

SILENCE descended on Donington Park as the last mewling superbike racer came into the paddock and its engine died. The collecting-area marshal raised his hand to the skies and thunder rent the air as Thor answered his supplication. The Twins were here, and their riders blipped the throttles as if to let the world know that this was the real action. The ground under my feet shook as the motors warmed, outsize pistons flying up and down in parallel twins with 360- and 180-degree crankthrows, vee-twins disposed across and along the frame, all pouring a rasping tumult into the air, and above all, the eerie treble of the two Norton Cosworth Challenges.

More than anything else, the International Battle of the Twins was about the bikes — for once personalities were harnessed to the machines they appeared on; machines created not by some anonymous department of a vast organisation, but lovingly crafted and honed to perfection by dedicated enthusiasts. Or to as near perfection as they could get, for not all these bikes were immaculate. Some had obviously

seen better times, kept by fond owners for nostalgic or hopeful reasons from the days when Triumph or Norton-engined specials were competitive. Their hope had been realised, but not in any gently nostalgic manner.

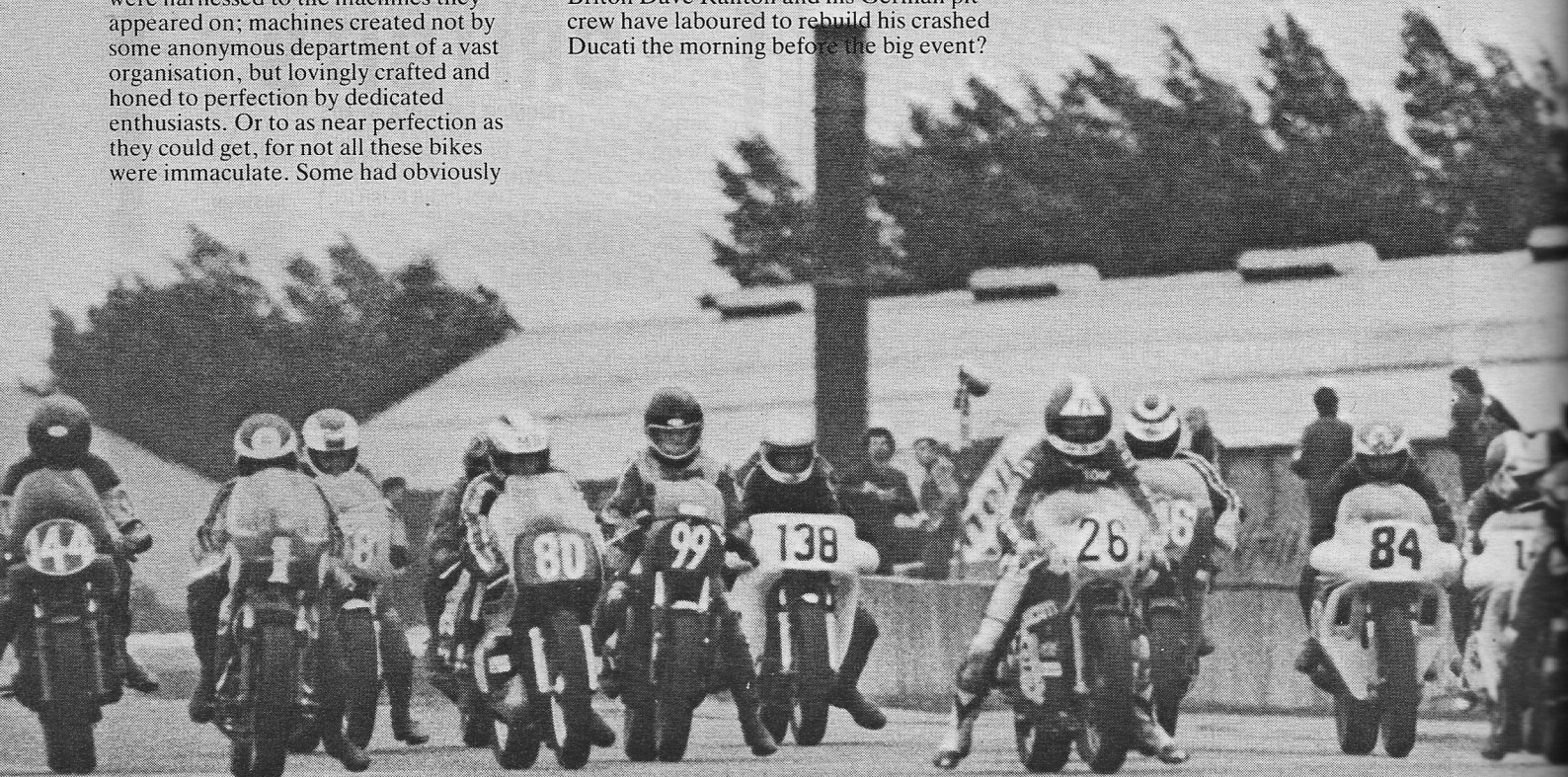
The Battle of the Twins was not an excuse for old duffers to sling a leg across their obsolete motorcycles and chuff around Donington Park. It was an extremely competitive event, evidenced nowhere more than in the practice sessions. Had it not been such, would Malcolm Tunstall, one of the competitors who had flown over from America, have bothered to rebuild his bike four times? Would Jon Minonno — another American — have slotted a second Triumph motor into the Big D frame after the first expired? Would Briton Dave Railton and his German pit crew have laboured to rebuild his crashed Ducati the morning before the big event?

