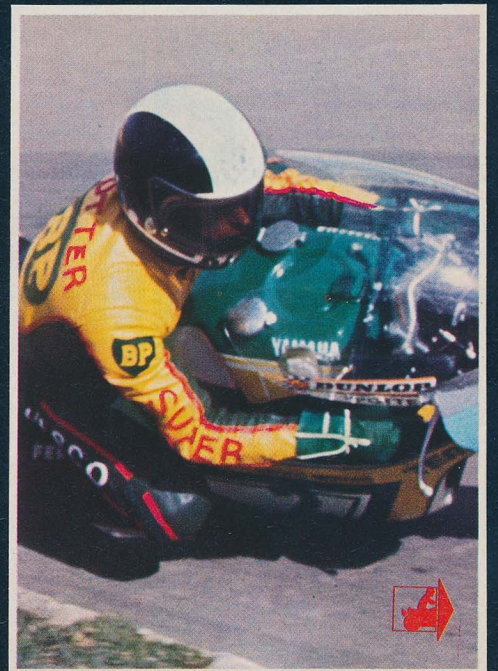
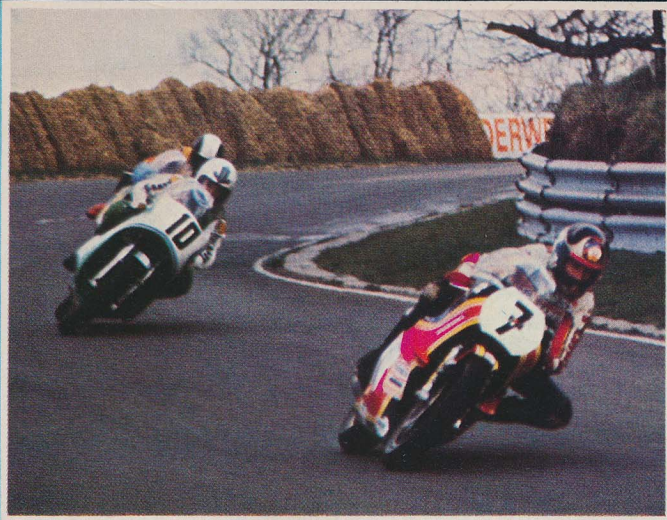


Thanks a Million!

John Player cough up
£1,000,000 each year to
sponsor sport. **MM** takes a
look at biking's share of
that lovely lolly





Thanks a Million!

Without trade support International motorcycle sport would die! CHARLES DEANE looks behind the John Player sponsorship scene...

"**E**RE, John. Fancy that? ... What a pair of..." and the voice was lost in the crowd behind the grandstand at Brands Hatch. But the implication was there as heads turned to watch a John Player girl wiggling through the mass of people gathered to watch the first in a series of epic races between top British and American road racers for the honour of winning the John Player Transatlantic Trophy.

The dolly bird is one of many employed to put over the message that John Player is seriously involved in the sport of motorcycling, and with ever-increasing crowds attending race meetings, they see it as a worthwhile investment as publicity for their products.

Whether you're tee-total, non-smoking, or a complete abstainer from all the vices known as pleasurable, as motorcycle enthusiasts we all have something to thank our chain-smoking brethren for, in the form of up to a million pounds a year being pumped back into sport of all kinds.

Brian Scott, Special Events Executive with the John Player organisation, is responsible for ensuring that his company get the best value for the money that they spend. And ever since 1971, a fair slice of the promotions budget has been coming our way.

It began with the Player's No. 10 International Trophy at Silverstone, which cost the company £4,000 in prize money. They obviously considered it very good value, because each and every year since, the spending has grown.

Without it, the John Player Norton race team would never have seen the light of day. And although the aging Norton twin was eventually outgunned by the more powerful Japanese machines in the Superbike Class, it gave British enthusiasts the opportunity of seeing Peter Williams and Dave Croxford on British machines pushing the Yanks to the limit in the first of the Transatlantic race series.

Naturally, John Player

aren't only involved in motorcycle sport. They have supported car racing, power boat racing, rugby league and, of course, the famous John Player cricket series.

