

Motorcycle Racer

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Cover

Tetsuya Harada. So close to the title -
but so far. He's 500 bound this year.
(Gold & Goose)

Harada (Gold & Goose); Cadalora (Gold & Goose);
Craggill (courtesy Redcat); ZX750 (Kel Edge);
Russell (Colin Fraser); Jefferies (Clive Challinor);
Schwartz (Nigel Kinrade); NSR250 (Koichi Ohtani)

Hope springs eternal

Having seen every thrilling lap of last year's
British Superbike Championship I find it really
hard to accept that the jewel of British motor-
sport is in such turmoil just two months before
the 1999 title fight swings into action at
Brands on March 28.

Yamaha - unbeatable for three years in the series -
have still to find a backer for the two-man team
they originally wanted to field. That means three-
time champion Niall Mackenzie is currently with-
out a ride after knocking back offers from other
teams to remain loyal to Yamaha and his former
team-mate Steve Hislop having no option but to
jump ship to Kawasaki or face not paying the
mortgage.

We've lost Honda. As a result, Michael Rutter
has taken a privateer GP500 ride on a V-twin.
Matt Llewellyn and Terry Rymer, both race win-
ners on the British scene last year, have no place
in the series this year. Jim Moodie has been
forced to take a 600 ride.

Phillip McCallen and backers, Motorcycle City,
are keen to run a superbike - but so far have
been unable to confirm factory bikes from any of
the manufacturers.

And James Whitham, a potential World
Superbike race winner is left on the sidelines
since the Harris Suzuki WSB backing from
Germany bombed.

It's unbelievable that such a rich vein of talent
could be left holding P45s. Robert Fearnall's
brainchild of Powerbikes filling the grid has sud-
denly started to have some merit.....

But while there is time, there is hope. Yamaha
could swing a last-minute deal that would
relieve both Mackenzie and another. Harris
may yet get enough cash to run a one-man
British Superbike team. And McCallen might
take another rider off the dole if City can secure
works machinery from one of the importers.....
I know I'm not the only one banking on those
hopes becoming reality.

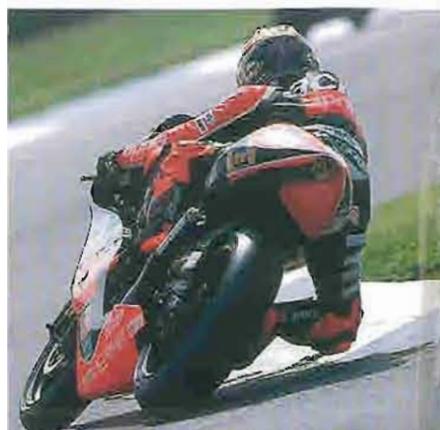
But while it's easy to approach the season with
negative thoughts, there is another way to view
the situation: We shouldn't forget that Suzuki
GB, through Paul Denning's Crescent team, and
Kawasaki Motors UK are both fielding works
bikes this year.

The rival Ducati teams have also got full-on fac-
tory kit this time around. Darrel Healey's Team
GSE, now managed by Colin Wright, benefit Neil
Hodgson joining Aussie hard-charger Troy
Bayliss. Ben Atkins' Reve Red Bull team boasts
the same line-up as last year, John Reynolds and
Sean Emmett.

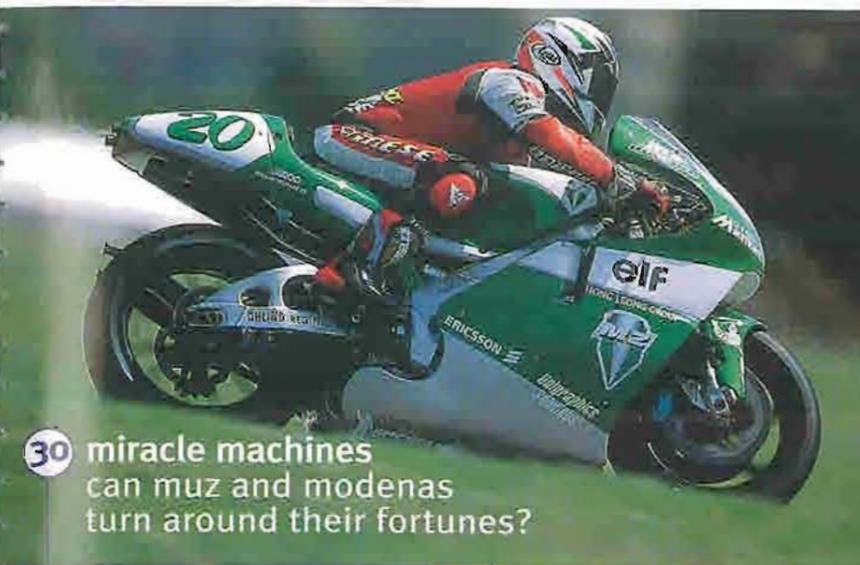
Eight factory bikes is an impressive grid count by
any standard for a domestic race series. It's just
that 11 or 12 would sit that little bit more
impressive.

