

## THE HENRY LONG COLLECTION

### Part 14 – 1959/60

With the speedway base having shrunk to miniscule proportions it was left to Fuller to keep the spark alive. He did so by staging occasional meetings at Wembley and Durban under the 'Buddy Fuller Motor Variety Show' banner. Two of these shows included championships last staged in 1958/59 and a third, the South African Junior Championship, which had not been held since the 1954/55 season. At Wembley in December 1959 Henry Long won what was to be his last national title, the South African Senior Championship, with Johnny Ackermann securing the Junior crown. Research has not uncovered the result of the Natal Open scheduled for Hoy Park on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1960. A SA National Championship at Bloemfontein was the final major meeting of the season, Neil Mortimer pipping Long to this title. So the season ended as it begun with no resolution to the impasse between the PSA/SCB and Fuller.

#### 1959/'60 season's Roll of Honour

SA Senior Championship @ Wembley:	- Henry Long,
SA National Championship @ Bloemfontein:	- Neil Mortimer,
SA Junior Championship @ Wembley:	- Johnny Ackermann.

1959

## Fifteen thousand fans at Wembley Stadium, Jo'burg

Henry Long again dominates the Springbok scene  
*reports John Bunton* 12. Dec. 59 SS&N, UK

Pretoria, South Africa.

**WHEN I** recently wrote that the future of speedway racing in South Africa was not too bright I certainly did not expect that a crowd of upwards of 15,000 would shortly pack Johannesburg's famous Wembley Stadium for a combined speedway and stock car show.

Billed as the "Buddy Fuller Motor Variety Show" and run in conjunction with the "Rand Daily Mail's" "Man versus Woman" Driving Competition for which a well-known motor firm in the "Golden City" had offered a new car of a popular make and an insurance company had put up £500 in prizes for the finalists, this meeting had received unprecedented publicity through the press and over the radio.

The meeting undoubtedly captured the imagination of the public and according to the "R.D.M." all roads to the stadium were jammed with cars from an early hour. Old timers reported that the scenes were reminiscent of the palmy days of speedway racing on the Rand just after the war when the first British and Continental teams visited this country.

But readers will no doubt wish to hear something of the speedway side of the programme.

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1959

## Fifteen thousand fans at Wembley Stadium, Jo'burg <sup>12.12.1959</sup>

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Widely advertised were the "Junior" and "Senior" South African speedway championships for which eight riders had been seeded into each event. The idea was for the first two in each of two heats to ride. In the two finals for the two titles. How the riders were chosen as seeds and whether it was open to all speedway riders in the country was not stated but as the acknowledged top riders of the day were on the programme I suppose it was fair enough to attach titles; other promoters will no doubt soon follow with their own version of the National Champions à la the various stock car world championships.

Riding is reported to have been of a high standard with the results of the junior heats as follows:

Heat 1: 1, Dave Collins; 2, Toby Boshoff; 3, Jimmy Meade.  
Heat 2: 1, Johnny Bekker; 2, Johnny Ackermann; 3, Charles Branders.

The final provided some spirited racing with Johnny Ackermann riding like a man possessed to snatch the title from Johnny Bekker with Dave Collins right up in third place.

### Hard riding

The senior held promise of some hard, tough riding and the fans were not disappointed in the first heat when Neil Mortimer, after a lengthy lay-off from active racing, got out of the gate like a scalded cat to lead the great Henry Long over the line both well ahead of Dennis Newton.

Howdy Cornell, the Redmond-trained Pretoria star, caused something of a sensation when he rode right round Doug Davies in the second heat and streaked away from the field to hold on to win in great style from popular Roy Bester who dived under Davies on the last bend to snatch a place in the final. Unplaced riders in the two heats were Johnny Gander and Des Haswell.

Excitement was high when the riders came up to the gate for the final and Cornell had quite a following who thought that he could repeat his previous impertinent performance. But it was

not to be. On the first bend, when well placed, he shed his rear chain and Henry Long once again made sure of adding a title to his long list of titles by holding out Neil Mortimer who in turn shaded Roy Bester.

Long's time in the final—the fastest for three years, was 78.0 seconds while the heats were won in 79.0 (Mortimer) and 80.5 (Cornell).

### Champions race

A race of champions through the years was easily won by Henry Long (1959) from Fred Wills (1949), Buddy Fuller (1939) and Stan Collins (1929). This race was run on the handicap basis with Long 150 yards behind the gate. Another rich prize for the fabulous Henry.

Why, oh why, does Long not return to England to have a bash at the world title which many think to be still well within his grasp?

"Variety Shows" will return to Johannesburg in mid-February, while patrons in Durban will no doubt be pleased to learn that a series of events will be staged at the Allan Ford Stadium during the Christmas season.

DOES ALL THIS MEAN THAT SPEEDWAY RACING IS ABOUT TO BE REVIVED IN THE UNION? WELL WE SHALL SEE. I STILL FAIL TO SEE HOW SPEEDWAY RACING ALONE WILL PULL IN THE CROWDS BUT THERE'S A CHANCE.



### Management discussions:

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