

Motorcycle RACING

'Works' bike
beater



Herron: GP facts of life

Our new hope?

Grant's nightmare

Plus amazing shots
of racing spills



Motorcycle RACING

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**COVER: Tom Herron on the Mococheck
Honda at this year's TT and Clive Padgett
on his 250cc Yamaha.**

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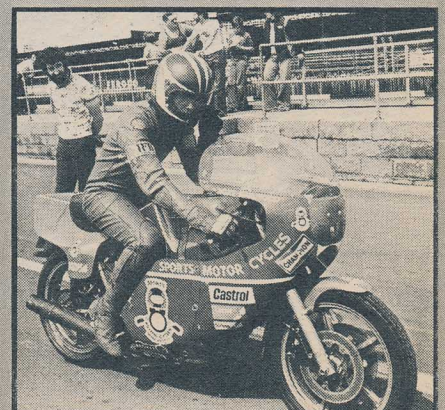
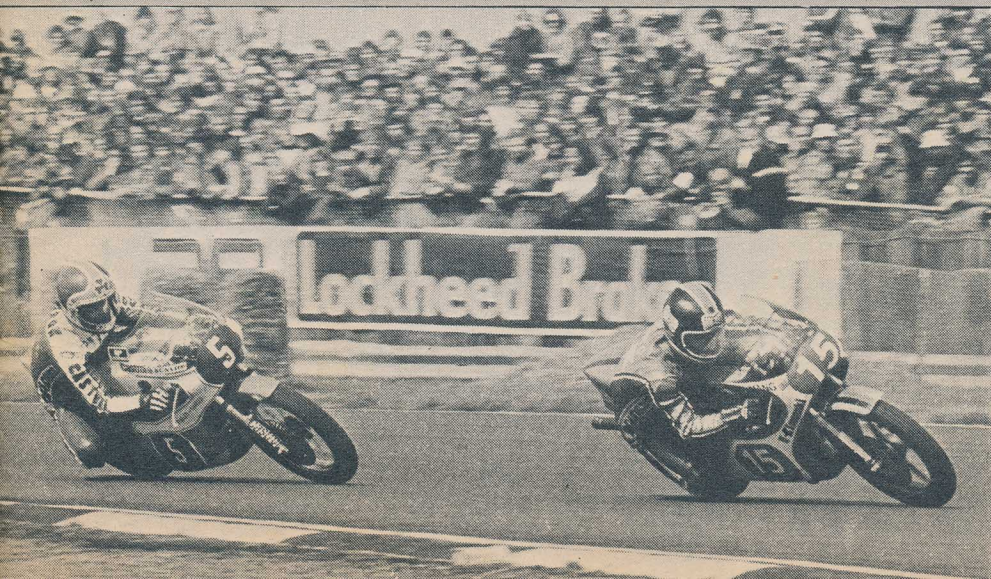
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Scratching around Silverstone

ABOVE: Three men for whom Silverstone will stick in the memory — winner Kenny Roberts, third-placed Barry Sheene and seventh man Johnny Cecotto.

MOTORCYCLE RACING

Ian Beacham goes in search of the action at Britain's biggest meeting

ARRIVING LATE at night and to be confronted by three ticket-checks makes for a less than pleasant introduction to Britain's most important race meeting.

Grand prix practising may be two days away but Silverstone has Securicor men out in force to make sure not one penny escapes their tills. The circuit's income will top the £350,000 mark this weekend.

But even by the Wednesday evening, the overland trekkers from the Finnish GP have nestled into the compact paddock with classes segregated into various compounds. Riders' caravans are towbar to towbar and form an effective curtain for Joe Public who has paid his extra thirty bob in the hope of seeing a famous bike or competitor.

THURSDAY: With no practice scheduled for the day, which some might have welcomed, bikes are stripped and re-built, prepared painstakingly by mechanics who are amongst the oppressed of world sport. They work right through the day with few breaks and next-to-no-food, and are often without space or facilities. In between meetings, they are usually on the road from dawn to dusk driving transporters. For most, a corner of a cramped caravan at night-time is the nearest thing to bliss.

But they always come back for more and right through the paddock are faces — possibly working for someone different — that are as familiar as some of the riders. The mechanics will never be rich from this game but they will admit to having a lot of fun.

I spot a very second-hand looking Tom Herron in the gent's toilet just before breakfast time and could see the hardships of having to motor hundreds of miles to meet the demanding grand prix schedule. Transpires he was down the road at Martin Sharpe's pub the previous night with his gang and was querying English licensing hours.

Over to the Texaco Heron Suzuki camp where Don Mackay, the original Sheene mechanic, is washing down the transporter while the busy Japanese mechanics set to work on ensuring that special RGA500 engine is trouble-free.

But all is not well. After the crucial Finnish round where the Sheene Suzuki crank went, the atmosphere was a little tense. My contact there says Sheene has not been the easiest man to work with this year and has been demanding more and more from his mechanical team. With greater pressures on him from all round, he was anxious to ensure no part of his bike would fail.

But his regular insistence that something was amiss with the machine tried even the patience of the little Japs who, after the last episode in Imatra, refused to work on the star's bikes until the matter was sorted out. Sheene, apparently, had cried wolf too often over suspected faults with the bike. Often upon being stripped, there was found to be nothing wrong.

Finally, in Finland, when Sheene made another complaint about something he felt to be not right with the Suzuki, the team were less than convinced — and the machine remained unchanged. The crank broke in the race to lose Sheene vital points.

The talk of Sheene moving onto four wheels has also disheartened the camp, according to my source, although there

has still been no intimation as to his future plans.

How about Formula Two cars next year as well as Suzuki machines for important races?

Heron Suzuki GB will still run a team. The sponsors are ready with the money and the new grand prix bikes are almost completed in Japan. Now who rides them in '79?

Sheene later rolls up in a smart powder-blue Porsche which he has on test and he is due to put a number of high-performance cars through their paces.

Nearby Steve Wright, the quietly-spoken coal merchant from Yorkshire, is admiring his new 500cc Suzuki which he has just obtained off TT doyen Bill Smith. He is hoping this machine will put to an end his miserable run of bad luck.

Over at the Shellsport caravan, the friendly team are already administering hospitality to a stream of visitors. Shell's contribution to the sport is huge and much-needed. Bike racing has much to thank the oil giant for. There, George Beale talks about the cost of providing transport and a paddock home for riders and the figures being bandied about are mind-boggling. Kenny Roberts, admiring the magnificent colour spread picture of him in *MCR*, is in a different financial class than most but his luxurious motor-home — partnering Kel Carruthers' — cost a cool £30,000.

Generally it's very much a low-profile day. The same could be said about the meeting, judging from the marked absence of John Player advertising. In previous years JP have pumped in a lot of money into the event, not least of all into generous expenditure on food and drinks for tradesfolk, VIP's and press. Alas, there was nothing from the cigarette concern this time and it doesn't take much to work out that this was almost certainly their last sponsorship of the grand prix.

