

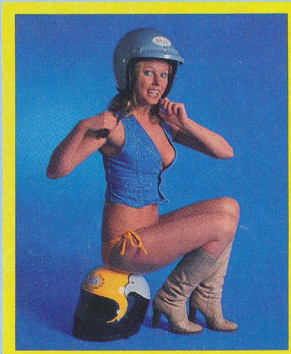
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TOMORROW'S HEROES?

Graham Wood

IF DETERMINED Graham Wood has one regret as he moves surely into the big league of British road racing, it is one of spending too long on four-strokes.

Wood, a well-built 27-year-old from Scunthorpe, Lincolnshire, began on a Triumph Trident and a 850 Norton six seasons ago but then progressed to the strokers after two years of anonymity.

"While the two years spent club racing on four-strokes helped to form the basis for a racing career, I do wish I had switched to two-strokes earlier," he said. "Greater experience on Yamahas would possibly have brought me better results sooner."

Wood now looks set to make even more trouble for the established stars at 750cc level and he gave notice of his intentions in the opening meeting of the season at Mallory Park by winning all his four races, albeit against a field devoid of the Barry Sheene's of this world.

"I feel confident I can be mixing it with the top lads this year. I've got good machinery which is usually half the battle and so I reckon it could be a useful season," he said.

It was Wood's good fortune to become one of the runners in the Fowler's of Bristol stable. Dennis Trollope, the racing supreme of the big Yamaha spares dealership, took Wood under his wing late in the 1978 season and the part-time competitor — he continues to work as a garage fitter — has gone from strength to strength.

Armed at last with a useful 750-4 Yamaha, he maintained good form through the '79 season culminating in a victory in the Oulton Park Superbike round first leg and setting the fastest lap in the second race at 102.79mph. He might have landed a prestigious runner-up spot to Kenny Roberts in the 'Race of the Year' had it not been for a distorted rear tyre forcing him to retire when lying second.

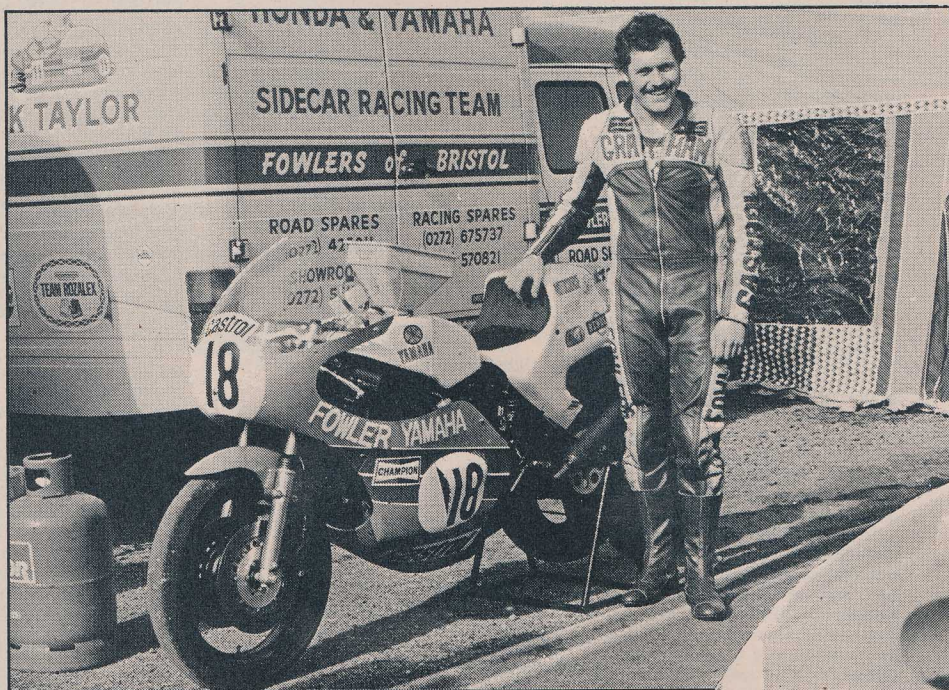
Although he did not give the series his full attention during last season, he scored three victories in the British Championship and in spite of missing three rounds finished third. His consistency through the year earned him the Bel-Ray Championship.

He was the man asked to ride the experimental Phoenix-4 for Barry Hart but was held back by the machine's unreliability. "The trouble with that bike was that it was never run on a test bench and consequently whenever parts, like the Yamaha pistons, were used and failed to last, it would be in a race and not in a workshop," he said.

"It wasn't short on power but there were a lot of crankshaft problems and then there were seizures. I'd say it needed another full year's development."

His campaigning of the 500 Sparton did bring him some attention although the bike was down on speed when matched against a 500 RG Suzuki.

There has to be some promising names on the road racing scene — Ian Beacham nominates three who might be worth following . . .



Graham Wood is a keen believer in 750 racing. His Yamaha is standard apart from Spondon swing arm and Dymag wheels. Fowler's of Bristol, who back sidecar ace Jock Taylor and promising youngster Steve Williams, have supplied him with a large Mercedes transporter this year.

Now Trollope has equipped him with a new 750, a 700 produced with a pair of 350 barrels and a 500 which is a sleeved-down 750. The machine which should do his prospects a power of good is the Roberts replica 500-4 Yamaha which he received in time for the beginning of the world championship series. In his GP debut in Austria he has a satisfactory performance, he plans to contest some more rounds. But he makes the Superbike Championship his main target. Last year he came fifth in the series.

