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JULY, 1981

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The V Bomber
Yamaha Hits The Target!

BATHURST
What Really
Happened?
What Of The
Future?

XV
750

**ENDURO
COMPARO**
Yamaha IT175
Suzuki PE175

YAMAHA



We Test The Gilera cbA Moped
Off To The Centre Rally!

DAYTONA SPEED WEEK
1981

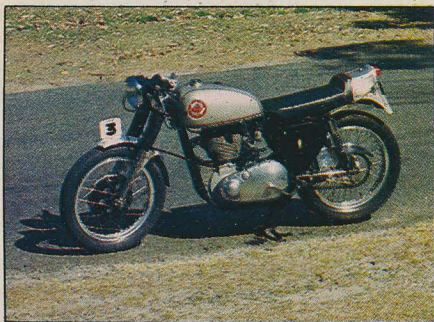
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BSA Gold Star - pity it died.

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Bathurst '81: Racing Or Religion?



The fact that it is Easter that sees the races at Mount Panorama is singularly appropriate . . . The mountain is a sacred site in the religion of Motorcycling, with pilgrimage stations set out along a six-kilometre black path — a path laced with unemotional white borders on the stony hillside. Bathurst at Easter, they say, is not to be missed . . . In 1981, the 50th anniversary year of racing in the Bathurst district, we needed all our faith . . . says DON COX.

“**B**athurst is the only circuit in Australia where you can spend two days practicing, and if you are really lucky your bike will be right for the race!” says a three-times winner on the mountain, Rob Hinton. “At Bathurst there’s never enough time to do everything you need to before the race.”

That comment can be applied to many performances, each year at Bathurst. It’s a factor Rob Hinton should know better than most . . . he took the 250/350 double in 1976 on a machine built up by his elder brother Eric, another three-times winner at Bathurst. Rob’s father Harry won no less than 16 races at the Mount Panorama circuit.

But other factors were at work at Bathurst this year. One of those was a sense of expectations unfulfilled, and it contributed to many coming away from Bathurst with the feeling that the racing was flat and dull.

When practice began, pre-meeting promotional hype aside, most considered we would see some of Bathurst’s special brand of magic. Perhaps we expected too much. Sure, there were some very good races, notably the Australian 350 cm³ Grand Prix, the Australian Unlimited (1300 cm³) Sidecar Grand Prix and the 20-lap Unlimited Production race. In all the 17 races there were fine individual performances — Bathurst is no easy circuit, it’s a hard road to master.

However, Bathurst racing in 1981 lacked sparkle, particularly as the three feature events on the programme didn’t live up to their promise.

The swansong of the Australian Unlimited Grand Prix should have seen a great three or even four-way battle, but machine problems on the Moriwaki-Kawasaki Formula One machine, and a coming together by Andrew Johnson and Gary Coleman on the last corner of the first lap effectively ended those hopes. Linked to the demise of the Unlimited was the decision to shift the 500 cm³ class to the premier status and programme slot on Sunday afternoon. After Ron Boulden’s very professional win, the cry came that the decision to switch the status was wrong. Perhaps a case of the right decision being taken at the wrong time.

The race where the might-have-been factor really showed, however, was the Arai 500 km, which simply had most of its stuffing knocked out in the opening laps. The telling blows were Dennis

Neill’s crash, the decimation of the exotic and prototype machinery, and later, the crash of Moto Guzzi rider Mike Lendrum.

