EARLY WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS - AUSTRALIA

C. Jewes   1.3.2014

'World's Championship Series'   1932-'34
'World's Speedway Derby'   1930-'42
- For 'World Derby' read World Championship. -

The World Champions' page of the Speedway Champions website covers such known unofficial championships prior to the formalization of the title by the ACU (with FICM recognition) in 1936, including the 1933 Australian World's Championship in Sydney. But for a good part of this decade, in parallel to, and with equal ACU authority to the UK Wembley event, a less well-known equivalent championship series was staged in Australia, the "World's Speedway Derby". To understand its genus it is best to consider the two competitions alongside each other. (Full results, plus venues, dates, formats, etc. as well as Line-ups, are given at the end of this document.)

World's Championship Series.

For the 1932/'33 season the Sydney Showground promoters, (Hoskins, Parker, Arthur, Ormston, Beardsmore,) organised their own World Championship Series (WCS) with a troupe of English tourists and returning Australian stars. (The same squads also took part in the Aus. v. England Test Match series.) The WCS was initially to have qualifying rounds at each state capital in which the top scorer from each of two sets of heats, for Aussie and for English riders respectively, would meet in a match race final, and points were to be accumulated for the Final meeting. An earlier World Championship staging in France at the Buffalo Stadium, Paris, which had been won by Bluey Wilkinson, was said to have constituted one round, though this is thought to have been 'creative publicity' to hype up the WCS and raise its status above that of the French 'Championnat du Monde'.

The premise for the Series got modified along the way and only WA, SA and NSW staged rounds: at the first in Perth 3 riders went into the final of the night after 2 Brits tied on points; in Adelaide 4 men went from the heats into the final. The concluding World Final qualifiers were to constitute "*available* 1sts and 2nds" from each of the rounds. On the night, the winner of a recent championship event (by a different promotion) at Melbourne Exhibition (VIC) was added to the WA, SA and NSW winners along with the local Sydney runner-up, van Praag, with Wilkinson and Lamont attributed as Paris qualifiers. In fact Lamont was not Paris runner-up, as printed, but the preceding year's Parisian World Champion. English runners-up from Perth and Melbourne were not on the programme, and the trophy recipient that night, and the ultimate accolade of World Champion, was determined by total points scored from the night's heats, - 7 riders racing 3 heats each, 3 riders per heat. Harry Whitfield proved to be unbeaten with 9 pts. (scoring was 3,2,0, as third place man was last.)

During the course of the Series local press articles often reported the qualifier-meeting winner as World Champion, which, along with the format and qualification vagaries/ /contradictions, has led, in current times, to confusion about the Series. This has been compounded by the knowledge that the winners at Adelaide and Melbourne (at least,) were presented with a silver cup, the Wyatt Trophy, by the captain of the P&O liner on which the squad sailed to Australia, and that he had donated, and according to the Final programme was to present, the trophy for the Sydney Final winner and ultimate World Champion. It has today been identified that the Wyatt cup(s) presented at the rounds (photo rt, with JS Hoskins in Adelaide,) was not the same piece of silverware as the Wyatt Cup presented at the Final in Cpt. Wyatt's absence by a Miss Peggy Wormald, (photo'd with Cup and Hoskins on main webpage,) the captain being presumed to have sailed, given the number of weeks between the SA and VIC qualifiers and the Sydney Final.

FOR THE WINNER of the championship for which dirt track speedmen will compete on Monday night, a cup has been presented by Captain F. N. Wyatt, of the P. and O. branch liner Bendigo. Captain Wyatt is shown handing the trophy to the manager of the touring speedmen (Mr. Hoskins).

= Mon. Jan. 2nd 1933 @ Adelaide, SA

In the next season, 1934/'35, the first WCS event, - programmed as one item at Sydney on Jan. 6th 1934 along with a second item, a Match Race event between Vic Huxley and Tiger Stevenson - , was rained off, but was re-staged three weeks later in a much modified form. Presumably because of non-availability of the field originally lined up, the WCS event was to become a 'best-of-3' MRC between the 2 riders originally paired for an Match

Race on the first date, but now for the title of 'World's Motor Cycle Championship'.   An Englishman was again the winner; there were no more Series meetings, the WSC was abandoned and not re-staged the following season.