Looking at the meeting in terms of publicity, how many people outside the 100,000 race fans really understand that John Player have been heavily involved in motorcycle racing? That's why the withdrawal decision, likely next month, may well go against two wheels.

In the evening, I look in at the village of Silverstone to see the extent of early arrivals. Both Watneys pubs are brimming with bikers, many of them foreign, most looking particularly unappealing and, unfortunately, are the kind that do nothing to improve motorcycling's reputation. Bet they're avid readers of *Bike* magazine.

It's much more sociable in the Silverstone club-house where Rolf Biland is dining with a large party of friends. A quick call on a friend's caravan finds Cliff Holland enjoying a night-cap. After being the victim of that horrific televised sidecar buffeting at Brands when he fell out of the chair and was given next to no chance, amiable Cliff had made a remarkable recovery. Partner George O'Dell is a quick mender too, but having seen him hobble painfully and slowly earlier in the day, one wonders if his come-back was too soon.

FRIDAY: This is one of the better days which provides the freedom for gathering stories and pictures for future



Above: "Now's my chance to beam Sheene off this planet." Roberts willingly does a spot of filming with the assistance of Dave Potter.

Below: We thought the Heron Suzuki machines ran on Texaco! Barry Sheene's dad, Franko, wheels away the BP-filled cans while the Yamaha mechanic and the late John Williams await their turn.

issues. Riders are less tense than on race days and there are few of the hangers-on that are beginning to invade our sport.

There is a early gathering of men, strong and true, as volunteer marshalls. Colin Armes has the task of rounding up enough before the meeting which comes as surprise because to see the racing free, from an advantageous position, would be worth all the effort involved.

After listening to some strong words from Peter Padgett — father of racing Clive — about the ACU, a lad from Kent who goes everywhere to watch top-line bike racing, complains about the cost of being a spectator at Silverstone for three days. This was the first of many similar comments heard about the charges levied.

There's no axe to grind with Silverstone or anyone else but admission charges are a bit steep. A couple with two kids would shell our £13 to get into the paddock on race day and that seems a lot especially as it doesn't guarantee a seat or even a good view; or when the big race is a wash-out. What the high charges do is to deter many families from attending bike meetings which is a poor way of attracting a wider audience to the sport. Some might say we get away cheaply, considering a seat for next year's Formula One car GP will be £20!

Later in the afternoon, journalists and photographers whose livelihoods are based on road racing, get together to form a Guild to help overcome obstacles which prevent the completion of a professional job.

Onto a reception provided by the circuit owners where all the big names are in attendance. Conversation becomes livelier as the Beaujolais flows and the chicken legs are gorged. Gangling Kevin Stowe feels money spent on this sort of lavish spread would be better channelled into start money while over in the corner little Jock Taylor, delighted over his



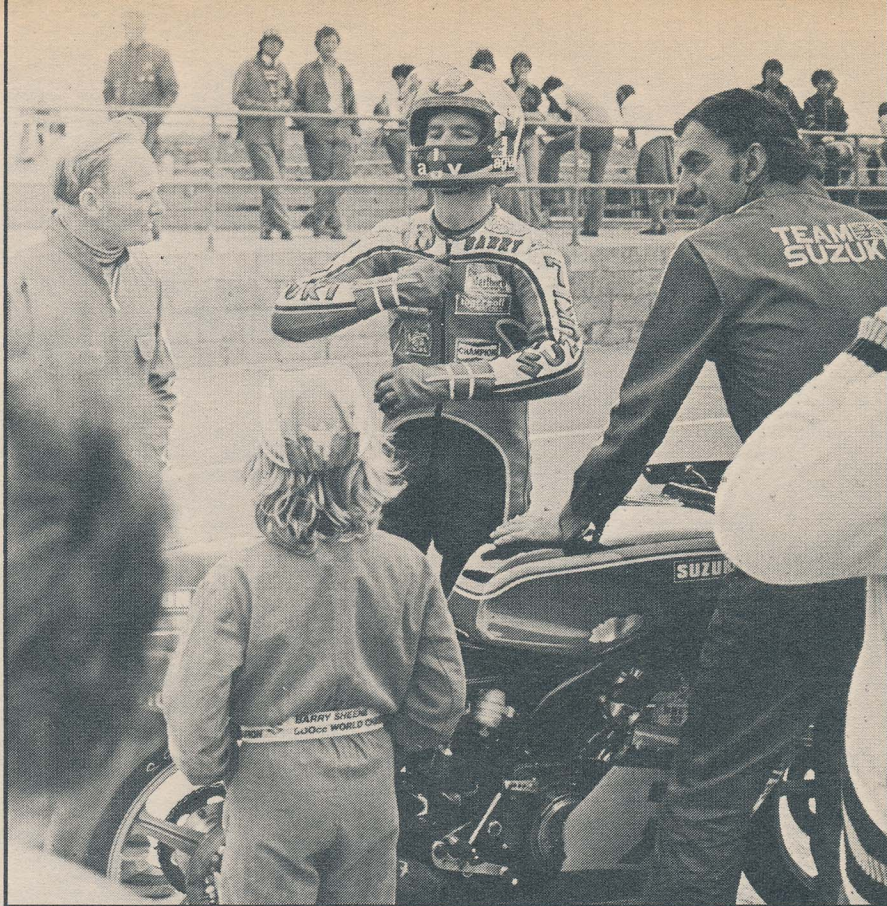
fourth fastest practice time on his first Silverstone visit, suggests his impoverished days may be over.

Denis Trollope of Fowler's of Bristol — one of the country's biggest sponsors in terms of riders supported — has given him very useful backing including a Mercedes transporter. As a speech is made to the gathering and the star names of the meeting are welcomed, Sheene booms out: "Hailwood will be soon be retiring as many times as Read". The marquee echoes with laughter and, being away on holiday in Spain, Read would have regretted missing the chance to have replied.

Delightful Bronwyn Ballington describes the £25,000 cottage they have bought near Northampton, which they will make their home, before a party of us make our way to Towcester for a little socialising. Already the pub is packed with race-goers, most of them very knowledgeable about the men and machines and prepared to sleep rough to see them.

SATURDAY: While having coffee in Mick Grant's caravan hideaway which has become another to have reflective windows fitted, Hailwood — sporting a very dapper moustache — comes in to request the loan of the 'van for the night. There's no room at the inn in Northampton for the maestro that night so Grant willingly allows Hailwood to have his paddock 'hotel' that evening. Hailwood is in plimsolls, so can this really be Edgar Jessop whom I have never met? The great man still gives himself little chance in the Formula One race and feels he will never ever get Woodcote right.

A stroll along the avenue of trade stands on the other side of the track makes a pleasant diversion. Many are selling badges and, obviously, to cover the £100 pitch fee, they will need to sell a vast number. Midland have a mobile banking hall there and one wonders



The team — including Stephanie's son Roman — closes in on Sheene as photographers and TV crews get ready to surround Britain's best during Silverstone practice.

