

THE HENRY LONG COLLECTION

Part 9 – 1954/55 Season

Despite falling attendances besetting speedway in Britain, the prediction by many on the local South African speedway scene that the 1954/55 campaign would be a boom season was proved correct. But there was also plenty happening before the South African season officially began. The Southern Rhodesians opened their season in May with a challenge match between the Bulawayo Lions and Pretoria Eagles which resulted in a victory for the locals. Further team challenges were staged against the Durban Hornets and Wembley Lions before the conclusion of the Bulawayo season with the impending arrival of the rainy season. The Northern Rhodesian outpost at Kitana continued with their regular routine of monthly meetings.

Over in the UK a clutch of South African riders appeared at various British tracks, - Roy Bester at Leicester, Doug Davies at Birmingham, Fred Lang at Wembley and Harry Serrurier at Bristol. Vern McWilliams rode for the Poole Pirates but not before earlier spells with Glasgow (White City) and Wolverhampton both tracks closing due to financial problems. The most promising of the South Africans in British racing was the teenager Davies. Despite being advised that he would not be able to take part in qualification rounds for the Worlds Championship, he decided to travel over to the UK anyway to gain experience for a tilt at the championship the following year. Davies showed much promise and became a popular member of the Brummies team.

Due to the National Championship being restricted to South African riders only, it was the intention to stage the delayed 1953/54 event before the arrival of the British Commonwealth touring team. An instruction issued by the South African Speedway Riders Association in late September for riders attached to British clubs to return by October 8th was not complied with, (in the event Bester, Davies, McWilliams and Johnny Walker only arrived back in South Africa on the 20th, on the same plane as the Commonwealth team!). Soon thereafter the SA Board of Control cancelled the 1953/54 championship and announced that the 1954/55 title would no longer be restrictive but open to all-comers.

The British Commonwealth touring team was surprised in the first Test against the Springboks slumping to a 60-48 defeat with Henry Long and Doug Davies each only dropping one point to the visitors. The tourists then stepped up a notch in the remaining four Tests and ultimately proved comfortable 4-1 victors in the series. Neither Long nor Davies maintained that initial level of performance whilst the Commonwealth's spearhead of Barry Briggs and Ken McKinlay went from strength to strength with the former claiming 18 point maximums in the third and fifth Tests. The series also saw Springbok debuts for New Zealander Trevor Redmond and Englishmen Roy Browning both having met eligibility requirements set by the SA Speedway Control Board. Four other internationals were staged, two against Overseas sides at Port Elizabeth and Bloemfontein, and two South Africa versus British Commonwealth challenges at Randfontein and Bulawayo. The latter was notable for the comeback by the Commonwealth side that overturned a 10 point deficit at the end of heat 14 by posting three 5-1's and a 4-2 in the last four races.

The teams competing in the National League remained unchanged with Pretoria Eagles operating out of Randfontein for the first half of the campaign. History was subsequently made in January 1955 when Pretoria moved into a stadium at Belle Ombre as it became, the first time that all clubs were to ride their home matches on their own track. The battle for the League developed into a titanic struggle between the defending champions, Springs Stars, and Durban Hornets. At various points in the title race it appeared certain that one or the other side would clinch the championship but in a game of tit-for-tat neither was able to pull away from the other. It seemed certain that Durban's poor record in the Transvaal would be their Achilles heel as prior to their final match they had lost at Wembley and at Springs, and only triumphed at Randfontein who were the chopping block of the league losing all eight of their fixtures.

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S.A. Season 1954/55 cont'd

However, a match winning last heat ride by captain Freddie Williams secured a come-from-behind victory at Pretoria and tied up the table with the two teams level on 12 points. The Springs captain Trevor Redmond claimed the championship for his side on the basis of a superior race points aggregate in line with British regulations that had been adopted by South Africa. Maurice Smith, Durban's team manager, countered that this, regulation only applied to Britain and demanded the SA Speedway Control Board order a run-off. He continued that failing this Durban would pull out of the National League the following season. After a tense stand-off the Control Board ordered a home and away run-off for the National League championship. The run-off's were close run affairs and the championship rested on the final heat of the second leg at Hoy Park with Springs needed a 3-3 to retain the title. However, Redmond was excluded for crossing the white line whilst his partner, Ronnie Genz retired after a plug lead came adrift leaving Williams and Dick Campbell to complete the race unopposed and see Durban home by 4 points on aggregate.

Two new competitions were introduced, a National 'Knock-Out' Trophy for all National League teams, and the Transvaal Cup for clubs in that province. The latter was run on a league basis with home and away fixtures but not all were completed, primarily due to Randfontein not staging any official matches after their meeting on 3rd February. This early closure of Randfontein also resulted in their withdrawal from the National Trophy after initially being drawn against Durban Hornets in the first round. Pretoria emerged winners of both competitions, overcoming Wembley Lions 114-102 on aggregate to win the Trophy.

The SA Match Race Championship was declared vacant when the season opened as Freddie Williams was still campaigning in the UK and the Speedway Control Board nominated Henry Long and Fred Wills to challenge for the title. Long won both legs 2-1 and then proceeded to see off the challenges of Redmond, Williams, Davies and Olle Nygren before surrendering the championship to Barry Briggs in his last defence of the season.

