

## TRIALS — BRITISH SOLO CHAMPIONSHIP

# 'OLD BRIGADE' STILL RULED THE ROOST

**ONCE again the British Solo Trials Championship was a three-horse race, with previous title winners Martin Lampkin, Rob Shepherd and Malcolm Rathmell battling for top honours.**

With Malcolm Rathmell back on Montesa after a year on the Suzuki, and desperate to do well, the series promised plenty of action and a close result.

Kicking off in February with the snow-covered Colmore Cup, nicknamed the Coldmore by frozen spectators, Malcolm slid the standard 310 Montesa to a clear win. Setting the scene for the year, Rob Shepherd was second on the works 359 Honda and Martin Lampkin third. The foot-deep snow lying on the sections took a high score from the ex-champions and Malc ended the day with a loss of 60 marks. Fifteen championship points and a vital boost to his confidence travelled with him the following weekend to East Anglia for round two.

Dry and frosty after the previous week's snow, the big three joined the other 80 riders for the event with a time limit extended to five hours. Rob Shepherd gunned the thumper round the course without losing a single five all day, finishing with a loss of 32 marks. Rathmell followed nine marks behind, which gave him 12 points and the title lead. For Lampkin the day was a disaster, finishing on 77 marks lost and taking just three championship points. John Reynolds claimed third spot with a loss of 60 marks, his best ever score in the championship.

Third round action centred on the Cotswold Cup trial near Sapperton and it was a one-two for Montesa with Malcolm first and Nigel Birkett slipping into second spot. Lampkin led the trial for a time but a group of four rocky sections near the end proved his undoing, as he lost his chain twice and bumped his total to 34, 11 more than the winner, Malc.

Rathmell had established a firm lead after only three rounds, with a total of 42 points, his nearest challenger being Shepherd on 35 points.

The V in Victory, being the fourth round in April, turned into another sort of V as riders found the event so easy that John Reynolds dropped only one mark for the day. Rathmell made a nervous start and by the third group had lost his first dab. Two more prods took his total to three for the day and he settled for second place and another 12 championship points.

Lampkin, Mike Leddy and Rob Shepherd tied on seven marks each and after the tie-break procedures had been carried out, Lampkin's 39 cleans put him ahead of Leddy and Shepherd, who could not be split and gained two points apiece. The last man to gain a second class award dropped only ten marks. Lampkin now lay in fifth position while Shep  
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Rob Shepherd, pictured here on the 306cc Honda in 1978, won four of the championship rounds last year to finish third, just four points behind Lampkin.

had fallen further behind Rathmell, but still in second place.

The title chase took a break for a holiday in the Highlands and after a cliff-hanging finish Malcolm Rathmell gave Montesa its first Scottish victory. Shepherd had led for three days

but slumped in the final group of sections. Lampkin lost that now-famous five while Rathmell grabbed the win at virtually the last section.

When the British championship resumed with the Lyn Traders trial, Shepherd made up



John Reynold's, Suzuki's brightest hope for top honours, finished fourth winning the Victory and British Experts.



Chris Sutton rode consistently for Suzuki all last year before changing to Montesa for 1980.



Chris Clarke, probably the most improved rider of 1979, is a great prospect for future honours. He is pictured here powering to third place in the Manx two-day in 1979.

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Peter Cartwright, pictured here fighting for grip at the Peak in 1978 on his Comerfords Bultaco, scored consistently last year from the Lynn Traders onwards.

for his SSDT disappointment with a two-mark win over Rathmell. Third was Lampkin. After five rounds Rathmell had collected 66 points, Shepherd 52 and Reynolds held third spot with 37. Big Mart had moved up to fourth, one mark behind.

Lampkin came back with a bang at the Alan Trophy trial to win his first big trial of the year. With a superb second lap, he overtook first lap leader Rathmell and finished on 73. It was a tough day for everyone with the first class awards going down to 138 marks lost. But at the top of the championship table it was still the Montesa man, Rathmell. John Reynolds finished third and claimed ten title points, but he slipped to fourth overall in the top ten.

Holdups marred the seventh round, when the contenders moved to Devon for the West of England trial. As Shepherd fought off a cold and finished eighth, Lampkin and Rathmell tied on 26 lost with Mart taking the decider.

Three wins and four seconds had given Rathmell a 30 lead and by now seemed to be uncatchable. Lampkin had moved up to second spot with 63 title points with Shepherd hanging on to third with 59.

Rathmell clinched the title at round eight, finishing 12 marks in front of Lampkin. With a total of 108 points there was no way anyone could now catch him. Title number five was secure.

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Seventeen marks was Sheps winning margin at the rain-soaked Hoad, as the Honda star grabbed his third win of the series.

Although he was successful where others failed, Shep could only manage 16 cleans all day. The conditions took marks from everyone, with second place man Lampkin clocking in with 100 penalties and third Rathmell on 108.

Shepherd was now within seven points of Lampkin and with another round to go there was still a chance for the Honda to snatch the runner-up spot from the Bultaco.

Shepherd concluded the 1979 series with a strong victory in the Peak trial and managed to narrow the gap between himself and Lampkin. But it was the Bultaco star who managed to hold on to runner-up spot with a total of 99 points. Shep finished on 95 while Rathmell, the title decided two trials ago, signed off with 124 marks. The Peak weather was a repeat of the Hoad, with heavy rain falling all day. The four-stroke proved to be the ideal tool for the muddy conditions, and for the second year in a row Shep had his name on the winning trophy.

John Reynolds finished fourth in the title table and as the 1980 series gets underway, he could be the man most likely to unseat all three of the previous British Champions.



After a good start, Nigel Birkett had to fight his way out of a rough patch in mid-season.