If this had been a excuse to potter round, they wouldn't have bothered.

Tunstall seemed to have incurred the wrath of the gods for some misdemeanour. On his second ever lap at the circuit, the back end let go at Coppice corner, and he only saved the situation by applying some dirt-track style legwork. The rear cylinder base-gasket had blown, leaving oil on the rear tyre and putting an end to that session.

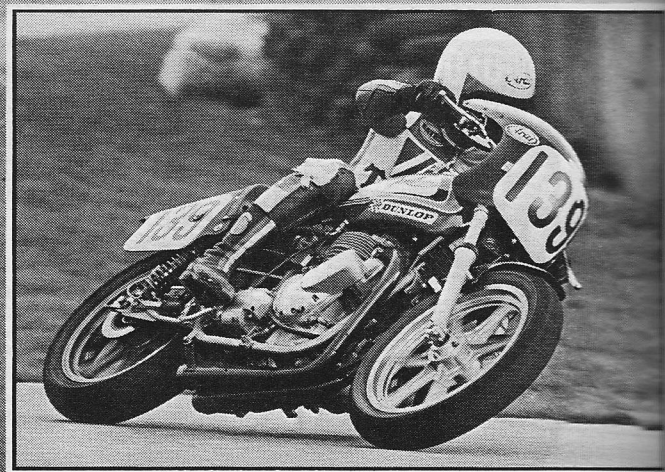
Next time out, the bracket supporting the modified ignition pick up — a bracket which bears little stress and had never even cracked before — snapped off. After fixing that, the ignition system itself expired, necessitating wholesale replacement.

This chapter of accidents ended in a big way when the crankcases of Tunstall's

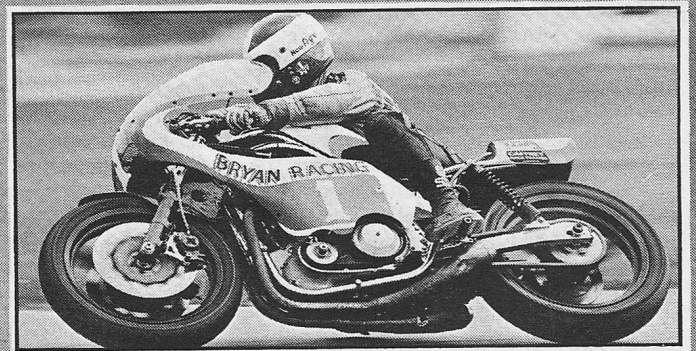
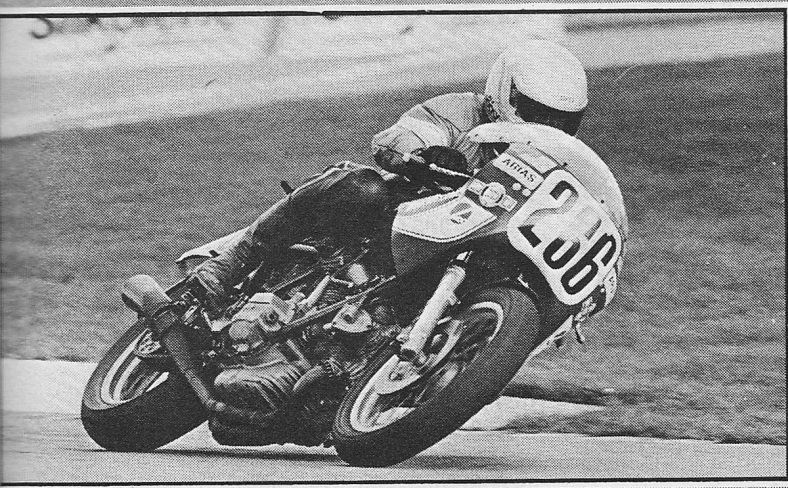