He is unlikely to contest the TT because "I'm too old to start learning there" and he will give Scarborough's Oliver's Mount a miss this season. "As well as Scarborough being none too safe, it's so expensive on machinery. Bikes are wrecked with so much hammer on the gearbox that it's just not profitable to race there," he added.

His sponsor provides the bikes, spares and assistance with the machines at



meetings while he spends his evenings on preparation of the machines.

"I'd like to go full-time but I cannot really afford to pack in my normal job. At present racing is costing me as much as I'm making. I realise I've a long way to go before I can get established — and only then will I contemplate becoming a full-time professional," he said.

Keith Huewen

SURPRISE PACKET of the UK Transatlantic Trophy team, winner of the British Championship and a possible contender for a works Suzuki berth. They were just some of the moments in 1979 that brought

headlines for Keith Huewen.

While the 23-year-old from Wollaston in Bedfordshire knows that it will take more than journals getting his name spelt correctly to have reached superstar level, he has been pleasantly surprised at the whirlwind of activity surrounding him since he began racing in 1975.

"If I can make some more progress this season, then that'll be good enough for me. But I am going out to win every time while trying to stay on the bike. Doing the two together isn't always easy," he said. He had four crashes in '79.

The Southend-born bachelor, who sold his half share in an automatic transmission business in Kettering to go racing full-time, intends treading a well-worn path — a sprinkling of the more accessible grands prix plus a full programme of internationals in this country. "I really want to concentrate on making a name at home. I know that's my priority. But the grand prix experience won't do me any harm," he said.

It was hitting a brick wall at 80mph on a

Norton Commando that, surprisingly, led Huewen into road racing. The money from the insurance company for the written-off bike and a feeling he would be safer on the track resulted in him obtaining a 500cc Suzuki production twin. He came second in his first race.

After a Honda 750-4 and a rise from obscurity on a 350 TZA Yamaha, he came into contact with Arnold Fletcher, boss of Melton Mowbray-based Len Manchester Motorcycles and a man with keen eye for young racing talent. Fletcher set him up with a machine and the pair have never looked back since.

A year rich in potential in 1978, he undoubtedly fulfilled all the faith in him last season that was only marred by a serious accident at Brands Hatch which sidelined him for a lengthy spell. "I hurt myself badly for the first time and I didn't like it at all. I've never liked hospitals anyway," he said.

Hailed as Britain's brightest prospect at the end of last season, Suzuki GB had discussions with him to ride a 500 RG in grands prix.

"Suzuki's approach caught me with my trousers down. I kept asking myself why they wanted me and I did come to the conclusion that they didn't have enough money to get anyone else," he remarked. "But I felt I was not ready for a works ride especially as I had only ridden abroad once before in the AGV Nations Cup and, because they expected me to finish way up, there would have been tremendous



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pressure on me. Besides that, I wasn't going cheap and perhaps that surprised them. I wasn't looking for a fortune from them, just enough to give me a small profit at the end of the year."

"The way I read it was that if Graeme Crosby or Randy Mamola are out of action, I might be asked to ride one of the works Suzukis."

But it is a 500cc Yamaha his friend Fletcher is keen for Huewen to race — the dealership sells Yamahas only! For the start of the season, he was using a brace of two-year-old 750 Yamahas although being fitted with new engines and frame they are up to 1980 specification.

Huewen puts his success in '79 — which included an excellent ride amongst elite company in the F750 world championship round at Brands — to good bikes, a single-minded approach and a refusal to be psyched out before races.

"If I have a good year perhaps there could be a works contract in 1981. We'll just have to wait and see," he said.

David Dean

WHEN YOU have just enjoyed a season bursting with 102 wins, what's the next step? Ambitious David Dean knew precisely what to do — he asked Yamaha to back his racing programme.

To his amazement, his cheek paid off and Mitsui, the British Yamaha importers, roped him into their team and provided him with two new TZ750's and a new TZ350.

"It was a bit of a long shot when I approached them and I couldn't really believe it when they took me on," said 23-year-old Dean who comes from Upholland, near Wigan, Lancashire.

At club level, his was a fantastic '79 season, cakewalking both the 350cc and 500cc Marlboro/Yamaha Championships. In the 500cc class, in which he had the advantage of riding an RG Suzuki, he won six of the eight rounds.

"The good results came from having a lot of confidence really — and cramming in as many meetings as possible," he said.

Now he has packed in his mechanical and driving jobs to give racing his undivided attention and, with the backing of local dealers Rogersons together with a host of other contracts fought for and won in the winter, he reckons on making a living from the sport this season.

Dean has yet to race outside the country and he will be gunning for awards this year in home nationals and internationals.

"Yamaha have put no pressure on me at all. They let me run my own set-up," he said.

This will be his fourth season and one in which he might tackle the TT. "I've been offered a bike to do the TT but will only go if I'm riding well beforehand," he said. ●



Above: Although he became British Champion last year with two points to spare from Bob Smith, Keith Huewen felt the title no longer means very much. His sponsor Arnold Fletcher supplied him with bikes and spares while collecting half his start and prize money in return.



Left: David Dean — Mitsui have pinned their faith in him.