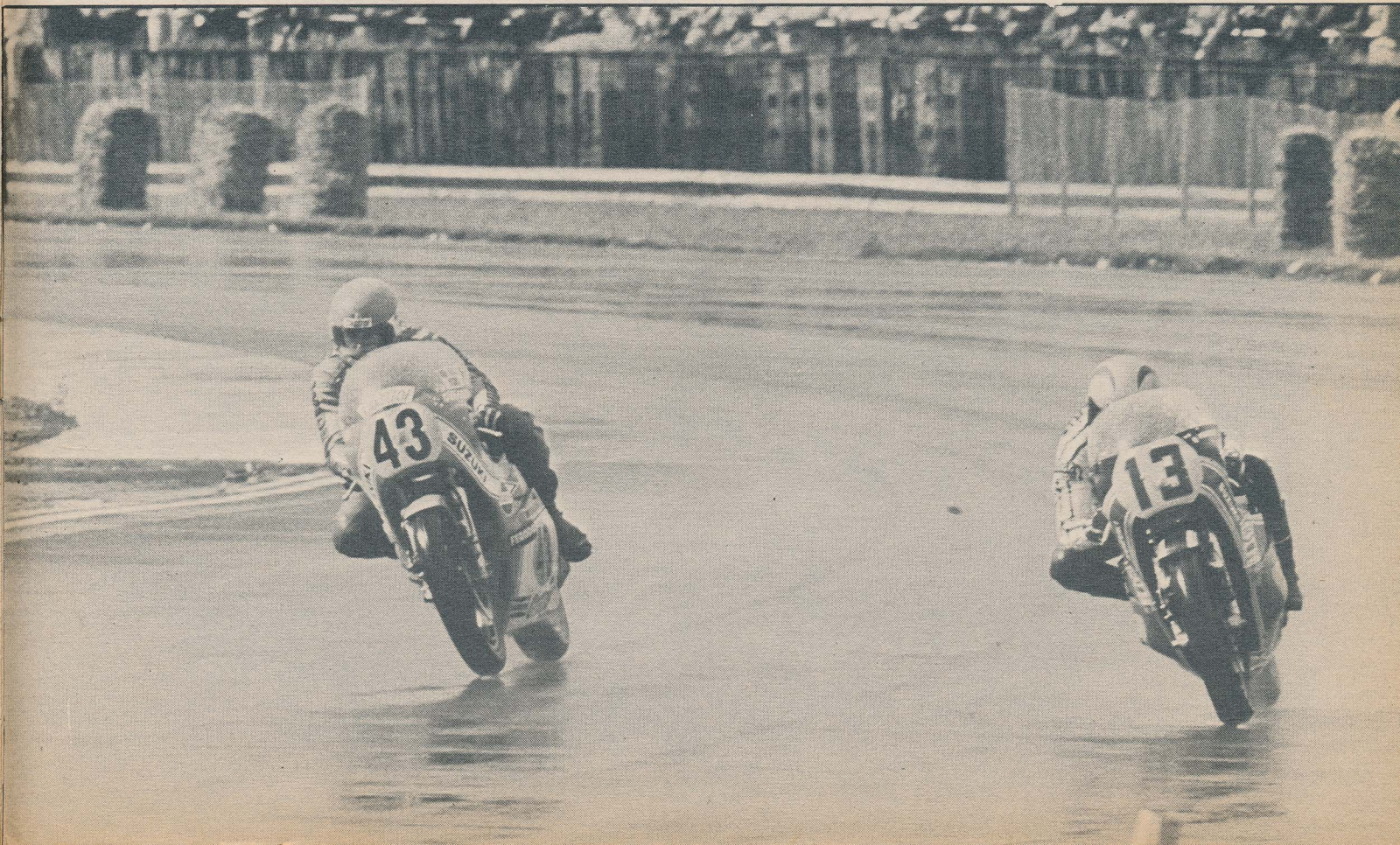
whether they will ever become enthusiastic bike racing sponsors.

Back to a lunch-time barbecue hosted by Michelin to show off their new GP tyre transporters, manned by French and British personnel. In fact, the young lads have trouble firing the barbecue charcoal

and the kebabs are served somewhat underdone.

In the nearby double-decker hospitality bus provided by Yamaha, Dave Potter munches through some cheese-cake and explains how keen he would be to have a regular attempt at the grands prix. "But

The Silverstone track is awash at Copse as Steve Manship, with his Suzuki on intermediate tyres, takes Michel Rougerie on his slick-shod Heron Suzuki in the 500cc British GP.



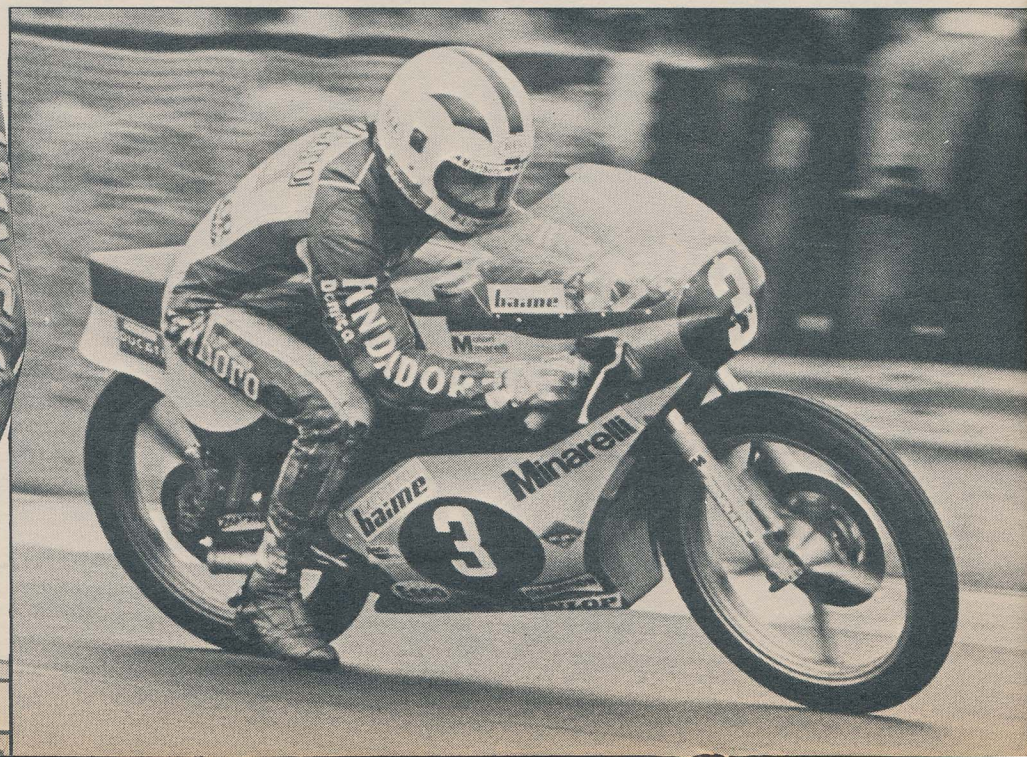
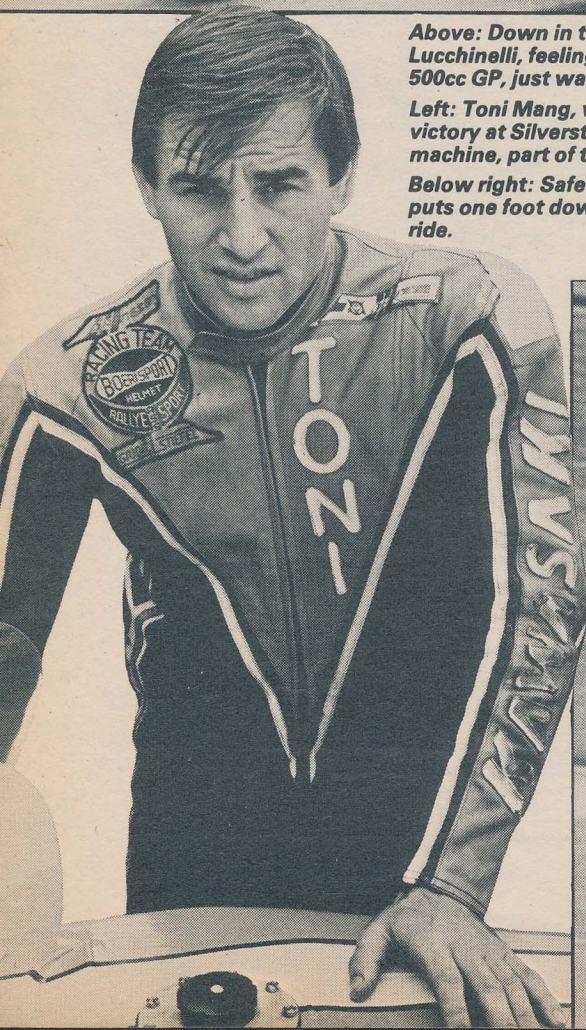
Silverstone
78'78'78'78



