

SCHWANTZ



By the multiple miracles of facsimile communicators, jet aircraft and Patrick Gosling we present the 1989 Japanese Grand Prix

O utrageously wasteful, sinfully materialist, ruthlessly elite — the '89 GP season kicked off, appropriately enough, at Suzuka, Japan. Honda fielded eight '89 NSR500s, Yamaha nine YZRs and even Suzuki had five RGVs. Gardner did himself a mischief, Spencer proved he could still go fast, Doohan stunned everyone, in practice and the race, until his bike ate a piston and on a circuit which hasn't been changed since last year Schwantz cut the lap record by nearly three seconds to win for the second year running. 84,000 Japanese GP fans turned up on the latest race replicas and clapped politely.



Above: Rainey and Schwantz, in close formation, about to dynamite back marker Kenmei Matsumoto. Rainey's Dunlops lasted perfectly though there are still wor-

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ries about them holding together on hot tracks. Both riders sometimes thought they were goners in the 45 minute race, particularly when Rainey went onto the dirt on the chicane. Good humour prevailed with Schwantz waving at Rainey on the straight and Rainey reaching out into the airstream to touch the Texan's leg, but Wayne kicked himself afterwards for misreading his pit board and denying himself a last lap pounce. By race end, both riders were still putting in qualifying lap speeds.





Previous spread below left: Magee, Sarron, MacKenzie and Taira. Niall was up to third when he got nurfed onto the dirt by an even more sideways than usual Wayne Gardner. Right on the pace up till then, Niall had to settle for sixth when his front tyre choice proved too soft. He was sad Marlboro hadn't tested at Suzuka (\$3,000 per hour) but he's pleased with the Yamaha, happy with how he's riding and looking forward to the season. Previous page below: Our Ron suffered from numberworideritis which manifested itself in the form of handling and front tyre problems. He also had his RGV seize in practice, and crashed two hours before the race. Punted onto the dirt by US flat track ace Shobert, Ron finished 12th, but he understands his bike's problems and the fiendishly clever Haslam mind should soon start making up for inferior supply of spares and tyres. This page middle: '89 swing arms. Left, the rare humpback version as fitted to Chili's HB NSR500. Right, the more common bowhead style adopted by Yamaha and Cagiva. (A cetologist called Sarah Insall writes: bowhead whales are rarer than humpbacks, but the Japs eat 'em anyway when nobody's looking). Right: a small selection of the fans' transport. There are at least six models in this picture not officially imported into the UK. Despite increasing diversification of the big four's model ranges Japanese punters show no signs of recovering from R model fever.





Left: Fat Fred Spencer, racing on his old 19 plate, didn't win and didn't retire either. Despite minimal pre-season practice and intermittent ignition failure he copped 7th fastest lap. The ability is still there. Near left: feverish work on the Italian Fior ridden by Gentile to no effect. Middle: the massed squadrons of Yamaha fighter command. Below: Doohan and his amazing helmet. (Note also his amazing riding style: knee on deck, still braking, still sitting up, front tyre starting to tuck in — arrgh). Doohan's never raced a 500 before, and was 6th in front of Lawson, Mackenzie and Sarron when his YZR blew up. Below: Chili was doing well on his Pirellis until his NSR was noted doing a 70mph stoppie at the hairpin. Eyewitnesses described the back wheel as 3½ feet off the ground. Quote of the race: Schwantz to arch-enemy Doug Polen's fading front brakes and DNF 17 lap race performance: "Welcome to reality." Horror story of the race: Wayne Gardner chose a narrow rear rim to quicken the steering of his NSR (is the bike still a pig after all?) and in so doing, altered the tyre profile. Result? Mega slides. He nearly came off at the hairpin, again in front of Mackenzie and again in front of Lawson. This third was a real monster and Wayne's groin hit the tank really hard. He finished the race in agony, seemed OK, then was rushed to hospital. You've only got to look at Wayne's riding last year to know that he has big balls, but they weren't meant to be this big, and for a while the surgeons were considering something really drastic. In the end, they didn't and Wayne discharged himself in OK-ish condition. What is truly amazing is that he carried on racing in the first place. Get well soon mate.

RESULTS

1	Kevin Schwantz (34)	Pepsi Suzuki RGVS00	USA
2	Wayne Rainey (3)	Lucky Strike Yamaha YZR500	USA
3	Eddie Lawson (1)	Rothmans Honda NSR500	USA
4	Wayne Gardner (2)	Rothmans Honda NSR500	AUS
5	Kevin Magee (5)	Lucky Strike YZR500	AUS
6	Nick Mackenzie (6)	Marlboro Yamaha YZR500	GB
7	Christian Sarron (4)	Gasolinas Yamaha YZR500	F
8	Tadatoshi Terao (21)	Teach 21 Yamaha YZR500	J
9	Masahiko Fujiwara (26)	Lucky Strike Yamaha YZR500	J
10	Shinichi Itoh (40)	Sood Honda NSR500	J
11	Dobho Shober (25)	Cabin Honda NSR500	USA
12	Ron Haslam (8)	Pepsi Suzuki RGVS00	GB
13	Shunji Yatsushiro (11)	Pentax Honda NSR500	J
14	Freddie Spencer (19)	Marlboro Yamaha YZR500	USA
15	Kunio Machii (48)	Hescale Honda NSR500	J
16	Randy Mamola (12)	Cagiva V5B9	USA



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