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# MOTOR CYCLE MECHANICS

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HOT BIKE  
MAGAZINE

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MANN, USA's No.1  
RACER TALKS!



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TT COURSE—INSIDE & OUT





*America's No. 1 plate racing star and captain of the US match-race team talks to Charles Deane at the Hatch . . .*

# MANN OF THE YEAR!

**D**ICK MANN is a professional . . . one of the top bunch of riders who dominate the American motorcycle sport scene. Known to his friends and competitors alike as "Bugsy", this tough 37-year-old from Richmond, California, was the captain of the American road-racing team who recently came short-circuit scratching in the UK.

The American team lost the John Player Match Race series, but they were not disgraced. The calibre of their riding was superb and after chatting to "Bugsy" Mann for over an hour in the paddock at Brands Hatch, we found out how, after so little experience on our short circuits, these guys can scratch round with and often beat some of our best British riders.

Dick Mann earned the American Motorcycle Association's "No. 1" plate last season and is probably one of only a dozen top riders in the States capable of doing so! The reason?

"Well, back home motorcycle sport is quite a bit different to what you have here in the UK," said Dick. "To win the AMA championship you have to ride in about 24 events in the season and these are not all road-race meetings. There's the quarter-mile short-track racing for the 250s—mainly Ossas, Bultacos or Harley Sprints—then there's

TT racing, which is a dirt course with left- and right-hand corners with a few jumps thrown in for good measure; we use the big Harleys and Beezas for these events.

"Next there's the half-mile and mile dirt tracks also for the big bikes, but the riding technique is something else . . . the machines have no front brake and, similar to your speedway, we have to lay the bike into the corner and step out the back wheel to broadside round . . . at about 90 miles an hour! Boy, we get some real humdinger pile-ups when guys throw it away on the mile ovals."

*How long does the race season last for the professionals?*

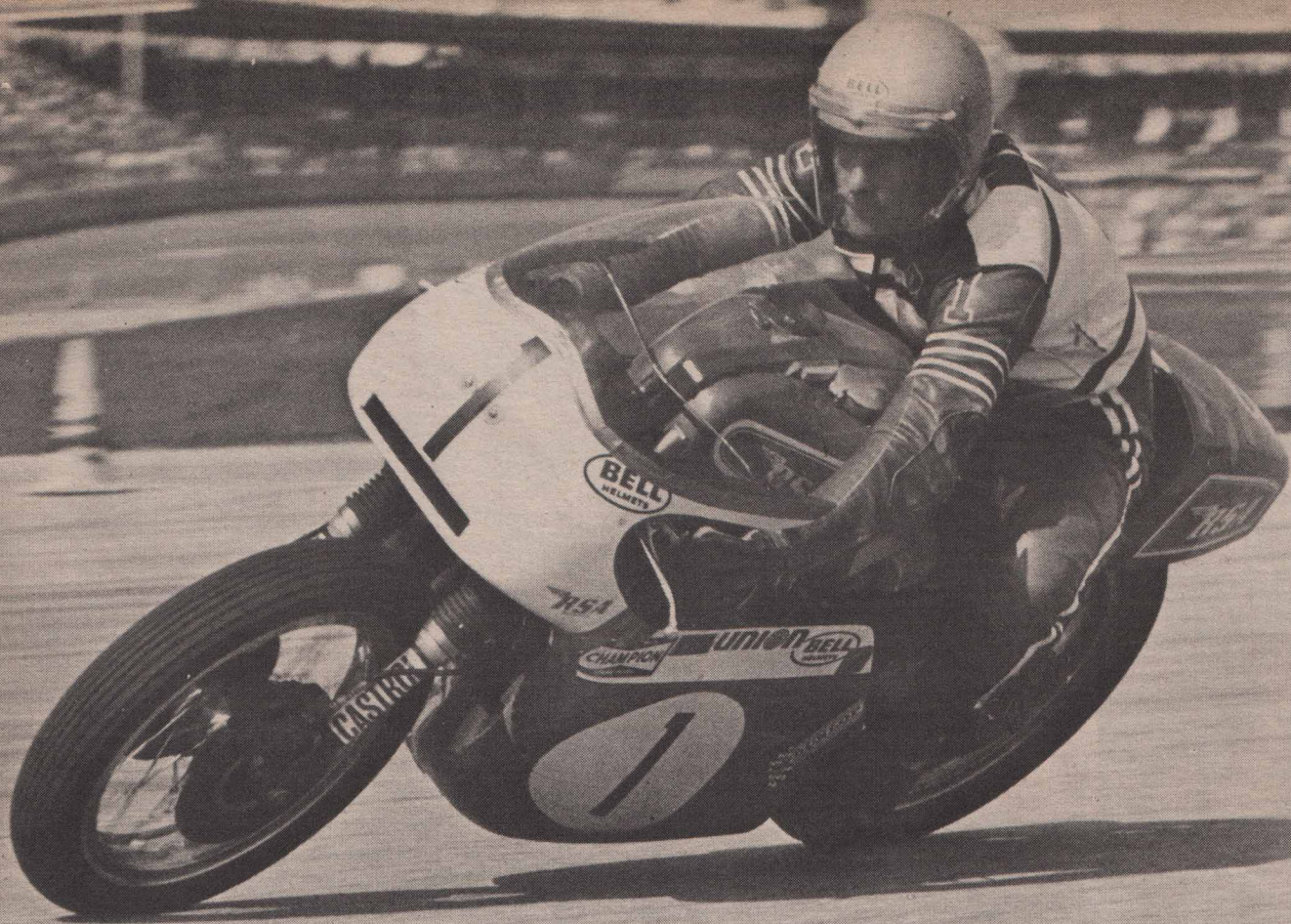
"From about mid-January to October," said Dick. "This is one of the reasons why you don't see many of our riders coming over to Europe to ride. You miss one or two AMA championship meetings and that can mean a big drop in cash for the rest of the season, even the season after."