Gary Pinchin

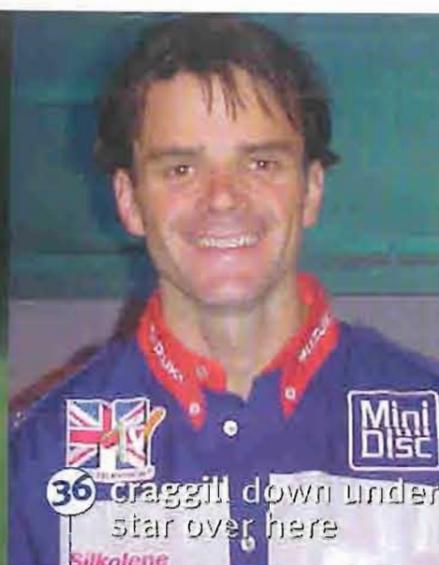
Next issue of Motorcycle Racer goes on sale
March 25 with coverage of the Daytona 200.
But don't forget, as the season kicks into
gear, we'll be going monthly. Place a regular
order with your newsagent now - or better
still, subscribe!



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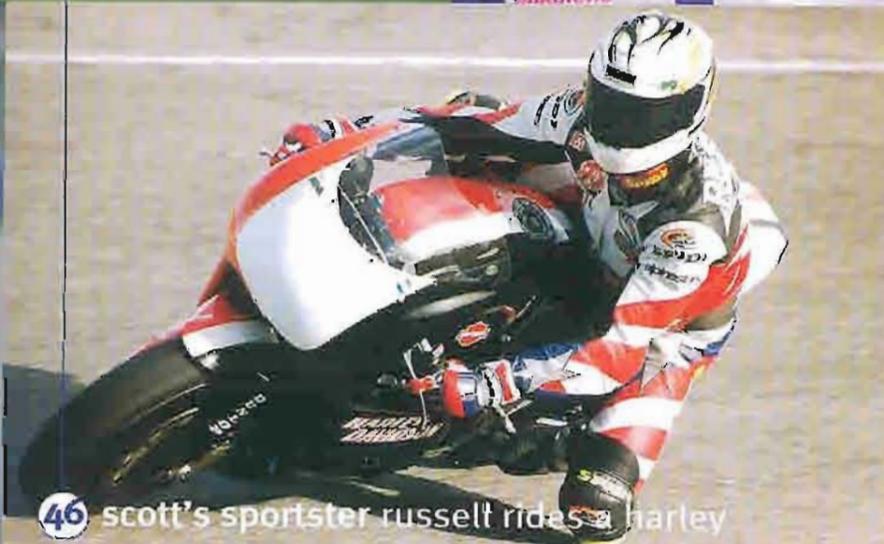
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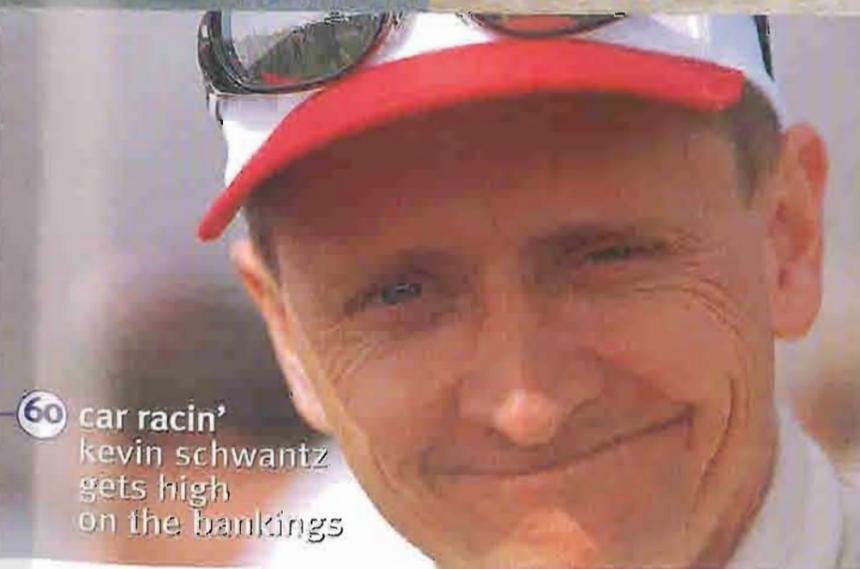
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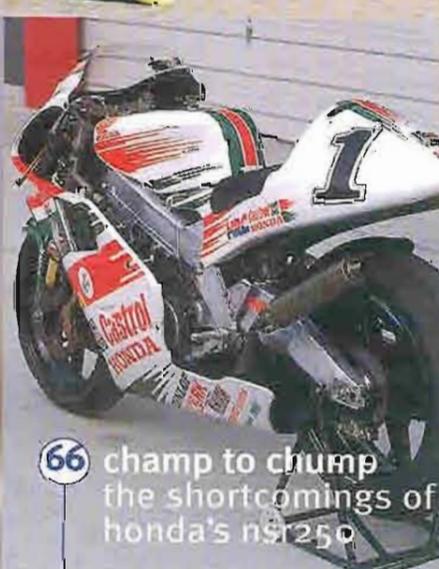
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