After a break of a year the SA National Junior Championship was re-introduced and staged at Randfontein. Charles Fourie triumphed with 14 points closely followed by Trevor Blokdyk a point behind. The senior National Championship at Wembley was staged for the first time on an 'Open' basis and after two qualifying rounds at Springs and Durban the field of riders, including such luminaries as Nygren, Long, Briggs, Williams, Davies and Redmond, would not have looked out of place at a World Final. The event was described as "probably the finest meeting ever seen at Wembley" and Kiwi Redmond took the spoils beating Long in a deciding heat 19 to finish a point ahead of Briggs and the Springbok no. 1. Redmond was unable to make it a double 12 days later when his Springs team-mate Roy Bester claimed the SA National 'Closed' Championship at Pretoria with a 15 point maximum.

1954/55 season's Roll of Honour

Test Series: - S.Africa 1, Br. Commonwealth 4
SA Open Championship (@ Wembley): - Trevor Redmond
SA National 'Closed' Chmpshp (@ Pretoria): - Roy Bester
SA Junior Championship (@ Randfontein): - Charles Fourie
SA Match Race Chmpshp E-o-S Holder: - Barry Briggs
SA National League Champions: - Durban Hornets
SA National Trophy winners: - Pretoria Eagles
Transvaal Cup winners: - Pretoria Eagles
Wembley Open Championship: - Henry Long
Durban Match Race Chmpshp E-o-S Holder: - Freddie Williams

Speedway stadium Sat. May 1 1954. for Pretoria

From Our Correspondent

PRETORIA, Saturday. — The Pretoria Speedway Association was granted permission by the City Council at its monthly meeting yesterday to hire a site at Belle Ombre to establish a speedway stadium.

The rent for the site was put at 20 per cent of all gate takings plus 20 per cent of all parking fees.

One of the conditions of the lease, which will be for three years, is that the stadium be placed at the disposal of the council, free of charge, during the centenary celebrations next year.



Buddy Fuller
Sunday July 4 1951
THESE are bad days for speedway — in Britain. There is talk that the current season could be the last on a national scale. Glasgow White City and Wolverhampton have closed down, other tracks are in danger, and box-office figures have slumped everywhere.

It's a sad, sorry story that reaches me. Yet, as speedway struggles for survival overseas, men close to the dirt-track sport in South Africa predict the season which opens on the Rand in September will be one of the best ever.

Here's the way things work: Australian and New Zealand riders, among the stars of English and Scottish clubs, are threatening to quit once their existing contracts run out.

They plan to go home and stay home. And it is right at this point we find South Africa entering into the scheme of things. Reason: **Buddy Fuller**, former national champion and one of the big personalities in speedway organisation, is to fly to London on July 30 on a recruiting campaign.

★ **FULLER'S** priority job is to get together a team to tour the Union this year. With the British set-up so unsatisfactory, he is

Along The Sportways With **PAUL IRWIN**

S. African Speedway Set for Boom Season

weather's unequal battle with television. If there is rain about, then Mr. Average Sports Watcher is no longer prepared to risk getting wet through. No, he tucks himself into his favourite armchair, switches on the TV set, and settles down to a few hours' entertainment in comfort.

Buddy Fuller saw the shape of things to come when he had a fling on English tracks a few seasons ago. Since then, television has increased in popularity, whereas speedway has gone a long, long way back.

★ convinced that it won't be difficult.

"The strength of the teams which have toured the Union has increased year by year," said Fuller, who is chairman of the S.A. Speedway Riders' Association. "We had the world champion, **FRED WILLIAMS**, appearing on our tracks last season, and I know he went back to England to tell how well he was treated."

"Now, I think dozens of other stars will be keen to try their luck here. The deciding factor will be the way things are going for the sport overseas. So they'll be ready to collect some good pickings."

Why has speedway taken such a bad knock overseas? There are several factors contributing to the slump, including the British

★ **THE** golden days are over for the riders. There was a time, and it was not so far distant, when the pick of them could earn anything from £120 to £150 a week from league matches and match races.

Many of the boys thought the money mill would turn for ever. Well, there are signs that it is running down, and, as Fuller told me, earnings have dropped to £30 or £40 a week.

The South African ex-champion commented: "If a man's weekly pay-packet is between £30 and £40, then he isn't on the bread-line in Britain. He is up in the higher income brackets."

"Far too many riders forget the fact. They can only remember the high old times when it was comparatively easy to pick up £100, or more. One result, it seems to me, is that they aren't always giving the

speedway fans full value for their money.

"All right, they still hit those bends as well as ever. They have to do so, otherwise they are in big trouble. But the close link between riders and public isn't what it used to be."

"Speedway was built on hero worship. The little bobby-soxers chased their idols for autographs and needed photographs. Unwisely, some of the riders aren't nearly so keen these days on a gracious response, and goodwill is breaking down."

★ **THEY** manage things differently in South Africa. The whole emphasis is on trying to build up the sport, and promoters and riders pull together to do the work with wholehearted enthusiasm.

"Overseas, the Speedway Riders' Association is too much of a glorified trades union," said Buddy Fuller. "The interests of the members come first, last, and most of the time."

"Here, if a track isn't doing too well, we get a bunch of the boys together and put on a meeting without much thought of the money we're going to collect. Really, our approach is the amateur one. It is strictly professional in Britain—and it isn't working out too well."