Above: Down in the dumps and rather depressed. Marco Lucchinelli, feeling he was the rightful winner of the British 500cc GP, just wants to be left alone.

Left: Toni Mang, who rode the 250cc Kawasaki to a fine victory at Silverstone. His machine is a standard works machine, part of the Pan-European Kawasaki set-up.

Below right: Safety first measures from Angel Nieto as he puts one foot down during his successful 125cc Silverstone ride.



I'm not prepared to let Ted (Broad) fork out all that money," he said, desperately keen to land a major sponsor to take some of the financial weight off the marvellous shoulders of Ted Broad.

While being less than enthusiastic about FI racing in the past, I thoroughly enjoyed the Silverstone race as must have done the 18,000 present. Pity there had to be protests and carburettor checks at the finish.

Before having a chance to talk to Lord 'Le Patron' Hesketh about a new motorcycle his company are building, I am whisked away to examine a boys' annual on Barry Sheene which is very colourful and should be a big seller before Christmas.

As the last engine notes of practice die away, Sheene, Cecotto and entourage depart for the Saxon Inn at Northampton while Grant heads off to the Saracen's Arms at Towcester where they serve a delicious peach melba that does nothing for his diet.



Above: Rolf Biland, who has something of a reputation amongst the sidecar fraternity of being a playboy, puts the world title to the back of his mind for a moment.

Right: Leg power for two talented riders. Wil Hartog strolls with popular Kork — real name Hugh — Ballington.



The paddock is enveloped in aroma of fish and chips as revellers prepare for the night ahead. As far as grand prix circuits go, Silverstone has little in comparison to splendid arenas such as Francorchamps, Nurburgring, Brno and similar tree-lined two-wheeled amphitheatres where camping in the hills and drinking in the villages is part and parcel of the GP scene.

As well as being a boring, flat airfield, with limited entertainments and diversion at night-time, campers are herded into fenced-off areas where tents

Kork Ballington (5) mounts the 350cc Kawasaki in-line twin at the start of the ride which clinched his first world crown. Tom Herron (2) has already made a flyer on his Yamaha.

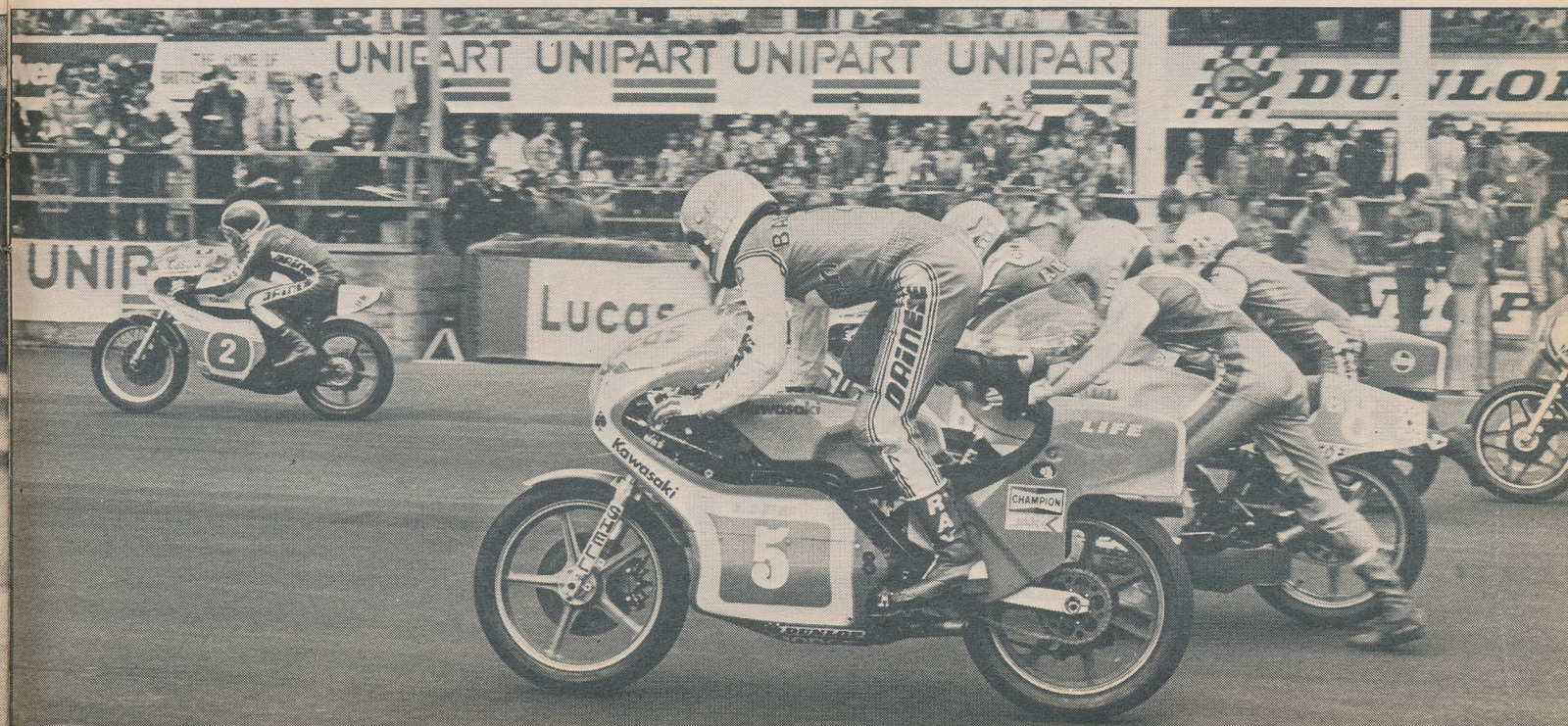
have to be pitched cheek by jowl. But there were no misdemeanours that have given Silverstone — and motorcycling — such a bad name in the past. Apart from the burning of a caravan, much drunkenness in Silverstone and Towcester, the evening went off trouble-free with only a few arrests and insufficient action for police to issue any kind of statement.

