

Riders to Remember....Wayne Briggs

By Peter Hosking



Wayne Briggs

Wayne Briggs was the youngest of the Briggs family, born in Christchurch, New Zealand on 24 June 1944, ten years after his elder brother Barry. Before leaving Christchurch for the United Kingdom, Wayne had ridden in some motocross events and had had some practice on a speedway bike but he had never ridden in a speedway meeting.

He arrived in England in 1961 at the age of 16 as a cheery crew-cut teenager hoping to emulate his brother's achievements. Johnnie Hoskins was interested in him and invited him to a trial at New Cross. In his autobiography, Barry says that Wayne's trial lap times at New Cross were only about half a second slower than some of the more experienced league riders. After signing him Johnnie Hoskins decided that it was better for Wayne to gain some experience in the Provincial League so he loaned him out to the Edinburgh team which was managed by his son Ian.

Experienced Dick Campbell and young Alf Wells were also in the side so there was quite a strong kiwi influence. Brother Barry also arranged second half meetings for Wayne at Southampton, St. Austell, Poole, and at Shelbourne Park in Dublin. Barry's theory was that the experience on the different tracks would speed up his progress.

Wayne settled in quickly with the Monarchs and his final average for the first season was just under 6 points. At the end of the year readers of the *Speedway Star* voted him the year's "Most promising Novice" ahead of Terry Betts and Eric Boocock. He missed the start of the 1962 season due to an eye operation but returned to the action in June and went on to have a great season. He won the Meadowbank qualifying round of the World Championship with a maximum 15 points and he won the Scottish

best pairs championship in partnership with Alf Wells. At the end of the season he finished second in the Provincial Riders' Championship to Len Silver.

During the UK winter Wayne returned to New Zealand where he rode in the New Zealand speedway championship at Palmerston North and finished 6th. Early in the 1963 season he had a fall at Southampton which resulted in a fractured collar bone and a painful leg injury. After just one match back he tangled with Doug Templeton in a second half race and broke both his wrists. In 1964 he started well winning the Provincial League Easter Trophy. Soon after, however, he pulled a muscle in his thigh which kept him out of action for several weeks. When he returned he had a very bad fall at Newport when the frame of his bike broke in half. The injuries from this accident kept him out of action for almost a year.

After resting through the winter of 1964-65 he decided to start riding again in the 1965 spring. However after six matches the injury jinx hit once more when his thigh began playing up again and he did not ride again that season.

During the winter of 1965-66 Wayne had another operation on his leg and then moved south to join Poole for 1966. He wasn't quite as fast as he had been but he rode steadily and completed the season.

In 1967 he moved to Exeter where he began to regain some of his earlier form. The following year was to be the best of his career in the first division. His scoring improved and he became one of Exeter's heat leaders. He also rode well in the British qualifying rounds of the World Championship and progressed to one of the semifinals where he finished 13th. Later in the year he finished 4th in the Scottish Open Championship. He was also selected to ride for New Zealand in the test series against England and rode in two matches at Swindon and Newcastle.

Despite this improvement he felt unsettled in southern England and was happy to return to the Monarchs in 1969 where he went moderately well finishing with an average of 6.39 for the year. In 1970 he was tempted south again to join the newly formed Wembley team, however, this only lasted for a year and in 1971 he was transferred back to Exeter.

At the start of the 1971 season he was involved in a payment wrangle with the Exeter promoters because he wanted his commuting expenses covered. When this was resolved he began riding but was troubled by a shoulder injury and was unable to continue from August onward. He announced his retirement at the end of the year.

He had never fulfilled his early promise but as Mike Hunter wrote in one of the Monarchs programmes "the name of Wayne Briggs will long conjure up memories of the high speed spectacular kiwi kid with the padded shoulders and the wide handlebars - the kid who might have been a champion."

After retiring from speedway, Wayne and his wife Teresa lived in Edinburgh for a number of years. Wayne had a haulage business driving lorries, and Teresa had a hairdressing salon. They bought flats in Majorca, Spain which they rented out. A couple of years ago they decided to move to Spain to live.

Team - Matches - Average

Edinburgh 1961 - 20 - 5.8
Edinburgh 1962 - 20 - 8.35
Edinburgh 1963 - 11 9.59
Edinburgh 1964 - 14 - 8.55
Edinburgh 1965 - 6 - 4.42
Poole 1966 - 25 - 5.4
Exeter 1967 - 17 - 7.83
Exeter 1968 - 36 - 7.75
Coatbridge 1969 - 31 - 6.39
Wembley 1970 - 32 - 5.8
Exeter 1971 - 20 - 6.4

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