

Riders to Remember....Jackie Biggs

By Dudley Jones



Jackie Biggs

Jackie Biggs had been about a few years when I first witnessed the sport in 1962.

He had been a man of many teams, and mixed fortunes.

Jack is probably best remembered as being the man who was the person who came closest to being world champion without actually winning, only to tear defeat from the jaws of victory.

As many will know Jack scored a maximum 12 points from his first four rides in the 1951 championship, and needed only a point from his last race to take the title (closest rival Jack Young, had amassed only 12 points from all five of his rides).

Finishing last in Heat 19 still left him with a run-off for the title where, once again, he came in last behind Jack Young and Split Waterman.

However, my personal memories of Jackie are quite different.

By the early 60's Jack's days of stardom were long gone, and those of the old National league were numbered.

Jackie was still in the top flight (in those days riders rarely raced at two levels concurrently), but he was mostly reserve for Coventry Bees.

Now Coventry Bees were our 'bogey' team at Norwich.

Norwich consisted essentially of a couple of big stars, and a longish tail.

Coventry, on the other hand, had less in the way of top men, but were considerably more solid.

What tended to happen was that Coventry would let Fundin, Nygren and Betts (or Hedge depending on year) go for the win, while they just closed in behind.

All this made for tense last heats, and this is where Jack came in.

Typically Jack would score the odd point, until that last heat decider.

Waiting on the terraces for the announcement of the riders for the last heat, we tended to get used to hearing those fateful words 'reserve Jack Biggs will replace so and so in the final heat'.

As the tapes went up, and it didn't matter how good the Stars representatives in the race were, Jack would get the start to end all starts, and proceeded to scorch away for a win, securing the match for the Bees.

Jack, of course, rode on after the formation of the British League in 1965. In fact the amalgamation revitalised him, as it did several others.

Very sadly, and I believe it was in the early 1970's, Jackie, now well over 50 years old, was killed in a track accident in Australia.

He may not have held the World Trophy, but he left me with memories and respect for the ability he still, occasionally in the 1960s, could show when it counted. It occurs to me that the experience in 1951 might have taught him to save the best for the last ride of the night!

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