World's Speedway Derby

The World's Speedway Derby (WSD,) was an initiative by the Sydney promotion, after the hiatus of 1934/'35, to stage an official World Championship in Australia, the birthplace of speedway. Back in 1930, after 4-plus years of dirt-track racing that had seen the rise of state and national championships since 1926 the ultimate championship of the new sport, a competition to find the Champion of the World, was still awaited.   In Australia at this time, as elsewhere in the Commonwealth, ultimate control of motorcycle sport lay with the ACU, head-quartered in London and operating through its regional authorities around the globe. The Davies Park promoters in Brisbane, Queensland, ('Speedway Ltd'; E.J. Holker et al,) guessed, correctly as it subsequently transpired, that a request to stage a World Dirt Track Championship, (speedway was still a term that covered racing on other surfaces, including concrete ovals,) would be denied them, so went ahead with a championship entitled 'World's Dirt Track Derby' in December 1930, the winner of which was American Ray Tauser, (photo rt.) He was followed home in the Final by locally-attached riders Vic Huxley and Dicky Smythe.

There was no such competition in the next 2 years, and the big events elsewhere, i.e. Sydney, in the following seasons need clarification, - see below - , but it is known that in October 1935 the Sydney promoters, Empire Speedways Ltd, (m.d. Frank Arthur,) applied to ACU(NSW) for permission to resurrect their World Championship title event and hold an official World Championship in Australia in 1936. The application went through ACU(Aus) to London but was turned down. Whether the ACU were already planning a World Championship for themselves at Wembley in '36, or it was the Australian's request that spurred them into action and re-title the annual 'Star' event we may never know, - but they did grant permission for an Australian staging of an equivalent international event providing the title did not include the word 'Championship'. They substituted 'Derby' and staged the World's Speedway Derby on February 8th 1936, seven months before the first Wembley World Championship. The Derby ran in parallel with the Wembley event during the latter half of the decade, with the same names in the frame, - Milne, Wilkinson, Duggan; van Praag was a 3x runner-up - , and only the onset of war in the Pacific in 1942 brought it to an end.

1933 to 1935

In the years prior to the official Derby of 1936 the Sydney Showground staged a number of events between big-name Dirt stars, including their unofficial World Championships detailed above, certain winners of which have sometimes been included amongst Derby winners, but their precise status remained uncertain, for contemporaneous press reports conflict. Two days after the 1936 WSD in Sydney, Brisbane's Courier Mail in its report said "*The Derby was instituted in 1930 when the American rider, Ray Tauser, won it. In 1933 it went to an Englishman, Jack Ormston, and in 1934 was annexed by 'Tiger' Stevenson. Last year Bluey Wilkinson won*".

In a preview a few days ahead of the forthcoming 1937 event the local Sydney Morning Herald reviewed the WSD series saying "*This will be the fourth Derby held in Sydney and none of the previous winners will be competing. The first was won by R Tauser the American rider and J Ormston (England) was the second winner. M Grosskreutz (Australia) won last season*".
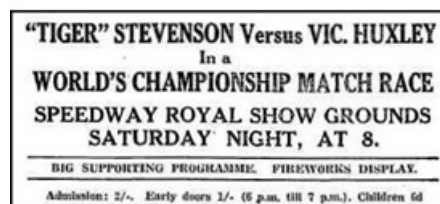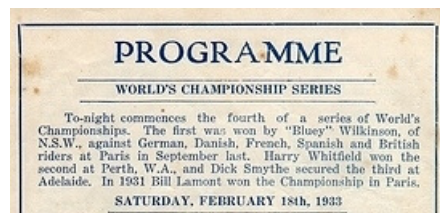
So the Herald reporter seems to have been aware of, or recognised, only one event from '34 and '35. Tiger Stevenson won the 'World's Motor Cycle Championship', a re-vamped WCS meeting, at the Showground on Jan.27th 1934; on Jan. 7th 1935 it staged a 'Grand Challenge Race' between Wilkinson and Stevenson on a 'best-of-three' basis which Bluey won. Yet he *was* a participant in the 1937 Derby!   It has to be concluded that the Brisbane Courier made a wrong association with respect to Bluey Wilkinson's Grand Challenge MRC, which should therefore be discounted from a list of Derbys. Whilst the Herald's '37 report may also seem contradictory, it now becomes correct that 4 Derbys will have been held in Sydney. It is also correct that Tauser was the first Derby winner: it does not claim that he was a winner of one of the 3 previous Sydney events, - they being Ormston, Stevenson & Grosskreutz, (the former, Ormston, being winner of the second Derby, it being the first held in Sydney, in 1933.)

