

Special Events at West Ham by Ted Breed



Memories of West Ham Speedway continue to surface, thank goodness! However, there were two 'Special' extra events, one staged weekly and the other whenever the occasion demanded, which require an airing I would think!

During the 1946-8 period or thereabouts, Riders were selected, each weekly meeting, to attempt to beat Bluey Wilkinson's one lap track record from a 'rolling' start. Not sure if the challenge was open to only West Ham riders or those, also, from the visiting team, the latter I suspect. I'm sure that this special event was held before racing started and was an extremely attractive and popular event. I saw many riders attempt to beat the record, so many that it followed that most were unsuccessful.

Did some rider achieve the seemingly impossible task? I just can't remember. But any of those supporters still around who visited the Custom House track around that time might well be able to provide an answer.

And then, of course, there was the 'Golden Helmet' Challenge. This was not confined to West Ham, all the top league teams participated. It went something like this!

If the rider holding the 'Golden Helmet' was in the visiting team, then the leading West Ham (or home team) rider would challenge the holder over four laps. If the Home rider won, he become the new holder of the 'Golden Helmet' and would need to meet a challenge when West Ham were on an away fixture. On what rider the 'Golden

Helmet' was first bestowed, I don't know, obviously nominated by some 'Speedway' entity.

The one lap record challenge was always popular and exciting. The 'Golden Helmet' not so. It was, after all, a race between two top riders and which one made the gate and headed the 'procession' usually won. Nothing at stake really for the fans to enthuse about.

Maybe the West Ham 'Rolling Start' one lap challenge was the brainchild of Arthur Atkinson and Stan Greatrex, the co-promoters at the time. It was, after all, a highly innovative and superb additive to an evenings racing.

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