

Part 21: FOREIGN RIDERS IN RHODESIA

The visit of the American touring team in November of 1972 undoubtedly put speedway back on South Africa's sporting map. From now on, under the promotion of Buddy Fuller and his right-hand man Doug Willoughby, the bikes featured prominently in the race programmes at Wembley and Durban. International riders were invited from Rhodesia, were in addition to the local riders, a contingent of overseas riders were based at Salisbury and Bulawayo, and gladly accepted the opportunity of extra bookings down South Africa way.

In **1972-73** there were four British League riders around, Australian Bob Young, New Zealander Robin Adlington, and a couple of Englishmen, Dave Durham and Peter Murray. All four of the British-based visitors were staying in a cottage in the grounds of veteran groundsman Bill Howell's home within the confines of Salisbury Showgrounds. A wonderful accomodation, that was very popular with the riders. Past lodgers had included Geoff Curtis, Garry Moore, Dave Jessup and Bluey Valentine!

Of the Rhodesian riders, Peter Prinsloo was still head and shoulders above the rest, but a youngster from Salisbury, by the name of Mike Ferreira was beginning to show immense talent.

With the arrival of the British-based riders in Rhodesia, the biggest attendances of the season packed into Bulawayo Showground and Salisbury's Glamis Stadium for the last two meetings before the holiday break from racing at the Rhodesian venues. Over the Christmas period, the four touring riders were invited by the Buddy Fuller promotion to ride in meetings at Durban and Johannesburg.

DURBAN WANTS (AND GETS) MORE SPEEDWAY

Following the excitement and prestige of the International meetings at Durban's Alan Ford Stadium, when first Rhodesia and then the USA rode in Test Matches versus the Springboks, speedway from now on of the domestic kind featured with the sprint car meetings at the tiny Hoy Park circuit.

The trim stadium was three-quarters full for the December 1972 meeting. Local riders were joined by a trio from Jo'burg to back up the main event of this particular evening, which was a round of the National Super-Modified Saloon Car Championships.

Proceedings got under way with an opening heat won by visitor Arthur Bruins, from John Serman and Dennis Brunton, but only after Brunton had tumbled on the third lap while holding a commanding lead – so far in front, in fact, that he was able to remount before fourth finisher Peter Maschke was able to pass him!

Plenty of action in the next race as well, with Benito Rossi taking the chequered flag after an exciting dice with Tommy Fox. Peter Thompson and Glen Butt bit the dust in this race after touching handlebars while contesting third place.

Following the Consolation race, won by Maschke from Thompson and Butt, after Tommy Fox had come to grief on the third lap while holding a lengthy lead, came the Solo Final, in which Dennis Brunton was victorious without being extended by either second-placed Rossi or Serman, the remaining finisher. In this race Bruins fell while contesting second spot with Rossi.

Such had been the level of public interest in solo racing at Durban since Buddy Fuller re-introduced the sport at his big-city tracks, that he was obliged to slot in an additional race to keep the patrons happy, and in this event local riders Fox and Rossi lined up against visitors Bruins and Serman. At the start, however, Rossi noticed that his rear tyre was flat as the tapes rose, leaving Tommy Fox to uphold Durban's honour in the heat ! This was exactly what Tommy was doing until the first bend of the last lap, when he fell heavily, although without lasting injury, to leave Bruins a clear winner from Serman.

At Durban's next meeting – on Boxing Day – the main attraction was a big Best Pairs competition with all the Overseas and Rhodesian riders included, but something that a lot of people were eager to feast their eyes upon was a special event called the "Race of the Fallen Stars"! In contrast to the Future Stars events, four former star riders were invited to return to the saddle as the Fallen Stars to show the crowd just what it was all about! On Boxing day of 1972 the line-up included Buddy Fuller himself, Fred Wills, Henry Long and Doug Serrurier!

BEST PAIRS CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES

Despite heavy rain falling for an hour before the start of the meeting at Wembley, promoter Buddy Fuller had an excellent crowd in attendance for this, the first of two meetings in a Best Pairs series featuring riders from six countries.

With an attractive invitation list bringing several highly thought-of visitors over the Rhodesian border for this event, it might be considered something of a surprise that the man of the meeting was the mercurial South African Etienne Olivier. But with everything going well for young Etienne for once, and with the machine he

purchased from visiting American Sumner McKnight, performing beautifully, there was no catching the boy from the Oranje Vrystaat. With partner Vic Pretorius, the 1972 South African Champion, weighing in with a valuable three points, it was the Freestate duo that headed the pairings at the end of the first half (9 heats) of the championship.

