

The Speedway Researcher

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Star Championship Trophy Competition 1935

Early in 1935 the National Speedway Association the body representing the promoters of the sport elected a small committee to try and evolve a satisfactory method of finding a Speedway champion.

The committee comprised of Mr Cecil L Smith (The joint managing director of New Cross), Mr Norman H Pritchard (The Manager of Wimbledon) and Mr J Harrison (Speedway Correspondent of The Star Newspaper).

Preliminary Rounds

The Star Championship committee selected who they considered to be the best 24 riders and it was agreed that a Preliminary Round was to be held on every National League track except for Wembley which was to be the venue for the Star Final.

The names of the riders were put into a draw with each one racing on four of the six available tracks. Each round had a sixteen rider field raced over the 20 heat format. After 20 outings each the sixteen riders out of the original twenty four who had the highest scores were the qualifiers for the Star Final.

In the Preliminary rounds the scoring was on a 3-2-1-0 basis with each man having 5 rides. The prize money for each round was:-

- **25 shillings per point**
- **The winner took home a bronze star and £20**
- **Second place £10**
- **Third place £5**

In addition to this the National Speedway Association presented three prizes to the riders with the highest aggregate scores in the Preliminary rounds. These were £30, £20 and £10 respectively. The winners were:-

- **First Prize – Bluey Wilkinson 51 points**
- **Second Prize – Tom Farndon 48 points**

- **Third Prize Jack Parker 47 points**

The Preliminary Round winners were:-

- **Wimbledon – Max Grosskreutz**
- **Hackney Wick – Ron Johnson**
- **New Cross – Ron Johnson**
- **Harringay – Ron Johnson**
- **Belle Vue – Bluey Wilkinson**
- **West Ham Bluey Wilkinson**

Wimbledon - Monday June 17th

The amount of close racing in this round was less than had been expected. Every competitor seemed so keen on making a reasonable number of points. As a result very few were inclined to take unnecessary chances if they stood in a good position during a race. Of those doing badly over anxiety accounted for several falls. Max Grosskreutz won each of his five races to win the meeting. Dicky Case lost only to Grosskreutz and Eric Langton. Wally Kilmister finished third only beaten by Grosskreutz Case and Langton. Eric Langton may have been on the podium but for a machine problem on the last bend while leading Vic Huxley. It had been hoped that the four Wimbledon riders would distinguish themselves but they never seemed really interested except for Geoff Pymar who found the field too strong for him. Syd Jackson's doctor refused to let him ride even though Syd wanted to. Wal Phillips came in to replace him although his points could not be included in the scoring for the Star Championship. Ron Johnson was in the wars falling in his first two races and he had to drop out with a knee injury. Gus Kuhn replaced him for his later rides.

Heat 1 Dicky Case, Norman Parker, Bob Harrison, Vic Huxley
Time 76.0 secs Vic Huxley was shut out on the first turn and Dicky Case had things all his own way.

Heat 2 Max Grosskreutz, Eric Langton, Frank Charles, Lionel Van Praag 73.5 secs Max Grosskreutz proved to be in unbeatable form and Eric Langton just let him go.

Heat 3 Geoff Pymar, Jack Sharp Tommy Croombs (Fell)
Joe Abbott (Retired) 77.4 secs Geoff Pymar won by virtue of making the best start. Tommy Croombs fell in attempting to pass Pymar.

Heat 4 Wally Kilmister, Jack Ormston, Wal Phillips, Ron Johnson (Fell) 78.1 secs Wally Kilmister beat Jack Ormston off the start and 2 went on to win easily.

Heat 5 Vic Huxley, Tommy Croombs, Wal Phillips, Eric Langton (Mt) 78.0 secs Vic Huxley pulled off his only win but only when Eric Langton had machine failure while leading on the last turn.

Heat 6 Wally Kilmister, Norman Parker, Lionel Van Praag, Joe Abbott 76.9 secs

Heat 7 Dicky Case, Frank Charles, Jack Sharp, Ron Johnson (Fell) 75.0 secs

Heat 8 Max Grosskreutz, Jack Ormston, Geoff Pymar, Bob Harrison 76.2 secs

Heat 9 Jack Ormston, Lionel Van Praag, Vic Huxley, Jack Sharp 77.6 secs

Heat 10 Eric Langton, Norman Parker, Geoff Pymar, Gus Kuhn 77.0 secs

Heat 11 Wally Kilmister, Vic Huxley, Geoff Pymar, Frank Charles 76.8 secs

Heat 12 Bob Harrison, Frank Charles, Joe Abbott, Wal Phillips 77.4 secs

Heat 13 Max Grosskreutz, Dicky Case, Wally Kilmister, Tommy Croombs 75.7 secs The three undefeated riders met in this heat. They swept round the first turn and down the back straight in a line across the track. Max Grosskreutz then managed to forge ahead and the race was over.

Heat 14 Max Grosskreutz, Wal Phillips, Jack Sharp, Norman Parker 76.7 secs

Heat 15 Eric Langton, Dicky Case, Joe Abbott, Jack Ormston 76.6 secs

Heat 16 Tommy Croombs, Gus Kuhn, Bob Harrison, Lionel Van Praag 78.1 secs

Heat 17 Max Grosskreutz, Joe Abbott, Vic Huxley, Gus Kuhn 78.8 secs

Heat 18 Frank Charles, Jack Ormston, Tommy Croombs (Fell Rem), Norman Parker (Fell) 80.0 secs Tommy Croombs fell while attempting to avoid Norman Parker. Croombs remounted and leader Frank Charles deliberately made sure he didn't lap Croombs to allow the West Ham man to pick up a vital point

Heat 19 Dicky Case, Lionel Van Praag, Geoff Pymar, Wal Phillips 79.0 secs

Heat 20 Eric Langton, Wally Kilmister, Jack Sharp, Bob Harrison 77.0 secs

Hackney - Friday June 28th

The high spot of the meeting was the spirited riding of Ron Johnson in scoring 14 points. In practically every one of his rides Johnson looked in imminent danger of falling but on each occasion he somehow stayed on board. Jack Parker dropped points to Dicky Case and Ron Johnson but still finished in second place. Max Grosskreutz would have won the meeting as he won his last four races but suffered a machine failure in his first ride. Eric Langton was very inconsistent and his tally included for him a rare fall. Vic Huxley and Tiger Stevenson once or twice showed glimpses of their old dash.

