



TMX News



The Kawasaki kid in action at the Ken Hall Trophy (top), Hawkstone Park (above) and leading Roger Harvey at Great Brickhill. More and more people are predicting greatness for the young Bracknell Bomber.

Aiming for glory: The Kawa-Kid

DAVE Thorpe has always been one step ahead of his rivals. Right from the age of six when he first took part in competition Dave has been a winner and his stature, both physically and in ability, has always seen him racing in a class above his age.

Gaining experience on a minibike from the age of three, Dave's first season of competition was in grass track, but a change to scrambling at the age of seven brought him his first national championship in his first season!

Cups, plaques and championships have flowed like a fast-moving river ever since and by the time Dave was 11 he was riding with the experts, a class which riders normally only ride in from the age of 14 or 15.

Riding against older lads like Steve Beamish and Fred Rowe, Dave was usually third or fourth in those days, but it wasn't long before he was back at the front, winning title after title.

Not that Dave is just good at motocross. He's a level-headed youngster and no-one would guess that he was only 17. While he was still in the schoolboy ranks Dave was 6'2" and a well-proportioned 11½ stone, and his articulate manner belied his youth.

His athletic prowess without a bike beneath him even brought him a schoolboy international cap, and Queens Park Rangers and

other big clubs wanted to sign the star centre half as an apprentice professional

Dave realised that he couldn't carve out a career in both football and motocross and, being a sensible lad, he plumped for the bike in preference to the boot.

Dave also pays tribute to his father, Keith, whose interest in his son's career and concern for his development have been evident throughout.

Keith, a scrambler of some ability himself in the early sixties, built Dave that original minibike and protected Dave the schoolboy from any undue pressures.

Dave remembers that first national championship meeting: "I was only a nipper — dad didn't even tell me it was a championship event beforehand."

There are some youngsters whose interest wanes before they graduate to the adult ranks because they spend all their time around bikes, but no way would Keith let that happen to Dave. He would keep Dave away from bikes throughout the week.

Having won everything in sight among the schoolboys in 1977, Dave wanted to ride adult the following year. He had already lapped the full Hawkstone track within four seconds of the top adult stars on his 125 Suzuki.

There was one problem though. He wasn't 16 until 29 September, 1978, and the ACU,



despite pleas to bend the rules for Dave, adamantly refused to let him ride adult until then.

The AMCA were a different proposition, however. Their open-ended system allowed schoolboys to compete if they were good enough, and Dave repaid their faith in him by walking away with every AMCA title for which he was eligible.

Until 1978 Dave had ridden Suzuki in every competitive race except for one (ironically on a Kawasaki) but he was snapped up by Honda UK for his AMCA campaign.

He was still with the Reds when he changed to the ACU for the final weeks of the year in an endeavour to gain the points necessary to be graded as an expert. That didn't take him long.

His first meeting at Nantwich saw him gain ten points from a junior win and three seconds to track specialist Pete Mathia, and the following week Dave sewed everything up with another junior win and a second place to Roger Harvey in a national class field during the Brian Stonebridge Trophy race.

His association with Honda was to come to an end shortly afterwards, however. They could only offer him a Mugen-converted bike for the open class and Dave was keen to gain experience on a larger bike.

Kawasaki were quick to offer such a machine to the youngster with the potential to be a world champion and another season of success was ahead. The open class Kawasaki which Dave was given to ride before the Uni-Trak arrived had a reputation as a beast because of its seemingly limitless power, but the prospect of riding it didn't worry Dave.

Asked if the bike held any fears for him his immediate response was: "The throttle works both ways." That is typical of his sensible approach to the sport and, despite racing against the very best in Britain, Dave's success has continued.

The Under-18 title and the support class to the British championship have both been won. It would be too much to expect him to beat Graham Noyce and Neil Hudson for the British crown this summer, but few people doubt that he will eventually emulate their performances on the track.



Dave in action at the Bootle Support Championship round on Easter Sunday last year.