



BY GRAHAM PAYNE (Editor *Amateur Cycle Speedway*)

HOW well do I remember the first reports that appeared in the Press back in the palmy days of 1946. What rattling good stories they were! Some found their way to the front pages of 'Nationals,' as well as into countless local papers. Double-column headlines bannered: 'Speedway's Younger Brother Born.' 'Bombed-site Bombshells Are Here!' 'Cycle Speedway Wins Through.' And there were many others.

Quite naturally, after this ovation, it was to be expected that cycle speedway would rocket skywards. I can say now, however, that at the time many of us had our doubts. After all, the sport was still raw; lacked organisation. It was just a rough and tumble affair in which a few adventurous lads wore themselves and their boots out in their enthusiasm for healthy fun.

We needn't have worried. After the usual growing pains, cycle speedway is still with us, and it is bigger and better than it was in even our wildest dreams. No doubt about it—cycle speedway has itself 'made the grade.'

Do You Want to be a Rider? Here's How!

There are still some who will tell you that to become a cycle speedway rider all you need is

an old machine and an irresistible urge for adventure. In many ways that is quite true; but there is much more to it than that! I grant you that an old bike that will stand up to a rough



Graham_Payne.

and tumble is your first item of equipment towards becoming a rider; but riders have long since learned that if they are going to do well, they must adapt their machine to their own particular style.

A suitable track machine should cost no more than £4 (although there is a specially manufactured model already on the market, retailing at about £12). Look for a fairly low frame—it's easier on the bends! Wide sweeping handlebars are well favoured because they respond to the smallest movement and send you broadsiding into the bends. But remember, they should not exceed 30 inches in width, and if you plan to use some sort of lead piping, the ends must be adequately covered with rubber shock-stops.

Your Bike is Your Best Friend

The greatest sufferers in the sport are—spokes! See to it, therefore, that your machine has strong, tight ones in your wheels. Wheels, by the way, are usually 26 inches in diameter with either 1 $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch or 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch rims. Tyres should be sturdy, with an extra heavy tread. One manufacturer has produced a special pair of cycle speedway tyres, designed to give added grip while racing on the loose cinders.

Rules have it that no dangerous fittings shall be fixed to your machine. Under this category come lamps and lamp brackets, mudguards, dynamos, wing nuts and brakes. Naturally, you carry the detachable type of brakes with you for use when riding to and from the tracks.

Your bike is your best friend. Treat it well, oil it, keep it free from rust and you will get from it, in return, a lifetime of good service.

Why Not Form Your Own Team?

Wear your oldest clothes when racing: a thick jumper, heavy trousers or riding breeches, a very thick pair of boots or shoes, gloves for protection and a lightweight crash helmet.

Most of all you will need unlimited patience, for although you may consider yourself ready to tackle the toughest of tracks, you must, if you are to succeed, join a team. Badger your local team manager for a trial spin around his track. If he likes your style—he'll be quick to tell you so. If you are not so lucky, don't dismay—you can always form your own team!

There are eight riders in a team, six team men

plus two reserves. Elect your captain and other officials: decide upon a suitable team name, attractive colours and an emblem. Perhaps your hardest task of all will be to secure a suitable piece of ground on which to build your track. Here, your local council, or local branch of the National Playing Fields Association or Parks Committee, will be able to assist. These sympathetic services have shown every co-operation during the past years to struggling beginners.

Tracks vary from 75-125 yards in length and about 15 feet in width. Cinders, earth or brick-dust make a jolly fast riding surface.

Making the Grade

Now for a question that I am so often asked by novices. 'What makes a really good rider?' Perhaps only a really good rider can answer that, so I asked one of the sport's outstanding champions, twenty-year-old Lew Grepp, of Manchester. Without hesitation he answered: 'Three things. Practice, Practice and then more Practice.' But he added that care of one's machine is also vitally important: and when you consider Lew's remarkable achievement of never once having 'retired' from a race with machine trouble, you will gather the importance of his words.

In addition to having tip-top equipment, there are two other essentials to a good rider. They are: Fitness and Knowledge of the Rules.

Fitness is almost self-explanatory. Exercises that will improve your leg muscles should be practised quite frequently, for in cycle speedway a race is won or lost by the rider with the greatest thrust from his legs via the pedals to the wheels. With overall fitness will come the ability to think clearly and quickly, and you will need to do this in a sixty-second race in which three others are pitting their skill against yours in that all-important last dash to the chequered flag.

Unfortunately, many new riders pay little if any attention to the rules that govern the sport. Official rules, covering every aspect, have been drawn up by the National Governing Association and are always available. As a rider, it is imperative that you should study them.

Above all, as with every other major sport, cycle speedway racing is a game to enjoy, with all the dividends coming from what you put into the game: not from what you can take out of it. Ride with a sporting spirit. And ride to win, fairly.