1933 & 1934 Sydney Derbys / 'World's Championships'

Jack Ormston's win at Sydney in 1933, cited in both press reports above, is identified as being the meeting of Feb. 18th, the programme for which, (extract, below rt,) affirms the event to have been one of the 'World's Championship Series', (with a few press reports terming it as that, but many giving it as the 'International Dirt Track Motor Cycle Championship'.) Further press archive research confirms this result of Feb.18th to have been

Ormston's only major success that year and therefore to have been the WCS qualifier meeting. Similarly, Stevenson's 1934 'Derby' success on Jan.27th was the re-vamped WCS match race against Huxley. It is considered that the words 'World' and 'International' were used synonymously and that for most purposes Motor Cycle was superfluous, (see press advert, rt.)

In conclusion, it would seem that having sought to have the World Championship competition that they started in 1933 receive official international status, when denied, the Sydney promotion maintained the link by retrospectively deeming the Showground qualifier meetings (but not those of other tracks/promotions, merely their own,) to be Derby championship equivalents, whereas the WCS Final of March 4th 1933, won by Harry Whitfield, was apparently allowed to remain to stand on its own merit.

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 Research: D. Austin & G. Frost.

PROGRAMME
WORLD'S CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES
To-night commences the fourth of a series of World's Championships. The first was won by "Bluey" Wilkinson, of N.S.W., against German, Danish, French, Spanish and British riders at Paris in September last. Harry Whitfield won the second at Perth, W.A., and Dick Smythe secured the third at Adelaide. In 1931 Bill Lamont won the Championship in Paris.
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18th, 1933.

"TIGER" STEVENSON Versus VIC. HUXLEY
In a
WORLD'S CHAMPIONSHIP MATCH RACE
SPEEDWAY ROYAL SHOW GROUNDS
SATURDAY NIGHT, AT 8.
BIG SUPPORTING PROGRAMME.   FIREWORKS DISPLAY.
Admission: 2/-. Early doors 1/- (6 p.m. till 7 p.m.), Children 6d

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WCS & WSDs : Results, Venues, Dates, Formats, etc.

Australian-staged Unofficial World Championships and World Derby alternatives.

"WORLD'S CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES" (1932 – '34)

"WORLD'S SPEEDWAY DERBY"   (1930 – '42)

