



*2,260 miles in one day was enough to win the race for Kawasaki and to add Chemarin and Cornu to the list of World Champions. But do endurance racers need the complications of F1 regulations?*



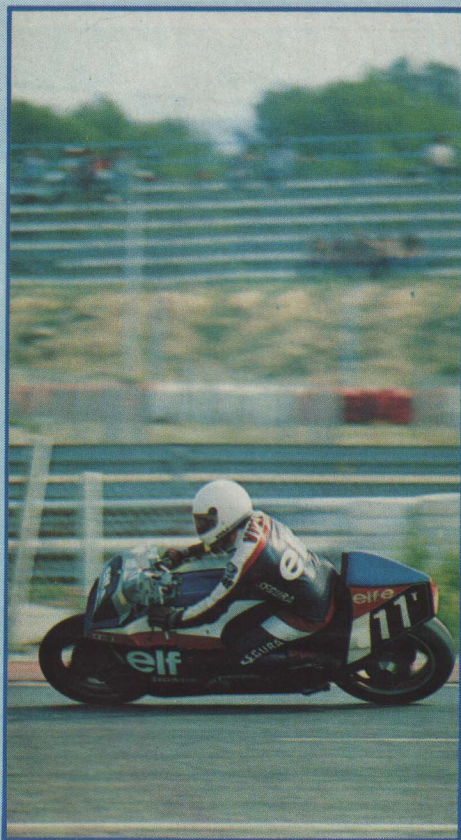
# B O L L D O R

**T**HANKS to the FIM, one of the world's most innovative and prestigious races is in danger of becoming a procession of similar bikes. We can, after all, watch TT F1 races any weekend. We've come to expect more from the Bol d'Or. The switch from an event which offered prototypes, real racers and even turbocharged engines (had anyone wanted to enter one), has not done anything to increase the interest. Factory development and technical innovation have always been one of the big attractions in endurance racing.

Now even the factories have to use bikes based on production machines. The exotic entries are out — like the Sonauto OW31 which kept the lead and kept everyone guessing for 18 hours until its crankshaft finally broke. The private entry which makes up the bulk of the field has always used bikes which are similar to F1 machines anyway. Usually they would be a bit faster because there was more scope to modify the engines, but there wasn't much in it.

So the change in rules won't do anything for the private runners; in fact the ones we spoke to have lost their grundle to such an extent that a petition is being compiled to tell the organising body that their idea is not a good one. And that the proposed change to 750 motors is even worse.

So the riders are not in favour, it's hard to see how the factories might benefit from the change in rules and it means there is one less item of interest for the spectator. Variety and an almost total freedom from rules have made races like the Bol exciting both visually and technically. The more rules there are, the worse it gets and you find strange anomalies; for instance, one of the bikes we took down to le Castellet was a Yamaha 650 Turbo, a street legal bike which is available to anyone who can muster the best part of three kilo-pounds (we're European now, you know). Last year we could have raced it on the Ricard circuit. This year not even Jean Claude Chemarin would have been allowed out on it. Nor, for that matter could one of our other bikes, the GS



**Above: a rare shot of ex-world champion Walter Villa on the short-lived Elf Honda. Opposite top: despite being long on numbers, team Honda were short on luck. Opposite bottom: the very fast works Suzukis in close formation early in the race. Below: steady, safe tactics from Chemarin.**

1100, have been raced. And if the 750 limit is imposed, the third bike, the humble R80 would be illegal.

Silly, isn't it? But it still doesn't remove the sun, the wine, the smell of Frenchmen burning themselves on charcoal grills, the fairground, the extrovert demonstrations of trials devices and the dozens of other carnival attractions. That part of the notebook was a bit smudged but we think it said "carnival".

There was enough attraction to persuade several thousand people to leave their firesides and make the long trek south. The French papers were talking about 100,000 (shouldn't that be 100 kilo-people?) and there was some mention of 4,000 British riders going down the Bol, although we don't know who counted them.

Among the devotees was the enthusiast who spent the whole 24 hours at the trackside so as not to miss any of the action and not to lose the thread of the race. He reckoned the Bol's attraction was increased because it was now a World Championship and a lot of ace riders had turned up for it. True, as well as the endurance regulars, there were people like Walter Villa, Dave Aldana, Bernard Fau, and a few other notables.