RACE-DAY: The sun may be shining but the Sunday Express tells of thunderstorms later in the day. Typical. The queues getting into the circuit are

long and frustrating. Some speak of an octopus of steel around Silverstone that is taking up to two hours to unwind. Getting out, for many, will present the same problems.

The parade of champions billed in the programme does not materialise and not even the sweet, multi-lingual voice of ex-sidecar queen Dane Rowe over the pits public address fails to bring out the so-called superstars — apart from Ballington, Hartog and Lazzarini — who ought to know better than to let down the public.

After watching the good-value 350cc and 125cc races from the inside of Copse,





I clamber up to the press box which affords a commanding view of Woodcote and the start and finish race. The 250cc race is a cracker made memorable by Herron's gallant last bend bid.

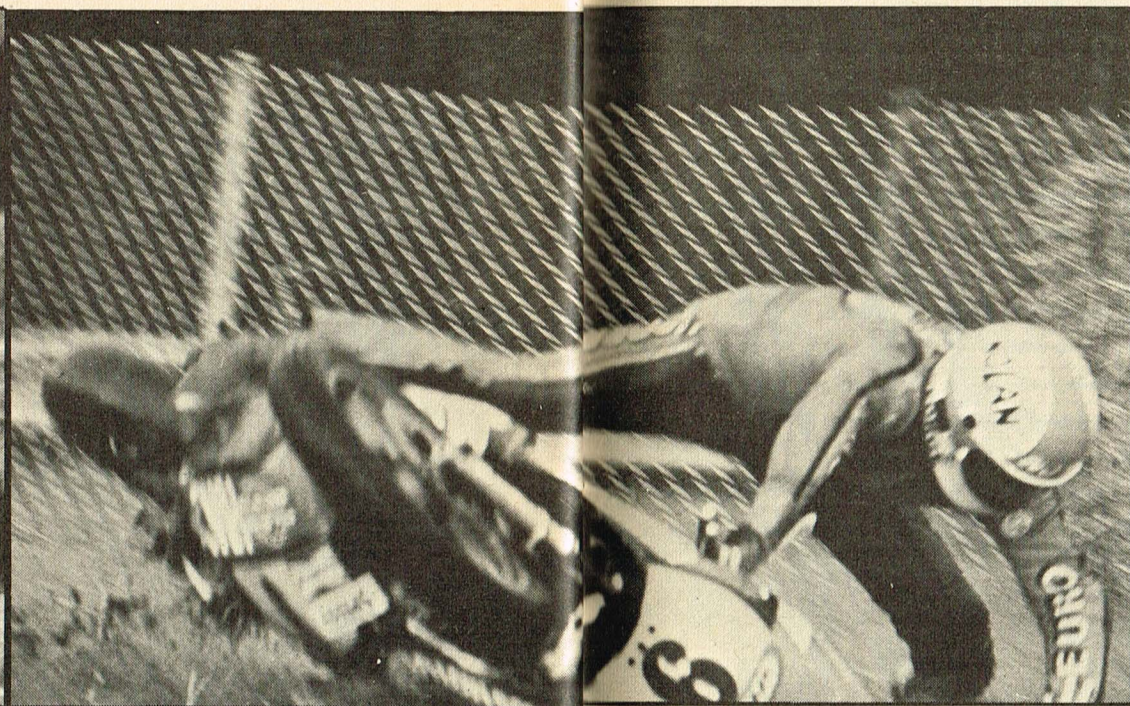
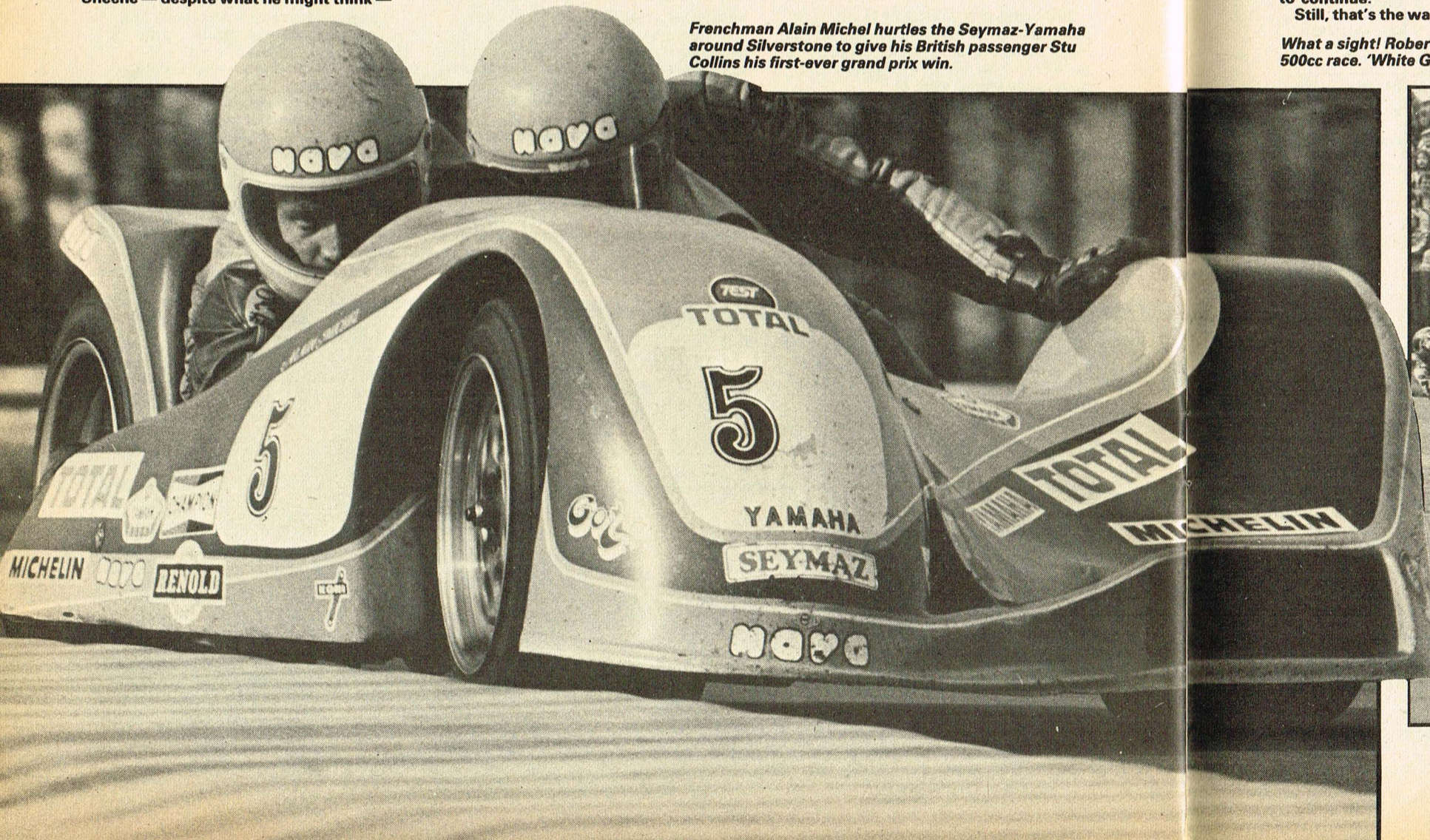
But what followed will remain as a lasting memory. Ninety-nine per cent of the crowd had come to get behind Sheene — despite what he might think —