Thrills of Cycle Speedway (Pictures by Carl Sutton)

at
the
Tulse
Hill
Rockets'
Track

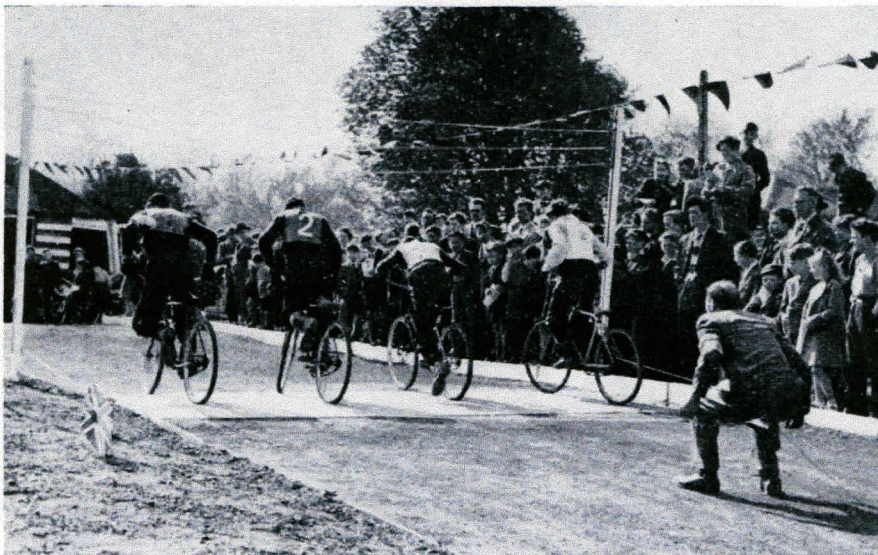


A four-cornered challenge match between Rockets, Dragons, Pegasus and Aces is in progress at the Tulse Hill Rockets' Cycle Speedway track. *Left*, the steward announces the result of the

last heat, and another race is about to begin. *Right*, a Pegasus rider adjusts his handlebars—he's due to ride in the next heat. Handlebars must not exceed 30 inches in width.

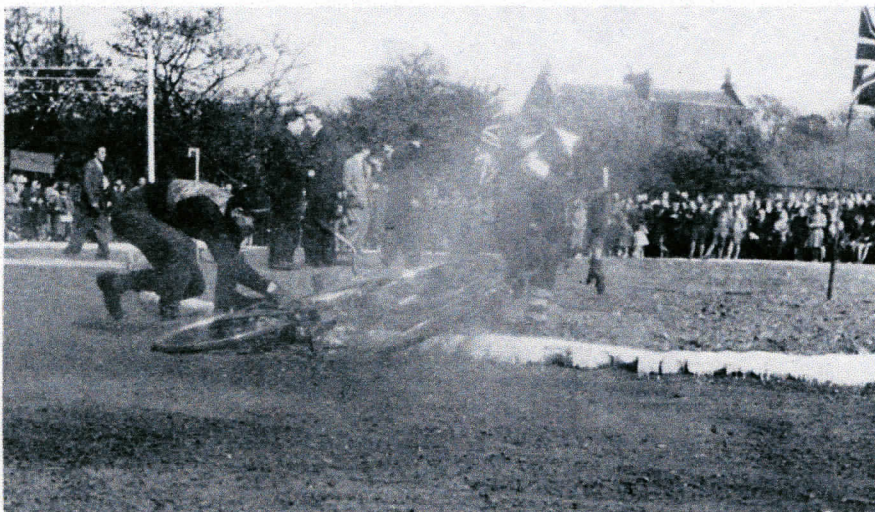


The busy scene in the pits as riders prepare their bikes for action.



When all four riders are correctly lined up at the tapes the starter pulls the control ropes—the gate flies up and **THEY'RE OFF!**

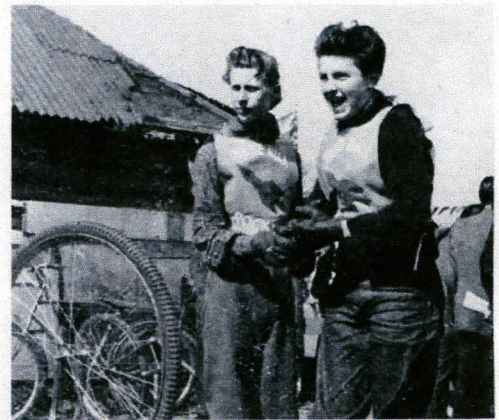
It's neck and neck into the first bend, with riders jockeying for the favoured inside berth.



The riders were too tightly bunched on the bend, and two of them came to grief. There are occasional spills among the thrills of Cycle Speedway, but injuries are few and far between. In this case both riders remounted and continued the race.



Above: Negotiating the far bend in the third lap, with one lap to go. Can the Rockets' rider catch the leader?



Right: Two members of the Tulse Hill team give their team-mate vocal support from the pits.



He's done it! A thrilling last lap, and it's Tulse Hill Rockets first past the chequered flag in this heat.