But there have been international stars in previous years and it seems like a lot of trouble just to add yet another world champion to an already long list. And for every dedicated spectator there was another who was equally interested in the general goings on and for whom the racing was just a noisy back-drop to a weekend of open air debauchery. With the roar of the engines and the smell of the crowd, Bol d'Or is as much showbiz as serious racebiz.

Of course it is fairly serious stuff for a lot of people. Like Chemarin and his Swiss partner Jacques Cornu who needed to keep their Kool Kawasaki ahead of the Hondas to win the championship. Chemarin has won the Bol five times, also winning seven other 24-hour races and been Europe's endurance champion four times. It's a sort of habit with him.



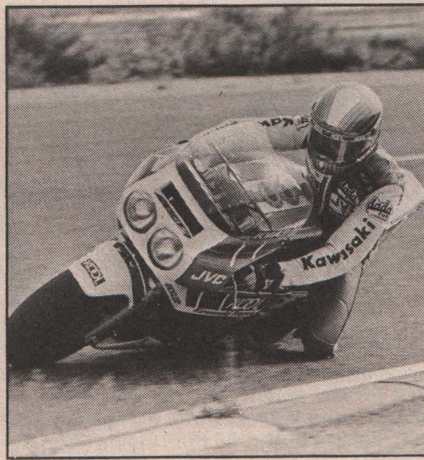
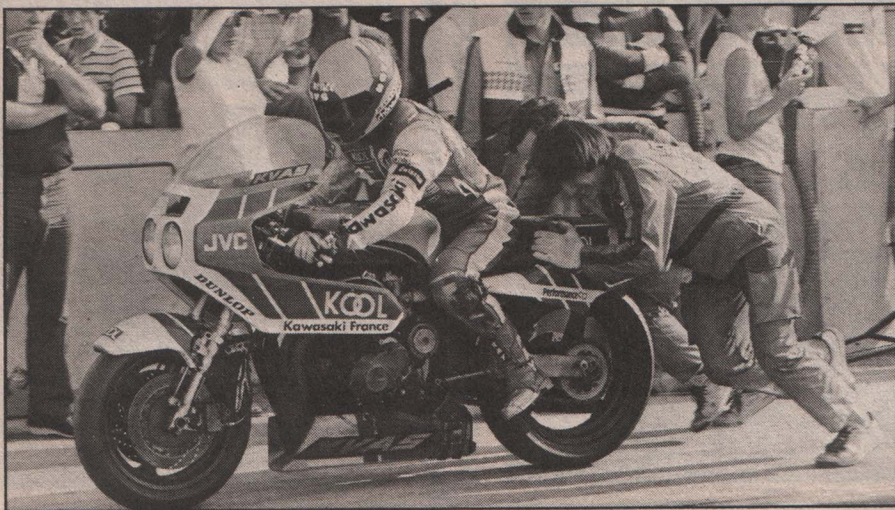
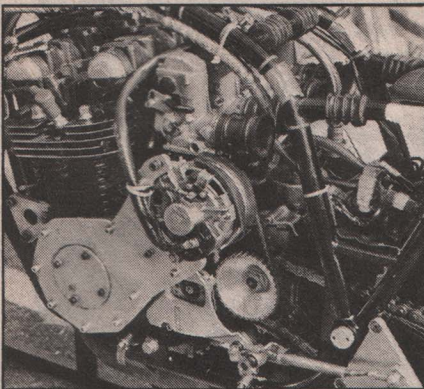
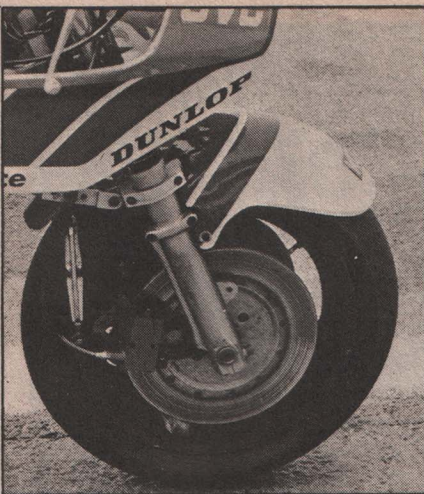
# KAWASAKI

Now the mainstay of private entries, 1000J-based machinery also came with works support. The Kool Kawasakis had the choice of 16 or 18 inch wheels plus the mechanical anti-dive shown (right). There were many variations on the alternator arrangement, most being driven from the gearbox, like the toothed-belt set-up pictured here. Note the stock bellmouths on the Mikuni carbs.