Whether Harry the Hare's usual appearance at Silverstone had anything to do with Alex George taking to the grass and tumbling off is not known. What is apparent is that the hare would have clocked a good time through the speed trap.

and help him on his way to another world title. From the outset in the dry, it was clear Roberts was never going to be caught by Sheene. Had there been a

re-start with the field on wet tyres, there might have been another story because Barry was circulating the quickest of them all over the camber-less, rain-filled

Frenchman Alain Michel hurtles the Seymaz-Yamaha around Silverstone to give his British passenger Stu Collins his first-ever grand prix win.



track.

Seated alongside was John Surtees, who knows about riding in the rain, and, bringing his car laws into operation, felt the race should have been stopped. Formula One cars can be stopped if they're shod on slick and it rains . . . provided conditions make it impossible to continue.

Still, that's the way it goes. Most

What a sight! Roberts' solitary Yamaha is locked in a bunch of singing Suzukis before the rain came and spoiled everyone's fun in the 500cc race. 'White Giant' Wil Hartog leads followed by Ferrari, Roberts, Rougerie, Sheene and Ireland.

people went home dissatisfied with the outcome, disillusioned with the sport and dismayed they had seen none of the anticipated fireworks. Who knows whether they will want to come back next year, even though memories are very short?

The debacle that ensued only made the situation worse. Sheene's pit-crew were perhaps the governing factor in the whole matter and one queries whether they slackened their pace when wheel-changing, being under the impression the race would be halted.

Nevertheless, Sheene was grumpy about the whole affair and quickly departed home. Three days later in the weeklies he was quoted as saying at the time that Roberts had *not* won. Sheene denies he even said this and we support him in his claim. So again he feels there is a conspiracy of the press against him in the same way as the Italian press treated the fallen-from-grace Agostini some years ago.

When the results stood as first announced, it came as no surprise. How could the ACU and race-scorers etc do anything else but confirm their first findings? Perhaps the best solution would have been to have scrubbed the result from the world championship scores.

Yet some were happy. One was Ballington whom I caught up with in the Dunlop tower enjoying a celebration drink with the tyre technicians who have helped him through the campaign. He expressed disappointment there was no South African national anthem played at the garlanding ceremony. What change

in fortunes for the talented rider who was unable to find a company willing to loan him a sponsored caravan for the season last winter!

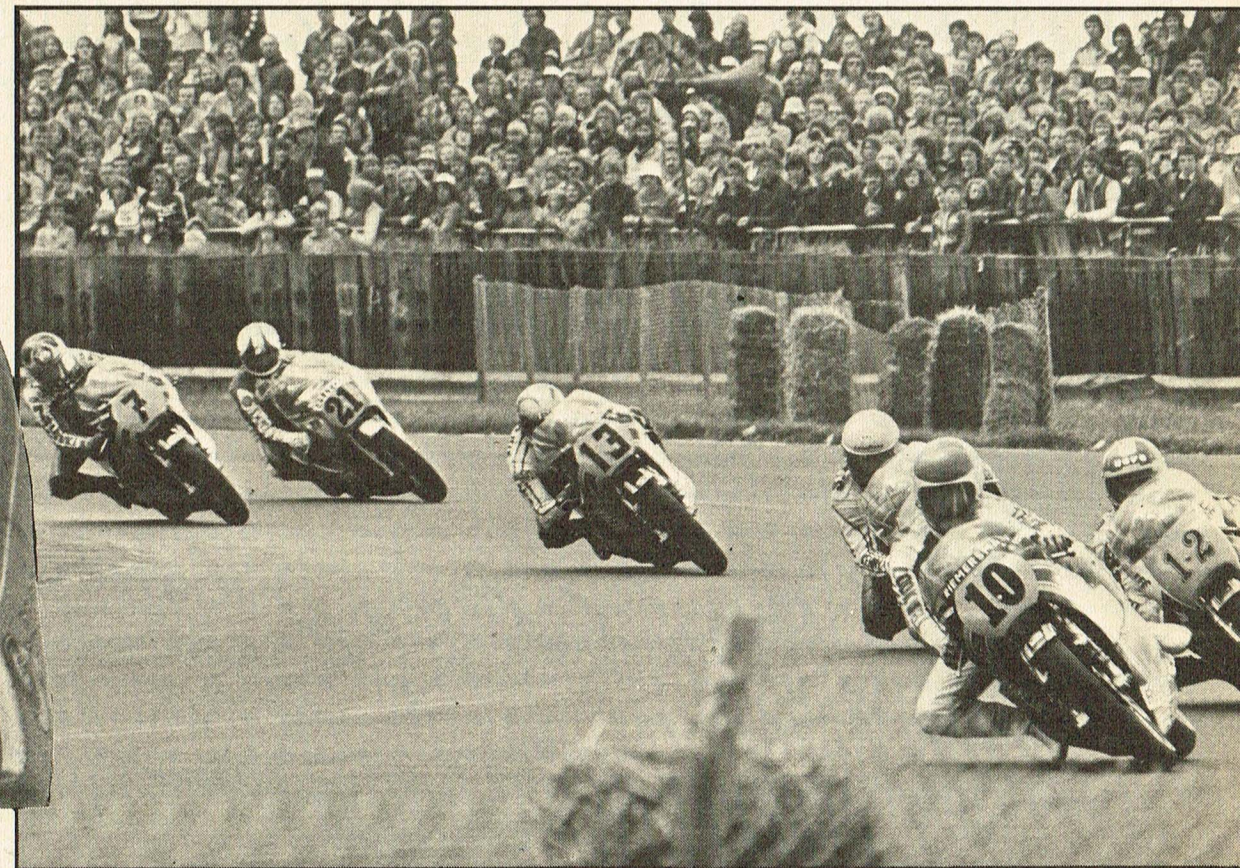
Another to be delighted about the day was Jock Taylor after this third place in the Shell sidcar race. Joining in with Bill Hodgkins and the ever-cheerful Kenny Williams, they celebrated well in the paddock bar.