Australasian duo Bob Young and Rob Adlington were also in good form, and had the Kiwi not struck engine problems in heat 4 a higher total might have been theirs. South African veteran Dennis Newton, mounted upon the super-fast bike he purchased from American Rick Woods, combined well with Scottish-born Rhodesian youngster Jimmy Gallacher to also finish on 11 points, as did the English pairing of Peter Murray and Dave Durham.

Rhodesia's Roni Ferguson and Ian McMillan failed to make the expected impression on their opponents, and the local duo of Danie Fourie and George Baynes (another man with an ex-American machine, having done the trading with Scott Autrey) on this form were really only there to make up the numbers.

Scores at Wembley:

Olivier & Pretorius 12 pts, Newton & Gallacher 11, Murray & Durham 11, Young & Adlington 11, Ferguson & McMillan 5, Baynes & Fourie 3.

The second half of this championship, held at the height of the South African holiday season, had the "house full" notices up outside the trim Alan Ford Stadium before the start, and no doubt, much to bossman Buddy Fuller's regret there were, in fact, a good number of people turned away from the turnstiles, such was the enthusiasm prevailing in the city.

With the OFS duo leading three other pairings by a single point before the off, the racing was close and exciting throughout, and in fact it took a brilliant maximum by the Rhodesia-based Scotsman Jimmy Gallacher, riding the tiny circuit for the first time, to clinch victory for himself and partner Dennis Newton, both on the night and on aggregate. They tallied 24 points over the two meetings, and it proved unfortunate for the English pairing in the field that Peter Murray tumbled first time out, as partner Dave Durham found the little strip to his immense liking and cracked on to score a solid seven points, to take that duo into second spot with 23, the same as previous leaders Olivier and Pretorius.

Scores at Durban:

Gallacher & Newton 13, Murray & Durham 12, Young & Adlington 11, Olivier & Pretorius 11, Ferguson & McMillan 3, Baynes & Fourie 3.

BEST PAIRS CHAMPIONSHIP complete result:

1 st 24 points	Jim Gallacher (Rhodesia)	5 + 9 = 14 points
	Dennis Newton (RSA)	6 + 4 = 10
2 nd 23 points	Peter Murray	7 + 5 = 11
	Dave Durham	4 + 7 = 11
3 rd 23 points	Etienne Olivier	9 + 7 = 16
	Vic Pretorius	3 + 4 = 7
4 th 22 points	Bob Young (Australia)	8 + 8 = 16
	Rob Adlington (New Zealand)	3 + 3 = 6
5 th 8 points	Roni Ferguson	3 + 2 = 5
	Ian McMillan	2 + 1 = 3
6 th 6 points	Danie Fourie	1 + 3 = 4
	George Baynes	2 + 0 = 2

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Part 22: 1973 SEASON

SPEEDWAY was back with a vengeance at Wembley and Hoy Park in 1973. The season started with some big International meetings with the overseas riders who were based in Rhodesia that season.

Twelve riders competed in the 1973 Wembley Open Championship. The competition was decided over two four-man semi-finals and a grand final for the first and second men from each semi. Obviously there were four riders to be eliminated from the action after the six heat races. In this meeting it was two local men – the Fourie brothers – and Rhodesians Ian McMillan and Roni Ferguson who failed to amass enough points after their respective two rides.

The first semi-final saw England's Dave Durham grab a start-to-finish lead from the ever pressing attentions

of Aussie Bob Young, while Kiwi Robin Adlington and South Africa's Vic Pretorius tailed off.

In the second eliminator a four-man first bend tussle saw Jimmy Gallacher of Rhodesia move from third to first from Peter Murray and Etienne Olivier, while Dennis Newton struggled to recover from a bad start.

As the tapes went up in the final, it was clear that the large crowd were going to see one of the best races of the season, as all four riders hit the first turn together. Gallacher led marginally on the second and third laps, with the others swapping places regularly behind him. By the last lap, the title was clearly to be decided between Gallacher and Bob Young, who by then was a little way clear of Durham in third and Murray in fourth place. On the very last turn, Young hurtled round the fence by the remaining dirt, and his momentum carried him to a marginal victory over the unlucky Gallacher right on the finish line.

NATAL OPEN SPEEDWAY CHAMPIONSHIP

ENGLISHMAN Dave Durham carried all before him in the 1973 Natal Open Championship at the Hoy Park in Durban.