Below: the winning Kawasaki was refuelling in around 10 seconds. The Eurac 1000J(15) used a PEM frame with rocker-operated rear suspension on a stiffened-up swing arm.

Bottom: the Wells/Moyce/Salle machine was based on the earlier Kawasaki in a Peckett & McNab frame — a very conventional but well-tried format which had a fairly trouble-free race and finished 9th.

Bottom right: J-C Chemarin on the number 2 Kawasaki kept out of everyone's way and circulated steadily enough to be second after the opposition had blown its motors or crashed out of the race.



◀ Cornu hasn't had so much practice at winning but he has ridden National Moto's Kawasaki and an Egli Kawasaki. This year the teams are allowed to have three riders in the longer races and another Swiss, Sergio Pellandini, was their third man. He normally rides 500 grands prix and this is his first year in long distance racing, which he started by helping to win the 24 hours at le Mans.

The other Kool Kawasaki was piloted by Jean Lafond, Hervé Guilleux and Patrick Igoa, who may not be familiar to British spectators but were decidedly strong contenders, a point which they brought home quite firmly by actually winning the race.

From the staff and organisation, the Kawasakis had to be the favourite team, but there was some serious opposition from Honda France, Honda Italy and Honda Brazil, all using pretty high calibre riders, not to mention factory engines. JapAuto had two bikes with official-looking bits of Honda in them plus riders like Jacques Luc. The French Elf team, determined to take over where Mead & Tomkinson left off, had another RSC Honda engine. Elf had also enlisted some impressive help at the helm, from Christian le Liard, Walter Villa and Dave Aldana.

And there were a lot more to come. Whoever won was going to have a tough time getting there.

The first surprise came in practice where the SERT Suzukis both proved to be faster than anything else. Suzuki haven't done a lot in endurance racing and it remained to be seen whether these were very fast, first-hour specials or whether they would be able to stay the distance. These factory bikes were being sponsored by Lubrifilm, which at least implies that they were also using it in their engines. This, subject to our translation of the French hand-out, deposits a mixture of metals — silver, lead and copper — on to internal engine surfaces, replacing metal particles worn away, thus helping to maintain compression and keep good seals.

After the dust had blown away from the qualifying sessions, Lafond's Kawasaki was in fifth place, while Chemarin's bike had only managed tenth in the le Mans-type line-up, more than 4 seconds a lap slower than the quickest Suzuki. As a matter of interest, the best-placed European bike was a Moto Guzzi in 51st place, whose lap times were 13 seconds down on the first-placed machine. And behind the Guzzi there were 25 more bikes to complete the field of 76 machines.

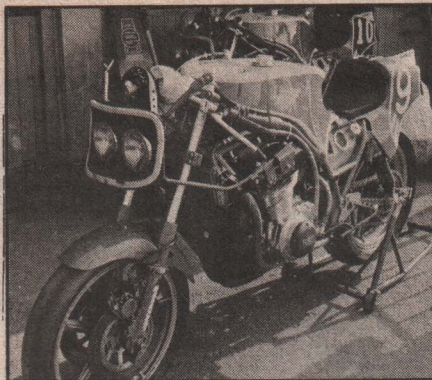
Every year the numbers dwindle, but every year there are still a few European twins; this time there were seven Guzzis, two Ducatis and two BMWs to break up the shrill screams of the Japanese fours.

