

# SPEEDWAY AT FULL THROTTLE

John Chaplin and John Somerville

Speedway historian John Chaplin and image archivist John Somerville have teamed up again to produce the fourth in their highly praised series about the world's most exciting sport. As you turn the pages you can almost smell the methanol and burning Castrol R racing oil, as Chaplin and Somerville delve into Speedway's exciting past, revelling in events and personalities that have won it legions of diehard fans. All of the romance, drama, heroism, glamour and bravery of the sport can be found in this journey back through Speedway history, recalling its famous and not-so-famous characters, and the excitement of its days of glory.

*Speedway at Full Throttle* is the latest in their successful series to follow *Speedway Superheroes*, *Speedway: The Greatest Moments*, and *Speedway Legends*. All the books featured illustrations of outstanding quality, many dating from the sport's pioneer years of the 1920s, and the latest Chaplin / Somerville epic continues their championship-winning high standards.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

John Chaplin is generally acknowledged throughout the speedway world to be the leading authority on the history of the sport. An author and broadcaster, his pedigree goes back almost sixty years, and this book is based on his writings during that time, including his acclaimed regular contributions to *Speedway Star* magazine and his own hugely successful *Vintage Speedway Magazine*.

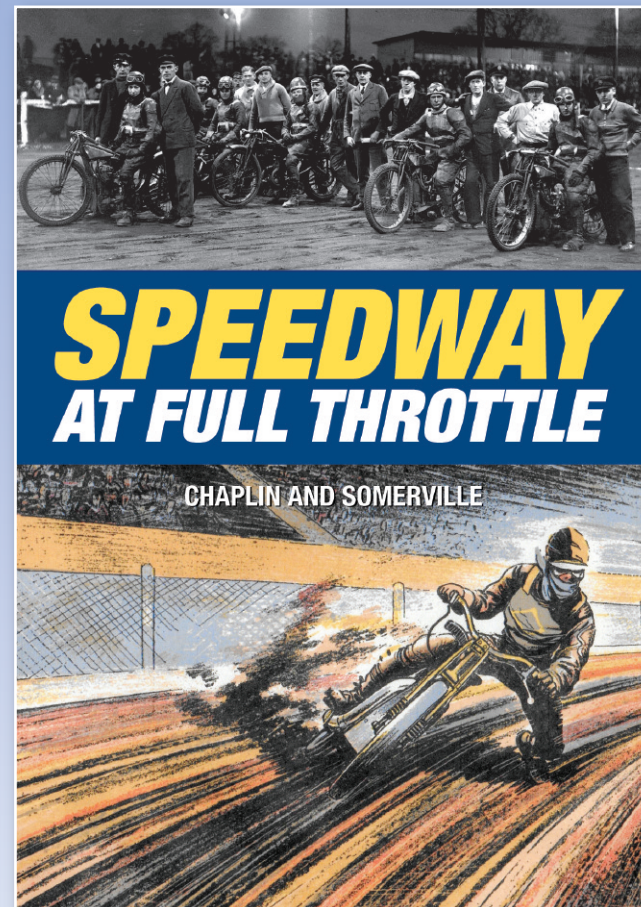


John Somerville has spent a fortune acquiring from the world's top speedway photographers their best and most vivid pictures. They appear in publications throughout the world. He is dedicated to preserving the sport's most iconic images.

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# SPEEDWAY AT FULL THROTTLE



Left: Wright-Wood's favourite subject: Peter Craven captured in unforgettable, fluid action.

Right: Glamour girl. The amazing Alma in full riding kit, complete with shiny boots, and ready to attract the thrill-seeking crowds.



Above: You did what . . . ? Alec Moseley, holding the tool of his trade, delights a gathering of the Tiger's West Ham team mates, Eric Chitty (left), Arthur Atkinson (centre) and Ken Brett with the tale of how he managed to trick their captain over his 'misbehaving' bike.