At present, Player support three major motorcycle events a year. The Transatlantic Trophy Series; the British Grand Prix at Silverstone, which has replaced the Isle of Man TT in the World Championship races; and the Race of the Year at Mallory Park.

Although we see the dolly birds and all the publicity material at the circuits, there is much that goes on behind the scenes which neither you nor I appreciate.

For example, when the Yanks arrive for the Transatlantic series, John Player look after their every need (well, almost!) and this includes hotel bookings, chauffeur-driven cars, Press receptions, meals, and refreshments in the paddock.

From that early beginning back in 1971, when £4,000 was laid on the line at the International meeting at Silverstone, the road racing budget is now somewhere in the region of £90,000 a year.

In fact, the total expenditure involved in promotion of sport of one form or another now exceeds a million pounds a year ... quite a lot of money when one considers that the Government are constantly pressing the population to give up smoking!

The next meeting of the season, as far as Brian Scott is concerned, is the World Championship Grand Prix at Silverstone on August 6. There, the world's greatest road racing competitors will fight tooth-and-nail for the sake of winning championship points.

John Player are guaranteed a fantastic attendance through the prestige of the meeting alone, but their efforts will not be lessened because of this. Fag shops, banners, dolly birds, promotional gear and many other things will have to be organised long before the event.

When Sheene, Baker, Roberts, and Co. push up to

the start line, Brian Scott will be rushing around making sure the John Player team is up to scratch. For example; the winner of each race must be driven around the circuit to applaud his victory. He'd feel a right fool just being left standing on the start line after receiving his award. So, somebody from John Player publicity has to ensure the victor's car is unobtrusively in the right place at the right time.

After August 6 at Silverstone comes the Race of the Year at Mallory Park, on October 1. It's a date all road racing motorcyclists should have in their diary, because it is the meeting which virtually closes the International road racing season in Britain and one where up to 50,000 people flock to see their road racing heroes in action.

John Player support has made it one of the biggest meetings in the road racing calendar and although the weather isn't always good, the racing itself is guaranteed to be hot!

Fortunately for John Player (and Brian Scott in particular) they don't actually have to organise the events. This is left to the circuit owners, the Auto-Cycle Union, and the local motorcycle clubs who provide marshals, scrutineers, and other useful bodies to tackle the thousand-and-one tasks required to run a meeting.

Let's face it, a guy collecting your ticket or selling you a programme doesn't rate much attention — but there'd be hell to pay if you couldn't get a programme, buy a ticket, or get a packet of smokes. These are the necessary gummy jobs, and although they are just accepted by the crowds, it is John Player or the money they provide that brings the star-studded entry to the meetings which you and I enjoy.

While at Mallory Park, we bumped into Gavin Trippe, manager of the American road racing team and one of the individuals responsible for organising the Transatlantic road race series.

He had nothing but praise

for the John Player effort.

"They look after our hotels, cars, meals; in fact, the works," said Gavin. "The pity is that they don't get the National press coverage they deserve."

"Just about every American motorcycle magazine carries four or five pages on the series, and yet the British papers don't seem to do the race series justice."

"A lot of effort goes into organising the Transatlantic Trophy races each year and our guys really look forward to coming over to the UK and racing against the British team."

"We know that Brands Hatch is very much a home team benefit because your riders know the circuit so well. But Mallory Park is reasonably easy to learn and the guys just flip their lids about Oulton. Man, that's some real road circuit!"

"The fact that John Player are involved makes it all so worthwhile. Let's face it, without their bread there's no way we could entertain running such a great series of races."

In a way, Gavin Trippe hit the nail on the head. Without sponsorship, top-line road racing as we know it today would die. The Ted Broads, Vincent Davys, Mochecks and numerous others are the life blood of the sport. Add the top liners — which means Shell, Castrol, BP, Renolds, Champion, and far too many more to name — and it's easy to understand why motorcycling is still one of the major spectator sports in the country.

It has often been said that if God intended us to smoke we would all have been equipped with little chimneys on top of our heads. It may not be too long before every motorcycle has to have an official Government Health Warning stamped on its petrol tank!

Meanwhile, if anybody would like to join me in a weed or a gasper ... then you non-smokers can be grateful we're contributing towards *your* road racing.

