

## Report of Royal Automobile Club Board of Enquiry on Speedway

We were appointed by the Committee of the Royal Automobile Club to enquire into matters affecting the control of speedway racing in this country under the following terms of reference:

"To make such enquiries as they think fit into the present dispute and difficulties in the realm of speedway sport and to make recommendations as to their solution."

We met on July 28th, September 17th, October 13th, December 3rd and 17th and January 13th. We invited those parties who appeared to have been affected by the dispute to submit written memoranda setting out their views and any suggestions they might have for the solution of the difficulties which had arisen and representatives of all those concerned attended our meetings on the 13th October and the 3rd December, and of the A.C.U. alone on January 13th. They were given a full opportunity, at lengthy sittings, of explaining their position.

Constitutionally, and from the point of view of the International Authority, the Royal Automobile Club has the ultimate responsibility for the control of motor car and motor cycle sport in this country. So far as concerns ordinary motor cycle sport, however, the R.A.C. delegated its powers to the Auto Cycle Union as long ago as 1903 and in regard to the sport of speedway, the R.A.C. and the A.C.U. entered into a Tripartite agreement with the Speedway Control Board, a limited company, under which they delegated their powers in relation to the control of speedway racing to the last named board. These delegations can be withdrawn and in order to leave room

4/12

for manoeuvre the R.A.C. did in fact give notice last June to terminate the delegation to the Speedway Control Board as from December 31st, 1964.

At the time we were appointed to enquire into these matters, 21 speedway tracks were being conducted in different parts of the country by various promoters, some of whom operated more than one track. Under the Regulations which they had established for governing the sport, the Speedway Control Board had power to divide the tracks into two Divisions or Leagues and they had in fact constituted a National League and a Provincial League. Of the 21 tracks in operation, 7 were in the National League and 14 in the Provincial League. The numbers in each League has fluctuated from time to time but the tendency has been for the number of the National League tracks to decline. The conduct of a National League track is more expensive than that of one in the Provincial League. Better amenities for the public are required in the stadium itself, the standard of riding is expected to be higher and riders are paid more. It was in fact because the Speedway Control Board had decided to elevate a particular track, namely that at Wolverhampton from the Provincial to the National League, contrary to the wishes of the Track Promoters, that the final crisis arose. In the result the Provincial League Promoters who like the Promoters within the National League have their own Association, broke away from the Speedway Control Board but continued to run speedway events although the Speedway Control Board cancelled their track licences. This in turn resulted in any riders who competed on those tracks being in breach of the Regulations and all riders who took part in such unauthorised events (a few were loyal and did not) had their licences suspended by the Speedway Control Board. These suspensions were recognised internationally by the A.C.U. and the F.I.M. with the consequence that the riders concerned, some of whom were commonwealth subjects, were barred also from riding in events abroad.

It was apparent from the Memoranda submitted to us that there was considerable dispute as to the facts which had led to

/the...

the difficulties and as to the merits of the different positions taken up. There were allegations of bias against the Speedway Control Board which was said to be overweighted with representatives of the A.C.U. and of the National League Promoters against the Provincial League; there were complaints of inefficiency and inconsistency in the enforcement of control and excessive interference with the Promoters in the detail administration of the sport. It appeared also that the members of the Board appointed by the A.C.U. regarded the Board somewhat as an agency of the A.C.U. rather than an independent body exercising powers delegated to it by the R.A.C. and A.C.U. jointly and that they took their instructions from the Management Committee of the A.C.U. It was very evident that there was a strong clash of personalities between those concerned, that there were jealousies as between Promoters and also as between individual members of the Control Board and that antagonisms had arisen, however unreasonably, which could not quickly or easily be eradicated.

In these circumstances, it seemed clear to us that no useful purpose would be served by holding an inquest on past events or by staging any sort of trial as to the rights and wrongs of the matter. We therefore decided to treat our meetings with the representatives of the various interests concerned more as conferences in which there was something of a "free-for-all" in discussing the best way to conduct the sport in future. We are glad to say that although now and again an old grievance would break out, all the parties did approach the matter in this spirit and that in the end we were able to reach conclusions which we hope will be largely agreed.

The underlying fact about speedway racing which cannot be concealed and must indeed be basic to any consideration of the control of the sport is that in truth it is a business. Promoters and indeed riders engage in it in order to make money. It is no doubt true, as we stressed to the Promoters, that the public at large

/expect...

expect speedway events to be conducted honestly and in accordance with sporting principles and that Promoters who were known to disregard these might expect a serious decline in their gates. Promoters on the other hand can hardly be expected to continue conducting events if the degree or manner of control exercised over them in the interest of sport were such as to make their operations financially unrewarding.

