

FRANKLIN ROUNDUP

‘Dobsy’ Takes 2009 Australian Historic Road Racing Championships! Another Great Kiwi Rider Takes the Title

‘Dobsy’ – Paul Dobbs, veteran of classic motorcycle circuits - cut short his European tour this year, missing out his usual races at the Isle of Man when his bike developed problems. The problems had a great outcome. The early return to New Zealand gave him a chance to compete in the Australian Road Racing Championships, usually missed because of the cross over of events in the northern and southern hemispheres.

Dobsy takes up the tale: “Last time I had ridden Peter Lodge’s Norton ES2 in Australia I had had too little time on her before we headed over and Phillip Island wasn’t kind to us. We’d managed two 3rd places behind Wayne Gardner and Dave Cole but only after breaking both fast motors, 2 belts, chasing fueling and ignition problems, a faulty tyre and to really finish the weekend: a fast crash.

“This time testing had gone well and we were quietly confident we had things under control. We had managed 4 laps of Pukekohe and a day at Taupo setting up before the bike was packed up for the trip to Australia. We arrived Wednesday morning, ready for the racing on the 4th, 5th and 6th of September. We collected the bike and fuel and made the 2 hour drive to Morgan Park at Warwick with Janice, Bridget and I in the front and Pete in the back with his bike. He seemed happiest there!

“Thursday was unofficial practice and at the briefing we were told to watch out for snakes and kangaroos. As if I didn’t have enough to do learning the track. Almost before we could unload, the sheep jokes started. Some things in Australia don’t change. The track was short but very tricky to learn and it was critical to gear for as few gear changes as possible. Luckily the chassis set-up we had done worked well, if lacking a little rear grip off the turns. We finished



the day lapping at 1min 13 sec and just ahead of the Aussie guys.

“On Friday we had only an 8 minute practice and a 10 minute qualifying session so the time spent on Thursday really paid off. Practice went OK but in qualifying the rear tyre went off badly and I was sideways for most of it. I did manage one good lap to get pole with a 1min 12.83sec lap - 0.5sec ahead of 2nd place.

“Saturday and Sunday’s races consisted of 1 non-championship and 1 championship race per day. The rain had come down and the track was damp for the first race and we had a new rear tyre so it was steady away. I had a few moments in the early laps but managed to make a break and crossed the line with a 12.3sec margin.

“Race 2 was the points race. We had fitted a new clutch, the track was dry and warm so it was time to see what we could do. The bike stood on the back wheel for the first 3 gears and with a bit of elbowing I was in the lead by turn 2. The bike was running like a dream and we managed to lap at 1min 11.36sec. At the finish we had a 13sec lead, the sheep jokes kept coming though. These Aussies just can’t help themselves.

Saturday night was when I realized the title was only over the 2 races so we had a chance at it. I’d better not stuff it up on Sunday. The first race on Sunday I had a steady run to save the bike for the important points race in the afternoon. We still managed to win by 13 sec.

“At the start of the big race things went a bit pear shaped. Off the start I missed 3rd gear and the motor over revved badly then went into 4th with a thump. The motor was still running OK but had a bad vibration. I still managed to get into the lead at turn 3 but wasn’t sure if it would finish the race. I put some space between them and me and managed the gap as best as I could without revving the motor too much. It all came good at the end and we now have an Aussie title to our name. A New Zealand one would be better but there’s still time, I guess.

“Thanks to owner and service engineer Pete and Janice for letting me ride their amazing ES2. It just goes to show you can’t beat a good Kiwi engineer and pushrods.” ■