★ **THAT'S** not all. South African riders are pooled. The result is that no one club has a monopoly on the pick of the performers, but they are allocated to different tracks to make team competition fairly even.

Britain doesn't operate the pooling system. So the major clubs, who can still pull reasonably big crowds, grab the stars and leave the smaller battalions to struggle on as best they may with indifferent talent.

The inevitable happens. League matches are often one-sided to the point of farce. And the supporters of the small clubs, weary of always seeing the local lads on the receiving end of the punishment, gradually come around to the idea that speedway is not a "must" for them.

"It won't happen in South Africa, where we have found that the riders' pool gives every team a fair crack," sums up ex-champion Fuller. "Why, we are really going places—and quickly."

★ **SO** South African speedway racing swings back to the thrills—and spills—of the cinder-track. The decision, announced by **"BUDDY" FULLER** at the riders' annual meeting in Durban, means that the man who can "jockey" his machine on the bends will come into his own.

Monotony was speedway's Number One bogey once tracks were cleared of loose layers of cinders to the depth of four or five inches. At any rate, as we saw when **FRED WILLIAMS**, the world champion, rode in South Africa last season, the fast starter, roving ahead of the others into the first bend, was usually the winner.

Far too many races were developing into wearisome processions. The rest of the "field" could do little more than whirl along behind the expert "rater" and hope that his engine would peter out.

Now, with the return to loose cinders, the boys will really have to ride those "bikes."

No Speedway Title Chance For Davies

THIS will be his chance for

Doug Davies, 18-year-old South African speedway Test rider, to win the World Championship this year. The S.A. Speedway Riders' Association, who called the English Speedway Board of Control asking them to accept Davies' entry, have received this reply: "Much regret unable to accept Davies for the World Championship."

Although the English officials give no reason for refusing Davies' entry, South African officials believe that it is because the preliminary rounds of this year's championship have already been held on tracks in Europe. Fred Lang, Wembley's South African rider, was eliminated in one of these preliminary rounds — held in Sweden.

Davies' comment: "I'm disappointed, but I hope to try next year."

SPEEDWAY DECIDES ON MAJOR CHANGE

Dirt Track Riding To Be Revived

Natal Mercury Thursday July 22 1954
THERE will be major changes in South African speedway that will see the sport revert to the old "dirt-track" style of racing when the new season opens in October. Tracks throughout the Union will all be standardised and covered with three to four inches of loose cinders instead of the present set-up where only a thin layer covers hard surface.

This decision was taken at the recent annual meeting of the South African Speedway Riders Association and confirmed by the Natal Association in Durban on Tuesday night.

The authorities feel that many races, under the present conditions, are won or lost at the starting gates. That once a rider has established a lead at the first bend it is practically impossible to overtake him and the race is finished as a spectacle. All he has to do is to hug the inside line for a comfortable win.

ADDED CINDERS

This will not apply with the added cinders which will make machine behaviour more uncertain for the riders and meetings more exciting for the spectators. The bends will be unpredictable and the first rider into a bend will not necessarily be the first out.

Riders who choose to hug the inside will be risking a bigger skid because of the tighter turn. This could not only lose them the lead but also cause upsets to those following on their heels.

The new surfaces will call for modifications in machines and a change in riding technique. Handlebars will be lowered and the wheelbase lengthened, while

tyres will be reduced to half their present width.

Mr. Buddy Fuller, the "Mr. Speedway" of South Africa, gave the Durban riders a pep talk at the Natal meeting. They were told that unless their machines, equipment and riding ability came up to the standard set by the four clubs in the Transvaal there was a possibility that Durban Hornets would be excluded from the National League.

Mr. Fuller will pay another visit to Durban on Tuesday, when he will tell the local authorities that they will have to import at least two overseas riders of first division status to strengthen the Durban team.

"Competition was keen last season and Durban Hornets were a disappointment in the Transvaal," said Mr. Fuller yesterday. "It will be keener still this coming season as there will be four strong and evenly-matched clubs on the Rand. Unless Durban can put in a team to meet them on more or less even terms it would serve no purpose to include them in the league."



HIS FIRST TRIP

Sunday Night 1954
Seventeen-year-old Doug Davies, Springbok speedway rider, is on his way to join Birmingham's National League team for a two-month experience-building tour. It's the first time that Davies (seen on the steps of the aircraft before leaving Jan Smuts airport) has been out of the Union.

He will get his first outing for Birmingham against Norwich on Thursday. Opinion of speedway officials is that Davies will come very close to winning the South African championship this year. It will be held soon after the start of the season in October.

Davies is accompanied by Buddy Fuller, chairman of the South African Speedway Riders Association, who is flying to Britain to complete arrangements for a combined overseas team to tour the Union this year.

WEMBLEY STADIUM TRACK NOW 6 YARDS SHORTER
FIRST HEAT WILL SET NEW SPEEDWAY RECORD

WEMBLEY LIONS meet "The Rest" in a Challenge Match to open the speedway season at Wembley Stadium next Friday—and the winner of the very first heat will set a new track record (writes ERIC LITCHFIELD).

THE REST: Willis, Duncan, Doug Serrurier, Edwards, Du Toit, Alec Blankfield. Reserves: Mortimer, James.