Durham and South African veteran Dennis Newton were undefeated in their heats, while Bob Young and Jimmy Gallacher dropped one point apiece on their way to the semi-finals. South Africans George Baynes, Danie and Louis Fourie and Rhodesian Ian McMillan were eliminated by semi-final time, and in the first semi it was Durham who set the pace as he won from Robin Adlington, with Bob Young rather surprisingly eliminated along with fourth placed Roni Ferguson.

In the second semi-final, Jimmy Gallacher took control of proceedings early on, with Peter Murray coming from the back to outwit a tiring Dennis Newton and Vic Pretorius.

With the Natal title at stake, it was clear that the capacity crowd at the Alan Ford Stadium were going to see a good race but although Peter Murray managed to stay with him for two laps, it was again Dave Durham who took the flag, in a time less than a second outside the track record set up by American Rick Woods in 1972.

RACE DETAILS:

Heat 1: (57.0) Durham, Gallacher, D.Fourie, Baynes.

Heat 2: (57.9) Gallacher, Adlington, Ferguson, L.Fourie.

Heat 3: (58.6) Newton, Murray, Pretorius, McMillan.

Heat 4: (57.5) Young, Gallacher, Ferguson, Baynes.

Heat 5: (58.2) Newton Adlington, Pretorius, L.Fourie.

Heat 6: (56.9) Durham, Murray, McMillan, D.Fourie.

Semi-Final 1: (57.4) Durham, Adlington, Young, Ferguson.

Semi-Final 2: (57.9) Gallacher, Murray, Newton, Pretorius.

Final: (55.7) Durham, Gallacher, Murray, Adlington.

SOUTHERN AFRICA VS OVERSEAS

In February of 1973 promoter Buddy Fuller set up a two-legged series of International Tests at his two major tracks in South Africa between a composite "Southern Africa Select" side of South Africans and Rhodesians – and an "Overseas Select" side featuring the tourists.

In the opening meeting of the series on Friday Night at the Wembley Stadium in Johannesburg, the Overseas Select enjoyed a convincing 24-12 win with British rider Peter Murray in unbeatable form.

SA captain Dennis Newton raised local hopes with his first heat win over the Australasian pairing of Bob Young and Robin Adlington, but when Murray and Dave Durham took the second heat with ease from Etienne Olivier and a somewhat out-of-touch Jimmy Gallacher, the writing was on the wall. Both Murray and Durham were undefeated by their opponents throughout the evening, and the English duo's superiority weighed the scale in favour of the Overseas side.

For the home team, only Newton and Olivier managed a heat win, and it was unfortunate that neither Gallacher, or the normally immaculate Peter Prinsloo, were able to capture better form on the night.

Heat 1: Newton, Young, Adlington, Prinsloo. (3-3) 3-3

Heat 2: Murray, Durham, Olivier, Gallacher. (1-5) 4-8

Heat 3: Murray, Durham, Prinsloo, Newton. (1-5) 5-13

Heat 4: Olivier, Gallacher, Young, Adlington (EF). (5-1) 10-14

Heat 5: Murray, Adlington, Newton, Olivier. (1-5) 11-19

Heat 6: Young, Durham, Prinsloo, Gallacher. (1-5) 12-24

SOUTHERN AFRICA SELECT ... 12

Dennis Newton 4, Etienne Olivier 4, Peter Prinsloo 2, Jimmy Gallacher 2.

OVERSEAS SELECT ... 24

Peter Murray 9, Dave Durham 6, Bob Young 6, Robin Adlington 3.

On the following evening in Durban, a pre-match torrential downpour completely flooded the Hoy Park circuit and left the track staff with a mighty task in getting the show under way at all. The miserable conditions took a lot from the quality of the racing once the meeting did get started, but with the rain persisting throughout it was a credit to all concerned that the programme was completed.

The cloudburst had thinned the crowd, of course, and still more customers headed for home after taking a look at the track before the off, but the hardy souls that stayed to brave the rain - and the stadium was still near half full despite all the drawbacks - were treated to a courageous show by both sides. Peter Prinsloo, on borrowed machinery, was the star of the evening as he showed a faultless gating technique which, but for a first race tumble in the mud, would have given the young Rhodesian a maximum.