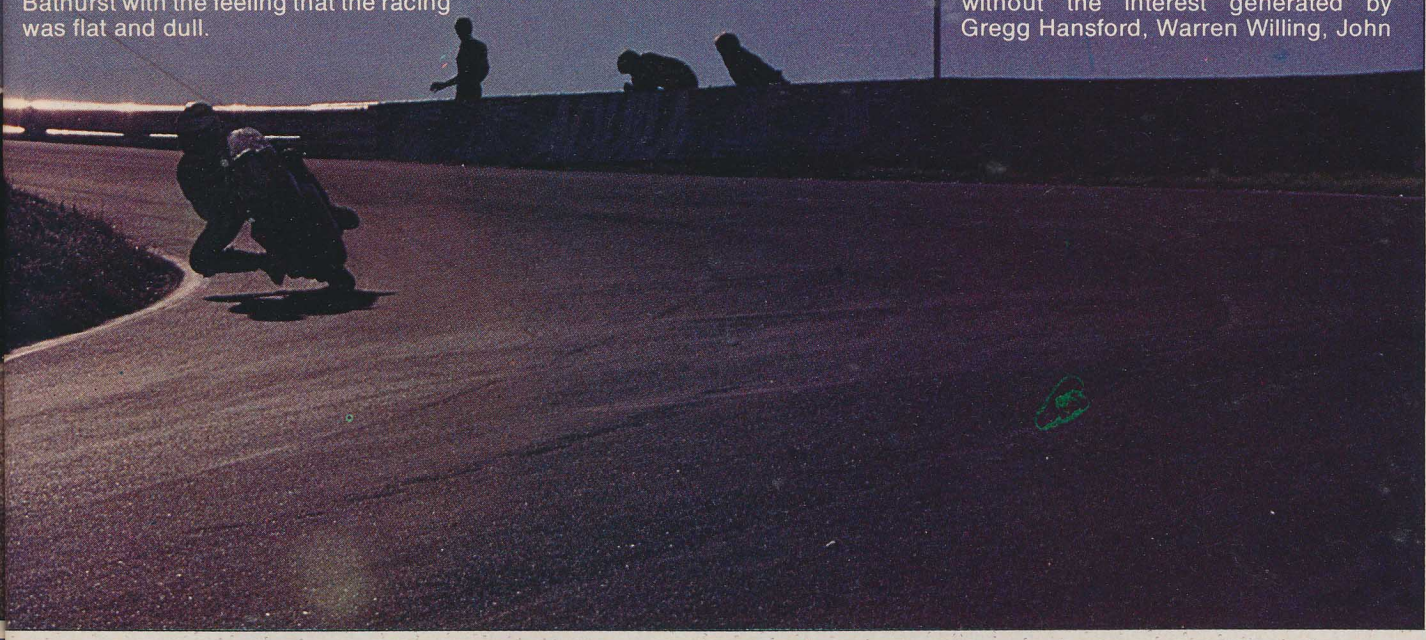
By half race distance, the only prototype machine still running was nine laps out of contention. Before that however, Neill’s crash not only meant both Team Honda superbikes were out within half a dozen laps, it meant arguably the most popular rider in the state was hurt.

No Internationals

Some people, with memories of the 1977 and ’78 downpours etched in their minds, advanced a mildly facetious reason for Bathurst not feeling ‘right’. Even on the practice days they noted rugging up against the cold and ever-present threat of rain was simply part of Bathurst! In fact, two completely dry years on the trot was nothing unusual before 1976.

A more important factor — the drying up of international entries for the meeting — was observed by those avid race watchers, the flag marshals. As New Zealand is in the same Federation Internationale Motorcycliste zone as Australia, the meeting this year did not even require an international permit. Major considerations on attracting internationals to Bathurst now are the British and Americans being already committed at Easter, and of course, the circuit itself.

To look at our own internationals — Bathurst may well have been able to do without the interest generated by Gregg Hansford, Warren Willing, John