REMEMBER "STRANGLER" FOURIE? You're right, he's the muscular gladiator who used to grapple and groan to the huge delight of the wrestling customers. Now, after about 10 years in the "sit-in" business, he has found a new sporting line—speedway racing. Charles ("Strangler") Fourie made the switch from the wrestling mat to the cinder track in the winter season. He bought himself a speedway bike and was out every spare moment practising on the Wembley track. He got his first match chance at Bloemfontein. Result: Victory over good runs like DOUG SERRURIER and DOUG LANG for an eight-point total. **Sept. 26, 1954.** Five feet 4 inches tall and sturdily built, the 29-year-old Fourie has the ideal physique for speedway racing. Living at Krugersdorp, he has been assigned to Randfontein Ave. So watch out for the "Strangler."



DYKES 12 —SETS RECORD

Aug 30, 1954

SPEEDWAY VICTOR: Doug Lang, winner of the Sparletta Speedway Trophy at the Nigel Show on Saturday, with the trophy after the race.

PETER DYKES, former Glasgow White City rider now living in Rhodesia, scored a maximum 12 points and broke Freddie Williams' 3-lap track record when Bulawayo Lions beat Durban Hornets 44-28 in a speedway match at the Agricultural Showground track.

A crowd of 6,500 saw Dykes clock 61.9 secs. in the seventh heat. Dykes received strong support from Bert Hall, a local rider, who scored 10 points. Hall was also inside Freddie Williams' old record, clocking 62.4 in his best ride on the 500-yard track.

BULAWAYO LIONS: Dykes 12, Hall 10, Collins 8, Doug Serrurier 6, Boshoff 5, James 3. Total 44. **DURBAN HORNETS:** Willis 9, Dalton 6, Brownling 6, Bremmer 4, Clarence 3.

FULLER (As Stand-In)

GETS 12

Monday Sept. 27, 1954. WEMBLEY LIONS found themselves a rider short when they went to Bulawayo for a speedway match against the local Lions on Saturday.

"I'll ride" volunteered 37-year-old Buddy Fuller, former Springbok Test star. He stood in for Fred Lang who has not yet arrived back from Britain. And Fuller scored the maximum 12 points in a 36-36 draw.

He followed this by winning the heat and final of the Scratch Race in the second-half of the meeting which attracted a crowd of 7,000.

Henry Long, the South African champion, scored 11 points for Wembley, while Bert Hall, Bulawayo's local star, was top scorer with 10 points.

All the existing records of the Wembley Stadium track have been expunged.

This was decided by speedway officials yesterday afternoon after they considered a report on the reconstructed track.

During the close-season the depth of the cinders has been increased in order to comply with the new speedway regulations. And in the six-weeks' preparation for the new season, the banking at the bends has been reduced slightly.

The length of the track has been reduced by six yards—to 428 yards. Thus the officials had no option but to expunge all previous records. So the record book is now clean — until the opening meeting.

Henry Long again leads Wembley Lions who will have Vic Blake as team manager. He has managed Springbok teams in previous seasons.

BID FOR TITLE

"Wembley Lions haven't won the National League since it was started two seasons ago. In fact, the Wembley side hasn't won any league since 1947," said Mr. Gilbert Brown, vice-chairman of the S.A. Speedway Board of Control, last night.

How will the riders, used to a fairly slick track, fare on the heavier and slower Wembley circuit? The opening meeting will provide the pointer.

There will be a full-scale practice for all riders on Monday night. Teams for the opening challenge match are:

WEMBLEY LIONS: Henry Long, Collins, Fred Lang, Meade, Doug Lang, Boshoff. Reserves: Aubrey Long, Bekker.

More interest needed in national speedway league

PUBLIC INTEREST in South African speedway has been bound up with the annual visits of touring teams. The international riders have kept the national league in the background and it has been noticeable that interest in the league has faded considerably with the departure of the visitors.

One reason may have been the fact that Wembley was the home track for more than one team. The introduction of speedway to Pretoria will, however, give speedway officials a bigger opportunity to underline the league struggle.

During the season which opens at Wembley on October 1 each of the five teams in the league—Wembley, Pretoria, Springs, Randfontein and Durban—will ride their home matches on their own track.

NO CHANGES

Another problem which has often upset the possibility of greater interest in the league has been the frequent interchange of riders. With a larger number of riders available the necessity for changes has been overcome.

In spite of the popularity of visiting teams the "body" of South African speedway must be the league; if the sport is to continue. Last season Springs gave a fine example of how the sport can thrive when the accent is put on league matches. Wembley supporters were offered a diverse attraction. This season they will be able to give all their support to Wembley Lions and, perhaps, cheer their team to their first league success since 1947.

RONNIE MOORE

FOR S.A.

RONNIE MOORE, world speedway champion, will ride in the Union early next year (writes ERIC LITCHFIELD).

This announcement follows the South African Speedway Rider's Association invitation to the Wimbledon rider last week.

The reply arrived last night: "Welcome the opportunity of riding in South Africa. Will fly direct from Australia to the Union."

Moore, styled the "Wimbledon Wonder"—this, because of his remarkable feats as a "teen-ager"—sails for his New Zealand home this week where he will be best man at the wedding of his sister and his Wimbledon team-mate, Geoff Mardon.