As brooms appeared to clear floors patterned with crushed plastic beer glasses and the last few people drifted back to their suburban semis, one was left with a sense of disappointment that the show was over for another year, even though the weather ruined a major spectacle.

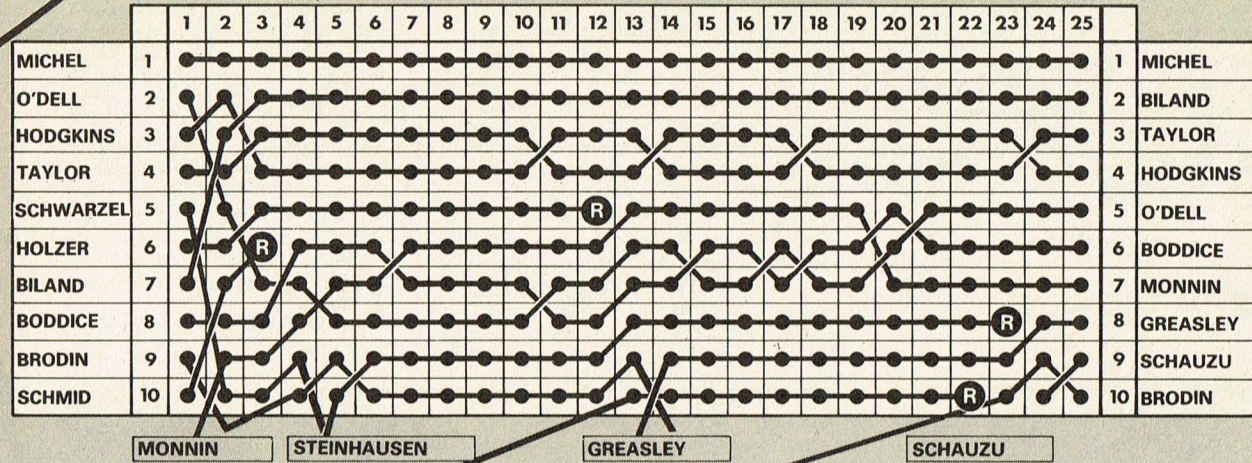
But the travelling Continental circus must move on.



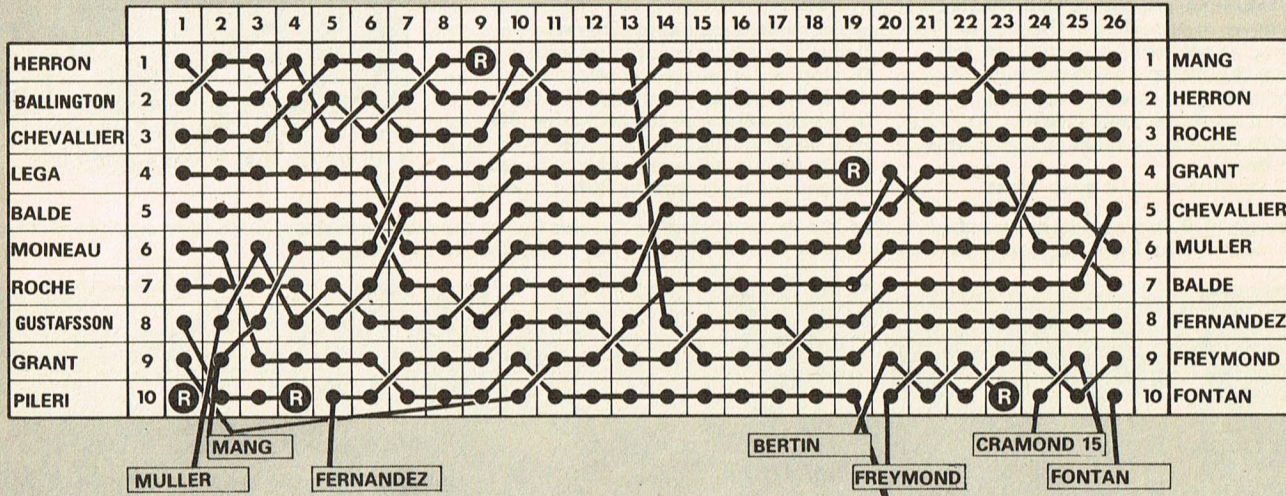
Proud of her man. Bronwyn Ballington is all smiles after hubby's world title win.



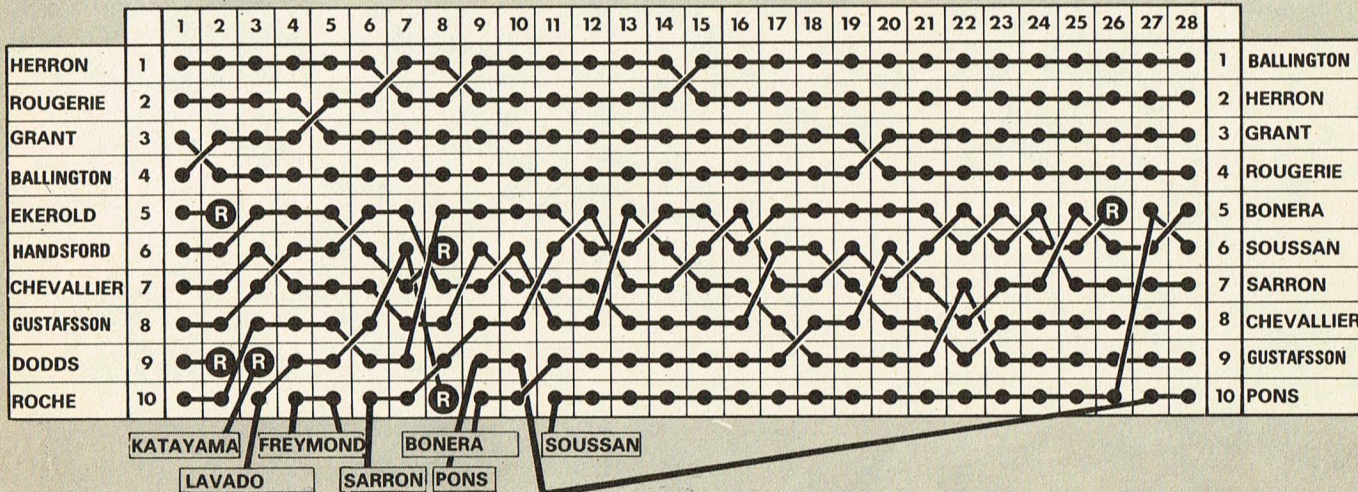
Sidecar British GP



250 British GP



350 British GP



500cc Lap chart HOW TO WORK IT OUT

1 10 . 1 . 13 . 12 . 7 . 8 . 6 . 4 . 2 . 11 . 21 . 5 . 29 . 17 . 15 . 32 . 9 . 34 . 22 . 25