**Heat 1 Eric Langton, Dicky Case, Bill Kitchen, Bob Harrison
Time 73.33 secs**

**Heat 2 Syd Jackson, Joe Francis, Jack Ormston, Tiger Stevenson
(Ex) Time 76.55 secs**

**Heat 3 Jack Parker, Dusty Haigh, Squib Burton, Max Grosskreutz
(Ret) Time 75.14 secs**

**Heat 4 Ron Johnson, Geoff Pymar, Vic Huxley, Stan Greatrex
Time 77.36 secs** Ron Johnson had a big lead from Geoff Pymar only to lose it all by a big over slide. Ron went right down on his left ear but somehow managed to bounce upright again only to find Pymar right alongside. Johnson fought the Wimbledon man tooth and nail and forced the pace so much that Pymar twice repeated Johnson's semi fall which lost Geoff a lot of ground.

**Heat 5 Jack Ormston, Vic Huxley, Squib Burton, Dicky Case
Time 76.65 secs**

**Heat 6 Max Grosskreutz, Syd Jackson, Geoff Pymar, Eric Langton
Time 75.78**

**Heat 7 Ron Johnson, Bill Kitchen, Tiger Stevenson, Dusty Haigh
Time 77.42 secs** Ron Johnson won his second outing easily.

**Heat 8 Jack Parker, Bob Harrison, Stan Greatrex, Joe Francis
Time 76.55 secs**

**Heat 9 Dicky Case, Dusty Haigh, Syd Jackson, Stan Greatrex
Time 77.45 secs**

**Heat 10 Ron Johnson, Jack Parker, Jack Ormston, Eric Langton
Time 75.08 secs** Jack Parker looked to have this race in his pocket. Johnson was way behind and finding all the bumps on the track with one on the back straight almost throwing him off. Ron however rode magnificently and eventually rode around Parker.

4 Heat 11 Dicky Case, Jack Parker, Geoff Pymar,

Tiger Stevenson (F) Time 75.24

Heat 12 Max Grosskreutz, Vic Huxley, Tiger Stevenson, Bob Harrison Time 77.62 secs

Heat 13 Bill Kitchen, Geoff Pymar, Squib Burton, Joe Francis Time 77.98 secs

Heat 14 Vic Huxley, Eric Langton, Wally Lloyd Time 77.44 secs

Heat 15 Max Grosskreutz, Bill Kitchen, Jack Ormston, Stan Greatrex Time 78.02 secs

Heat 16 Ron Johnson, Squib Burton, Bob Harrison, Syd Jackson Time 79.15 secs Ron Johnson again won easily.

Heat 17 Max Grosskreutz, Ron Johnson, Dicky Case, Joe Francis Time 77.23 secs Dicky Case got an early lead but all the interest was a few yards behind him where Ron Johnson and Max Grosskreutz were fighting a thrilling duel. They were never separated by more than a length and at one point Grosskreutz actually had his wheel tucked under Johnson's saddle. Dicky Case was in sight of the winning post when he suffered machine failure and Grosskreutz and Johnson shot past him.

Heat 18 Tiger Stevenson, Squib Burton, Eric Langton, Stan Greatrex Time 78.19 secs

Heat 19 Jack Parker, Syd Jackson, Vic Huxley, Bill Kitchen Time 77.65 secs

Heat 20 Bob Harrison, Dusty Haigh, Jack Ormston, Geoff Pymar Time 79.33 secs

New Cross - Wednesday July 17th

Much of the racing at New Cross was of the highest possible class. Ron Johnson was once again to the fore and tied with Jack Parker for the highest score on 14 points. The winners Bronze Star went to Johnson as he had the fastest race winning time. Tom Farndon won his first two races comfortably and was sitting comfortably in his third when his front wheel struck the inside board and he tumbled into the dust. Later on he had to then give second best to Jack Parker.

Wally Kilmister who started his Star Championship campaign brilliantly at Wimbledon blew up his machine in his second ride at New Cross. Stan Greatrex found he had to do something special to ensure a Wembley Final place and he rode with more determination than he had shown for a long time in recording a seven point tally. Syd Jackson had a poor meeting scoring only two points and he only got those due to other riders falling. Bluey Wilkinson lost points through not being content with anything but a win.

Heat 1 Ron Johnson, Jack Parker , Wally Kilmister Time 59.5 secs
Ron Johnson had to make his fastest run at New Cross to beat Jack Parker.

Heat 2 Max Grosskreutz, Dicky Case (FRmt), Norman Parker (FRmt), Vic Huxley (f) Time 63.3 secs This race saw the old fierce Huxley of old. Grosskreutz stayed level with him for two laps and they hindered each other just enough to enable Case to come through inside the pair of them on the third lap. Huxley was pushed back into third place. Case then unaccountably fell while leading comfortably. Vic Huxley had also fallen and Norman Parker had gone wide trying to avoid him and over slid near the fence. Grosskreutz romped home untroubled while both Case and Parker remounted to finish.

Heat 3 Tom Farndon, Jack Sharp, Bill Kitchen, Time 61.2 secs
Tom Farndon won comfortably

Heat 4 Stan Greatrex, Geoff Pymar, George Newton Time 62.4 secs

Heat 5 Tom Farndon, Ron Johnson, George Newton Time 60.0 secs
Tom Farndon won comfortably

Heat 6 Bluey Wilkinson, Bill Kitchen, Vic Huxley Time 62.2 secs

Heat 7 Max Grosskreutz, Geoff Pymar, Syd Jackson, Wally Kilmister (Mt) Time 62.2 secs

Heat 8 Jack Parker, Stan Greatrex, Jack Sharp Time 61 secs

Heat 9 Ron Johnson, Vic Huxley, Syd Jackson, Stan Greatrex (F) Time 62.8 secs

Heat 10 Bluey Wilkinson, Dicky Case, Geoff Pymar Time 61.2 secs
Bluey Wilkinson Dicky Case and Geoff Pymar were at each other for a couple of laps until Wilkinson gained the upper hand and finished well in front of Case.