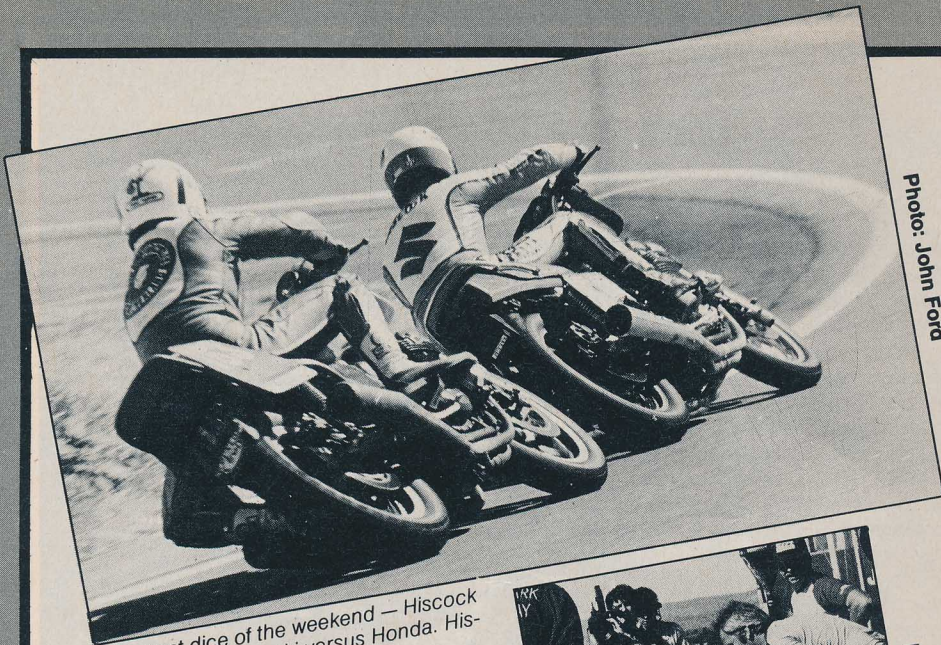


Photo: John Ford

Toughest dice of the weekend — Hiscock versus Heyes, Suzuki versus Honda. Hiscock stayed upright.

Woodley and Graeme Crosby when two or even three of them are not racing. But when all four aren't there to race, it shows.

With Jeff Sayle, Graeme Geddes, Graeme McGregor, Wayne Gardner and Peter Campbell established overseas, the chances of seeing them at Bathurst again are slim. In Kenny Blake's case, he plans to retire at the end of this year regardless.

However, it should be also recognised that Bathurst cannot always rest with the 'name' riders of the seventies. A valid exercise is to compare the entry for 1981 to the meeting in 1976. In that year Bathurst was big news to the factories.

This year we saw exotica in the form of the TT Formula One/endurance type Moriwaki-Kawasaki — a more potent machine than the works endurance racer ridden by Hansford and Jim Budd last year. The two Ken McIntosh framed TT F1/endurance machines deserved attention, particularly for McIntosh's craftsmanship.

Unfortunately riders Rodger Freeth and Dave Hiscock found the effort largely stumped by lack of time and woes in the engine department. Freeth's Yoshimura-Suzuki GS1100 unit lost the top off a piston, which ultimately caused a broken rod and ventilated cases. Hiscock's first motor developed oil leaks, and the second unit didn't want to exert itself in the race.

With the superbikes, ingenuity continued to show its face again in the Yamaha-Pitman's camp. The team walked around with the fabled Cheshire cat grins throughout practice. The race result proved it wasn't all



Photo: John Ford

A good time to align the wheels! John Pace's view of the Arai 500's opening laps.

psych. Well, not all that long ago people could have been certified for suggesting an XS1100 Yamaha of any description could win races against 290 km/h Moriwaki-Kawasakis, Yoshimura-Suzuki F1 machines and the Team Honda armada!

In place of the stock carburettors used in the Coke 800 were a pair of twin-choke Mikuni/Solex sidedraught units, with 36 mm chokes. No they weren't spirited from a Renault Gordini R10 — the idea had been sorted two years earlier at the Suzuka Eight-hour race by Yamaha. After the problems with the TZ500 rear wheel cum sprocket system, a new custom mounting was manufactured at Pitman's factory, to reduce driveline vibration. The team also fitted a heavy duty clutch. When this proved too much for Greg Pretty's left wrist, a very neat hydraulic actuator system was added. (It makes you wonder if Mal Pitman had read the story about Mercedes Benz doing the same for Stirling Moss before the 1955 Argentine Grand Prix — they simply sent a chap down to the local Chrysler agent and bought a servo unit off the shelf.)

Team Honda troubles

Over in the Honda camp, the Victorian division had begun looking for more power from the endurance-race conceived RSC component engines. The NSW end of Team Honda, which has its superbike preparation done on contract, had followed this course for a year. Probably the encouraging part of the meeting for the Victorians was that although Mike Cole parked his machine after five laps, their work had already showed benefits on Conrod Straight.