# Twins take off

The International Battle of the Twins was a cosmopolitan event. Tim Holmes reports on Britain's triumph.



highly tuned Ducati exploded during the final Saturday practice, eliminating him from the qualifying race to determine grid positions. Ducati racing crankcases are simply not available, but Tunstall was able to borrow enough parts to lash up what he called a touring motor (and indeed, the rods and pistons had come from Dave Railton's road bike, complete



With a thunderous roar and a popping of wheelies, the twins get off the line. Jon Minonno (139) had problems with petrol, but gave of his best. Bob Smith (1) rode to an easy win on the RGB Weslake, ahead of Malcolm Tunstall (266) on a Ducati with a touring motor.

# Twins take off

with carbon). The rebuild was completed at 1.30 on Sunday morning, and the determined American was up again at 7am to make final preparations for the very limited practice he would be able to get.

In its normal state, Tunstall's bike is a very interesting machine. The cylinder heads have been ported and gas-flowed by Syd's Place, the Ducati mecca of the States, but just as importantly, they are dual plug items. Together with the electronic ignition, Tunstall insists that this transforms the bike, giving instant response without the need for accelerator pumps on the carburetors, plus a big boost in fuel consumption. At the Daytona 200 — where he came in a very creditable 22nd — the Ducati averaged 25mpg.

Petrol was also a major concern of Jon Minonno and his tuner Jack Wilson, both from the Big D team of Texas. No-one had thought to inform the transatlantic visitors that petrol in this country has a much lower octane rating than that available in the States. Running on pump petrol had caused the Big D motor — a heavily modified eight-valve Triumph — to self destruct; a 13:1 compression ratio and four star juice just don't agree. Nothing daunted, a second-string motor was fitted with the compression dropped as low as possible. The team, however, did not have much hope of winning the race — they had seen Bob Smith and the RGB Weslake!

The potency of this combination had been clearly demonstrated at the first Battle of the Twins (*Classic Bike* July 82) and it was obvious to all, from the first lap of practice, that Smith could make the RGB fly. Even with a conventional 850cc motor (the 180-degree crank, 900cc unit having blown up) the Americans reckoned bike and rider were too fast to be beaten. Tidings of this British pair seem to have crossed the Atlantic, and could have a lot to do with the non-appearance of Jim Adamo.

Adamo is the number one twins racer in America and at present that means the world. As such, he commands a good deal of start money and being beaten by Smith would reduce his bargaining power. The feeling was that he did not want to risk it. Adamo excused himself by saying he'd blown the cases of his Duke. Tunstall — who had reason to know — dismissed this as risible, but not in those words.

Joaquin Folch had brought his John Player Norton from Spain, and he was soon comparing notes with Rob Sewell.



Sewell had bought himself one of the space-framed, Commando engined racers, campaigned so successfully by Peter Williams and Dave Croxford, to make himself competitive in twins racing.