	TITLE	VENUE	DATE	FORMAT	WINNER		SECOND		THIRD	
'30/'31	'World's Dirt Track Derby'	Davies Pk, Brisbane QLD	1930, Dec.13	4 Hts, 2SF, F.	**Ray Tauser**	USA	Vic Huxley	AUS	Dick Smythe	AUS
'31/'32			1931/'32	NO COMP'N						
'32/'33	'Championnat du Monde'	Buffalo Stdm, Paris FR	1932, Aug 28	* (see below)	**Bluey Wilkinson**		Charles Bellisent FR		Leo Kilmeyer	AST
			THIS MTG CLAIMED AS FIRST OF AUST. WC SERIES BUT CONSIDERED "CREATIVE PUBLICITY".							
	'World's Championship Series'	Claremont, Perth WA	Dec. 3	2x6 Hts, MR.F**	Harry Whitfield ENG		Bill Clibbett ENG		Max Grosskreutz**	
	" " "	Wayville, Adelaide SA	1933, Jan. 2	Hts, 4-man F.	Dicky Smythe		Bluey Wilkinson		Norman Evans ENG	
	" " "	Melbourne Exhib'n VIC	Jan.28	4 3-man Hts, 4-man F.	Jack Chapman		Larry Boulton ENG		Bert Spencer	
	" " / WS Derby	Sydney Showground NSW	* Feb.18	2x6 Hts, MR.F.	Jack Ormston ENG		Lionel van Praag		- (match race Final)	
			aka "International Dirt Track M/C Chmpshp"							
	'World's Championship'- Final	Sydney Showground NSW	Mar. 4	7 3-man Hts	**Harry Whitfield** ENG		Billy Lamont		=Jack Ormston ENG	} 6 pts
						9 pts		8 pts	= B.Wilkinson	
'33/'34	'World's Championship'	Sydney Showground	1934, Jan. 6	(Hts + F.)	Rained-off					
	Wld Chmpshp / WS Derby	Sydney Showground	Jan.27	MRC.	Tiger Stevenson ENG		Vic Huxley AUS		- (match race, 2-0)	
			aka "World's Motor Cycle Chmpshp"							
'34/'35			1934/'35	NO COMP'N						
'35/'36 on	'World's Speedway Derby'	Sydney Showground	1936 Feb. 8	6 Hts, 3SF, F.	**Max Grosskreutz** AUS		Vic Huxley AUS		Wal Phillips ENG	
	" " "	" "	1937 Jan. 9	6 Hts, 3SF, F.	**Bluey Wilkinson** AUS		Jack Milne USA		Vic Huxley AUS	
	" " "	" "	1938 Feb.16	18 Hts, F.	**Jack Milne** USA		Wil. Lamoreaux USA		Bluey Wilkinson AUS	
	" " "	Sydney Sports Ground	1939 Feb. 4	20 Hts.	**Jack Milne** USA		Wil. Lamoreaux USA		Bluey Wilkinson AUS	
	" " "	" "	1940 Mar. 2	15 Hts.	**Cordy Milne** USA		Lionel v. Praag AUS		A.Lawson = V.Duggan AUS	
	" " "	" "	1941 Apr.11	4 Hts, F.	**Vic Duggan** AUS		Lionel v. Praag AUS		Ray Duggan AUS	
	" " "	" "	1942 Apr. 4	Not Staged, (post-Pearl Harbour, Pacific at war !)						

(left margin: Official ACU status)

* Paris Format :   ** 2 Brits admitted to Final when both unbeaten.

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Full rider **line-ups** of participants for all of the above World Championships and World Derbys meetings are given below.

Line-Ups , 'World's Speedway Derby', 'World's Championship Series'.
(Winners in bold.)