Heat 11 Ron Johnson, Max Grosskreutz, Jack Sharp 61.4 secs

Heat 12 Jack Parker, Max Grosskreutz, Bill Kitchen 62.3 secs

Heat 13 Joe Francis, Norman Parker, Tom Farndon (FRm) 65.4 secs

Heat 14 Bluey Wilkinson, George Newton, Norman Parker 65.0 secs

Heat 15 Dicky Case, Bill Kitchen, Stan Greatrex, Time 62.4 secs

Heat 16 Jack Parker, Tom Farndon, Vic Huxley Time 61.6 secs

Heat 17 Ron Johnson, Bill Kitchen, No Third Time 62.6 secs

Heat 18 Tom Farndon, Max Grosskreutz, Stan Greatrex 63.2 secs

Heat 19 Jack Sharp, Vic Huxley, George Newton Time 63.0 secs

6 Heat 20 Jack Parker, Dicky Case, Joe Francis Time 62.4 secs

Jack Parker had to win in order to tie with Ron Johnson. Johnson was however awarded the winners Bronze Star having defeated Parker in the first heat.

Harringay - Saturday July 27th

This meeting saw one of the biggest crowds of 1935 at Harringay. The meeting was run so slickly that all twenty races had been completed by 10pm. The racing was good to watch although most of the winners came from those wearing the blue helmet colour with twelve races running being won from the gate two position. Ron Johnson took the winners honours and remained undefeated. His success was immensely popular on the terraces. Bluey Wilkinson was runner up on thirteen points. He made every outing a real scrap and won four of his five races. Tom Farndon would have finished higher up had he not over slid trying to pass Jack Ormston in heat 18.

Frank Charles was the best of the Wembley men on show although Wally Kilmister never gave up trying. Tiger Stevenson was indifferent and Tommy Croombs had a poor meeting. Squib Burton looked anxious to shine but looked unsafe and eventually he hurt his hand and had to retire from the meeting. Stan Greatrex rode a little better than he had been doing recently. Joe Francis was off colour throughout.

Norman Parker fought well and frequently put some of the star men under real pressure. Jack Ormston although not a well man health wise was never unplaced.

Heat 1 Jack Parker, Wally Kilmister, Joe Francis Time 74.0 secs

Jack Parker won with comparative ease from his greatest danger Wally Kilmister.

Heat 2 Ron Johnson, Tom Farndon, Bluey Wilkinson Time 73.2 secs

Ron Johnson and Tom Farndon waging a battle up front gave Bluey Wilkinson a right cinders bath leaving him unable to do anything better than third place.

Heat 3 Tiger Stevenson, Squib Burton, Stan Greatrex 77.2 secs

Heat 4 Lionel Van Praag, Tommy Croombs, Jack Ormston 73.8 secs

Heat 5 Jack Parker, Frank Charles, Norman Parker Time 74.8 secs

Jack Parker won after one of the best scraps of the meeting.

Heat 6 Ron Johnson, Wally Kilmister, Stan Greatrex Time 76.4 secs

Heat 7 Tom Farndon, Jack Sharp, Joe Francis Time 76.8 secs

Heat 8 Bluey Wilkinson, Jack Ormston, Bob Harrison Time 76.8 secs

Heat 9 Ron Johnson, Jack Parker, Jack Ormston Time 75.4 secs 7

Heat 10 Frank Charles, Wally Kilmister, Jack Sharp, Squib Burton (fell injured hand) Time 75.8 secs

Heat 11 Tom Farndon, Jack Parker, Tommy Croombs, Bill Pitcher Time 74.2 secs

Heat 12 Tom Farndon, Stan Greatrex, Bob Harrison, Lionel Van Praag (Blown motor) Time 75.8 secs

Lionel Van Praag was showing Tom Farndon the way home only to suffer a blown engine.

Heat 13 Bluey Wilkinson, Tommy Croombs, Norman Parker Time 75.4 secs

Heat 14 Bluey Wilkinson, Wally Kilmister, Tiger Stevenson Time 77.0 secs

Heat 15 Frank Charles, Jack Ormston, Stan Greatrex Time 77.2 secs

This was the best race of the meeting as it produced a four lap scrap for the win. Jack Ormston led going into the last bend but took it too wide. Frank Charles slipped through the gap and although Ormston closed up on the dash to the line Charles held on to win by a whisker.

Heat 16 Ron Johnson, Norman Parker, Bob Harrison Time 77.2 secs

Heat 17 Bluey Wilkinson, Jack Parker, Jack Sharp Time 75.0 secs

Heat 18 Jack Ormston, Norman Parker, Wally Kilmister, Tom Farndon (fell) Time 77.8 secs

Heat 19 Ron Johnson, Bill Pitcher, Lionel Van Praag Time 78.8 secs

Heat 20 Frank Charles, Tommy Croombs, Tiger Stevenson Time 76.4 secs

Belle Vue - Saturday August 3rd

Thrills and intense excitement were the order of the evening at Belle Vue as the riders keen on securing every point possible served up racing of a really high standard. The riders who preferred to ride the inside line were heard to complain bitterly of the shortage of tyre gripping material on the inside of the track but the riders who took the bends fairly wide were well served with grippy conditions.

Several riders met with wretched luck which made all the difference between success and failure. The victor was Australian Bluey Wilkinson. Dicky Case with the same total of 14 points received a big disappointment in losing by a matter of three seconds on the aggregate 8 total time for the riders five scoring heats.

- **Bluey Wilkinson total aggregate time 6 minutes 39 seconds.**

- **Dicky Case total aggregate time 6 minutes 42 seconds.**

Bluey Wilkinson was presented with the Northern Championship Trophy and the Star Championship Round Winners Bronze Star amidst terrific applause.