Cole's troubles began at the very start of the race. He stalled the bike at the Le Mans start. Apart from team chief Clyde Wolfenden almost being run down in pushing Cole away (which is why the race has a motor-running start), Mike used a few too many revs trying to get quickly back into contention. All he got was a fistful of bent valves and a sidelining.

However, in terms of direct factory participation, the bottom line is that the golden days are over. That is unless, or until, the Auto Cycle Union succeeds in its aim of securing a round of the world endurance championship for the circuit.

One marque achieved remarkable results at Bathurst, and that was Yamaha. By winning every Grand Prix except the 125, plus the Arai 500, the 250 production and all five graded races, Yamaha arguably achieved the best run ever by a single marque in the 50-year history of racing at Bathurst.

There was more than the usual curious tale of misadventure involved in the outcome of this year's races. Insufficient time is a perennial problem, but it was compounded by events of sheer chance and bad luck, and some unprofessional preparation and pitwork.

In the Australian Unlimited Grand Prix, the contest between Greg Pretty and Andrew Johnson was never properly resolved, although Pretty's name goes in the record books as the last ever AUGP winner.

The anticipated four-stroke challenge evaporated almost before a shot was fired with Freeth's McIntosh Suzuki sounding ill, Hiscock being black-flagged, and John Pace being both black-flagged and stopped by crank trouble. A great shame, as Pace later turned laps only two seconds slower than Johnson-Pretty-Coleman.

At the foot of the straight on the first lap, Coleman and Johnson touched fairings while battling for the lead, and took an excursion. Pretty, who was right behind them, then had the race at his mercy. Johnson fought back from seventh to finish second, while Coleman came back from 12th to finish fourth, despite a cracked exhaust.

The other disappointment in this race

was that John Wood only received ninth place money, after Rob Hinton's venerable TZ750 Yamaha cooked its ignition on the last lap. Wood had earlier carved his way through to third place, outbraking Boulden's far lighter TZ500 at the foot of Conrod in the process. According to Hinton, Wood would be the hardest braker he's ever seen — harder than Kiwi John Boote.

As Wood slowed, Boulden re-annexed third place. His machine performed so well in the race, he confided that evening that he would have no excuse if he didn't win the 500 GP.

In the Unlimited race Johnson, Pretty and Coleman lapped within 0.03 seconds of each other's times, so it would have been a ball-tearer of a race if Johnson and Coleman had not effectively cancelled each other out. As a consequence, the dicing that was done was for sixth place — between Lee Roebuck (Yamaha 750), Dennis Neill on his 1062 cm³ Honda superbike, and Mal Campbell on the 500 Suzuki.

Just two races later in the programme, Coleman won his second Australian 350 GP in four years, on Murray Sayle's Yamaha. This race featured a three-way dust-on with Lee Roebuck and Western Australia's Michael Dowson for the first five laps. When Dowson retired with a broken gear linkage, Roebuck took over the running.

The set-up

But one of the problems at Bathurst with the smaller machines is, as Rob

Hinton points out: "You use the tallest ratio your bike will pull down Conrod, and then you just have to make the best of it elsewhere. If you're not spot on coming out of XL Bend, or McPhillamy, you can lose seconds."

Related to the gearing problem, is the fact that the jetting needs to be spot on. As an engine becomes hotter toward the end of a race, it richens its own mixture, and may not pull the required gear on the last few climbs from XL Bend.

Roebuck's machine was struggling to pull third up the mountain, but on the last lap, and leading, he tried third and was promptly out-hauled by Coleman. Gary turned the fastest lap of the race on the last lap — and that was the ball-game, as Roebuck couldn't use his slipstream on Conrod.

It was good work from a man who hadn't ridden a 350 in years. It was also good work by Sayle to have the machine firing so well. As Murray will tell you, the only secrets in brother Jeff's fifth place in the 1980 world 350 championship was his riding ability and his sorting out of the carby jetting.