This is in fact the situation which has arisen or is arising in the case of tracks in the National League. For the reasons already indicated, these tracks are more expensive to operate. And, in view of the fact that the best gates are obtained by Saturday events, there is at least great difficulty in staging competitive events with teams from other tracks in the National League unless there are several more than the existing 7 tracks in the National League. It was precisely for this reason that the Control Board decided to elevate Wolverhampton to the National League as the Board, under the Regulations, was entitled to do. But it was equally understandable that the Wolverhampton Promoters, faced by the probability that a financially profitable operation would thus be turned into a losing one, preferred to decline the honour.

Although it is a matter for regret that there should not be a National League, or higher division in the sport to which tracks in the Provincial League could from time to time be promoted because of the higher degree of skill which their riders had developed, the plain fact of the matter is that in existing circumstances the National League is not economically viable. On the other hand, it seems to us hardly reasonable, and in any event impossible to enforce, in practice to transfer tracks from one League to another in face of opposition by the Promoters concerned on account of the fear of financial loss. The kernel of our recommendations to the R.A.C. therefore has to be that, at all events for the present, the distinction between the two Leagues

/should...

should be abolished, With this conclusion we believe the members of the Speedway Control Board and also the Promoters, although some of them no doubt reluctantly, are agreed. Indeed in order to implement them the Speedway Control Board immediately lifted all suspensions of provincial tracks and riders and we pay tribute to Mr. Allan and his colleagues for their contribution which this prompt action made to the solution of current difficulties.

Our other recommendations flow from this basic conclusion and are designed to simplify the control of the sport and to make it more efficient. They will leave matters of detail and day to day administration in the hands of a Management Committee representing the Promoters, whilst retaining in the Control Board the ultimate responsibility for general policy, for administering the Regulations, for licensing tracks for nominating referees and judge timekeepers, and hearing appeals. Our recommendations to this end are as follows:

Control: The Speedway Control Board

(1) The present limited company which is the Speedway Control Board to continue subject to the necessary alteration of its Articles of Association. The amended Articles to provide:

(i) that the Board should be composed of four representatives of whom two shall be nominated by the R.A.C. and two by the A.C.U. One of the two R.A.C. members shall be Chairman. The quorum shall consist of one member of the R.A.C. and one member of the A.C.U. There shall be provision for proxy voting.

(ii) It is our strong recommendation that the members of the new Board and its Secretary should be individuals who have not had the misfortune to be personally associated with any of the difficulties which have recently arisen. This view involves no kind of censure on those who have previously been good enough to give a great deal of time and attention to the promotion and supervision of the sport, and, in the case of the Secretary, loyal service to the Board, and who may in truth

/be...

be entirely blameless for any of the troubles which occurred. We are, however, left in no doubt that those concerned would best show their continuing interest in and goodwill towards the sport by withdrawing from any active control in it at present and this we believe imperative.

(iii) The Board as newly constituted should be responsible for the general control of the sport, for the promulgation and administration of the Regulations, for the issue of track and rider licences, the registration of transfers, the conduct of any international arrangements and the organisation of the World Championship.

(iv) The Board should have power to establish sub-committees to deal with particular matters and to co-opt onto such sub-committees representatives of such outside interests as appeared appropriate.

(v) Except as otherwise provided in the Regulations, there should be an appeal to the Stewards of the R.A.C. in regard to any decisions of the Board.

(2) The General Council of Promoters and the Management Committee

(i) There shall be constituted a General Council of British Speedway Promoters consisting of one delegate from each track (who must be the holder of a Promoters Licence other than a training track Licence or Open Licence) granted by the Speedway Control Board.

A Company, firm or individual holding two or more track licences shall not be entitled to more than two votes on the General Council.

The General Council will meet at least twice a year normally in the first and last quarters of the year and elect its own chairman. Meetings additional to the minimum two may be called if at least two thirds of members so require. Meetings may also be called by the Management Committee hereafter mentioned.

(ii) The functions of the General Council shall be as follows:

/(A)...

- (A) to elect a Management Committee consisting of five members. The first Management Committee shall consist of two members of the 1964 National League and three members of the 1964 Provincial League.