An in-between, with an RSC engine in its unusual, French frame, the Elf had qualified sixth in practice which at least proved that the chassis matched the works engine. There was still room for scepticism though. Jim Wells, one of the most experienced privateers in long-distance racing, grinned as he made his ▶



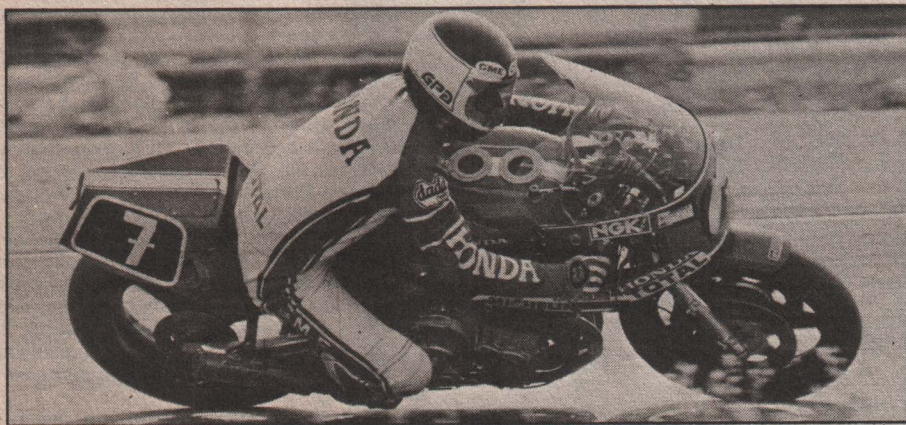
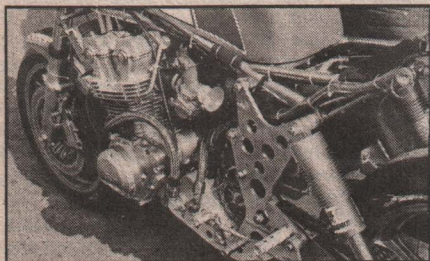
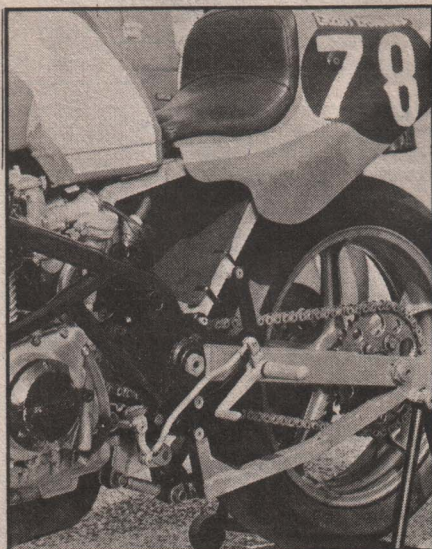
# HONDA

As well as the official bikes, there were RSC engines used by Japauto, with PEM frame and Marzocchi suspension (top right). Right: the Darvill Honda ridden by Copland/Hunt to 25th place used a Spondon frame with the rear suspension compressed by a rocker arm below the spring. Note the removable section of swing-arm.



Below: several bikes featured bolt-on plates to carry suspension, footrest and engine mounts — it certainly simplifies frame construction and repair. It also shows off the RSC dry-sump kit quite clearly.

Bottom: after threatening to win right up to the last hour the Honda France entry ridden by Fau, Fruttschi and Bolle finally expired. The bike featured Pro-Link rear suspension and Showa anti-dive forks. The other RS1000 was hindered by a blown head gasket after breaking a head stud, but managed to make up enough time to finish in eighth place, ridden by Sarron, Jaubert and Bertin.



# SUZUKI

The SERT Suzukis were official, all-Japanese efforts with Full-Floater suspension, Japanese frame and forks and very fast engines. This one (top right) had a piston failure but the other went on to finish 4th despite having to have the rear suspension stripped out and rebuilt.

Right: typical of the private Suzuki entry, this Dutch machine had a Yoshimura engine and Nico Bakker frame with RG500 front forks.

Below: having set up the fastest times in practice the two works bikes led from the start of the race, circulating together and gradually pulling away from the rest of the field. It wasn't enough to beat the steady but relentless pace of the Kawasakis and Hondas, though.

Bottom right: this Swiss Suzuki ran a belt drive to a car alternator to supply power for lighting. The belt could be quickly unhooked for daytime riding.



pronouncement, "It's a one-hour special. As soon as the TV crews pack up, so will they. The one I saw didn't even have a rev counter."

The first hour of the race is broadcast live on French national television and there is a lot of prestige and publicity for the early race leaders and their sponsors. In fact Jim had over-estimated Team Elf by about 45 minutes. Apart from a BMW which wouldn't start, the Elf was the first machine to abort, with a broken rod on the fifth lap.