Heat 1 Eric Langton, Bill Kitchen, Frank Charles Time 77.0 secs

Heat 2 Bluey Wilkinson, Wally Kilmister, Joe Francis Time 80.2 secs

Heat 3 Joe Abbott, Lionel Van Praag, No Third Time 80.1 secs

Heat 4 Tom Farndon, Dicky Case, Tommy Croombs Time 79.0 secs

Heat 5 Wally Kilmister, Lionel Van Praag, Frank Charles Time 80.0 secs

Heat 6 Eric Langton, Tommy Croombs, Tiger Stevenson Time 79.1 secs

Heat 7 Dicky Case, Bluey Wilkinson, Max Grosskreutz Time 78.3 secs

Heat 8 Tom Farndon, Bob Harrison, Joe Abbott Time 80.2 secs

Heat 9 Tom Farndon, Max Grosskreutz, Frank Charles Time 78.4 secs

Heat 10 Dicky Case, Joe Abbott, Wally Kilmister, Eric Langton (Puncture) Time 80.2 secs

Eric Langton suffered misfortune which totally put him out of the running for the rostrum. He was riding like a sure winner with a lead of 10-12 lengths when his tyre punctured on the third lap. Langton's misfortune was followed by a wheel to wheel duel between Case and Abbott. After two laps of passing and re passing Dicky Case gained the upper hand.

Heat 11 Bluey Wilkinson, Tommy Croombs, Frank Charles, Joe Abbott (Ex) Time 79.4 secs

Heat 12 Bluey Wilkinson, Tiger Stevenson, Bob Harrison Time 80.4 secs

Heat 13 Lionel Van Praag, Bill Kitchen, Tommy Croombs Time 79.4 secs

Heat 14 Eric Langton, Max Grosskreutz, Stan Greatrex Time 79.1 secs

Heat 15 Tom Farndon, Bill Kitchen, Tiger Stevenson Time 79.3 secs

Heat 16 Dicky Case, Lionel Van Praag, Bob Harrison Time 82.1 secs

Heat 17 Dicky Case, Tiger Stevenson, Frank Charles 81.3 secs

Heat 18 Bluey Wilkinson, Eric Langton, Tom Farndon Time 79.0 secs

Tom Farndon over slid when making a now or never burst to pass the race leader Eric Langton on the second bend of the third lap. Before Tom could correct himself Bluey Wilkinson had taken full advantage of a ten lengths arrears to gain a similar lead. Langton was again hotly pursued but appeared an odds on winner until he left the last bend wide and Wilkinson cut inside to win brilliantly.

Heat 19 Bill Kitchen, Joe Abbott (Fell Rem) Time 85.0 secs

Joe Abbott fell and Bill Kitchen rode around slowly to ensure he didn't lap him.

**Heat 20 Tommy Croombs, Wally Kilmister, Max Grosskreutz
Time 82.4 secs**

West Ham - Tuesday August 13th

West Ham staged the sixth and final eliminating round which was won by the local hero Bluey Wilkinson. Bluey won all five of his races with the greatest of ease as he totally outclassed the opposition.

The racing at West Ham was really first class. Outstanding incidents were the equalling of the track record of 44.30 m.p.h. By both Vic Huxley and Tommy Croombs and the return to form of Tiger Stevenson.

The Fifteenth heat decided the issue. The unbeaten at that stage Wilkinson and Tom Farndon met along with Vic Huxley who was also still in the running. Bluey Wilkinson took command of the race right from the start and held a long lead until the last corner where he took no chances and slowed down. At that point Huxley put in a spurt and closed up a lot of ground but Wilkinson was still in control.

In the last event all Wilkinson had to do was finish first or second to take the winners Bronze Star. Bluey took first place easily enough ahead of Tommy Croombs. Croombs spent his time shutting out Frank Charles so making sure of his West Ham team mates victory.

The West Ham management were annoyed by the absence of Manchester stars Eric Langton and Joe Abbott who it was rumoured were suffering still from injuries sustained in a recent National Trophy match.

In winning Bluey Wilkinson finished as the top qualifier for the Star Final. As a result of his nights work his earnings were said to be around £68. Runner up at West Ham was Vic Huxley with 13 points while the third place prize was shared by Tiger Stevenson and Tom Farndon who both recorded 12 points.

10 Heat 1 Vic Huxley, Jack Sharp, Tiger Stevenson

(Fell Remd), Syd Jackson (Mt) Time 81.2 secs
Heat 2Bluey Wilkinson, Bill Kitchen, Rol Stobart, Norman Parker (Mt) Time 82.6 secs
Heat 3Tom Farndon, Frank Charles, Lionel Van Praag, Mick Murphy (Fell) Time 84.0 secs
Heat 4Jack Parker, Tommy Croombs, Geoff Pymar, Stan Dell Time 84.6 secs
Heat 5Bluey Wilkinson, Tiger Stevenson, Mick Murphy, Geoff Pymar (Mt) Time 81.2 secs
Heat 6Tom Farndon, Tommy Croombs, Rol Stobart, Syd Jackson Time 83.0 secs
Heat 7Bill Kitchen, Vic Huxley, Frank Charles, Jack Parker Time 83.4 secs
Heat 8Jack Sharp, Morian Hansen, Lionel Van Praag, Stan Dell (Fell) Time 85.6 secs
Heat 9Tiger Stevenson, Stan Dell , Frank Charles, Rol Stobart Time 84.0 secs
Heat 10Bluey Wilkinson, Lionel Van Praag, Jack Parker, Syd Jackson Time 85.8 secs
Heat 11Tiger Stevenson, Tommy Croombs, Bill Kitchen, Lionel Van Praag Time 83.2 secs
Heat 12Tom Farndon, Bill Kitchen, Jack Sharp, Geoff Pymar Time 84.4 secs
Heat 13Vic Huxley, Tommy Croombs, Morian Hansen, Mick Murphy Time 83.6 secs
Heat 14Frank Charles, Syd Jackson, Geoff Pymar, Morian Hansen Time 88.0 secs
Heat 15Bluey Wilkinson, Vic Huxley, Tom Farndon, Stan Dell Time 83.2 secs
Heat 16Jack Parker, Jack Sharp, Rol Stobart, Mick Murphy (Fell) Time 87.2 secs
Heat 17Tiger Stevenson, Tom Farndon, Jack Parker, Morian Hansen 83.6 secs
Heat 18Bill Kitchen, Stan Dell, Mick Murphy, Syd Jackson Time 84.8 secs
Heat 19Vic Huxley, Lionel Van Praag, Rol Stobart, Geoff Pymar Time 87.0 secs
Heat 20 Bluey Wilkinson, Tommy Croombs, Jack Sharp Frank Charles Time 86.2 secs

National League Riders Star Final Championship

Wembley – Thursday August 29th 1935

Sixteen riders were to take part in the Star Championship Final over a 20 heat race format. Points were to be on a 3-2-1-0 basis with the highest scorer being declared the winner. In the event of a tie for first place the Star Championship was to be decided by a single round match race. Any tie for second and third places would see the cash prizes lumped together and then split equally amongst the riders concerned with both being presented with a bronze star.