Speedway Stars Get "Come Back" Call

Sunday Sept. 26, 1954.

The South African Speedway Riders' Association officials have sent out a "Return Immediately" cable to Doug. Davies and Roy Bester, Springbok Test men riding for British National League teams (writes ERIC LITCHFIELD).

The 18-year-old Davies, now completing his first season with Birmingham, and the copper-haired Bester, who cost Leicester £100 transfer fee when they secured him from Edinburgh Monarchs, had planned to return in the same aircraft as the 7-man Commonwealth touring team, leaving Britain on October 16.

"This is not good enough" said a Speedway Riders' Association official last night. "The South African season opens at Wembley Stadium on Friday and they should have been back for that meeting. So we have booked them on an aircraft leaving Britain on October 7 and sent them a cable saying that they must not miss that aircraft."

These two Springboks were wanted for the South African championships which will be held just before the arrival of the Commonwealth touring team.

There's a firm note to the cable which has been sent to Davies and Bester—"You must not miss that aircraft." But South African speedway officials are on good ground.

Mr. Gilbert Brown, vice-chairman of the S.A. Board of Control, explained last night: "One of the conditions when overseas riders come to the Union is that they shall be back in time for the start of the British season. Now we feel the same way about South African riders joining British clubs for our close season."

"After all, Springboks do not go to Britain as free-lance riders. They are given a special licence by the S.A.A. which is approved by the Board of Control. We feel, therefore, that they are under an obligation to return in time for the opening of our season."

The Board of Control have still not decided the conditions of the South African championship, but it is likely that at least one qualifying round will be held before the final at Wembley Stadium.

Seems as though speedway, which opens with the Challenge Match between Wembley Lions and "The Rest" at Wembley Stadium on Friday, is in for a bumper season. "I have been inundated with requests for season tickets which are being re-introduced for the first time in three seasons," says Mr. Brown.

They All Stood to Cheer Fuller

Sat: 2.19.54
G.C.: 2.19.54

By ERIC LITCHFIELD

HENRY LONG LED WEMBLEY LIONS TO A 44-33 WIN IN THE OPENING SPEEDWAY MATCH OF THE SEASON AGAINST "THE REST" AT WEMBLEY LAST NIGHT. THE CAPTAIN SCORED A MAXIMUM 12 POINTS. BUT IT WAS REALLY SPOON'S NIGHT.

For the last eight years the "Fearless" Fuller has ridden before the Wembley crowd. He has become something of a legend in South African speedway. And last night, in his farewell appearance, he did not let his supporters down.

He totalled nine points in his four rides, thus giving strong support to his "flying" captain, Long, who never looked like being beaten in this Challenge Match.

Fuller has always given the crowd full value for their entrance money. And last night was no exception. Why, in his final heat—and riding against brother-in-law Fred Willis—he "fought" it out to the finishing line.

Mr. Gilbert Brown, the Wembley track "chief," told the crowd: "You are saying farewell to a great sportsman, but I'm happy to tell you that he's only retiring from the track and not as an official."

Lions, in their first home match, set ahead for the first time in heat 12. Then Dave Collins, junior heat rider, held off a challenge from the experienced Doug Serrurier, to assure the 5-point victory margin in the last heat.

WEMBLEY LIONS: Henry Long 12, Fuller 9, Collins 8, Long 4, Boshoff 4, Bekker, Aubrey Long 3. Total: 44. **THE REST:** Du Toit 16, Willis 9, Serrurier 5, James 3, Alec Blankfield 2, Naude 1. Total: 39. **STADIUM OFFICIALS:** Race: 1. Henry Long; 2. Doug Lang; 3. Arthur Duncan; 4. 18.30. Total: 11.

Chance for Mortimer

Sat: Oct. 2, 1954
Nell Mortimer, former South African Skid-Kid champion,

can stake a long-range claim for Springbok Test selection this season when he rides in the Best Pairs speedway competition at Springs, to-night.

Mortimer, who has shown much improvement during off-season practices, teams with Doug Lang as one of the Wembley Lions pairings.

The larvae starting strip on the track has been reduced from 30 ft. to 10 ft. This should make for quicker "gating."

SPRINGS: Du Toit, Messer, Van Zyl, Mowand, RANDFONTEIN: Willis, Joe Blankfield, Alec Blankfield, McKennis, Wemley, Boshoff, Doug Serrurier, Mortimer, Doug Lang.

Now Speed Championship is "Open" Ronnie Moore in Bid for "Double"

Sunday Oct. 3, 1954

Ronnie Moore, World speedway champion who is due in the Union early next year, will get the chance to become South African title holder — this, because the South African speedway championship is to be made an "Open" event (writes ERIC LITCHFIELD).

In previous years the South African championship has been a "closed" event. Now speedway officials have decided to follow Australia and New Zealand and run an Open championship. It will probably be held in February.

It seems likely that it will follow the pattern of the World Championship with the top 16 points scorers from qualifying rounds going into the final.

So three out of the first five in the World Final — Moore, Olle Nygren, of Sweden, and New Zealand's Barry Briggs — will be in the South African championship "field."

This will, in fact, be a "miniature" World Championship. The 7-man Commonwealth team, New Zealand's Trevor Redmond, and Dick Campbell, all the South African riders and probably a few other "leg" riders, will vie for the World title who is to "free-lance" in Durban this season will be in the championship "field."

