

A WINNER

Ok, OK here we go again with some more dope on the F-1 Ducati story that I'll link to the Mike Hailwood story. Motor Cycle News has been doing a lot of pre-race coverage of the Mike Hailwood comeback and the bike he is running. Again this article has been taken from Motor Cycle News, this time from their May 24, 1978 issue. I don't know if you folks can get a hold of this publication, but I think it is an excellent journal dealing with many aspects of motorcycling. They do a lot of race coverage, road tests, bits and pieces and they are up to date on what is happening on the motorcycle scene all over the world. Their news is fresh. You don't have to wait three months to read about what happened at Daytona, or at the Isle of Man or Imola, they have the info in week. Hope you all enjoy it.

MOTOR CYCLE NEWS: Barry Ditchburn tests F-1 Ducati Mike Hailwood will be riding at the TT. Photos by MCN. May 24, 1978 issue.

The Hailwood Ducati is the first bike I've ridden hard against the stop coming out of Esso. And as I came out of Knicker Brook I thought how good it will be down the Cronk-y-Voddy straight.

I didn't go round the corners very quickly as I didn't want to flip such a valuable equipment down the road but the power was really good and I'm sure I could knock a few seconds off my best lap times.

I did only six flying laps of Oulton Park. My best was 1 min 51.5 seconds which is just under 90 MPH. My best on a 750 Yamaha is 1m 39 seconds which speaks very highly for what is basically a production roadster.

I understand 1 min. 50 sec's. was good enough for front row of the Formula one race at Oulton. If the TT had not been so close and we could have used the circuit a bit longer, I am sure I would have gone round faster.

Bill Smith, who kindly let us in on his practice session, was getting round in 1 min 59 sec s. on the Bimota Suzuki. But I am digressing. Back to the Ducati.

The last time I raced a four stroke twin was back in 1969-70 when I rode a Weslake Triumph. And the fantastic engine braking of the big Duke brought memories flooding back.

I don't use the back brake very much at the best of times but, with the Ducati, I used only the front anchor. Operation was nice and light and I squeezed the lever to the bars without any misgivings about the behaviour of the Brembo twin discs.

Handling was taut but good enough to make me feel at home on the bike immediately. I had to think about changing gear with my left foot -- the action is one up and four down--but the bike's greatest attribute is the flexibility of the engine.

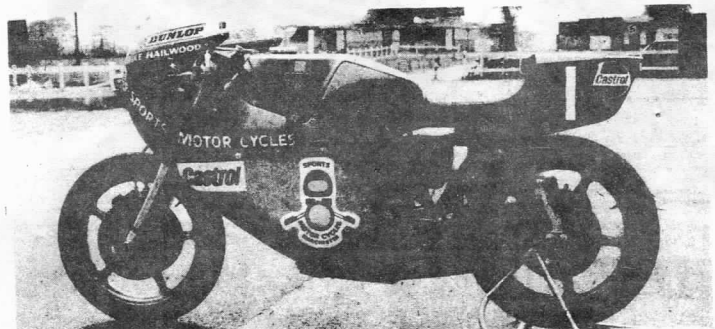
It seemed the sort of engine which never needs maximum revs. I took it to 8,500 in top. And although it never dropped below 4,000, the engine was at best at around 6,000 rpm.

It was virtually impossible to arrive in a corner in the wrong gear. I purposely messed about to pull higher gear coming out of corners, often taking a big handful on the exit



Steve Wynne (left), of Sports Motor Cycles with tester Barry Ditchburn and Mike Hailwood's TT Ducati. Note brake pedal on the right, for Mike's injured foot, translucent petrol tank strip and oil cooler air intake.

Such handfuls could be exciting with a big two stroke but the power of the Ducati is beautifully progressive. You don't get the kick of a Yamaha--just real gutsy strength!



The sleek lines of the formula racer with one-piece tank and seat arrangement. Fuel consumption is expected to be around 40 mpg, but Hailwood and his team-mates will probably take on three gallons after the third of five laps.

Suspension was a bit stiff for me but the special Girling shockers are claimed to be 100 percent better than the original Marzocchis. I weight 11½ stone and the bike tented to hop over the bumps

I would not have the bars as steeply raked as Hailwood but the bike was not tailored for me. With five different runners for the TT, the entrants have a standard tank-seat unit with different padding for each jockey.

With so little weight that I was able to pick it up a little going down the Cascades, the Ducati is deceptively fast. There was no fuss or vibration and it never felt it was really moving

It may not be the quickest in the world but the big Duke is sheer pleasure to ride. I think it has ideal power characteristics for the Isle of Man

I can imagine it really getting into stride from Ramsey and over the Mountain.

I don't know about Hailwood but, on last year's performance alone, the bike is a potential winner.