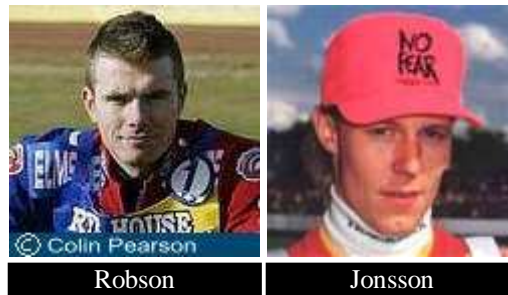


Fences - Time for Action
By Steven Quarterman
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Speedway is and always has been a sport fraught with danger, with every single rider knowing in the back of their mind that any race could be their last. Advances in machinery have meant that the riders are reaching greater and greater speeds (where tracks allow) on a constant basis, thus meaning the riders skill must increase also. Many riders over the years have had their careers cut short by crashes, some even been paralysed or worse. Jan o Pedersen, Per Jonsson and Krzysztof Cegielski are just a few of the names that have been lost to speedway fans as racers.

The BSPA have made strides over the past few seasons to improve safety with the introduction of air fences which are sure to have saved many riders from the same fate as the three afore mentioned riders. Air fences are mandatory at all Elite League tracks but currently not in the Premier League. Are the BSPA saying that riders in the Premier League are not as important as those in the Elite League? Or are they saying that riders in the Premier league are not as fast as their Elite league counterparts and therefore at less risk?

That question has surely been answered by the recent crashes at Mildenhall. In consecutive weeks there have been serious crashes at Mildenhall which have resulted in the meetings being abandoned when only partially complete. I am not casting aspersions towards the safety of the Mildenhall fence, I only use it as an example of the need for air fences to be made mandatory in all competitions. Elite league teams (except for Coventry) afforded air fences by arranging 'challenge' matches against another Elite league team for their first meetings of the season. The riders competing in these meetings did not get paid for riding, instead the money was used to pay for air fences. Ultimately they were investing in their safety.

I finish this article by wishing Stuart Robson, Garry Stead, Jamie Smith, Mark Loram and all other riders currently injured a speedy recovery. You provide us with entertainment, risking your lives to do so and for that I thank you all.

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