While the final is certain to be held on the 42-year-old Wembley Stadium track, the qualifying rounds will probably go to Durban, Springs, Randfontein and Pretoria.

Don't be surprised if the keen speedway folk of Bulawayo make an application for a championship qualification round. The championship details will be worked out during the next few weeks.

Speedway officials are unanimous that Moore will find it more difficult to win the South African title than the world championship.

Why? Because the 21-year-old New Zealander, who rode for Wimbledon, was not the complete "master" of Henry Long and Roy Bester when he was here two seasons ago. Moore was then strongly fancied for the World title.

Bobby Fuller, who has now retired from the track to concentrate on his work as chairman of the Speedway Riders' Association, told me: "Moore didn't appear happy on the track, and I don't think our boys would be able to hold him."

First job for the Board of Control officials when they meet on Tuesday night will be to nominate two riders for the vacant South African title championship.

On the evidence of the opening meeting at Wembley Stadium, the challenges should be Henry Long and Fred Willis. But the Board of Control officials also want to hear the views of the South African Pairs competition at Springs before making their nominations.

Long Did It—From the Back

Sat: Oct. 2, 1954

By ERIC LITCHFIELD

It was just as Mr. Gilbert Brown, Wembley Stadium speedway "chief" forecast in yesterday's "Rand Daily Mail," the first "leg" of the South African match-race speedway championship was won "from the back."

Victory went to Henry Long, the Wembley Lions' captain, by a 2-1 margin—this, after he had been beaten by Fred Willis, of Randfontein Aces, in the first heat.

But it required a tremendous effort in the third and final heat before Long could claim the victory. In fact, Long, beaten out of the starting gate in all three heats, only ensured his first "leg" lead in the very last bend of the third heat.

Willis, from the outside, won the first heat by two lengths despite Long's tremendous effort. But the South African champion equalised the score in Heat Two—this, despite being beaten at the starting gate. He rode round Willis in the second bend of the second lap.

BEST EVER
So a deciding heat was necessary—and what a race! Peter Glover, the Wembley Stadium announcer, voted it the best-ever match-race at the track. And I agree. Long trailed Willis for 2½ laps—and then slipped ahead in the final bend to win by "a few feet."

The second "leg" will be held at Springs next Saturday. South African speedway Test selectors can have no worries about the future—not after the performance of two 19-year-olds, Arthur Duncan and Nell Mortimer, in the combined Teams' event.

Riding for Pretoria Eagles they scored maximum points from their three rides and helped Eagles to win by six points from Springs Stars. Harry du Toit, of Springs also totalled full points from his three rides. Points scorers: **PRETORIA EAGLES:** Duncan 9, Mortimer 6, D. Serrurier 5, James 3. Total: 23.

SPRINGS STARS: Du Toit 9, Van Zyl 6, Mathewson 6, Gert 3. Total: 19. **WEMBLEY LIONS:** Boshoff 6, Collins 6, Doug Lang 3. **RANDFONTEIN ACES:** Fourie 5, Jo Blankfield 2, Blokdyk 2, Naude 2. Total: 11.

Bester asks for speedway transfer

Tuesday Oct. 5, 1954

ROY BESTER, the Springs Stars rider who has been in Britain for the speedway season, has asked for a transfer. In a letter to the South African Speedway Riders' Association he says that he would like to ride for Pretoria Eagles.

Although he does not state his reasons for wanting to leave Springs Stars, who won the national league last season, it is believed that Bester has made a strong friendship with Harry Serrurier, with whom he has travelled in Britain.

If the transfer is granted Pretoria would have the basis of a very strong side for their first season on their own track. With Doug Serrurier, Doug Davies and Bester as heat leaders, and Sonny James, Arthur Duncan and Neil

Speedway title for Long

Monday Oct. 18, 1954

HENRY LONG won the South African match race speedway championship at Springs on Saturday when he defeated Fred Willis 2-1 in the second "leg," having won the first at Wembley the previous week by the same margin.

Willis won the first heat on Saturday, Long being unable to make up for a slower start. In the second heat Willis again got away first but slithered all over the track while Long went straight to the bend. Long sped round the outside in the third heat and won easily.

Arthur Duncan, Nell Mortimer and Toy Edwards helped North-Eastern Transvaal beat Southern Transvaal 45-27. Duncan scored a maximum of 12 points. Mortimer would have scored more had he not incurred the displeasure of the stewards in a hectic dash through on the inside which caused Johnny Bekker to fall.

The meeting was marred by an injury to Dave Collins, who was taken to hospital with a suspected fracture of the pelvis.

SCORES

The individual scores in the challenge match were: **North-Eastern Transvaal.**—A. Duncan 12, T. Edwards 10, D. Serrurier 7, N. Mortimer 7, F. van Zyl 5, H. du Toit 4. Total: 45. **Southern Transvaal.**—F. Lane 7, I. Boshoff 7, D. Collins 7, J. Blankfield 3, D. Naude 2, T. Blokdyk 1. Total: 27.