For the Overseas team, Robin Adlington adapted best to the wet track and dropped only one point. The Overseas squad, having achieved an easy 12-point win in the first match, struggled to a one-point win in Durban, for neither Dave Durham nor Peter Murray could quite reach the highspots of the first leg. Bob Young withdrew from his second ride (reportedly to wring the water out of his moustache!) and local reserve Dennis Brunton took the ride, while in the same event the home-side replaced an out-of-form Etienne Olivier with Tommy Fox, but in the end the substitutions were to no avail, as neither reserve completed the course.

Heat 1: (62.0) Young, Adlington, Newton, Prinsloo (FELL). (1-5) 1-5
Heat 2: (62.1) Gallacher, Murray, Durham, Olivier (DNF). (3-3) 4-8
Heat 3: (61.0) Prinsloo, Newton, Durham, Murray (EXCL). (5-1) 9-9
Heat 4: (61.8) Adlington, Gallacher, Brunton (DNF), Fox (DNF). (2-3) 11-12
Heat 5: (62.0) Newton, Adlington, Murray, Olivier. (3-3) 14-15
Heat 6: (60.8) Prinsloo, Young, Durham, Gallacher (FELL) (3-3) 17-18

SOUTHERN AFRICAN SELECT ... 17

Peter Prinsloo 6, Dennis Newton 6, Jimmy Gallacher 5, Etienne Olivier 0, Tommy Fox (res.) 0.

OVERSEAS SELECT ... 18

Robin Adlington 7, Bob Young 4, Dave Durham 4, Peter Murray 3, Dennis Brunton (reserve) 0.

SOLO RANKS DEPLETED IN RHODESIA

THE absence in South Africa of Prinsloo, Gallacher and the Overseas riders thinned the line-ups of the solo speedway division at both Salisbury and Bulawayo for the opening meetings of 1973. With Ian McMillan also prevented from riding through work commitments and Pip Harris and Ricky Britten still sidelined with injuries, the solo ranks at the Rhodesian tracks looked bare indeed. One thing about the absence of the big guns was that the riders who stayed at home, notably Roni Ferguson and young Mike Ferreira, were able to consolidate their positions in the weekly accumulative points score events for the respective track championships at Bulawayo and Salisbury.

17-year old Mike Ferreira, who is the son of one of Rhodesia's most colourful motorcyclists of past years, was already talked about as a real challenger for Peter Prinsloo's national title later that year.

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Part 23: O.F.S. SPEEDWAY REVIVAL IN 1973

The very first meeting of the 1973/74 South African speedway season was staged at Bloemfontein after a lapse of almost 30 years since Schoeman Park last echoed to the sound of exhausts.

The meeting was staged by the Bloemfontein Speedway Club, but the driving force behind the affair, and the man who had put his hand deep into his own pocket to get the circuit into operation again, was rider Vic Pretorius. Vic's long-time ambition was to see regular speedway once more featured in his home town.

The new circuit, a quarter-mile oval around a soccer pitch, was surfaced with a cinder-based compound and cut up in the manner of nearly all new-laid racestrips before the match was over.

A reasonable attendance greeted the new venture, and witnessed an interesting evening's racing between two representative teams, although the home side were augmented by the inclusion of riders from the Western Transvaal and Natal.

Transvaal's captain Dennis Newton, riding again despite his retiral announcement that greeted his 1973 South African Championship win, was the best man on view, racing to a three ride maximum and recording the fastest time of the night in Heat 1. His only support came from Arthur Bruins, while the promising Andy

Long suffered a first outing tumble and was seen no more.

The OFS team was better balanced, with good displays from Tommy Fox, Piet Viljoen and Pretorius himself, and their win was deserved.

ORANGE FREE STATE ... 40

T.Fox 8, P.Viljoen 8, V.Pretorius 6, L.Fourie 6, J.Stevens 4, D.Brunton 3, I.Patterson 3, B.Rossi 2, G.Butt 0.

TRANSVAAL ... 30

D.Newton 9, A.Bruins 6, G.Long 4, B.Strydom 3, F.Boltman 2, H.Horacks 2, W.Pearson 2, G.Engle 1, B.Stevens 1, A.Long 0.

TEAM RACING RETURNS TO RHODESIA

THE biggest Salisbury attendance of the season was out to see the return of team racing to the circuit, and the first of a series of mini matches between Salisbury, led by Roni Ferguson and comprising Mike Ferreira, Colin Stokes and Ray Barclay, and the Bulawayo quartet of the Prinsloo brothers, Pip Harris and Charlie Steer.