The hot engine factor also affected Wood's Yamaha and Paul Cawthorne's Kawasaki. Actually Wood looked a good bet in this race, but lost the crucial early slipstream of the leaders. Instead he gave Cawthorne a demonstration on how much Kiwi street-circuit racing improves your braking.

One of the most pleasant parts of the weekend was wandering down the paths and spectator fences from Sky-line to Forest Elbow during the latter stages of the Arai 500. When John Pace did join the race proper — albeit nine laps too late, after a wheel-alignment and adjustment to the cam cover gasket — he took the Moriwaki framed racer through the Dipper section as if on rails. The flag marshals on the section were so enthralled, they timed him through the 400 metre section in seven seconds; only Boulden on his 500 racer was quicker by the flaggies' hat and watch method.

On the section of track below the Dipper, at the Toombs memorial, the wheels of the machines are at eye level to the spectator. It was here that the piece of orange rag entangled in Rob Phillis' Suzuki GSX1100 superbike's rear wheel could be seen flapping. There's a theory that Rob crossed paths with a colony of black cats before he began the race.

Down at Forest Elbow the battle for production honours, and second place outright, was on in earnest. Glen Taylor had long since gathered in early leaders Mal Campbell and Roger Heyes on the Gus Liu Hondas, but he was delayed by a broken front mudguard