1930, Davies Park WSD
<u>Australia</u>   Frank Arthur; Dick Case; Harold Hastings; Max Grosskreutz; Frank Pearce; Charlie Spinks; Frank Duckett,
Dicky Smythe; Vic Huxley.
<u>USA</u>   **Ray Tauser.**
1933, WCS
Perth, WCS
<u>Australia:</u> Frank Arthur, Stan Catlett, Jack Chapman, Max Grosskreutz, Steve Langton, Syd Parsons, Dicky Smythe,
Lionel van Praag, Bluey Wilkinson
<u>England:</u> Phil Bishop, Gordon Byers, Bill Clibbett, Norman Evans, George Greenwood, Wally Lloyd, Chum Moore, Jack Ormston,
Jack Parker, **Harry Whitfield**.
Adelaide, WCS
<u>Aust:</u>   Jack Chapman, Arnold Hansen, Clem Mitchell, Les Fredericks, **Dicky Smythe**, L. van Praag, B. Wilkinson, Max Grosskreutz.
<u>Eng:</u>   Jack Parker, Jack Ormston, Harry Whitfield, George Greenwood, George Byers, Phil Bishop, Bill Clibbett, Cliff Parkinson.
Melbourne, (WCS, non-ascribed**.)**
<u>Eng:</u>   Larry Bolton
<u>Aust:</u>   J. Bibby, F. Apsted, **Jack Chapman**, Bill Rogers, Max Grosskreutz, Ernie Evans, Bluey Wilkinson, George Hannaford,
Bert Spencer,   Dicky Smythe, Steve Langton.
Sydney, WCS/WSD
<u>Aust:</u>   Billy Lamont, Lionel van Praag, Bluey Wilkinson, Steve Langton, Dicky Smythe, Max Grosskreutz, Jack Hollis, Wally Little.
<u>Eng:</u>   Jack Parker, **Jack Ormston**, Harry Whitfield, George Greenwood, George Byers, Phil Bishop, Bill Clibbett, Cliff Parkinson.
Sydney, WCS Final
Aust: Bluey Wilkinson, Billy Lamont, , Dicky Smythe, Jack Chapman, , Lionel van Praag.
<u>Eng:</u>   **Harry Whitfield** ,Jack Ormston
1934, Sydney WCS/WSD
<u>Australia</u> Vic Huxley;   <u>England</u> **Harold 'Tiger' Stevenson**.
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Sydney Showground, WSD
1936
<u>Australia</u>   **Max Grosskreutz**; Vic Huxley; Billy Lamont; Steve Langton; Doug McLachlan; Clem Mitchell Frank Pearce; Bluey Wilkinson
<u>England</u>   Arthur Atkinson; Dusty Haigh; Wally Key; Cliff Parkinson; Wal Phillips; Tiger Stevenson ; Rol Stobart
<u>New Zealand</u>   Syd Perkins
<u>USA</u>   Cordy Milne; Jack Milne.
1937
<u>Australia</u> Dicky Case; Jack Chignell; Vic Duggan; Artie Fenn; Vic Huxley; Billy Lamont; Steve Langton; Wally Little;
Dick Sulway; **Bluey Wilkinson**
<u>England</u>   Tommy Croombs; Cliff Parkinson; Norman Parker; Jack Parker; Eric Gregory
<u>USA</u>   Wilbur Lamoreaux; Jack Milne; Byrd McKinney.
1938
<u>Australia</u> Bluey Wilkinson; Clem Mitchell; Jack Hancock; Bill Rogers; Dick Sulway; Andy Menzies; Charlie Spinks; Frank Dolan;
Ray Duggan; Bill Longley; Stan Shuetrim
<u>England</u>   Norman Evans; Wally Lloyd; Jack Parker; Cliff Parkinson; Bill Pitcher; Alec Statham
<u>USA</u>   Wilbur Lamoreaux; **Jack Milne**.
1939
<u>Australia</u> Aub Lawson; Bill Longley; Andy Menzies; Charlie Spinks; Lionel van Praag; Bluey Wilkinson
<u>England</u>   Arthur Atkinson; Bob Harrison; Wally Lloyd; Jack Parker; Norman Parker; Geoff Pymar; Alec Statham
<u>USA</u>   Wilbur Lamoreaux; Cordy Milne; **Jack Milne**.
1940
<u>Australia</u> Ken Blair; Jack Chignell; Ray Duggan; Vic Duggan; Frank Dolan; Steve Langton; Aub Lawson; Max Neal; Ray Taylor;
Bert Thomas; Noel Thompson; Lionel van Praag
<u>England</u>   Cliff Parkinson
<u>USA</u>   Bobby Hill; **Cordy Milne**.
1941
<u>Australia</u>   Ken Blair; Jack Chignell; Ray Duggan; **Vic Duggan**; Cecil Garland; Dave Hynes; Max Neal; Ray Taylor; Lionel van Praag
<u>England</u>   Cliff Parkinson
<u>USA</u>   Bobby Hill; Cordy Milne.

1942   NO COMPETITION. Planned meeting of April 4th abandonned, - War in the Pacific.