Salisbury won by 15 points to nine, and the main eye-opener was Ray Barclay's five points score from his two rides, a return matched by Ferreira. The Bulawayo challenge, predictably led by a Peter Prinsloo maximum, was only in evidence in the races that featured the Prince. The crowd were certainly pleased to see team racing back and gave every Salisbury rider a warm round of applause as he returned to the pits.

Following the team match, the usual individual handicap events had a distinct 'second-half' feeling about them, but the racing was certainly keen as ever.

ON the following night, the return match was staged at Bulawayo. The four heats battle found Barclay again the surprise package for Salisbury, and somewhat to their surprise Bulawayo were trailing by two points as the riders came out for the deciding heat, the Prinsloo brothers against Ferguson and Barclay. With a fair bit of honour at stake, tension was high at this point. Peter Prinsloo quickly went to the front and brother Chris, to the enormous delight of the locals, hung on for the vital second place for a 5-1 to secure the result of 13-11 in favour of Bulawayo. The huge cheers turned to a chorus of boos for Ferguson as the Salisbury captain made his final lap at the end of this race with a huge grin on his face and waving gaily to the fans. Seems that the spectators might have appreciated Roni's gesture more had he used all his fingers while waving, but perhaps they can't have everything!

SPEEDWAY TAKES OVER DURBAN

WITH promoter Buddy Fuller's Natal outlet at Hoy Park having suffered from noise problems during the close season and the big hot-rods that have previously ruled the roost at the Alan Ford Stadium having been banned by the local authority, it suddenly opened the way for speedway – specifically not affected by the veto on the big cars – to take over the track, and spectator interest, at the trim arena.

The first meeting of the 1973/74 season in Durban was a team challenge match. It suffered from the windy and cool November weather, with a hint of rain in the air, but still attracted a handy crowd to welcome the bikes back. The stadium looked a little unfamiliar, too, with the old main grandstand, that up to the previous season had housed the bulk of the support, now gone in the name of progress. The racing was the usual Durban serving of good, close duels on the ultra-slick little bowl.

The wily Newton played a captain's role in the Wembley Lions' 30-28 win over the Durban Hornets.

DURBAN HORNETS ... 28

G.Baynes 6, V.Pretorius 6, D.Brunton 5, B.Rossi 4, A.Bruins 4, G.Butt 2, I.Patterson 1, T.Fox 0.

WEMBLEY LIONS ... 30

D.Fourie 9, D.Newton 7, B.Strydom 6, B.Stevens 4, A.Long 2, B.Edwards 2, G.Engle 0, G.Long 0.

After the team match, an individual competition formed the second half of the program. In this, Etienne Olivier, who had not ridden in the team event, and was fresh off his homecoming aircraft after a season with Bradford in the British League, came out on borrowed equipment to contest the Brest Exhaust Trophy with Newton, Brunton, and fellow traveller Mick Fielding of Bradford, England.

Olivier, after making an appalling start, made up a fantastic amount of ground inside one lap, only to lose it again as Newton tumbled in front of him. On the last lap, the youngster from Welkom contested the lead with Brunton. However, a worn back tyre on the loaned machine, coupled with the slick surface, proved too much for Etienne to handle and he fell on the last bend. It was clear from his brief showing that on his own equipment he would be the revelation of the season.

BAN BRINGS RACING TO A STANDSTILL

IN A SHOCK announcement by South Africa's minister of Sport, Piet Koornhof, from his Pretoria office, the hopes that the current season would see the Springboks once more restored to a high position among speedway nations, were dashed when it was ruled that because of the world wide oil crisis all motor sport in the country was to be banned forthwith.

Amidst sweeping measures to conserve fuel, the ban was at first thought not to include speedway in view of the fact that our sport's track machinery fires methanol and is lubricated by vegetable oils, but when it was confirmed that all motor sport meant exactly that, promoter Buddy Fuller made immediate representation to Dr. Koornhof, that the ban be lifted.

The announcement caused the cancellation of meetings at both Durban and Bloemfontein and put the anticipated return to shale of Johannesburg's Wembley Stadium in doubt.

FURTHER NORTH, Rhodesia was also in the grip of a petrol shortage, but there the matter was handled in quite a different matter. Almost immediately after the war in the Middle East, when it first became clear that there was going to be a delay in crude oil supplies, Premier Ian Smith announced that petrol was to be rationed on a coupon system, but the country's motorists were still to be allowed to use their allocation in any manner they think fit – thus no ban on sport was contemplated.