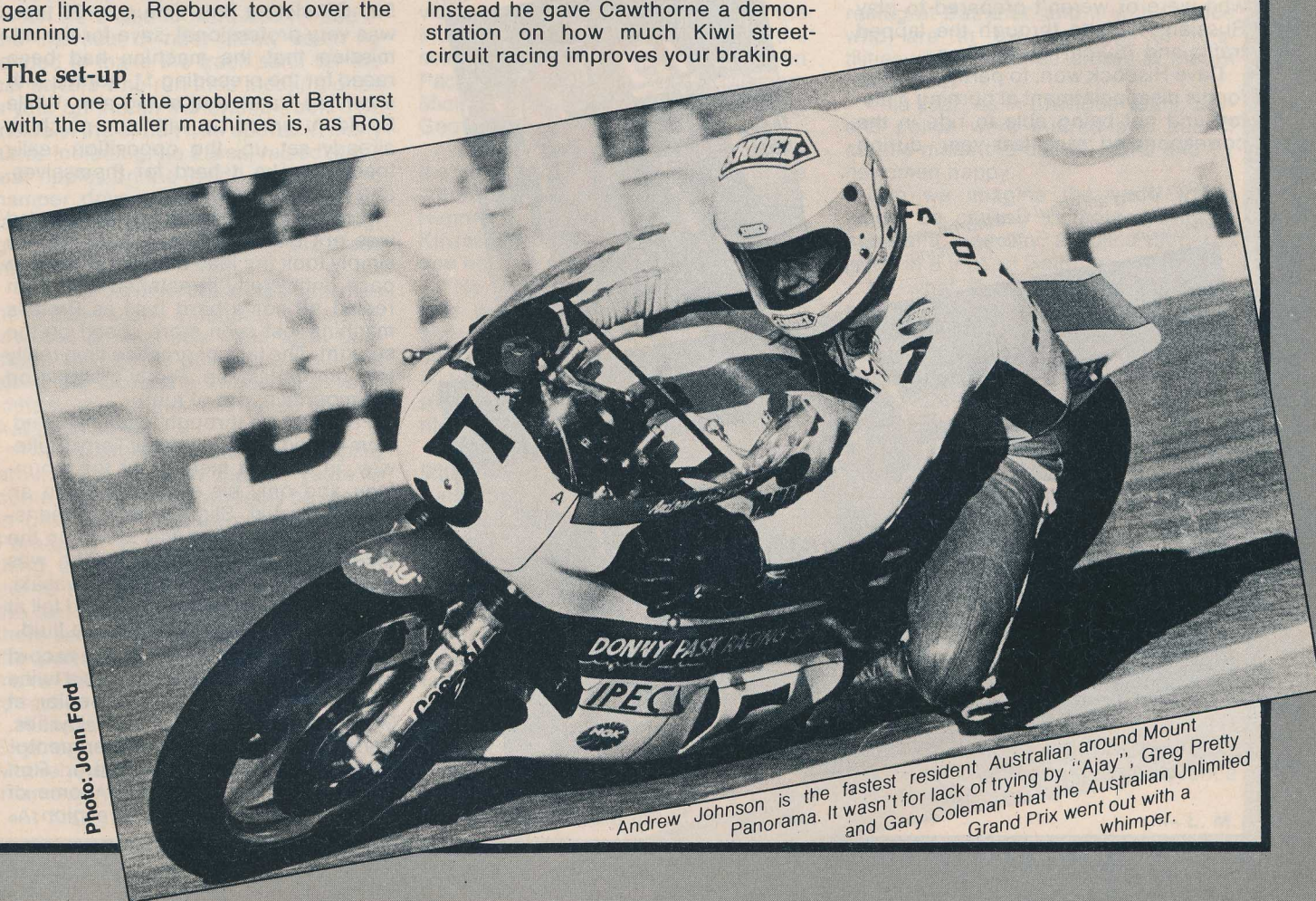


Photo: John Ford

Andrew Johnson is the fastest resident Australian around Mount Panorama. It wasn't for lack of trying by "Ajay", Greg Pretty and Gary Coleman that the Australian Unlimited Grand Prix went out with a whimper.

and had to chase and re-pass New Zealander Vince Sharpe for the honours. Of course right in the middle of this, some brain-surgeon dropped a full can on the circuit.

Near the end of the race Pretty had eased his pace right back, with a badly worn rear tyre, but with the other hot-ties all sidelined or delayed he was safe. A glance in the pits afterwards revealed he wasn't the only person who should have been concerned about his rear tyre. Some of the tyres on the production machines asked the question: is three and a half hours, with speeds of 240 km/h plus, too much for road tyres? By the way some tyres chunked, the answer is yes!

There's a good argument after three Arai races and two Coke 800s that a separate class and prize purse for production machines is unnecessary! Results-wise, superbikes performed worse in the last two Arai 500s than in the first. If production machines can pick up second, third, fifth, sixth, eighth, ninth and tenth places outright, do they need their own prize schedule? It may be better placed into one big purse.

If it was nothing else, the Unlimited Production race the next morning was hectic. It wasn't so much a story of marque versus marque, as the riders who were or weren't prepared to play Russian Roulette through the lapped traffic and 750 cm³ class bikes.

Dave Hiscock won, to partly make up for his disappointment at burning a piston and not being able to ride in the corresponding race last year, during

his first outing at Bathurst.

The race began as a four-way battle, but after just three laps Mal Campbell fell at McPhillamy Park, breaking his leg. His Honda bounced back across the track and almost scored a few more riders. Steven Klein's 750 Yamaha did the same thing in 1976, but the armco hasn't been moved.

Soon after, Glen Taylor retreated, leaving the fight to Hiscock and Roger Heyes (Honda). Taylor said later he simply wasn't prepared to take the same risks through traffic. Next for a while, handily placed, was Neil Chivas, until halted by a broken crankshaft. Behind Chivas came Mike Cole (Honda) and John Pace on the GPz1100 Kawasaki, followed by Vince Sharpe on another Honda.

During the course of the race Sharpe headed this trio for a while, but later Pace's breathtaking form through lapped traffic left the Honda riders temporarily scratching among themselves. When they realised the Kwaka had flown, it was too late.

On the last lap, after a dice so tough

the riders were seen elbowing each other in front of the control tower, Heyes finally drew a chamber with a bullet, and crashed. He clipped the back wheel of a rider he was lapping. Hiscock won, from Taylor and Pace.

Drawing conclusions from this race was almost as risky as the race itself. The Honda in theory has better brakes, yet Hiscock consistently went under Heyes at the foot of Conrod. Hiscock had a smoother entry to Pit Straight and Mountain Straight, yet up at XL Bend a sidelined Chivas couldn't believe the way he went into the turn seemingly on a wing and a prayer. The riders behind Pace were simply amazed as he picked off three riders out of Reid Park, while holding the Kawasaki in a massive drift! Production racing is about riders and machines, not just machines.