The Management Committee shall be subject to re-election annually at the Autumn meeting of the General Council. They shall hold office until their successors are elected unless previously removed for misconduct by the Speedway Control Board after due enquiry (subject to appeal to the Stewards of the R.A.C.). The Speedway Control Board shall have the power to appoint successors to those so removed.

- (B) to discuss matters of mutual interest and put forward recommendations to the Management Committee or, through the Management Committee, to the Speedway Control Board.

- (C) The Management Committee shall fix its own meetings and elect its own chairman. It shall cause Minutes of its proceedings to be taken and to be sent to the Speedway Control Board The Royal Automobile Club and the Auto Cycle Union within 14 days of the meeting to which they relate.

(iii) The functions of the Management Committee shall be:

- (A) to carry out the day to day administration of the sport in accordance with the Speedway Regulations
- (B) to discuss recommendations put forward by the General Council and make any necessary recommendations to the Speedway Control Board.
- (C) to transmit to the speedway Control Board any recommendations which the General Council require to be discussed by the Speedway Control Board.

Prior to putting forward any recommendations affecting riders' conditions of service, rates of pay etc. the Management Committee shall ascertain the views of the Speedway Riders Association.

/(D)...

(D) In the case of a decision of the Management Committee where the voting is not unanimous, particulars of the voting shall be stated in the Minutes.

(iv) The Speedway Control Board and the Royal Automobile Club shall have the right to veto any decision of the Management Committee which they shall consider detrimental to the interests of the sport.

(v) Neither the Promoters General Council nor the Management Committee shall exercise quasi judicial functions on any matter arising under the Regulations on which, unless the Regulations otherwise provide appeal lies to the Stewards of the R.A.C.

(3) Secretariat:

(i) The Speedway Control Board to appoint its own Secretary, It is anticipated that the amount of administrative work falling upon the Board will be significantly lightened by the fact that day to day matters will in future fall within the jurisdiction of the Management Committee.

(ii) The R.A.C. to provide the Board with such secretarial and administrative services as may be necessary.

(iii) The Promoters General Council and the Management Committee will appoint a Secretary and such other administrative assistants as in their opinion are necessary for the efficient discharge of their functions including their responsibility to the Speedway Control Board.

(4) Finance

(i) The existing arrangements whereby A.C.U. is responsible for referees and judge timekeepers fees and expenses and the A.C.U. and Speedway Control Board receive payments from Promoters in respect of each meeting held shall continue pending the conclusion of other financial arrangements.

(ii) It is anticipated that owing to the reduction in some of its administrative duties and the discontinuance of the practice of paying fees in addition to expenses, the administrative costs of the Board may be reduced. On the other hand, the

/constitution...



constitution of the Promoters General Council and of the Management Committee will lead to some additional expenditure by the Promoters.

(iii) The Speedway Control Board should consult and seek agreement with the representatives of the A.C.U. and of the Management Committee as to the fees to be payable in future to the A.C.U. and to the Board in respect of meetings and as to the proportions in which any profits resulting from the World Championship or semi-final should be distributed as well as to any other financial matters.

In the absence of agreement between the three parties as to these matters a decision will be given by the Stewards of the R.A.C.

The expenses of the Promoters General Council and of the Management Committee shall be borne by the Promoters upon an equitable basis to be agreed by the Promoters General Council and in default of agreement to be settled by the Stewards of the R.A.C.

(5) Regulations:

The Speedway Control Board shall in consultation with the R.A.C., the A.C.U., the Management Committee and the Riders Association and as soon as may be promulgate new Regulations for the control of speedway racing which shall include the necessary alterations to give effect to these recommendations and shall also take account of the criticisms made from time to time of existing Regulations by the Stewards of the R.A.C.

(6) F.I.M. Representation

(i) Speedway is presently represented on the F.I.M. by a nominee of the A.C.U. who, subject to the R.A.C.'s right of veto, is approved by the F.I.M. The present representative is Major Fearnley.

(ii) In future the representative of speedway should be nominated by the A.C.U. from a list of candidates submitted

/by...

by the Speedway Control Board and subject to the veto of the R.A.C. as hitherto. In submitting the names of candidates and in making the nomination the Board and the A.C.U. respectively should have regard to the circumstances set out in paragraph (1) (ii) above.

We desire to express our warm appreciation of the frank and helpful way in which the representatives of all concerned have helped us to reach these conclusions and also to Mr. Izod for his assistance as our Secretary.

6th March 1965

The Royal Automobile Club  
29th January, 1965.

SHAWCROSS  
WILFRID ANDREWS  
JOHN CRAMPTON