Example of a double page spread

Chapter 1

## HUNTING'S TEAM OF MADCAP MARAUDERS

THERE couldn't be a more distinguished line-up than this. They are the daring adventurers who first brought the sport half way across the world and really established speedway in Britain.

While not forgetting the brave English pioneers who put on such a spectacular show on that memorable day behind the King's Oak Hotel in Epping Forest in February 1928, when these boys with the kangaroos emblazoned on their aviators turned up they rolled there was quite a lot to learn.

This picture was taken three years on from the High Beech bonanza. It's a strength-in-depth Australia ready to take on the Old Enemy. And every one of them is not only a maverick in the true Aussie tradition, but nowadays they would all be described as speedway superstars.

From the left they are Max Grosskreutz, Lionel Van Praag, Charlie Spinks, Len Woods, Frank Arthur, Ron Johnson and Billy 'Cyclone' Lamont.

Their leader out front was the biggest star of them all – Victor Nelson Huxley. Hux, in his way, was a sportsman with as formidable a reputation as any modern day motor sport champion. As a master of his art he was someone the crowds loved or hated in equal measure. He was ruthlessly successful and he pulled in the paying customers.

1931

HUNTING'S TEAM OF MADCAP MARAUDERS

Below the bonanza picture in 1931. A lot of the riders here were in AJ Hunting's party of the original sixteen that won the England test 1928. From the left – AJ Hunting, (standing); No. 10 riding as the first rider; Lionel Van Praag, on the right; Billy Buchanan in the cab; Guy Widdell outside; Fred Barber; Colin Kennedy; Jack Kinney; Bill Lewis, and Sam Cooper.

And this is the happy star spangled gathering at the outbreak outpost. Thousands, most of Australia's original massive force before setting out to conquer the world ... first step England.

The man who led his Madcap Marauders to the other side of the globe, AJ Hunting, can be seen standing on the left holding on to the mudguard of that magnificent vehicle on which sits V.L. Hunting, Lionel Van Praag is on the roof and among the others is Billy Buchanan, in the cab, and Ben Urrain.

He came over in the first wave of AJ Hunting's madcap marauders in early 1928. After weeks getting race rusty on board the boat from Australia, he disembarked in Italy and took the train to Paris. There he caught an Imperial Airways flight to Croydon and landed in England ready and eager for action.

A scant 24 hours later he was at the High Beech track having worked on a bike which had been supplied to him – complete with brakes, silencers and lights. Dirt track racing was very new to Britain and the locals knew little about the art of broadsideing – until Hux went into the cinder-smoking first bend at King's Oak and promptly shattered the one and four lap track records.

The amazed crowd was stunned into silence at the spectacle. Until the times were announced, and then the fans went wild. Hux took it all in his stride. He was never known to lose his cool.

Modern enthusiasts may marvel at today's Grand Prix stars' stables of machinery, but even in those early days Hux kept up to seven bikes and two full time mechanics because he was in such demand that he was riding five and a half days – and sometimes nights as well – every week. It was not unknown for the big names to take part in two meetings a day.

It was, of course, only a matter of time before aspiring British riders began to match the skill and abilities of the Australian invaders. The breakthrough came in the year before this picture was taken, in 1930 when the first official Test series between England and Australia took place.

After an initial painful defeat at Wimbledon in the opening Test, England went on to win the next four that year. When they got around to the one pictured, the fourth match of the 1931 series at Belle Vue, the home side was leading by two matches to one.

They won this one too, even though in desperation the Aussies had recalled the legendary Lamont. The match report records that the Australians didn't cope with the track as well as the English riders. Conditions were 'rather treacherous' because of rain.

Final score: England 53 Australia 41. True to form, Huxley topped his side's score with ten points. England went on to post a 4 – 1 series win.

Below: Los Angeles World Final 1982. It is Heat 12, Penhall leads with Dennis on the outside just over Bruce's shoulder. 'He came out of the turn first and beat me,' Dennis remembered. Following them is England's Dave Jessup whose engine failed and allowed Poland's Edward Jancarz to take third place.