All the major place getters were found to be legal after the race. Inside info reveals that one unlimited class machine had been taken out to the maximum in oversized pistons by its previous rider — this is legal for all production races, except the Six-Hour. Another when measured had its cam-chain tensioner in pieces in the sump! But it had done another race after the production event.

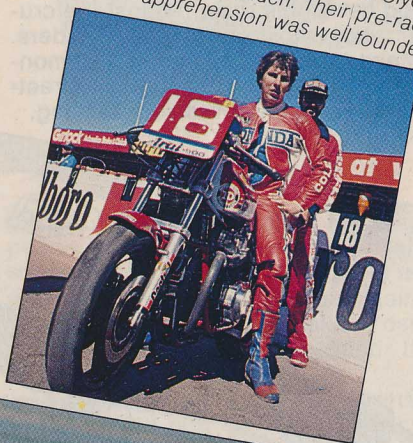
Ron Boulden's second successive 500 GP victory, this time over 20 laps, was very professional, save for the admission that the machine had been raced for the preceding 11 months with a twisted frame and swing-arm. While Boulden turned up with one machine already set up, the opposition really tried to make it hard for themselves, and most succeeded!

It could have been a good race, and was not Boulden's fault it wasn't. He simply took the lead and ran at his own pace until Pretty threatened him, then reeled off some hard laps as Pretty's machine lost even more speed on the straight. The lack of practice time really told on the last lap. Pretty stopped on the mountain, out of fuel.

Freeth came through to take second, from young Queenslander Terry Blake-way, in his first meeting at the mountain, and only his second ride on an RG500 Suzuki. Slightly older Queenslander John Warrlian was fourth on the oldest RG500 in existence. Fifth was Paul Cawthorne on the 350 Kawasaki, after sparring partner John Wood fell at Murrays Corner on spilled brake fluid.

Boulden's win puts him in the record books in illustrious company as a twice in two years winner of the Senior at Mount Panorama . . . 'Bat' Byrnes, Harry Hinton Snr, Ron's former mentor Jack Ahearn, Kel Carruthers, Ron Toombs and John Woodley, some of the high priests of Bathurst religion. *

Defending Arai champions Mike Cole and Team Honda chief Clyde Wolfenden. Their pre-race apprehension was well founded.



John Wood and Paul Cawthorne were dicing Saturday morning . . . and still dicing Sunday afternoon.



Bathurst According To Morris

Mt. Panorama is a jousting-place with few equals and no betters, a hard and tough battle-ground where only the best survive and only the great are recorded in the pages of history. Like any battle-ground it is a dangerous place for the reckless and the unwary, for the speeds recorded here are amongst the fastest anywhere in the world and the machinery with which today's Knights of the Road are equipped is amongst the best — and the best-prepared — to be found anywhere in the Known World.

And yet Bathurst 1981 continues to leave an odd taste in the mouth, even though the spectacle of racing was as keen and as fast as you would hope, nay, expect, to find. The track was in high-perfect shape, with a new — if belated — sandtrap at Skyline and several other questionable 'improvements' which allowed an edge on rider safety, hence greater rider confidence and thereby rider performance.

Sadly, the modifications to the track, which were said to have been made in the interests of rider safety seem intended to make the track safer for the car drivers who run their meeting once a year on the Mt Panorama track. The inside of the circuit now sports, in many areas including the Esses, raised strips and ripples on the inside of corners to hamper drivers who might otherwise take a short-cut or crib a bit by dragging their inside wheels onto the grass verges.

The murderous Armco steel barriers have been subtly extended in the Hollow and at least one rider, Mick Lendrum, who came down and bounced along the top of the Armco for several metres, can thank the fence for his fractured bones.

The concrete wall is slowly creeping around the track so that, in years to come, the riders will probably be racing in one half of a giant concrete pipe. Perhaps it is not necessarily a bad thing, as witness one Graeme Crosby's trip to the lip of the concrete wall on the exit from XL Bend a year ago, but there seems to be an excess of zeal on the part of some people who would make Bathurst a safe circuit on which to race.