It is of course quite ironical that the speedway scene in Rhodesia entered its close season at almost the same moment as Mr Smith made his announcement. While South Africa wanted to race but weren't allowed to, Rhodesia could, but did not want to at the time.

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Part 24: SOUTH AFRICAN RACE BAN LIFTED

GOOD NEWS for South African speedway just before Christmas of **1973!** Following a succession of representations to the government, the country's speedway promoters – led by the ever-resourceful Buddy Fuller of Thrills Inc. (as he styles his company) were at last rewarded by a further announcement by the Minister of Sport that the total ban on motor-sport in South Africa would not include speedway, as long as participants employed only methanol and vegetable-based lubricants during the course of the racing and practise sessions.

The decision rewarded the initiative of promoter Fuller, who had appealed against the ban from the moment of announcement. However, despite the lifting of the restriction that had already caused the cancellation of meetings at Bloemfontein, Durban and Johannesburg, it was by no means certain that the sport would be able to continue in anything like a normal fashion. South African speedway in the 70's was very much a week-end affair, thus allowing riders to compete in meetings some distance from their homes without taking time out from work. The difficulty facing the riders in the days of the oil crisis was that by law all petrol stations had to close down on a Friday evening until Monday morning. Thus inter-city road travel was out of the question, and Durban was especially hard hit in this respect. The problem was the distance from Johannesburg, where the majority of riders were based, while there were only four riders residing in or around Durban.

In an effort to defeat the difficulties holding back a re-start – particularly at the isolated Durban circuit, where the best crowds turned out – boss-man Buddy Fuller sounded out the possibility and cost of chartering a light aircraft to haul a dozen or so of the up-country riders over to Durban at weekends, with their bikes and equipments preceding them by road during the week, as fuel could be purchased at the roadside during daytime hours on weekdays.

SCHOEMAN PARK, BLOEMFONTEIN

Having received the reprieve from the government, Bloemfontein's speedway rider/promoter Vic Pretorius lined up a handy field for his latest presentation, an Inter-Provincial affair between his own Orange Free State and the Western Transvaal. Holidaymaking Englishman Dave Baugh, who rode for Bradford in the British League, happily accepted an invitation to ride for the visiting team. The man of the match, however, was "the local boy made good" Etienne Olivier, here making his long awaited return to the Free State after his British adventures, and showing his friends and admirers what he had learned in the process. Never once

headed throughout the evening, he added to his triumph at the interval when invited to contest a series of one-lap record attempts, an affair that saw Etienne capture the record by lowering the old time by over a second.

ORANGE FREE STATE ... 31

E.Olivier 9, V.Pretorius 8, G.Engle 7, A.Long 4, F.Lendrum 3, B.Strydom 0.

WESTERN TRANSVAAL ... 29

D.Baugh 8, J.Frost 7, I.Patterson 6, J.Stevens 3, G.Baynes 2, V.Page 2, F.Boltman 1.

OLIVIER WINS NATAL TITLE

DURBAN'S first meeting to follow the lifting of the government ban on speedway there, saw promoter Buddy Fuller present a double-feature programme to a capacity holiday crowd that packed in to see speedway at Hoy Park again.

The opening event was a match between Durban Hornets and Wembley Lions, while the after-Interval races were devoted to deciding the destination of the Natal Open Championship. The match was highlighted by the brilliant riding of Etienne Olivier in the colours of Wembley, while Englishmen Peter Murray and Mick Fielding kept their form to pick up points throughout. Local lad Brian Stephens was another undefeated Wembley rider in a side that carried just too many big guns for the more balanced scores turned in by the Hornets.

From the very beginning of the meeting, when Tommy Fox tumbled on the first turn in Heat 1 and remounted to go on to take third place, the crowd got their money's worth. The second race saw Murray going well (on a machine borrowed from Fox), the third heat saw Stephens win his first. Heat 4 gained a lot of attention as Olivier shot from last to first despite Dennis Brunton's efforts to hold him back. More fun and games in the last two races, with the visitors from Johannesburg winning by one point.

DURBAN HORNETS ... 17

P.Murray 6, T.Fox 3, G.Butt 3, F.Lendrum 3, B.Rossi 1, D.Brunton 1.

WEMBLEY LIONS ... 18

E.Olivier 6, B.Stephens 6, M.Fielding 4, L.Botha 2, G.Engle 0, G.Hoffmann 0.

The Natal Championship was decided over two semi-finals and a final, and won by Olivier, with Murray second and Fielding third. This win added the Natal title to the Orange Free State Championship already held by Etienne.

