



# ***SPEEDWAY***



*Bast is fast enough*

He came. He sidewaysed. He conquered. Mike Bast. They moved the show out of the Coliseum, but the Orange County Fairgrounds in Costa Mesa was fine enough for Bast to win his second consecutive national title. And the fourth in the last six years for the 23-year-old.

Bast, who swept five straight heats last year, was almost 86'd in the first heat. A bump from Alan Christian sent him wide and into the fence. He kept it on two wheels, got back in the race and moved from last to second by the checkered. His loss of a "perfect" evening right off set up

"Wild" Bill Cody (left) and "Crazy" Alan Christian finished eighth and tenth respectively in season scoring. Cody has been racing since the revival in '68, has his own Racing Products company. Christian returned to Southern California in '76 after five years of racing in Northern California.

some dramatic racing later on.

Bast won his next three heats. Lightning Larry Shaw, riding a Neil Street four-valve converted Jawa for the first time in competition, won his

first three heats, wire to wire with room to spare. In his fourth heat (against Bast) he finished third. Shaw waltzed to another wire to wire win in his final heat to conclude his evening with 13 points.

Bast and his teammate, Bruce Penhall, also aboard one of the Street conversions, went head to head in their final heat. Bast had 11 points, Penhall 10. The teen needed a win to tie Shaw for first overall, the defending champ had to win to win. If Penhall edged him the three faced a three-man ride-off to decide the championship. Penhall grabbed

by Len Weed  
Photos by Pat Brady

# NATIONAL





Bobby Schwartz was seventh in scoring for the year. His official Larry Huffman racing nickname is the Boogaloo Kid.



Sonny Nutter (right) is the "old man" of the circuit at age 31. His many fans are still waiting for that centerfold in *Playgirl* Magazine. Scott Sivadge is making the move on him.

For 1976 Speedway Racing Association sanctioned racing was switched from an open everybody-rides-five-nights-a-week format to team racing, which has been popular overseas for years. This setup gave the riders one home and one away event per week. For the racers it meant less riding for about the same money. At least until the rainouts started piling up in August. (Yes, rain in L.A.) Thirty percent of the gate, with a minimum guarantee, was pooled from all five tracks and then distributed by calculating the average value per point. Some of the top riders probably would have done better racing five nights a week, but their pay per meet, racing twice a week, was higher.

The league racing gave the fans a home team to cheer for, but did deprive them of seeing all the stars on a given night. Most of the riders seemed to really like the switch to team racing. They didn't have to face an all-star field every time to the line and most seemed to get caught up in the team aspects, which saw some of the better riders coaching the less experienced riders on their team.

According to Harry Oxley, co-promoter of the National with Jack Milne, attendance for the '76 season was ahead of 1975 until the weather hit.

Team racing has four scratch starters, two from each team. Each racer starts four of the first 12 heats, facing each rival team rider once. The top two scorers for each team meet in a final 13th main heat. Then the riders change out of team leathers into their personal skins for handicap racing, every man for himself. While the open

racing pays purses, no points are earned.

Bast led all scorers by a wide margin with a 13.56 average — 15 points is perfect. Bast's average figures out to alternating firsts and seconds with no DNFs. Nineteen-year-old Bruce Penhall came on strong under Bast's schooling to take second in the scoring with an 11.79 average. Oddly, the top twosome's team, the Los Angeles Sprockets, finished in second place, one match behind the Bakersfield Bandits, who had the next three top scorers. The Sprockets conceivably had a chance to win the league championship since Bakersfield competed in two less matches, but the rain cancellations were not made up at season's end. Plans for a three match Championship playoff between the top two teams were also scratched.

What about 1977? More league racing. It is possible the season will be split in two, with first half league racing and second half open racing, finishing up with a three match team championship series.

#### NATIONAL SPEEDWAY LEAGUE 1976 FINAL STANDINGS

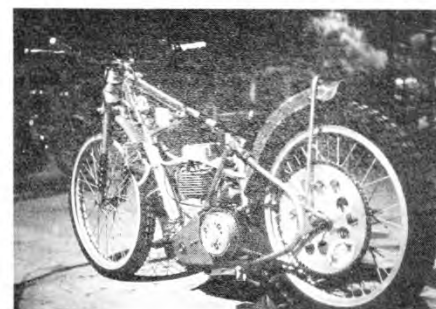
	Wins	Losses	%	Matches Behind
Bakersfield Bandits	26	11	702	
Los Angeles Sprockets	26	13	667	1
Ventura Sharks	18	20	473	8 1/2
San Bernardino Sizzlers	13	24	351	13
Orange County Eagles	10	25	285	15

#### TOP SCORERS

	Matches	Pts.	Ave.
1. Mike Bast, L.A.	39	529	13.56
2. Bruce Penhall, L.A.	39	460	11.79
3. Dubb Ferrell, Bak.	37	417	11.27
4. Jeff Sexton, Bak.	37	365	9.86
5. Steve Nutter, Bak.	36	344	9.55
6. Jim Fishback, S.B.	31	294	9.48
7. Bobby Schwartz, Ven.	38	353	9.28
8. Bill Cody, O.C.	35	322	9.20
9. Rick Woods, O.C.	29	261	9.00
10. Alan Christian, O.C.	35	305	8.71
11. Mark Cherry, S.B.	35	304	8.68
12. Larry Shaw, S.B.	27	232	8.59
13. Sonny Nutter, Ven.	37	285	7.70
14. Gene Woods, L.A.	39	285	7.30
15. Randy Marsh, Ven.	37	268	7.24
16. Scott Sivadge, Ven.	36	253	7.02
17. Dan Becker, Ven.	28	194	6.92
18. Dean Forman, S.B.	37	250	6.75
19. Ron Preston, S.B.	26	175	6.73
20. Dave Sims, Ven.	33	222	6.72

the lead, but when he went wide Bast and Rick Woods (National winner in '70 and '72) moved up to run abreast. Then Penhall took a wide line for the lead, only to lose it to Bast who resorted to a wide line for his pass. After some more furious racing Bast took the lead for keeps, with Penhall keeping the pressure on. The champ almost lost a finger when Penhall's front tire ground into his hand while the bike was cranked over in a corner. But he kept the finger and the title.

