

EDITORIAL COMMENTARY

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Rules Change

A lot of people were disappointed this year at Daytona because Dick Mann did not ride. His G-50 Matchless, the same machine he used last year in his thrilling chase after Don Burnett, was not approved for this year. The racing frame is the part that was not approved. A meeting of the Competition Committee members at Daytona, turned down Mann, Jess Thomas, and Tom Clark, basing their decision on the November meeting decision that this racing frame was not suitable for Class C.

The newspapers picked up the story, and some press agency ballooned it into a threatened lawsuit, injunction to stop the race, and even more, all inferred to be Mann's intentions. Dick said he did not know of any such plans. In Florida, he was in no position to remove this AMA ruling.

Back in California, things were different. Dick entered this G-50 in the Jimmy Phillips Memorial TT race, and had no problems. The AMA made no move to try and forbid it, three months after they had announced it to be unacceptable.

We do not know what it is about the G-50 racing frame that causes it to be unacceptable. There are a lot of things we do not know about how this governing body goes about deciding who and what can play the game here. The AMA tells little to its members or the public. All they tell us is to join up.

But, we do know what this decision against the G-50 appeared to be, to the average motorcyclist on hand. It appeared to be a power play inside the trade to keep out this unwanted machine. Naturally, when the governing body does not choose to make clear its reasons for a decision, it leaves the field wide open to public speculation.

At the Awards Night, Dick Mann was among the finalists in the AMA Popular Boy Rider Contest. Naturally he was not present, he is no hypocrite. Lin Kuchler had to make some statement when he came to Mann's name, and Lin told us not to believe the papers, that Mann was not doing, or going to do, all that the papers said. Lin went on to state that the AMA would back Dick Mann 100%, just so long as he goes along by THEIR RULES. Last year, Dick rode his G-50 going along with their rules, and he was a hero. This year, he wanted to do the same thing, but he's set on the fence instead. Rules change.

Dropped

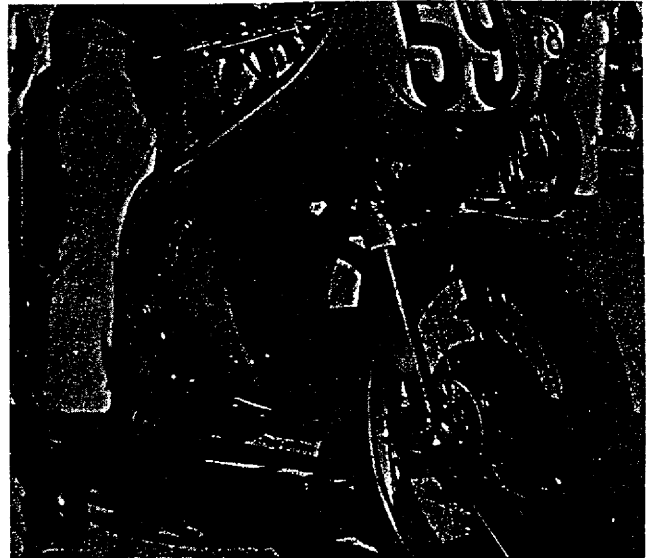


Other things change too. The man who submitted the G-50 and got it approved, Jimmy Hill, is now dropped from the Competition Committee. He'd been a member over 25 years, as Indian Co. service manager, and race tuner. Last summer, Indian was closed down, and the Matchless franchise sold to Joe Berliner. Jimmy was out of a job, no longer connected with the trade. It is the announced policy of the AMA to restrict Competition Committee membership to persons employed in the trade. So out went Jim Hill, and over a quarter century of service to the sport. Now, at Daytona, he was unable to even get a hearing from his former associates, in his effort to prove his case that he DID submit the G-50 frame for approval.

Meanwhile, the Competition Committee still carries another member on its rolls, Jim Davis, who has no trade connection visible. Jim is a stone cutter. He's a valuable man too. He must be lucky, too. Jim Hill was just valuable, and that's not merit enough to be a mover and shaker in this fine American sport of ours.

What About This?

Although we now understand that a racing frame made by Matchless for the G-50CSR as sold in America, is not acceptable for Class C racing, we see where it is quite OK to fit a Matchless racing wheel to a Triumph for Class C racing. Some of the same Competition Committee members who decided against the G-50 frame, sat in the inspection line and let Skip Van Leeuwen go on through OK with a front wheel brake from a 7R AJS fitted into his Triumph forks. It was pretty plain to see too. Of course, maybe this is within the rules, or maybe the inspection people were too busy to notice.



Matchless racing front brake fitted to Skip Van Leeuwen's Triumph.

Diluted Glory

The AMA decided this year to spread around the glory in the Popular Girl Rider Contest, and declared all 10 finalists as winners. This meant the public relations firm could send out announcements to newspapers in 10 different places instead of one, and hope for 10 times as much good publicity in the local press. It also meant that there were 10 very distressed and angered girls, who had been hustling hard to win, only to find their chances removed by the heavy hand of bureaucracy, well meant, but fumbling.

There's Still Hope

There's a cynical comment one often hears these days that goes, "You can't fight City Hall." It is the ordinary man's typical way of expressing his dismay at how his public servants have become his masters through bureaucratic techniques.

This saying was well used at Daytona, what with all the controversy over the G-50. It carried a measure of truth with regard to the immediate situation, the parties concerned were helpless to do anything at all to present their position to the AMA people.

But, in the long view, acceptance of this philosophy will hurt our sport. The AMA is very necessary to the sport here. It is still a very imperfect organization. It is, however, our only national motorcycle organization.

We believe in supporting the AMA, belonging to it, and then putting our full attention to exposing the numerous flaws it displays with the view that such publicity cannot help but result in gradual improvement and correction so badly needed.