The Star newspaper once again provided the prize money and trophies as below.

- **1st Place – A Silver Star and £100.00 – Frank Charles**
- **2nd Place – A Bronze Star and £50 – Jack Ormston**
- **3rd Place - £25 – Max Grosskreutz**

In total the amount of prize and appearance money available for the meeting amounted to being the highest that had even been given out at a Speedway meeting. Each rider had a meeting guarantee of taking home £5. There was also a payment for finishing order in each heat as below:-

- **First Place - £4 and 10 shillings**
- **Second Place - £3**
- **Third Place - £1 and 10 shillings**

Frank Charles who had come out of retirement to join Wembley a year earlier in 1934 put in a superb performance against a top class field to become the first Wembley rider to win the Star Championship Final. Charles won each of his five races fairly easily and the only time he looked in danger was his last ride when Eric Langton held him back for a couple of laps.

The Star Championship was staged in front of the biggest Wembley crowd of the year.

Jack Ormston was the surprise packet of the meeting and he just toyed with the more fancied Jack Parker, Eric Langton and Dicky Case.

Ormston's 14 points were more than well deserved.

Joint fourth place went to those riders who finished on 10 points Jack Parker, Eric Langton and Bluey Wilkinson.

Of the rest Dicky Case, Bill Kitchen, Vic Huxley, Bluey Wilkinson and Eric Langton were all disappointing and only gave rare glimpses of **12** what they were really capable of.

Vic Huxley was the best of the also rans and when he finally got going he was superb. In his last two races he gave the crowd full value for money. In one heat he was last coming out of the first bend but in turn he passed Tiger Stevenson, Norman Parker and Bill Kitchen to gain one of the most spectacular wins of the night.

In the absence of Ron Johnson and Tom Farndon (following the horrendous crash at New Cross which cost Farndon his life), Geoff Pymar and Norman Parker qualified to fill the gaps. It should have been Bob Harrison of Belle Vue instead of Norman Parker but he was unable to get down to Wembley for the meeting.

RIDERS		1	2	3	4	5	TOT
1	Eric Langton	F	3	2	3	2	10
2	Max Grosskreutz	3	3	3	1	3	13
3	Dicky Case	1	2	2	3	F	8
4	Arthur "Bluey" Wilkinson	2	2	3	1	2	10
5	Lionel Van Praag	1	0	2	0	F	3
6	Jack Parker	2	2	0	3	3	10
7	Jack Sharp	0	0	1	0	0	1
8	Frank Charles	3	3	3	3	3	15
9	Geoff Pymar	1	1	0	0	1	3
10	Tommy Croombs	2	1	2	1	1	7
11	Jack Ormston	3	3	3	2	3	14
12	Wally Kilmister	F	F	Ns	Ns	Ns	0
13	Bill Kitchen	1	2	1	0	F	4
14	Harold "Tiger" Stevenson	0	0	2	1	1	4
15	Norman Parker	2	1	1	2	0	6
16	Vic Huxley	3	1	1	2	2	9

Heat Details

Heat 1 Max Grosskreutz, Bluey Wilkinson, Dicky Case, 4th Eric Langton (Fell) Time 76.2 secs (Track Record)

Heat 2 Frank Charles, Jack Parker, Lionel Van Praag, Jack Sharp
Time 76.2 secs (Equal Track Record)

Heat 3 Jack Ormston, Tommy Croombs, Geoff Pymar, Wally Kilmister (Fell) Time 77.8 secs

Heat 4 Vic Huxley, Norman Parker, Bill Kitchen, Harold "Tiger" Stevenson Time 77.0 secs

Heat 5 Eric Langton, Bill Kitchen, Geoff Pymar, Lionel Van Praag Time 78.8 secs

Heat 6 Max Grosskreutz, Jack Parker, Tommy Croombs, Harold "Tiger" Stevenson Time 77.8 secs

Heat 7 Jack Ormston, Dicky Case, Norman Parker, Jack Sharp Time 77.8 secs

Heat 8 Frank Charles, Bluey Wilkinson, Vic Huxley, Wally Kilmister (Fell Non Starter) Time 76.4 secs

Heat 9 Jack Ormston, Eric Langton, Vic Huxley, Jack Parker Time 77.8 secs

Heat 10 Max Grosskreutz, Lionel Van Praag, Norman Parker, Wally Kilmister (Non Starter) Time 78.6 secs

Heat 11 Eric Langton, Harold "Tiger" Stevenson, Jack Sharp, Wally Kilmister (Non Starter) Time 78.8 secs

Heat 12 Bluey Wilkinson, Tommy Croombs, Bill Kitchen, Jack Sharp Time 78.6 secs

Heat 13 Frank Charles, Dicky Case, Harold "Tiger" Stevenson, Geoff Pymar Time 77.8 secs

Heat 14 Frank Charles, Jack Ormston, Max Grosskreutz (Fell Remd), Bill Kitchen (Ret) Time 78.8 secs

This was the most important race as at this stage Frank Charles, Max Grosskreutz and Jack Ormston were all unbeaten. Jack Ormston was soon out of the running as he got crowded out on the first bend and could never make up the lost ground. Max Grosskreutz held the early lead with Frank Charles barely two lengths behind him. Halfway through the race Grosskreutz over slid and he was unable to right himself and down he went. Charles was aware enough to avoid the fallen Australian. Jack Ormston overtook Grosskreutz to finish second while Max remounted to take the third place point.