RAINY SEASON CAUSES HALT IN RHODESIA

FARTHER North, over the border in Rhodesia, there had been some unpleasant news for the Salisbury and Bulawayo fans delivered by young Mike Ferreira's postman – his call-up papers!

The youngster, after enjoying such a good run at both tracks that he was able to dispose Peter Prinsloo from his throne as Salisbury track champion, as well as running him close in the Bulawayo affair, had obviously been hoping that Premier Ian Smith might be able to get along without his services for a while – especially with the National Championship coming up.

PIONEERING Rhodesian promoter Alex Hughson certainly had made a wise decision back in September when he decreed that his meetings would halt in early December to await the passing of the rainy season come March. The rainfall in Rhodesia during that time had been "way over the norm", and the promotion's attempt to give supporters just a taste of the action they are missing in two special holiday meetings only underlined the problems facing them at this time of year.

Bulawayo Showgrounds were to host a meeting, but when the affair was postponed on three successive Saturday evenings, the organisers then decided to take the hint and to write this one off to experience.

Further north, Glamis Stadium in Salisbury was just a little more fortunate when the time came for their meeting. For although rain had hit the Rhodesian capital hard for most of the day, the track was in fair condition and with most of the recognised riders present and ready to race, the meeting started on time, with Charlie Steer the first man over the line, to take the honours in the Junior Solo Scratch race.

The senior division lost some of its usual appeal when it was confirmed that the Prinsloo brothers, Peter and Chris, had turned back when they met torrential rains on the road north from their Gwelo homes. In the

senior scratch race there was some spirited action from eventual winner Mike Ferreira, runner-up Ray Barclay and – before he went down in a heap on the pits turn – Roni Ferguson. However, with ominous black clouds beginning to gather overhead as the stock-bikes races were taking place, the meeting was heading for trouble. And although a junior handicap race got away all right, by the time the winner, Ray Barclay, was crossing the line it was raining heavily. One further race was staged, but with the heavens rapidly emptying themselves over Glamis, the resulting win by Mike Ferreira over Steer and Ferguson was only of academic interest. Mike's race time being almost twenty seconds below his earlier figure !

So did Rhodesia's last Solo event until March stumble to a close, and with it came the worrying news that promoter Alex Hughson, the man who was solely responsible for the original re-introduction of speedway to Rhodesia in 1970, confirmed that he was withdrawing from the administration of the sport. Obviously Hughson's absence would leave a gaping chasm to fill for his successor John Dreyer and his fellow directors, to carry on with the great show that Rhodesian speedway supporters had come to expect.

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Part 25: RAINY DAYS

The Year of **1974** began with plenty of rain in South Africa. In fact, the entire country was undergoing its wettest summer for more than a decade, and it was particularly bad in the coastal regions of Natal, where severe floodings caused much damage. It came as no surprise that a number of scheduled speedway meetings at Durban's Hoy Park venue were cancelled. This robbed Durban of some of its diminishing numbers of remaining fixtures, as the ever-present noise problem had long been a bugbear to motor-sports events in Durban. Hot-Rods had already been banned at Alan Ford Stadium a few months earlier, and while this had in fact allowed additional track appearances for the solo speedway riders, the writing was always on the wall and promoter Buddy Fuller had been anxiously investigating the possibility of an alternative site for all forms of racing.

WELKOM

THE opening meeting at the new Welkom track, operating under Buddy Fuller's banner, proved a good advertisement for speedway. Local rider Etienne Olivier had been giving the organising motorcycle club the benefit of his overseas speedway experience, having ridden in England in 1973.

A larger-than-expected crowd was presented with an Inter-Provincial match between the Freestate and Transvaal. The limitations of the short-formula programme of a seven heat match were highlighted by both sides having an undefeated rider. The racing was usually close and despite local hero Olivier appearing to be down on power - and therefore on points – the Freestate team was well served by Vic Pretorius and Louis Fourie, to defeat the Transvaal side 23-19.

The visitors had the man of the match in Dennis Newton, celebrating his 45th birthday, with Ian Patterson weighing in with a solid four points to help keep his side in contention.

Scores:

ORANGE FREE STATE ... 23

V.Pretorius 6, L.Fourie 4, G.Baynes 4, E.Olivier 3, P.Murray 3, F.Lendrum 3, F.Boltman 0.

TRANSVAAL ... 19

D.Newton 6, I.Patterson 4, B.Strydom 3, G.Frost 2, L.Botha 2, M.Fishwick 2, A.Long 0.

