

Dave “Living Legend” Cole Takes it North

Racing the European Classic Circuit

Classic motorcycle racer and four times National Formula 2 and 600 Champion Dave Cole is still buzzing after his first season on European classic circuits. Dave, wife Sue and little daughter Georgia are settling back into rural Glenbrook life after a six week trip that took in the four major British raceways of East Fortune in Scotland, Donington Park, Cadwell Park, Brands Hatch, and the famous Chimay circuit in Belgium.



Pulling a caravan and with a 1961 McIntyre Matchless G50 and an AJS 7R 350 loaded into the van, it was Dave's first taste of international racing outside New Zealand and Australia, where he burst onto the Aussie national circuit like a whirlwind. In his career, Dave has notched up four New Zealand National Championships on bikes as diverse as a Yamaha TZ250, Ducati 748 and Yamaha YZF600 and four Australian 500 Classic Championships, shattering several lap records. Quiet and unassuming, Dave is called a “living legend” in the classic motorcycling community and is twice winner of the NZ Classic Motorcycling Award. As well as his New Zealand Championships, in 2007 he raced wheel-to-wheel with 1987 World 500 Champion Wayne Gardner at Phillip Island, and won. World champion Kevin Schwantz knew Cole was the man to beat at Pukekohe in 2009 and it was a close run thing all the way.

Dave started racing motorbikes in the late '80s, on a converted motocross bike fitted with road tyres. Originating in Eketahuna, his home track was Manfeild.

“I learnt my way around a track down there and around Pukekohe, Wanganui, Paeroa, Ruapuna, Levels and Teretonga and took up classic racing eight years ago. I've ridden Ross Graham's G50 1961 Matchless for the past eight years now, mainly at Pukekohe at the

Classic Festivals and at the Labour Weekend Classic TT races. I won the Australian 500 Classic Champs twice on that and twice on the new bike we took to the UK, the 1961 McIntyre Matchless G50. It has a different chassis setup, smaller and lighter.”

Dave says it was a whole new world on the northern circuits, not the least because of racing on unfamiliar tracks. “There was not a lot of practise before racing – it was a matter of trying to learn five new tracks in 10 minutes each, then we were off. There was no point in doing any changes to the bike. It was pretty challenging, a lot easier the second time around! Most of the guys were younger, riding other people's bikes. At Chimay, there were five or six really good riders on very good machines. Chimay has an atmosphere similar to the Pukekohe meetings, with 5-600 riders. Everyone camped out in tents and caravans – it was pretty relaxed. The people were great and happy to lend us stuff when we broke things!”

Despite racing on unfamiliar tracks, Dave won three of his four races at Cadwell on the McIntyre and came in third in one of his races at Chimay. He finished most races in 4th-6th place and met some familiar faces on the circuit, including ‘Dobbs’ (Paul Dobbs) at Cadwell.

Dave's bikes arrived back in New Zealand two weeks after the family and underwent “a big overhaul,” in preparation for the TT races at