



1. Yrjo Vesterinen.

WORLD OBSERVED TRIALS

Britannia bows to a continental champion

by Len Weed

"Bloody awful, what? The lads have lost it." A treasured prize of the Isles. The World Observed Trials championship. It has been ten years since a continental, Gustave Franke of Austria, took the European championship aboard a Zundapp. But back then the British cham-

pionship was still the premier title, the one Sammy Miller won for 11 straight years. The series received FIM recognition just last year when Martin Lampkin became the first official world champion, extending the Yorkshire/Bultaco winning streak to three years.

The new world champion is Yrjo Vesterinen of Finland. The 23-year-old's win made it four straight for Bultaco and six out of the last nine. Vesterinen won with a total of 93 points, a six-point margin over



2. Malcolm Rathmell.



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runner-up Malcolm Rathmell, in the best seven of 12 series. It was the second straight year that the Finn led in gross points, counting all rides. In missing the title last year by

a single point he led all riders with four wins. This year the Big Three (Vesterinen, Lampkin and Rathmell) won three each. Ulf Karlson scored two wins. One of his wins was the Swedish round, staged in his "backyard," a few hundred yards from his home. Two-time European champion (1971-72) Mick Andrews recorded the other win.

Vesterinen won the opener in Ireland, then watched Malcolm Rathmell take three of the next four rounds to jump out to a 15-point lead over defending champion Lampkin. At this point Vesterinen was 21 points behind. After failing

to score in Great Britain, the Finnish foot-upper abandoned a super-lightweight prototype, returned to a stock bike and put together a string of five seconds and two wins in his next seven rides to clinch the title in Switzerland, the 11th round of the series.

For runner-up Rathmell, who moved past Lampkin in the finale at Czechoslovakia, it was his second straight second after taking the title in '74. In 1975 he had amassed a 19-point lead before Lampkin came on to win.

Lampkin, who also won the championship in 1973, was the only

rider to score points (top ten finishes) in all 12 rounds. He lost out on a tie for second place overall because Rathmell picked up an "extra" two points in the U.S. round won by Lampkin. Rathmell, who finished fourth, received third-place points because American Marland Whaley was riding without an FIM license. Ulf Karlson finished with two wins and two fourths in his last four rides to claim fifth behind Mick Andrews. French champion Charles Coutard slipped to sixth.

Despite the loss of the title, Great Britain still managed to take five of the top ten spots, down from six last year. Both Lampkin and Rathmell, writing for their columns in the English moto weeklies, got on the organizers of the British nationals held during the lull between the American round and the final four events. The last four were held on successive weekends starting in mid-August. They both felt that the "easiness" of the nationals failed to keep them sharp for the upcoming world events. In one of those nationals Mick Andrews' "two" on the final section prevented a clean ride for the day.

Three riders dropped out of the Top Ten club in '76. Dave Thorpe, who won two world rounds in '75, Alan Lampkin and Benny Sellman, who after finishing seventh in '75 scored only five FIM points in '76. The three newcomers were Nigel Birkett, Belgian champion Jean Marie Lejeune and Spanish champion Manuel Soler.

On the American side, a couple of highlights. National champion Marland Whaley finally turned 18 and finished second at the U.S. round. And new champion Vesterinen was quoted by the English press after the series concluded as picking the American round, presented by the Pacific Northwest Trials Association, his favorite for the year, even though he didn't win it.

And so a country that has about 100 trials riders within its borders has somebody to join Heikki Mikkola on the global victory stand. Meanwhile, in Spain, Bultaco continues its hold on the top spot, be the pilot English or Finnish. Across the North Sea the British are resolved to claim back the world title for the sport they invented. All they have to do is beat the Finn, who, unlike Heikki, doesn't fly.

But he does foot a whole lot less.



4. Mick Andrews.

| | Feb. 2, Ireland | Feb. 29, Belgium | Mar. 7, Spain | Mar. 13, Great Britain | Mar. 21, France | May 15, West Germany | June 13, Italy | July 25, U.S.A. | Aug. 29, Sweden | Sept. 5, Finland | Sept. 12, Switzerland | Sept. 19, Czechoslovakia | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------|------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Yrjo Vesterinen (Fin) | BUL | 15 | 5 | 6 | - | 12 | 15 | 12 | 12 | 15 | 12 | 10 | 93 (126) |
| 2. Malcolm Rathmell (GB) | MON | 6 | 15 | 8 | 15 | 15 | - | 8 | 10 | 5 | 12 | 6 | 12 87 (106) |
| 3. Martin Lampkin (GB) | BUL | 3 | 6 | 15 | 10 | 10 | 12 | 6 | 15 | 8 | 4 | 15 | 6 85 (110) |
| 4. Mick Andrews (GB) | YAM | 4 | 8 | 4 | 8 | ½ | - | 15 | 5 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 8 69 (89 ½) |
| 5. Ulf Karlson (Swe) | MON | 5 | 2 | 12 | - | 2 | - | 4 | - | 15 | 8 | 8 | 15 67 (71) |
| 6. Charles Coutard (Fra) | BUL | 10 | 12 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 5 | 10 | 6 | - | 5 | - | - 54 (62) |
| 7. Manuel Soler (Spa) | BUL | - | 10 | 10 | - | 8 | 8 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 6 | 3 | 4 52 (61) |
| 8. Nigel Birkett (GB) | SUZ | 8 | 4 | - | 4 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 1 | - 30 (34) |
| 9. Jean Lejeune (Bel) | MON | - | 1 | - | 1 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 2 | - | 3 | - | 5 26 (27) |
| 10. Rob Edwards (GB) | MON | 12 | - | - | - | - | 10 | 2 | - | - | - | - | - 24 |