Witness the sandtrap at the top of Skyline, constructed after Rob Moorehouse met his death under the infamous Armco there last year.

At first glance it seems like a Very

Good Idea, and indeed it is, but I suggest it leaves a lot to be desired as far as the safety of *motorcyclists* is concerned.

You see, the trackside edge and the safety of the deep sand trap is separated by a *speed hump* about 20 cm high, with a rounded ramp on the trackside. A rider who is in trouble and takes to the sandtrap at this point would probably be doing in excess of 160 km/h, and that speed hump would very certainly send him well into the air — and quite possibly *over the fence as well!* Again, though said to be primarily a safety feature for motorcyclists, I suggest it could well be designed more with the needs of the car drivers in mind.

As far as the media was concerned, the best-kept secret at Mt. Panorama was that its 50th anniversary was being celebrated. It is a great achievement for any enterprise to have survived the Great Depression, a World War, several recessions, apathy, indifference, bad publicity and motorcycling's darkest hours in the mid-to-late fifties.

The local media was on hand alright, but not to record some of the finest achievements of man and machine on one of the world's (great) open road-race circuits.

Many newspaper reports said that violence had again erupted on the Mount, but made no mention of the scintillating rides of Greg Pretty, John Pace, Ron Boulden, Gary Coleman, Michael Dowson and the sidecar stars Geoff Taylor and Barry Frazer.

"Seventy Police injured!!" screamed the headlines, but not a word about the incredible performance of the Ross Hannan crew, who pulled the Moriwaki Kawasaki apart and replaced a crank in one hour 45 minutes dead.

"No racing again at Panorama!!" said the news services, but nothing about the great ride from the young John Pace, who clawed back two laps — two laps! — against fearful opposition in the Arai 500, after being down nine laps at the start.

If the sensationalist press could find little remarkable in the racing at Mt Panorama this year, then we must feel for them, for the meeting was one of very high standard and some very tight, close riding with the results of many races not assured until the very last laps.

The 1981 Bathurst meeting was notable for many fine rides, more than a fair share of accidents — one or two of them serious, but happily none fatal — several broken records and the usual hysterical outbursts from the Popular Press.

There were problems on the Mount yet again and it could be said the

ACU is derelict in its duty, as the promoting body, in allowing the same old hassles to occur year after year. The Police compound on the Mountain is provocative in its own right just because it is there, and it could be argued that the Police contribute to the so-called riots simply by their presence on the Mount.

The problems have been there for years, and will not be easily overcome, but I thought the presence of both Bikers Ltd and the MRA would have seen sanity prevail.

Of course it only takes one boozed cretin (bikie or not) to hurl just *one* missile, rock or can, to start the whole fracas and the end result is a foregone conclusion.

A solution must soon be found, or Bathurst may one day be unavailable to motorcyclists. The Mountain area could perhaps be declared dry, which would be a relief even for the pisspots, or the ACU could join forces and *co-operate* with the several motorcycle organizations which are far more into the political scene than they, in an attempt to control — or at least modify the behaviour of — those who are hell-bent on cracking a few skulls for whatever reason.

We should all remember that it is the *police* who sign the papers and allow racing at Bathurst, and it is the *police* who are in the forefront of hostilities when violence erupts at Mount Panorama.

This year, as in previous years, several police were injured and this of course made the dailies, radio and TV newsmen happy.

Can we imagine the strife which would be caused to motorcycling in general if, one day, a police officer is *killed* in a 'riot' at Bathurst.

So what if the so-called riots are blown out of all proportion in daily resumés of racing at Bathurst at Easter time, does it all really matter when next Easter comes around?

You bet it does, for 1981 saw the Police Commissioner call for special reports on the violence at Mt Panorama.

I have visited Bathurst almost every year since my first trip by train and pushbike when I was still a schoolkid back in 1948, and I have heard veiled threats of circuit closure to motorcyclists almost every second year.

But the cries grow louder each year, so much so that 1982 will certainly see the specially-formulated Riot Squad at the Mountain for some on-site practice.

Quite probably, if the 'enemy' was not present, little of any consequence would occur.

— L. M.