Qualification of the 16 finalists was changed a bit for '76. The top ten riders in season points were given a bye to the one-night winner-take-all championship event sponsored by Datsun. Although riders across the nation were invited to participate in the five-round qualifying series for the remaining six spots, all finalists were from Southern California.



Bast's winning Weslake. It was the only one in the national, is imported by Circle Industries.

Missing from the field was Bast's older brother, Steve, a national winner in 1969 and 1974. He retired during the year because of a heart condition.

Twenty scratch (no handicap) four-lap, four-rider heats decided the championship. Each finalist rode five heats, racing each of the 15 other entries once. The scoring was three points for a win, two points for second, one point for third. Bast had a perfect 15 in '75 and Rick Woods turned the trick in 1970 and 1972.

The favorite machine is still the two-valve 500cc Jawa four-stroke single. Nitro was banned for '76, the bikes ran on alcohol. Bast won on the four-valve Weslake manufactured in England. Several other riders made the switch to four valves with conversion kits for the Jawas.



Jim "The Animal" Fishback is a former number one in the desert. He is still remembered for his flying auger into the seats at the Coliseum in '75. He broke three of them; all they did was bend his little finger.

Summing up. The Night the World Went Sideways, Part Eight. Another slam bam for some 9000 spectators, complete with a title showdown heat between the top two season scorers. Full lock and smokin' is awwright!

#### RESULTS

	Finishes	Pts.
1. Mike Bast	(2-1-1-1-1)	14
2. Larry Shaw	(1-1-1-3-1)	13
3. Bruce Penhall	(3-1-1-1-2)	12
4. Alan Christian	(1-2-3-1-3)	10
4. Bobby Schwartz	(2-3-2-2-1)	10
6. Jeff Sexton	(2-4-2-1-1)	9
7. Dubb Ferrell	(1-2-4-4-1)	8
7. Steve Nutter	(3-3-3-1-2)	8
7. Rick Woods	(3-1-2-2-4)	8
10. Jim Fishback	(3-2-2-4-3)	6
10. Scott Sivadge	(2-4-2-3-3)	6
12. Bill Cody	(2-3-3-4-4)	4
12. Ron Preston	(4-4-3-3-2)	4
14. Mark Cherry	(4-3-4-2-4)	3
14. Sonny Nutter	(4-2-4-3-4)	3
16. Randy Marsh	(4-4-4-4-2)	2



#### RAPPING WITH THE CHAMP

Team racing: I really liked it. It meant that you didn't have to race your brains out every heat, five nights a week. Instead we could put on more of a show. I think the team concept helped some of the riders come along faster because the team captains took an interest in helping them improve. I made more money per night of racing this year, but my biggest two-week check this year was less than some of my good weeks last year.

Future doings: We need more tracks. We should keep the team racing, but have some open meets too. This would let us make some

more money and give the second division riders more rides. The team racing this year did open it up for some of the better second division riders.

Qualifying: I know invitations went out to riders across the country for the qualifiers, but traveling out here for five events isn't cheap. I'd like to see more riders across the nation given a chance. Let them find out if they really are competitive with us out here. Maybe they could go with 12 riders from here and pick two from Northern California and one each from the eastern and central states. It would be a start toward having a real national.

One-night nationals: That's the way they do it in Europe, but I think that the season's performance counts for more. Maybe I'm prejudiced because I've won the season scoring championship for the last six years, but season scoring seems to be a better measure. One bad heat and you're out of it with the current system. Look at the world final this year. The champions in '74 and '75 didn't even qualify. But that world championship match over there draws 100,000. What promoter is going to give that up?

Team selection: I'd like to see some kind of draft similar to that used by other sports. We didn't have any say on our team assign-

ments: they sent us a letter telling us who we were riding for. And then they went and switched Steve off our team. That's why he decided to take the doctor's advice and retire for a year. Maybe we could have a draft of the up-and-coming second division riders each year, last place team selecting first.

Preparing for one big night: It's a win, win, or win type thing in my mind. Second doesn't mean anything. I go into a shell about a week before the national. I tear down the bike and go over every part. I don't change the motor, just freshen it up with rings and a valve job. And I secure the tires so they can't come off even if I get a flat. I work on my own bike and I know it pretty well. I practice starts because it's so important. I think riding my trials bike regularly really helps my throttle control, particularly when the track is slick and you have to feel for control rather than just turn it on.

Four-valve bikes: The Weslake I ride is a beautiful bike. Jim Oakes at Circle Industries sold every one he imported this year. Four valves seems to be the way to go. Bruce Penhall on my team has two of the Neil Street four-valve OHC conversions for the Jawa; they should be available next year. And Bill Cody has a Weslake conversion kit, head and barrel, that fits over the Jawa lower end.