Long shows speedway mastery over leading Commonwealth rider

Saturday Nov. 20, 1954

RIDING WITH COMFORTABLE CONFIDENCE and a dash which he has seldom surpassed, Henry Long experienced one of his greatest successes at Wembley last night when he won the first leg of the South African November speedway match race championship against Trevor Redmond and led Wembley Lions to a two-point national league win over Randfontein Aces.

In both heats of the match race event Long beat Redmond out of the gate and never gave his opponent a chance. Redmond made two efforts to pass Long on the inside in the first heat, but in the second Long never left the line and won easily.

The one blot on Long's performance was in the first heat of the league match when he had the unusual experience of stopping at the gate. In his next ride he beat the track record and Ken McKinley, who is rated as the best of the visiting Commonwealth riders. After the interval Long again beat McKinley in even faster time and finished the meeting by riding through the field in a handicap event.

SCORED MAXIMUM

Long had fine support from Junior Bainbridge, who scored a maximum, and Doug Lang in the league match. With one heat to go the score was 39-39, but Long beat McKinley and Gerald Jackson finished in third place to give Lions a heat score of 4-2.

After two heats Randfontein Aces led 18-2, and they doggedly held on to keep the lead for the next 10 heats, but when Bainbridge beat Peter Clark in a thrilling 13th heat to level the score their chances of gaining their first league win faded away.

South Africans shine in thrilling speedway win

Saturday Oct. 16, 1954

THE SOUTH AFRICAN STARS in the Wembley Stadium last night but there were a number in the South African speedway team which beat the Commonwealth tourists 60-48 in the first-test match. Henry Long shone as brightly as he has ever done—and dropped his only point in his final ride when beaten by Barry Briggs, but the man who was the most convincing was Doug Davies, the youngest rider in either team.

Davies also scored 17 points but must be given credit for a maximum as it was his skill which allowed Arthur Duncan to cross the line first in their third ride.

The tone of the exciting match was set by Davies and Duncan in the second heat when they rode like experienced veterans to gain a 5-1 win. From then on all was over and provided thrills. Fred Willis put up his best performance of the season to incorporate the South African lead and was given splendid support by Roy Bester. Long beat the track record in the heat after the interval and Davies equalled it in the next heat.

TEAM RIDING

On two occasions Fred Lang joined Long in the van and the South African captain gave his greatest displays of team riding in the whole of his test career.

The brilliance of some of the local riders shocked the visitors. Ken McKinley, who was invariably beaten by the speed or tactics of the South Africans, no excuses. Barry Briggs was in a similar position until he borrowed Davies's machine and equalled the new record in his final ride. Junior Bainbridge said he had never seen such great riding—and he saw it all from the back.

Almost 6,000 people saw South Africa win a match which indicated that they can meet the world's best at Wembley and have a big chance of success.

HEAT WINNERS

The heat winners were: H. Long (S.A.), 77.5sec. (S.A.), 78.5sec. (S.A.), 79.5sec. (S.A.), 80.5sec. (S.A.), 81.5sec. (S.A.), 82.5sec. (S.A.), 83.5sec. (S.A.), 84.5sec. (S.A.), 85.5sec. (S.A.), 86.5sec. (S.A.), 87.5sec. (S.A.), 88.5sec. (S.A.), 89.5sec. (S.A.), 90.5sec. (S.A.), 91.5sec. (S.A.), 92.5sec. (S.A.), 93.5sec. (S.A.), 94.5sec. (S.A.), 95.5sec. (S.A.), 96.5sec. (S.A.), 97.5sec. (S.A.), 98.5sec. (S.A.), 99.5sec. (S.A.), 100.5sec. (S.A.), 101.5sec. (S.A.), 102.5sec. (S.A.), 103.5sec. (S.A.), 104.5sec. (S.A.), 105.5sec. (S.A.), 106.5sec. (S.A.), 107.5sec. (S.A.), 108.5sec. (S.A.), 109.5sec. (S.A.), 110.5sec. (S.A.), 111.5sec. (S.A.), 112.5sec. (S.A.), 113.5sec. (S.A.), 114.5sec. (S.A.), 115.5sec. (S.A.), 116.5sec. (S.A.), 117.5sec. (S.A.), 118.5sec. (S.A.), 119.5sec. (S.A.), 120.5sec. (S.A.), 121.5sec. (S.A.), 122.5sec. (S.A.), 123.5sec. (S.A.), 124.5sec. (S.A.), 125.5sec. (S.A.), 126.5sec. (S.A.), 127.5sec. (S.A.), 128.5sec. (S.A.), 129.5sec. (S.A.), 130.5sec. (S.A.), 131.5sec. 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Long leads in match race on speedway

Sat Dec 18 1954
HENRY LONG has never shown better tactics than when he "tricked" Freddie Williams in the second heat of the first leg of the South African speedway match race championship at Wembley last night. Long meets Williams again in the second leg at Durban tonight and if he displays the same dash and tactics has a good chance of retaining his title.

In the first heat the two riders were locked together for the whole of the first lap with Long experiencing a lot of trouble on the inside. But he refused to give way and eventually he forged ahead to win with Williams slowing down with machine trouble.

SUDDEN SWITCH

Williams was first away in the second heat and appeared to try to force Long towards the fence but Long suddenly switched to the inside and before Williams could recover the holder was well in front.