Heat 15 Dicky Case, Vic Huxley, Tommy Croombs, Lionel Van Praag Time 79.8 secs

Heat 16 Jack Parker, Norman Parker, Bluey Wilkinson, Geoff Pymar Time 78.6 secs

**Heat 17 Frank Charles, Eric Langton, Tommy Croombs
14 Norman Parker Time 79.6 secs**

**Heat 18 Max Grosskreutz, Vic Huxley, Geoff Pymar
Jack Sharp Time 80.4 secs**

**Heat 19 Jack Parker, Dicky Case (F), Bill Kitchen (F)
4th Wally Kilmister (NS) Time 81.2 secs**

Jack Parker did a fine piece of work when he laid his machine down promptly to avoid the fallen Dicky Case.

**Heat 20 Jack Ormston, Bluey Wilkinson, Harold "Tiger" Stevenson
Lionel Van Praag (F) Time 80.0**

Referees

Andy Marlow from Leicestershire has raised an interesting topic about the men in the middle.

The Speedway Referee - the people many fans love to hate, whose eyesight and parentage are often questioned by supporters of teams on the wrong end of their decisions. Of course we all know we could do a better job, would never get a decision wrong, but really it is a thankless task. Whatever decision is reached is going to annoy someone - irate riders complaining to incensed team managers and the crowd howling their derision in the direction of the referees box. But the simple fact is that without them there would be no speedway meetings to watch each week. They do their best in often trying conditions and after all they are only human (well most of them) and everyone makes mistakes from time to time (even you and me).

I recently saw a book listing all the Football League Referees since 1888 and it set me thinking that the speedway referee is a vital but neglected part of speedway history. To try to rectify this oversight I have recently started to compile a list of referees from the 1946 to 1964 era from my programme collection. This initial list is taken from Leicester Home programmes between 1949 and 1963.

R F JONES	1949-50-51-52-53-54
A B TAYLOR	1949-50-51-52-53-63
G R ALLAN	1949
E G COPE	1949-50-51-52-53-54-55-56-57-58-59-60-61-62
H P ELLIS	1950-51-52-53-55-60-61-62-63
C CLEGG	1952
E W B ROE	1953-54-55-56-57-58-59-60-61-62
E P HARROW	1959 - At Two Composite meetings only
G H REYNOLDS	1963

They were listed as ACU Stewards between 1949 and 1956 and ACU Referees from the beginning of 1957.

It seems that each season usually the same two or three referees officiated at meetings. Maybe appointments were made on a local basis. I am hoping that people who have pre-war programmes and magazines in their collections may be able to help me fill in the details for that era.

Any assistance that you can give would be much appreciated. I can be contacted at marlow.a@sky.com

A J Hunting arrives in Great Britain 1928.

This is an extract from "The World wide adventures of AJ Hunting" by Tony Webb. It has been written in collaboration with the Hunting family and research at National Archives London and Queensland Archives Brisbane Australia.

Leaving his Davies Park operations under the capable control of brother Frank, AJ. travelled by train to West Australia leaving Brisbane on January 17, 1928. In Perth he visited the speedway at Claremont where he met up with John S. Hoskins. This is the only known reference of a meeting between AJ. and J.S.H. A report in the West Australian newspaper stated that AJ told J.S.H that he already had one track in England under construction. This is important in speedway history confirming that AJ. was one step ahead of the "father of speedway". AJ's meeting with JSH was reported in the West Australian Sunday Times thus:

"Passing through during the week from Brisbane en route to the United Kingdom was Mr. A. J. Hunting. He is under contract to put on several motor cycle racing meetings and as such had a " particularly interesting" chat with the. local speedway "live wire," Mr. J S Hoskins. In England, the first small dirt track is being completed, it is also-the first to be put down in Europe, it will be fit to ride on by the time Mr. Hunting's men get there in April. Mr. Hunting has obtained two world famous riders among others in "Billy" Lamont and Cecil Brown, while other speedmen from Brisbane have intimated their intention of making the trip. A movement is on foot to get them to stay in Perth and compete on the way over for one Saturday at least. This will be early in March. 16 Providing they stay here a picked team of riders will be pitted

against them, which will give us ample opportunity to compare our speedsters with the world's best. Early developments, if successful, will be awaited by Speedway followers”.

AJ then boarded the SS Nalder at Fremantle en route for London. His ventures attracted the attention and the imagination of the press across the world. The progress was recorded almost daily in the London Times and the Brisbane newspapers, not always correctly.²

Discussions had previously taken place with Stanley Glanfield when he was in Brisbane. Plans were finalised to bring a party of Australian riders to England. Other promoters from Australia and England were also showing a keen interest. Both John S. Hoskins in Perth and Jimmy Baxter in London were hatching plans. A mention here of John S. Hoskins, as his name has been linked with the Hunting promotions in England, and later in South America, in articles in the Speedway News. It is certain he was not employed by .AJ. at any time. We will explore the JHS story in a later chapter.

Jimmy Baxter had already encouraged three Australians from Sydney, Keith McKay, William James Pomfroy and Geoff Meredith to travel to England to form a rival company known as Dirt Track Speedways Limited. AJ, who has been called a “monopolist” lost no time in making contracts with the English National Greyhound Association to run speedway on smaller tracks within several London greyhound stadiums. At this time another Australian promoter, Geoff Meredith, became speedway’s first tragedy. He died of illness after visiting the Isle of Man TT races in 1928AJ’S date of arrival in England has always one of considerable debate among historians. His name is not on any shipping arrival listings. The recent discovery of his passport and a letter written at the time proves the arrival in Marseilles on February 17. He spent a day there with Mac Bowcher, who he met on board. He dined with a French lady who helped AJ mail a parcel of magazines back to Ethel. He then caught the Blue Arrow Express to London, via Calais and Dover, The passport fails to show an arrival date in England .He is reported in several publications that he arrived at High Beech by taxi in the afternoon of the historic meeting of February 19. It is possible, but it would have been an extremely tight time frame. It was widely reported that AJ then expressed dismay at the lack of organisation at High Beech, He was invited to prepare the track for the next meeting. This same story is repeated by the prolific British author Norman Jacobs, **17**

in his 2005 publication, *Speedways Classic meetings*, to quote Norman's words,

"In spite of the excitement and its importance to speedway history, there was one man present at the meeting who was not too impressed with the days proceedings and that was Australian promoter A J Hunting. Johnnie Hoskins, notwithstanding, Mr Hunting had become the leading promoter of speedway in the world and had under his wing the leading Aussie riders of the time including Frank Arthur and Vic Huxley. After the meeting AJ sought out Hill Bailey and said you have got it all wrong old boy, that was not the way to run a speedway meeting."

