



Malcolm Rathmell, back on the Montesa after a year with Suzuki, negotiates a stream in the Vic Brittain trial under the watchful eye of Jim Sandiford. Malcolm finished third.

TRIALS PROFILE—MALCOLM RATHMELL



Malcolm powers his Mont up a grotty looking section at the tough Lakes Two-Day trial in January 1979, as the boys queue up on the bleak Cumbrian fells for their go.

MALC'S HAPPY RETURN TO FORM—AND TITLE

THE trials story of the year was unquestionably the triumphant return of Malcolm Rathmell. The blonde, handsome Yorkshireman, after a year in the doldrums with Suzuki, switched back to Montesa and promptly regained his British Championship title with a series of majestic performances.

No-one will ever really know just what went wrong in 1978 for Malcolm and Suzuki. It was a combination of a good bike and a superb rider, and the fact that it didn't click was a disaster for both man and marque.

So Rastus had a lot to prove last year. And the way he did it effectively silenced those critics who reckoned that even "King Rat" was off the summit and over the hill.

Unlike many aces who started off at motocross and then converted to trials, Malc first made his name as a trials artist before seriously switching to motocross.

After several years in the feet-up game, he won his first national trial, the Clayton, in 1967, and then took up motocross in a big way, becoming a works rider for Greeves and then Bultaco when the famous Thundersley firm ran into terminal financial trouble.

For his first few years, in fact, trials and

motocross had an equal share in Rathmell's career. He started riding trials at 16 on a C15 BSA, and then his local butcher, Eric Atkinson, sponsored him on a Greeves Hawkstone scrambler. He started winning immediately, but also continued to ride in trials on his own Tiger Cub with a measure of factory support from Triumph.

He won the Travers, his second national success, and picked up some splendid places in other nationals. Then Triumph pulled out, and Malcolm signed his first works contract — with Greeves on an Anglian trials iron. He never got on with the bike, and in mid-season switched to the Greeves scrambles team, joining established stars like Bryan Wade, Vic Allan, Arthur Browning and Dick Clayton. He went well, but then Greeves hit trouble, and Malcolm switched to a Comerfords Bultaco scrambler.

He had another good year on the Bult, and one of his first major wins was the Brian Stonebridge Memorial meeting at Hawkstone. However, in a curious reversal of the Greeves experience, he also rode a Bultaco in trials as a back-up to Sammy Miller who was developing the Sherpa to perfection.

The start of the 1971 season saw Malcolm finally make up his mind on what branch of

the sport he was to specialise in. Fortunately, he chose trials — and went on to greatness.

In 1972 he took the British title from Gordon Farley, lost it the following year to Bultaco team-mate Martin Lampkin, then regained it in 1974.

Come 1975 and Rathmell switched camps, joining Montesa on a three-year riding development contract which made him one of the best paid men in the game. He took the Montesa to the British Championship that year, and again in 1976. 1977 was the year of the Honda, piloted by Rob Shepherd, then Martin Lampkin carried off the title in 1978 while Rathmell was undergoing his crisis of confidence with the Suzuki.

But 1979 saw Malc back with Montesa — and the rest is recent history. In addition to dominating the British title series, he repeated his 1973 Scottish Six Days victory, snatching the prize from Lampkin on the final group on Ben Nevis. He also had his fifth Scott win, and won the British and Canadian rounds of the world championship series.

Some come-back! The career which started on an old BSA Bantam in a Yorkshire field at the age of ten proceeds smoothly and triumphantly forward. . .