AFTER the team event, an individual second half programme was held to decide the Welkom Open Championship. The final was an excellent example of how to win a race from the pits as Dennis Newton charmed his younger opponents out of their minds, with his patter before the race as to why they could count him out of it, only to pull off a beautiful gate and four fast laps to win.

RHODESIA RESUMES

WHEN the Rhodesian speedway scene burst back into life in March of 1974, following a lengthy break decreed by the rainy season, all eyes were on the resumption of hostilities between Peter Prinsloo – virtually unopposed as Rhodesian Champion since the inception of the title in 1971 – and young Mike Ferreira, the

teenager whose steady progress had brought considerable interest to the solo sections of the race-cards at both Salisbury's Glamis Stadium and Bulawayo Showgrounds.

Apart from the talented twosome at the top of the Rhodesian tree, the senior ranks that year included Pip Harris, Roni Ferguson, Chris Prinsloo and Ray Barclay, while Ian McMillan was making appearances as often as his tobacco farm and service commitments would allow.

The ever-growing junior classification was headed by Col Stokes, Charlie Steer, Trev Bezeley, the Wolhuter brothers and others.

Over the Easter Weekend in April a team of Rhodesian riders came to Johannesburg and rode in three meetings promoted by Buddy Fuller at a specially constructed track at Milner Park, where Peter Prinsloo had the cheek to snaffle the title of South African champion from under the noses of several more fancied home riders. The Rhodesians also proved their superiority in two team matches, with Peter Prinsloo, Pip Harris and Dave Hemus top scoring for the visitors.

During the 1974 term of racing, there was tragedy with the death of Ricky Wolhuter at the Bulawayo track, the first ever fatal accident to a solo speedway rider in Rhodesia. As a result of this incident, Ricky's brother Geoff retired from active competition.

Mike Ferreira had his first taste of British speedway in 1974, riding for Glasgow Tigers, and in September returned to Rhodesia ready to challenge Peter Prinsloo's reign.

A welcome break from the usual scratch and handicap racing was provided by the visit of a South African touring side. Despite the fact that the visitors were heavily defeated at both circuits, the Springboks were popular visitors and attracted bigger attendances than usual. Only Dennis Newton could match the Rhodesians to any real extent, and hard as they tried Louis and Danie Fourie and Jantjie Stevens were usually forced to eat the home riders' dirt.

Rhodesia won 27-21 at Salisbury in a match that was in no way as close as the scoreline might suggest, while the Bulawayo result was a 36-12 win for the home men. Other than through engine failure, Prinsloo, Ferreira and Harris rode undefeated throughout the two-match series.

SLOW START IN S.A.

Klerksdorp was the venue for a challenge match between Western Transvaal and the Johannesburg Angels. The locals won by the narrow margin of 37-35.

The Jo'burg team was splendidly served by Arthur Bruins, who has shown solid improvements and already ranks among the best riders in South Africa. Other than Bruins, who was headed just once by Jantjie Stevens in his opening ride, the main bulk of the Angels' scoring was provided by Brian Stevens, Boet Strydom and Andy Long, who is the nephew of the great Henry Long.

For the home team, Danie and Louis Fourie collected 22 points of their team's total. The brothers were also instrumental for the smooth organisation of this meeting, which attracted a better turn-out than Klerksdorp had seen for some time.

The following week, the action moved on to Bloemfontein, where an individual meeting was selected to open proceedings for the new season at Vic Pretorius's circuit. Unfortunately the meeting was robbed of some of its potential when it became clear that the Natal riders Tommy Fox, Gerry Hoffman and Ricky Potts were not going to be able to put in their expected appearance. The trio suffered severe engine damage to their hired transport more than 200 miles from Bloemfontein, and every effort to hire alternative transport failed.

Racing went on without the Natal contingent and a non-too-large crowd saw Arthur Bruins emerge a clear winner of the trophy, with Pretorius himself taking second place and George Baynes third.

The season was the first for years without a track in operation in the Durban area, for the city's Alan Ford Stadium was finally closed in May of 1974 and there had been solid opposition among local residents towards promoter Buddy Fuller's plan to open up a new track at the New Kingsmead football ground.

Durban had traditionally been a stronghold for speedway in South Africa and at every meeting staged at Hoy Park last year the attendance topped the five-figure mark. In addition to his continuing search for a new site in the Durban area, Buddy Fuller expressed his intention to re-open the Wembley circuit in Johannesburg after a fallow year.