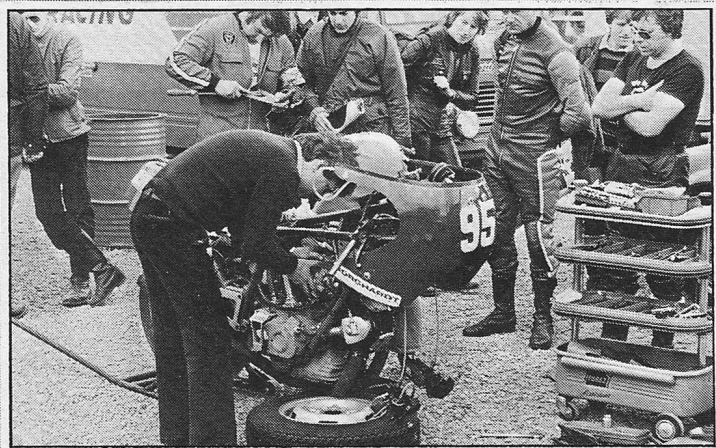
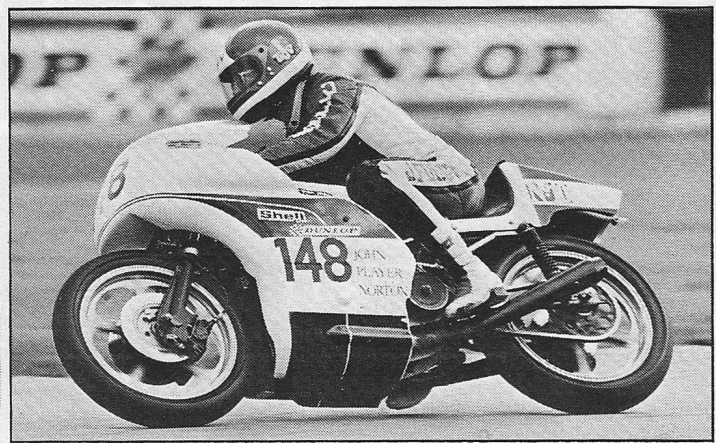
Norton's last fling was also represented — Ian Sutherland had brought his two Cosworth-engined Challenges for Jack Gow and John Findlay to ride. Probably the most powerful bikes on the grid, no-one expected them to win, though riders and spectators alike were mesmerised by the sight and sound (especially the sound) of those ill-fated machines. Fortunately Ian Sutherland is keen on seeing them raced, so there should be other opportunities to sample the experience.

More mundane Nortons were also on show, from the Kerby Norton of Merv Brookes to Lloyd Dickinson's well thumbed Manx Commando. Dickinson, who did so well in the first Battle, was disappointed when the magneto gave trouble during the qualifying race, while he was lying third. After overnight repairs, the bike was running again, but he was not happy with it and retired after eight of the 15 laps, following a very hairy moment at the chicane.

The Ducati factory was well represented, entries being split almost equally between the big 850-900cc twins and the smaller, Pantah-based bikes. Prime among the latter was Tony Rutter's Formula Two mount, 600ccs of world championship winning poke with a rider determined to use it all. In the qualifying race Rutter stuck so close to Smith's tail that they shared the time for the fastest lap. However, two questions remained: would Smith's bike last for fifteen laps, and was he riding on his limit? Rutter admitted to having nothing left in reserve.

Come the big day, practice provided further food for thought. Dave Railton — another Ducati exponent — pranged his bike on the first lap, writing off the forks and causing sundry other damage. The German pit crew attending him were an example of organised hurry. You could see that a lot of work was being done, but there was a systematic air to it — no tripping over one another or raised voices. The bike was ready with time to spare.

Railton seemed to be the major source of Ducati requirements, for not only did he lend Malcolm Tunstall that roadster



**Top:** Joaquin Folch brought his immaculate JPN all the way from Spain for this event.

**Above:** German mechanics worked swiftly and methodically to repair Dave Railton's Ducati, after a spill in practice.

**Main pic:** Tony Rutter (26) and Malcolme Tunstall had an exciting dice, until Rutter came a cropper.

motor, he provided Howard Lees with a complete machine. What he hadn't mentioned was that it was still on Isle of Man gearing!

Classic Bike's own Alan Cathcart was mounted on the sole Laverda to make it to Donington. Extensively modified by Maurice Ogier, the bored-out special had seen action in the Isle of Man, where the bumpy surface had allowed a swinging-arm operated fuel pump. To overcome Donington's billiard-table tarmac, Ogier had fitted a pump driven off the end of the crank, which lifted petrol from the low-mounted main tank to the header tank fixed atop the frame rails. Immaculately presented, the bike's orange livery added a distinctive dash of colour to the grid, its slightly offbeat exhaust note filling out the four-stroke harmony.