*What do you do "out of season" to keep in tune?*

"Motocross . . . but not very successfully. The young riders are getting to be good and you can't hope to compete unless you ride motocross full time.

"I have no aspirations as a





motocross rider," he smiled. "I just do it to get my mind off the other deal and to keep fit."

*The States is a big place. What mileage do you cover in a season of racing?*

"That's a hard one, but I reckon about 60,000 miles would be near the mark. A 500-mile round trip isn't unusual for a day's meeting and we quite often do two or three meetings in a week. In between times we are working on our bikes to keep them in good shape."

*Do you have five or six weeks road racing, then a similar period for TTs and dirt tracks?*

"Heck, no! One meeting could be a road race, the next a dirt track or TT. It's all mixed up and they each have their own technique for riding."

*Which do you find the most enjoyable or easiest?*

"Road racing, I guess. It's not as physical as the rest, but none are easy. The trouble is I haven't got 'the eyes' like some riders. You know what I mean . . . some guys can pick out a blade of grass at 100 yards and set up for a corner almost perfectly after one or two laps practice. Me, I have to do it the hard way . . . concentrate, practice, practice and more practice. I get it in the end, but it isn't ever easy."

*How many years have you*

*been racing as a professional?*

"Twenty years this June . . . long time, isn't it?" he smiled.

*In twenty years of motorcycle sport you must have ridden many different machines. What factory bikes have you actually used?*

"BSA, Indian . . . you know, the old Matchless G50 which was imported by Indian into the States. Suzuki and Kawasaki 250s, Yamaha 250 and 350, the Honda 750 . . . I won Daytona in 1970 on that one. Bultaco 250, Parilla 250 and Ossa 250.

"In '58 and '59 I rode the factory Harleys at Daytona and came second both times. My first win there was in the 250 race back in '64 or '65. Then, of course, I won it for BSA in 1971. At the moment I'm riding with Gene Romero for BSA-Triumph on the triples."

*What happened to the BSA and Triumph bikes at Daytona?*

"Just lack of time to prepare them properly. We lost factory support from the UK which meant that instead of having Doug Hele and his guys come over with the factory prepared triples, we had to start from scratch to build the bikes literally a few weeks before Daytona. Our mechanics are good but they haven't the years of experience of working on the triples like your guys have. Therefore the bikes

weren't really sorted out for Daytona. But they'll be running right before the season's out.

"The pity is that if you don't start the season well there's little chance of catching up any lost ground in the championship!"

*Who do you think is going to win the AMA title this year?*

"Your guess is as good as mine. The Team Hansen Kawasakis are probably the most competitive bikes at the moment with Gary Nixon, Yvon DuHamel and your Paul Smart riding them. But Suzuki are also taking it very serious with their new triples.

"There are probably a dozen riders capable of winning the AMA title including Mark Brelsford, Cal Rayborn, Mert Lawill, Gene Romero, Dave Aldana, Jody Nicholas, Art Baumann, Gary Nixon, Don Emde, Jim Rice and some more besides. It's almost impossible to forecast who's going to win because Lady Luck plays a very big part in the results.

"You not only have to ride well but you have to get through the season with a minimum of machine trouble and no major injuries. A broken arm or leg can put you out of the running at any time," said Dick.

*How do you rate the British road racers now that you've*

*ridden against them in two of these Match Race series?*

"They're good . . . very good, but they're road-race specialists and concentrate purely on the paved tracks. It would be very interesting to see how a guy like Ray Pickrell would go on a long track bike in the States."

"He's a natural and would probably switch on pretty good. But apart from this, I still think our top road racers would give your guys a run for their money and probably beat them!"

*What chances do you think the Americans would have racing in the TT on the Isle of Man?*

"With two or three years experience of winning the TT circuit I'm sure riders like Rayborn or Brelsford would do as well as anybody. But there's not enough financial attraction for us to race there because it's slap bang in the middle of the US race season. However, if the Harley-Davidson, Suzuki, BSA and Kawasaki factory teams were to contest the Formula 750 race series and it meant going to the Island, no doubt we would have to go. But that circuit certainly takes a lot of learning and nobody, but nobody, could expect to do well there first time out," he said.

*Thanks for talking to us, Dick.*

"Thank you and give my best to all *Mechanics* readers!"