2 1 . 10 . 13 . 12 . 8 . 7 . 4 . 6 . 2 . 11 . 21 . 5 . 29 . 32 . 17 . 15 . 9 . 48 . 16 . 34

3 1 . 10 . 13 . 12 . 8 . 7 . 4 . 2 . 6 . 11 . 29 . 32 . 21 . 5 . 17 . 15 . 48 . 9 . 16 . 34

4 1 . 10 . 13 . 12 . 8 . 7 . 4 . 2 . 6 . 11 . 32 . 29 . 21 . 5 . 14 . 15 . 48 . 17 . 16 . 9

5 1 . 10 . 13 . 12 . 8 . 7 . 4 . 2 . 6 . 11 . 32 . 29 . 21 . 5 . 14 . 8 . 15 . 16 . 9

6 10 . 1 . 13 . 12 . 8 . 7 . 4 . 2 . 6 . 29 . 11 . 32 . 14 . 5 . 21 . 16 . 9 . 48 . 42 . 15

7 10 . 13 . 1 . 12 . 8 . 7 . 6 . 2 . 29 . 11 . 4 . 32 . 14 . 16 . 5 . 42 . 43 . 9 . 5x

8 10 . 13 . (37)-7 . 1 . 8 . 12 . 7 . 29 . 6 . 11 . 2 . 32 . 4 . 14 . 16 . 4x . 43 . 42 . 9 . 22 . 39

9 13 . 10 . 1 . 8 . 12 . 29 . 7 . 11 . 6 . 2 . 32 . 14 . 16 . 4x . 43 . 16 . 32x . 42 . 9 . 22

10 13 . (38)-9 . 1 . 8 . 12 . 29 . 10x . 11 . 14 . 2 . 6 . (37)-9 . 7x . 43 . 16 . 32x . 3 . 25x

11 13 . (38)-10 . 7 . 10 . 28x . 8 . 1 . 43 . 12 . 11 . 2 . 6 . (37)-10 . 16 . 42 . (5)-9 . 9 . 22 . 39x . 3 . 25x

12 13 . (17)-11 . 8 . 1 . 43 . 12 . 11 . 2 . 6 . (5)-10 . 16 . (37)-11 . 42 . 22 . (4)-10 . 3 . (10)-11x . 9

13 13 . 43 . 8x . 1x . (38)-12 . (17)-12 . 11 . 12 . 2 . 28 . 11 . (5)-11 . 6 . 16 . (4)-11 . (37)-12 . 42 . (7)-11 . 22 . 3

14 43 . (9)-12 . 13 . (5)-12 . (28)-12 . 11 . 2 . 12 . (38)-13 . (17)-13 . (4)-12 . (7)-12 . 6x . 16 . 22 . 42 . (37)-13 . 3x

15 43 . (5)-13 . (9)-14 . 13 . (28)-13 . (4)-13 . (7)-13 . 11 . (1)-14 . 2 . 12 . (38)-14 . 14 . 22 . (17)-14 . 16 . 42 . 6 . (37)-14

16 43 . (3)-15 . (5)-14 . (7)-14 . (4)-14 . (28)-14 . (1)-15 . (9)-15 . (8)-14 . 13 . 11 . 2 . 12 . 22 . (38)-15 . 16 . (17)-18 . 42 . 6

17 (5)-15 . 43 . (7)-15 . (37)-16 . (4)-15 . (1)-16 . (3)-16 . (28)-15 . (8)-15 . 11 . (9)-16 . 13 . 2 . 12 . 22 . 16 . (38)-16

18 (5)-16 . (7)-16 . (42)-16 . (17)-16 . 43 . (4)-16 . (6)-17 . (1)-17 . (8)-16 . (28)-16 . (3)-17 . (37)-16 . 11 . 2 . (9)-17 . 13 . 22 . 16 . (7)-17 . (5)-17 . (4)-17 . (1)-18

19 43 . (38)-17 . (42)-17 . (8)-17 . (6)-18 . (17)-17 . (28)-17 . (3)-18 . 11 . 2 . (37)-17 . (9)-18 . 13 . (7)-18 . 22 . (5)-18 . 12 . (4)-18 . (1)-19 . 16

20 43 . (8)-18 . (38)-18 . (42)-18 . (6)-19 . (28)-18 . (17)-18 . 11 . (3)-19 . (7)-19 . 2 . (9)-19 . 13 . (5)-19 . (4)-19 . 1 . 22 . (37)-18 . 12 . 16 . (8)-19

21 43 . (42)-19 . (38)-19 . (28)-19 . (6)-20 . (7)-20 . 11 . 2 . (4)-20 . (3)-20 . (5)-20 . 1 . (17)-19 . (9)-20 . 13 . 22 . (8)-20 . 12

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28 1 . (22)-27 . (4)-27 . 43 . (5)-27 . (6)-26 . (8)-27 . (12)-27 . (13)-27 . (38)-25 . (3)-26 . (28)-26 . 7 . 11 . (17)-25 . (9)-27 . 2 . (42)-26 . (37)-25

bers are at the end of this story. The scorers have logged numbers as they have passed through regardless of order but they have noted how many laps have been completed for each man. When a rider pulled in for a pit-stop, an X is against his number. After returning to the race his number is placed in brackets and the number of the laps he has completed is noted alongside. For example, at the end of lap 8, with Wil Hartog leading, Dick Alblas

IF YOU did not believe Kenny Roberts won the British 500cc Grand Prix at Silverstone with Steve Manship second, here is proof. This is the lap-scoring chart completed by the official time-keepers at Silverstone and it tells an interesting story. The laps are in the left-hand column and, reading across, are the numbers of bikes as they came across the start and finish line. The riders and their corresponding num-

tyre advantage then enabled him to pass Rolando, Lansivuori and Finchinelli — all on slicks — to finish third. Roberts pitted on lap 13 when lying fourth. But the speed of the Yamaha camp enabled him to come round at the end of the 15th lap just one lap adrift of those who preferred not to change tyres. He went through the field like a dose of salts, as did Sheene, but the American had one lap advantage over the Briton. Roberts unlapped on lap 18. Here the score-sheet shows him as going through twice on this one lap — the same as with

Newbold, Sheene and Cecotto — but, with Manship being marked down as the race leader, this would appear to be right as the four riders made up lost time and caught up a lap. Manship took the lead on lap 14 and held it right through to the last lap when Roberts overtook him. Key: 1 — Roberts, 2 — Lansivuori, 3 — Coulson, 4 — Cecotto, 5 — Newbold, 6 — Parrish, 7 — Sheene, 8 — Katsuyama, 9 — George, 10 — Hartog, 11 — Lucchinelli, 12 — Ferrarri, 13 — Rougerie, 14 — Williams, 15 — Wiener, 16 — Williams, 17 — Woodley, 18 — Vieri, 19 — Breda, 20 — Ireland, 21 — Rolando, 22 — Baker, 23 — Vogt, 24 — Rossi, 25 — Baker, 26 — Rau, 27 — Alblas, 28 — Sjöström, 29 — Middleburg, 30 — Potter.