Jon Minnono was first away when the green starting light came on, his front wheel lifting as the eight-valve motor punched into full action. Tony Rutter and Bob Smith tucked themselves behind their screens and the whole thundering bunch made off down the Wheatcroft Straight.

When they came past again Smith was

leading. He got into a massive wobble coming out of the chicane, but still kept Rutter at bay, with Tunstall snapping at the F2 Ducati's back wheel. Minnono was fourth, comfortably ahead of Steve Wynne who headed a tightly bunched pack. After just one lap, Jack Gow retired his Challenge.

Smith was never threatened, but the action behind him heated up as the pack jostled for position. Merv Brooks and Cathcart came past side by side, then Benny Anerod's big Ducati suddenly found some extra power and swept up three places as if the other bikes were going backwards.

A rainbow shone out over the far side of the track, and we realised it was raining there. Aesthetically pleasing though it may have been, the rain gave the American riders some worry, and both Tunstall and Minnono slowed noticeably. The chicane too seemed to be slippery as several riders had nasty moments negotiating it. On lap seven Lloyd Dickinson broadsided his way out of it, and on the next lap he ran so wide he used up all the grass verge. On lap nine Tony Rutter tried just a little too hard and sent his bike into the straw

bales, fortunately without hurting himself.

Tunstall was now established safely in second place, with John Caffrey, Minnono, Wynne and Railton all tussling behind him. On lap ten Railton nipped into third place as Caffrey dropped back and Wynn slipped ahead of Minnono, whose motor was possibly suffering from the low octane petrol.

In another lap the American Triumph was back to fourth and as the track dried out Minnono began to chase Railton in earnest, closing a little each time. At the flag he was within striking distance but just failed to catch up.

Smith had won handsomely, and the RGB had proved it could stand hard use over fifteen laps (though it was misfiring on the last). Tunstall had acquitted himself well with an unchallengeable second (on a 'touring' motor, don't forget), and Railton repaid his hard-working team with a creditable third. Many riders had retired, the saddest surely being Rob Sewell, who was going consistently well in the group chasing third place when his front tyre punctured. Amazingly, he managed to stay on and bring the JPN back to the pits. When he has discovered the bike's full capabilities (this one, for example, brakes superbly, unlike the overbored twin he uses for vintage racing) he will be a twins racer to be reckoned with.

The first International Battle of the Twins was late starting, thanks to a delay of almost an hour while the TV company covering the so-called big races waited for its live transmission slot. To add insult to injury it was the only race they did not monitor for the press box (though both of the exceedingly dull and predictable Streetbike races were covered) — but that only shows how shortsighted they are. Twins racing is here to stay (at least one magazine is seriously considering backing a full series) because it provides a much more interesting spectacle than a procession of unobtainable, factory-tuned and sponsored bikes ever could. The bolides out there could — with a bit of work and lots of time — be yours or mine; with a bit more experience we could even be racing them. What other race encompassed such a variety of machines, from Smith's perfect RGB through the irreplaceable Challenges to Lloyd Dickinson's hard-used Norton? The storm is gathering; the thunder will not die away.

## RESULTS

1 Bob Smith (GB — RGB) 83.90mph, 2 Malcolme Tunstall (USA — Ducati), 3 Dave Railton (GB — Ducati), 4 Jon Minnono (USA — Triumph), 5 Steve Wynne (GB — Ducati), 6 Benny Anerod (Sweden — Ducati), 7 Gian Luigi Donez (Italy — Ducati), 8 Mark Smith (GB — Moto Guzzi), 9 Merv Brookes (GB — Norton), 10 Howard Lees (GB — Ducati), 11 Alan Cathcart (GB — Laverda), 12 Paul Barrett (GB — Norton), 13 John Caffrey (GB — Ducati), 14 Joaquin Folch (Spain — Norton), 15 John Findlay (GB — Norton).  
**Fastest lap:** Smith 86.25mph.