

Dave Bickers and Greeves

LAST month we carried an article on the British record, and prospects, in 250 c.c. moto-cross. For British you could read Bickers. This has been a bad year for Bickers . . . and how weary he must be of reading that! No longer, as was pointed out in that article, is he achieving quite the attack of the earlier years, and that is natural enough. After winning two 250 c.c. titles he has no compulsion to prove himself. He is one of the best in the business . . . perhaps the best, who can say? He proved himself years ago and perhaps now he has tired a little. This is conjecture—champions rarely admit to this sort of introspection—but reasoned conjecture, we feel.

His accidents this year, and mechanical troubles with the Greeves which we take now to be developed at least dangerously near, if not beyond, the limit of power-with-reliability, have been little encouragement. So the change to Husqvarna is understandable though it may be considered drastic medicine.

His win at Shrubland Park at the Bank Holiday proves nothing—except, possibly, that he was inspired by the change. Apart from his 250 c.c. race win, his retirement in the Junior race is significant. Worried about possible engine seizure after a main-jet change, he dropped out. Obviously, riding a Husqvarna with extensive spares rather more distant than Thundersley, Essex, will mean that Bickers is going to nurse his engine more tenderly than in the past; and we recall the words of our continental correspondent, describing a visit to the competition shop at Husqvarna: “. . . and in the Husqvarna factory even a world champion does not seem to be forgiven for that sort of treatment!” The treatment: a damaged piston and cylinder. So if Bickers really hankers after a works Husqvarna a more gentle riding style may well be seen.

Whatever financial loss is suffered by Bickers in his break with Greeves, the loss to the factory must be considerable too. Financially because Bickers was synonymous with Greeves and his successes must have accounted for a notable part of their sales of competition machines, and in prestige. Despite the excellences of other riders, in British scrambling now there are just two riders who have champion status: Jeff Smith and Dave Bickers. The factories who have their services gain immeasurably.

A few years ago the Greeves was superior, we believe, to similar machines from other British factories, and the factory had the inestimable benefit of Bickers as number-one rider. Now the difference between rival makes has diminished, perhaps vanished, and Bickers has moved on.

Result: equality . . . with Greeves perhaps just a little more equal!

The 250 c.c. class gives a fascinating picture of alternating fortunes. In early years it was Jawa who dominated, then came Greeves, now it is Husqvarna, next year . . . CZ, perhaps. Or it could be Jawa again, to judge from their latest machine which is shown on this page. The factory has scrapped all current models in favour of this one for next year.