Helped by some fine riding by Gerald Jackson and a welcome return to the best form by the Lang brothers, Long led his Wembley Lions team to a convincing 63-44 win over Springs Stars in a Transvaal Cup match. Long dropped a point when beaten by Trevor Redmond but his engine seized towards the end. Wembley's two Commonwealth riders, Gerald Jackson and Junior Bainbridge, were also high up in the scoring list.

HEAT WINNERS

The heat winners were: H. Long (W), 79.6sec.; D. Lang (W), 79.5sec.; G. Jackson (W), 79.2sec.; F. van Zyl (S), 80.8sec.; J. Bainbridge (W), 78.6sec.; G. Jackson (W), 78.1sec.; H. Long (W), 78.0sec.; T. Redmond (S), 77.9sec.; T. Redmond (S), 79.3sec.; A. Quinn (S), 79.5sec.; D. Lang (W), 80.2sec.; H. Long (W), 82.5sec.; F. Lang (W), 80.1sec.; J. Meade (W), 82.4sec.; R. Bester (S), 81.5sec.; G. Jackson (W), 80.7sec.; H. Long (W), 78.3sec.; F. Lang (W), 80.1sec.

Williams Forces Decider

Monday Dec 20 1954
FREDDIE WILLIAMS, ex-world speedway champion, is all square in his South African match-race title challenge against Henry Long.

He levelled the series when he beat Long, the holder, 2-1 in the second "leg" at Hoy Park, Durban, on Saturday night.

A 6,000 crowd saw Williams set a new three-lap record while winning the first heat in 44.5 secs. Long levelled by taking the next race in 44.8 secs., but Williams came from behind to win the third heat in 44.9 secs.

Long, a 2-0 winner in the first "leg" at Wembley Stadium, must now beat Williams in the decider if he is to retain his title. Durban Stars beat Wembley Lions 47-38 in the National League match at Hoy Park.

Points scorers: Durban: Williams, Browning 10, Campbell 9, McWilliams 7, Byford 6, Doinell 3, Bremner 2. Total 47. Wembley: Henry Long 10, Fred Lang 9, Jackson 8, Bekker 4, Aubrey Long 3, Bainbridge 2, Collins, Doug Lang 3. Total 35.

The North Eastern Transvaal-Overson speedway meeting, washed out by rain on Saturday night, will be held at Springs' Olympia Park track on Wednesday night.

Long gains speedway revenge

Tuesday Dec 28 1954
EVEN though Freddie Williams, the former world champion and holder of the South African match race championship, beat the three lap record at Springs speedway last night he could not stop Henry Long retaining his match race title. By winning the first and third heat Long gained revenge for his defeat in a challenge match last year but he did so after the most protracted and even match since the championship was instituted.

Long won the first heat in the record time of 46.5sec, gaining the lead at the gate. In the second Williams, from the inside, edged Long towards the fence and finished in 46.4sec. There was an even start in the third heat but Long never gave an inch on the inside and gradually forged ahead to win in 46.6sec.

MAXIMUM FOR GENZ

Ronnie Genz, was in great form in the 100 guineas trophy competition and scored maximum points. He beat both Williams and Long and by adding his handicap of one point to his total scored more than either of the scratch men could possibly equal.

Nell Mortimer had a chance of doing even better than Genz until he failed against Fred Lang and Trevor Redmond. Toby Boshoff, although he won only one heat, finished in third place by making good use of his four points handicap.

HEAT WINNERS

The heat winners were: R. Genz, 63.3sec.; T. Redmond, 64.7sec.; H. Long, 63.3sec.; P. Clark, 64.5sec.; R. Genz, 62.8sec.; F. Lang, 63.2sec.; H. Long, 63.2sec.; A. Quinn, 64.5sec.; R. Genz, 62.9sec.; T. Redmond, 64.2sec.; N. Mortimer, 65.2sec.; F. Williams, 63.7sec.; R. Genz, 64.4sec.; H. Long, 63.5sec.; P. Lang, 63.9sec.; E. Williams, 64.2sec.; R. Genz, 63.9sec.; T. Boshoff, 66.5sec.; A. Quinn, 64.4sec.; H. Long, 63.2sec.

The total scores (with handicaps in parentheses) were: R. Genz (1) 16, H. Long (0) 14, T. Boshoff (4) 13, N. Mortimer (5) 12, A. Quinn (3) 12, F. Williams (0) 11, T. Redmond (1) 11, A. Duncan (4) 11, F. Lang (2) 11, J. Bainbridge (2) 11, A. Long (6) 10, P. Clark (3) 10, C. Fourie (6) 9, T. Boshoff (5) 9, G. Matthews (6) 8, A. Thomas (6) 6.



Thur Dec 23 1954
OH, WHAT A FALL! An Johnson, rated one of South Africa's future speedway stars, got himself into this remarkable position on the Wembley Stadium track. Johnson's machine reared at the starting gate and he travelled 30 yards with his front wheel high in the air. Then his machine "looped" — with Johnson still firmly in the saddle. And there he remained in a speedway "loop the loop." Johnson was not seriously injured in the most spectacular spill of the South African season.

Dec. 23, 1954

The above press cuttings take us to Dec. 1954:
 The season continues in Pt. 9.2, Jan.- June 1955.

Rider's licence, issued to Henry Long, 1954 by The SA.SCB, (formerly Transvaal SCB).

