

# THE SCOTTISH





# LION - JOCK TAYLOR World Champion

Scotland can boast two of the most incomparable driving talents of all time, Jim Clark and Jackie Stewart, amongst its ranks of sporting champions. Success on two wheels, however, has been limited with only Fergus Anderson taking world titles in the early 50s. Scotland can now boast a three wheel world champion — 26-year old Jock Taylor from the East Lothian town of Pencaitland, near Edinburgh.

Aided by baby-faced 23 year old Swede, Benga Johansson, Jock drove his Yamaha 750-powered, Windle chassis outfit to four Grand Prix wins during the 1980 season and snapped up the World Sidecar Championship in the process.

Now sponsored by Fowlers of Bristol, Jock had plenty of support for his World Championship bid. Racing boss of Fowlers, Dennis Trollope, built up no less than 15 superb Yamaha 500 engines for the Grand Prix season, plus a further selection of 750cc motors for other Internationals! There was plenty of financial backing as well so all Jock had to do was supply his particular brand of hard-charging riding talent.

It wasn't always like that, however. Jock earned his spurs the way that just about every British racer has to. Struggling in club events with no financial backing at all. Making do with worn tyres, tired engines and penny-pinching even to put petrol in the transporter.

Well-known British race commentator, Fred Clarke, for example, remembers Jock in the early days.

"He used to come down to do the North Gloucester club meetings at Gaydon in Warwickshire" says Fred "as he had a sponsor from that area who liked to see him perform near his home.

"Jock had an old bus for a transporter and it used to roll up at the track and disgorge a whole bunch of Scots fans. I thought he must have a really loyal fan club. When I found out that the whole group were clubbing together to help Jock pay for the petrol then I **knew** he had a really loyal fan club!"

Jock actually began racing in 1975 with an ex-Mac Hobson BSA twin. In the space of two years he had switched to Yamaha and started to make his mark on the British scene, with his most significant performance







being the setting of the Ulster Grand Prix lap record at over 105mph.

In that same year he won the Scottish Championship and, in the larger sphere of British Championship racing was second in the title chase with another young Scot, Lewis Ward, in the chair. Biggest win for the pair was in the British Championship qualifier at Oulton Park.

It was efforts like this that brought him to the attention of his current sponsors, Fowlers of Bristol and in 1978 they backed him for his first attempt at the World Championship series. For a first-timer on the Championship trail, Jock performed creditably well. Lewis Ward was still in the chair but decided part-way through the season that he didn't enjoy the travelling entailed. When Lewis stepped down, his place in the chair was taken by another young Scotsman, James O'Neill.

The help from Fowlers was enabling Jock to concentrate on the riding aspect of the job and a third place before the delighted home fans at the British Grand Prix, plus a fourth in Czechoslovakia, sixth in Belgium, seventh in France and eighth in Italy, put him in seventh spot on the World rankings in his first GP season.

Highlight of the 1978 season, however, was at the Isle of Man where, with the experienced Kenny Arthur deputising in the chair, Jock finished second and third in the two legs of the sidecar race and so took the Sidecar TT win overall. In the process he whistled the three-wheeler round at a record 101.22mph ... a speed that many solo riders would be ecstatic at attaining.

Jock started the 1979 season with James O'Neill still in the passenger's slot but, midway through the year, James decided to quit at very short notice. So short, in fact, that Jock didn't find out until he was waiting passengerless at Snetterton ready to practice for the Race of the Aces.

Jock appealed for a passenger over the paddock PA system and along to the Fowlers transporter came a young Swedish solo class rider by the name of Benga Johannsson. In the previous year Benga had showed some promise in the 125cc category, with a ninth place in the British GP being his best effort.

The decision to help out Jock, however, was to change the young Swede's life. All thoughts of a solo career were forgotten and a World Championship pairing was born.

The combination of Taylor and Johannsson clicked right away and a fairy-tale quality was added to their story when Jock won his first Grand Prix. Appropriately, it was before Benga's home fans in Sweden!

A second place at Silverstone for the British GP plus a third in Holland, helped Jock further up the Championship ladder to fifth place. The stage was now set for an all-out assault in 1980.



**Jock Taylor (left) and Benga Johannsson**

Winning rides at the Dutch TT, Belgian and Finnish Grands Prix, plus a second spot in France and third in Yugoslavia meant that Jock was poised to take the title by the time he appeared before the British fans at Silverstone in August. His rivals for the title were reigning Champion, Rolf Biland of Switzerland and Frenchman, Alain Michel.

Before the start of the season, Jock had turned down a chance to ride for ex-Champion and engine wizard, Helmut Fath. Michel had taken the ride instead and now both were in contention for the title. Taylor's loyalty to Dennis Trollope's prowess as an engine-builder and to Fowlers was now about to be put to the test.

Right at the start of the race the odds turned dramatically in Jock's favour. Both Biland and Michel hit trouble on the warming up lap ... all Jock had to do from that point on was to finish in the top three.

But even that wasn't as easy as it sounds. After a crowd-pleasing initial dice with fellow Briton, Derek Jones, Jock's rear tyre punctured and began slowly deflating as the laps wore on. Letting Jones go ahead to win, Jock nursed the ill-handling machine to a second place finish and the World title!

A couple of weeks later he emphasised his right to the Championship by winning the West German Grand Prix.

It was a fitting climax to a season which had seen him dominate international-class British events with efforts like winning all of the sidecar events during the Transatlantic Trophy Series, winning Donington's "Sidecar World Trophy", taking the overall victory in the Isle of Man Sidecar TT and posting an incredible new lap record of 106.08mph in the process!

With success like this, does Jock have any ambitions left to satisfy? Well, obviously he'd like to win the World Championship again but he has another burning desire and that is to prove that sidecars can go quicker than solos on a major racetrack. At the Mallory Park Race of the Year in September he came one step closer to doing just that. He set a new sidecar lap record at 100mph exactly. More important, that was precisely the same speed posted by Kenny Roberts who set the fastest solo lap of the day! Of course, Kenny's outright circuit record is still fractionally quicker but the writing is on the wall ... **"this record reserved for Jock Taylor!"**