As discussed elsewhere, doubts exist on this arrival. Respected historians Cyril May in his "Complete History of Speedway" states AJ arrived on the morning of the High Beech meeting. Robert Bamford in 'Speedway the Pre War Years' recorded the former account. Some others say it was physically impossible to achieve that arrival date. The author discovered Marseilles and Paris post cards, dated March 5 and 7 mailed to his daughter Nancie Hunting by AJ on March 6 and 8 1928. This raises the question if AJ did arrive on February 19, or is it logical to assume he would delay the posting of the card for two weeks? AJ gave his address as 41-43 Fleet Street London EC4

Speedway historians have always argued over the arrival dates in London. The main problem is that the shipping records, on line, indicate the arrival of all the riders except JSH and Schlam as May 9 at Tilbury. This indeed was the destination on the tickets. The official records have a red line drawn through the entries but this is not repeated on the on-line versions.

On his arrival in London, AJ had talks with Jack Hill Bailey who introduced AJ to a journalist from the Daily Mirror. The plans for what was termed a Speedway Movement made headlines in that paper with a photo of AJ. Very soon AJ was approached by company touts and a series of luncheons and dinner meetings commenced as AJ was introduced to all the influential men in the city. After two weeks AJ felt he was not making progress, he had his team ready to depart from Brisbane, waiting on the money for fares. It is important to state the financial affairs were always conducted from London. In the end AJ gave his fellow directors in London an ultimate, if the money for fares was not sent by the weekend the tour would be cancelled. At noon on **18** the Saturday AJ's representative in Brisbane received 1,700 pounds

by cable from London and things started moving. The press then announced A J was a director of a new company National Speedway Ltd. however the company was International Speedways Ltd (ISL), the “inter” had been missed out. Another director was stated to be Colonel Bersey who had Wembley connections. Brisbane Speedways Ltd was confirmed as shareholder. The article was in the Canberra Times on March 17 and stated plans were in hand to open at Wembley in May. This report was misleading. There was no Brisbane Speedways Ltd registered and no evidence that AJ had Wembley in his sights. The question then arises did AJ have the blessing of the directors of National Speedways in Brisbane when he took off for England? The answer is no, he did not, at the farewell dinner in Brisbane, W. E. Robbins refers to AJ, and a syndicate that raised the money for the floatation of ISL in England. This “syndicate” arises again in a letter by AJ when he despairs of the procrastination of the businessmen in England. We now know there were four Brisbane based men in the syndicate, W. E. Robbins, F.A Hunting, K. Logan and Norman Pritchard. It is important to emphasise the venture was not backed by the full board of Davies Park Speedway. Whatever happened in the boardroom between AJ’s departure from Brisbane and his arrival in England is not known. It was further announced in The Times newspaper on March 23 1928 that AJ had succeeded in floating a 30,000 pound company known as International Speedways Limited (ISL) for the express purpose of promoting speedway in England.

From records in the National Archives, which I visited with UK Historian Peter Oakes in 2013, it is confirmed that ISL were quickly taken over by another company Speedway Trust Ltd registered on June 11 1928. It is this company, not ISL, who ran the show from June 1928. Records show that AJ was awarded 267,420 one shilling shares in Speedway Trust, another company, Secretarial Agency Ltd was awarded 181, 147 shares for consultation work. It is assumed that these allotments of shares were compensation for the preparation work done by AJ and it is quite likely he had an interest in Secretarial Agency Ltd. ISL continued to have its name on the programmes. The promoting company, ISL, in reality it was a subsidiary of Speedway Trust and never made a financial return.

A strong Board of Directors was drawn from some very influential London identities. Under the chairmanship of Colonel Walter Bersey of Wembley Exhibition fame, fellow board members included

Theodore Goddard, a lawyer and director of Picture Post, W.J.Cearns, Sir John Rhodes DSO, Lord Strathsey, Arthur Johnson OBE, Charles E Wakeling, William E Robbins and Lord Sempil. General Manager was Vivian Van Damm who later came to fame with the Windmill Theatre in London's West End. Speedway Trust had 903 subscribers including rival promoters Fred Mockford, Claude Langdon and W J Cearns. Motor racing icon Major Henry Seagrave was appointed as technical motorist advisor. ISL Ltd. had offices at 10, Sergeants Inn and 40-43 Fleet Street in London EC4.

The appointment of Lord Sempill to the board would prove to be a shrewd move by AJ. Later in the 1928 season speedway was gaining bad publicity by a section of the press, who labelled the sport as a low form of entertainment and something was needed to lift the public image. Lord Sempill was able to use his considerable influence to persuade Royalty, HRH King Alphonso of Spain, HRH Princess Ingrid of Sweden novelist Edgar Wallace, speed celebrities Sir Henry Seagrave and Sir Malcolm Campbell and actresses Miss May Bacon and Peggy O'Neil to attend speedway meetings and present the prizes. This lifted the profile of speedway in the public's eye. All the ISL company information is gleaned from newspaper articles. In fact the British Archives do not have any record of ISL, although they hold records of nearly every other speedway company from 1928. Meanwhile AJ had moved to a new address, the Loudon Hotel in Surrey Street WC1. In the Brisbane Courier Mail on March 20 1928 it was announced that a team of ten Australian riders, all Davies Park regulars, were to travel to England. Each rider and official had first class fares on the Orient liner 'Oransay' paid from Sydney to London and also received, as an added incentive, a parcel of shares in Speedway Trust. The riders chosen were Vic Huxley, Frank Pearce, Dicky Smythe, Noel Johnson, Hilary Buchanan and Ben Unwin, all from Brisbane, together with Frank Arthur, Jack Bishop Charlie Spinks from Toowoomba and Billy Lamont from Newcastle, New South Wales. Lamont in fact left earlier to travel via USA with Cecil Brown who was also a member of AJ.'s group. Officials Frank Hunting, Roland Robbins, Keith Logan and Norman Pritchard accompanied the riders. Prior to the departure the team were photographed by the Courier Mail in Adelaide Terrace. Frank Pearce, in a 1985 interview claimed the photo was taken in Wickham Terrace outside the Trades Hall Splendidly attired in suits and 20 hats, they probably had little idea of what a historic event this would

be in the future of speedway. Later in the year Bert Spencer, Harold Stevens, Fred Hore and Lyle Boyd Pratt sailed to England to join up with the original party.