As the Elf was being wheeled back to the pits the two works Suzukis took the lead and circulated together, quickly pulling away from the rest of the field. The closest challenge was coming from the many Hondas, although Kawasaki had a different plan. The Lafond/Guilleux/Igoa machine was supposed to be up front, forcing the pace and going for a win. The other bike, ridden by Chemarin, Cornu and Pellandini was to keep out of everyone's



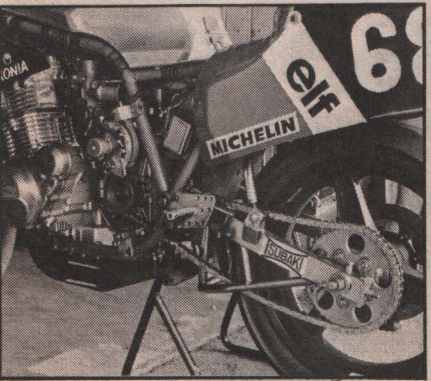
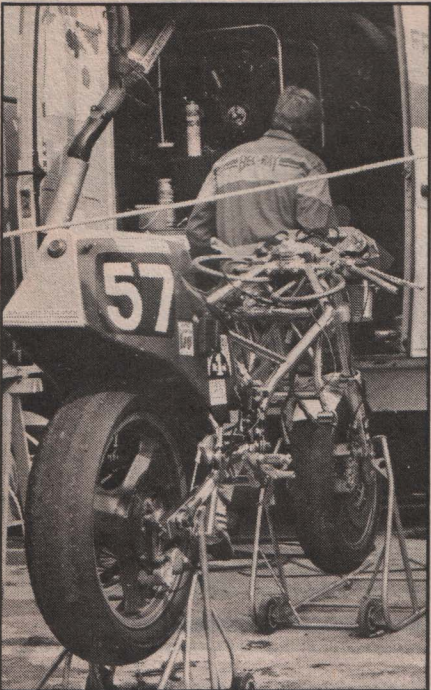
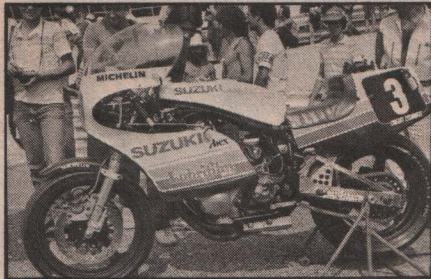
Most of the pre-race antics concerned the laws of gravity, which...

way, ride a safe race and finish high enough to give Chemarin and Cornu the world championship — and Kawasaki the manufacturer's championship. Basically this meant beating the Dutch Honda ridden by Johan van der Wal.

The Suzukis were finally split up when the

Moineau/Hubin machine lost 12 minutes having the rear damper changed, putting the bike a few laps behind the race for first place. Well into the night it was still a Honda-Suzuki fight with Kawasaki keeping safely in the background. At midnight Dominique Sarron's Honda lost over an hour when it broke a cylinder stud and blew its head gasket, a problem which also sidelined the SDVM Honda.

In the early hours of the morning the lead Suzuki was abandoned with a piston failure, which was ironic considering their Lubrifilm sponsorship. The pit crew pulled the engine out and stripped it, with the intention of putting the bike back into the race, but it was just too much of an undertaking. Meanwhile it was all falling apart for Honda as well. The Sarron/Bertin/Jaubert machine was some 30 laps behind, leaving Fau, Fruttschi and Bolle on the other Honda France bike to chase the Suzuki. Both Italian Hondas retired, one with ignition