A farewell dinner was held at Brisbane's Constitutional Club in Adelaide Street on Thursday 22 March in honour of the UK-bound party, with toasts made by notable citizens, L.Barratt, Frank Hunting and Frazer East. Frank Pearce gave an eloquent reply on behalf of the riders. Frank was to prove a very articulate man, and his letters from England, published in the Sydney Showground programmes in 1935-36, have been absolute gems in tracing the history of these early days.

A further private farewell dinner was given for Vic Huxley on his return to Brisbane from Adelaide by his parents Mr. and Mrs. H.Huxley. The dinner took place at "Morlancourt" Montague Road, South Brisbane, the home of Mr. and Mrs. H.C.Tipper. Tables were decorated in Vic's racing colours of helio and sky, which must have been a splendid display. Also present at the dinner were the Sydney riders Dick Sulway and Bob Stilley, who had arrived that very evening on the mail train from Sydney. They were collected from South Brisbane station by Skip Rees and rushed direct to the dinner.

A farewell speedway meeting for the overseas riders was held at Davies Park on March 24 1928. At the close of the meeting the riders stood at intervals around the track and threw streamers into the spectators amid cheers and shouts of bon voyage. At that time Huxley and Smythe were riding in Adelaide, missing the formal farewell dinner. Smythe returned in time for the farewell meeting but Hunting and Frazer East. Frank Pearce gave an eloquent reply on behalf of the riders. Frank was to prove a very articulate man, and his letters from England, published in the Sydney Showground programmes in 1935-36, have been absolute gems in tracing the history of these early days.

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The free passage and shares created an air of optimism among the riders as they departed from Brisbane Central Railway station on Monday March 26 at 8pm on the first leg of the journey. Fans had congregated at the railway station from late afternoon to farewell their heroes.

The voyage to England was a time to relax from all the pressures of preparation. They were joined by Huxley as planned at Adelaide and then at Fremantle on April 10, 1928 by four more travellers, Ron Johnson, Sig Schlam, Charlie Datson and the legendary John S Hoskins. These four travellers were known as the Wills party. With the exception of JSH they travelled third class. At Naples Huxley left the ship to travel overland to honour an earlier booking to race at High Beech. He arrived for the fifth meeting on May 5 1928. The trip continued without event. The ship carried on to the French port of Toulon, where AJ.'s manager, Mr. Baybrooke met them. They then travelled by train to Paris where they stayed for a few days. It was then on to Calais to catch the Channel Ferry to Dover an arduous route by today's standards. An especially reserved Pullman railway carriage was awaiting them with an afternoon tea prepared.

The final stage was to Victoria Station London where they were met by AJ. Rooms at the Bedford Head Hotel in Tottenham Court Road had been booked for the weary travellers. However, they were a little disappointed to learn that there had been delays in track construction. It would be another two weeks before they could demonstrate their skills.

22 The time was taken up with organising workshops; getting lost in

London's maze of streets and a visit to the Douglas Motorcycle works in Bristol.

To continue the story of the rider's arrival, the following evening the riders were spectators at Stamford Bridge where they were surprised by the shape of the track, with its long straights and narrow bends. They realised there would be a lot of adapting to do. The Australian riders found that only the High Beech track, renamed [Kings Oak,] was similar to Davies Park, which is no surprise as AJ. had an influence in the design of the track after the first meeting.

The team had their first taste of high society when a luncheon was held in their honour at the famous Savoy Hotel in London on May 16 presided over by Lord Strathspey. One of the speakers Theodore Collins prophesied that the sport of speedway could well eclipse football and greyhound racing in popularity. Tributes were paid to the enthusiasm of AJ and his team.

To further cover the mechanical side AJ made the very shrewd move of signing up the ace tuner, Alec Mosely, to work exclusively for International Speedways Limited. As an indication of the confidence shown in the future of speedway, International Speedways Ltd. had placed an order for seventy five speedway machines including fifty new Douglas dirt track bikes. Part of the reason behind this large order was to give the Douglas company encouragement, as they had stopped production the previous year. The Douglas management took a different view fearing these large orders would command further concessions from the promoters, therefore there was a reluctance to accept them. The orders were then placed via a number of agencies. It would appear that these large orders never eventuated as machine shortages were to be a problem for the remainder of the season. The supply of speedway machines at the beginning of each season is a problem that has never been resolved throughout the years. This is mainly because speedway machines are not generally mass produced, requiring tuning and modification to the individual rider's requirements.

To Be Continued

Racejackets

Andy Marlow has also penned this item about one of his interests. Race jackets are something that have always interested me and over the

years, I have been lucky enough to add several to my speedway memorabilia collection. My personal favourites are from the pre- sponsorship era which to my best recollection began in 1976 when Gulf Oil company's stickers were added to the jackets (please correct me if I am wrong) Previous to this the race jackets design seemed to stay the same season after season (with a few exceptions) and were instantly recognizable to the regular supporter. Also the old style ones were made of leather, with each part e.g. the crossed hammers of West Ham and the letters of a team name e.g. (Edinburgh) Monarchs were stitched to the background material, whilst most today's plastic versions where the details are screen printed.

Something that has always puzzled me is where do all the old race jackets go? - There are hundreds produced each year for every team in every league and with the constant change of design each year that we seem to get now they are all instantly redundant for the following season.

Do the riders hang on to them, or the clubs keep them? Do they get passed on to sponsors or even destroyed? I know they are sometimes auctioned off at the tracks and from time to time some appear at Collectors Fayres or on E-Bay but that still seems to leave an awful lot unaccounted for.

Perhaps someone who knows more about these matters can enlighten me.

(**Editors** Eric Watson and other contributors have been compiling drawings of a race jackets and they may be able to answer Andy's question re sponsors names. Also, anyone any thoughts on the best race jacket ever?)

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