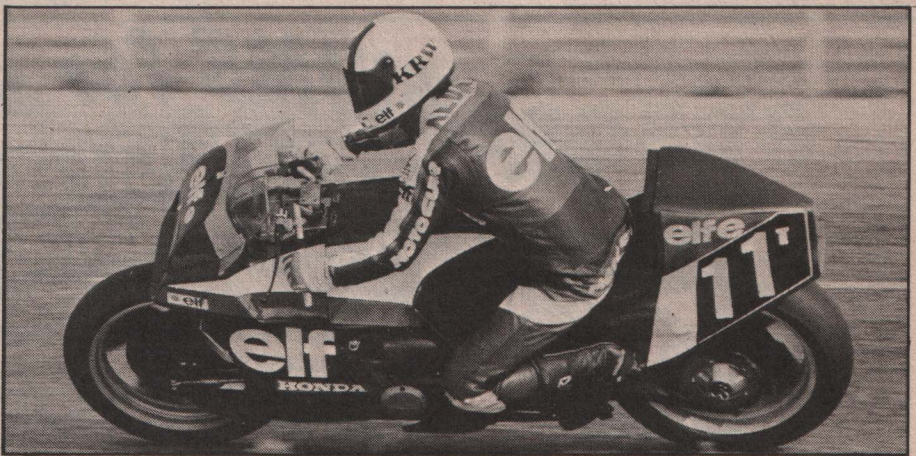
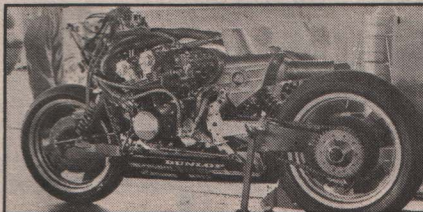
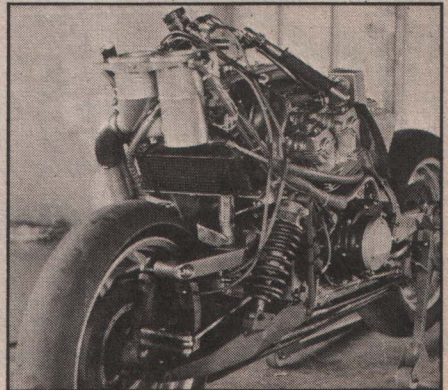
# ELF

**Right: Team Elf refuel their light, fast Honda-powered device during practice. This unusual machine was sixth fastest in qualifying but broke a rod in the opening laps of the race.**

**At the front there are car-type ball joints locating the steering axis, controlled by a drag link. The double arm suspension bolts directly on to the front engine plates and the rear suspension mounts on the back of the RSC engine. Although the engine is stressed, there are additional struts between front and rear engine plates.**

**The chunky brake discs are carbon fibre — an expensive but effective way of building a bike some 30lb lighter than the factory specials.**

**Fuel is carried below the engine while the cruelly-shaped header tank behind the carbs contains oil for the dry-sumped engine which was supplied by Honda RSC. Mike Tomkinson must be feeling very pleased.**



failure and the other after crashing. The Brazilian machine had lost time with exhaust problems and one of the National Motos Hondas also suffered a couple of crashes before being retired. The Japauto Honda, ridden by Luc, Robles and Battistini had a puncture and

**... seem to be different at Ricard.**



crashed, putting the bike down to 68th place by the time they got it running. Once back in the race it steamed away, eventually finishing 12th after some rapid but consistent riding.

This left the other Japauto and the Dutch Honda still circulating steadily, plus a "stock" 1000cc motor in a stock CB1100R frame, entered by the French dealer Guignabodet. By now the Kawasaki tactics were paying off with Lafond's bike in the lead, pressing on all the time while Chemarin's machine was only a few laps behind. In between there was the French Honda ridden by Frutschi, Fau and Bolle who now decided that they had nothing to lose and would make a banzai attempt to win. Gradually the Honda made up ground, un-lapping itself and getting within striking distance of the leading Kawasaki when the pace became too much and the motor failed, leaving the two Kawasakis with a relatively easy ride home, to win the Bol and the world

championship respectively.

Right behind were the Japauto and Moineau's Suzuki, followed by four Hondas led by van der Wal, and then the first British team, the ninth-place Kawasaki ridden by Jim Wells, Asa Moyce and Mark Salle.

This bike, or most it, was their original formula one machine, and goes back about five years. Apart from some work to sort out a clutch problem it had a steady ride and in the second half of the race was lapping as quickly as the leaders.

The rule changes, although they've taken away the freedom and much of the technical interest in the prototype bikes, have at least allowed a bike like this aged Kawasaki to be competitive, given a competent team of riders and pit crew. And that's not to say that the racing has become any slower; the winning Kawasaki chalked up a new race record of 2,260 miles.