

BACKLASH OVER SINGLES AXE

SPORT FOCUS

SINGLE-CYLINDER

fanatics are fuming at last week's news that the class is set to be axed from next year's British Supercup series after just one year.

Just as the class had made it into the big time after a lengthy struggle for recognition, it is now likely to be demoted and run as a lower-status national championship.

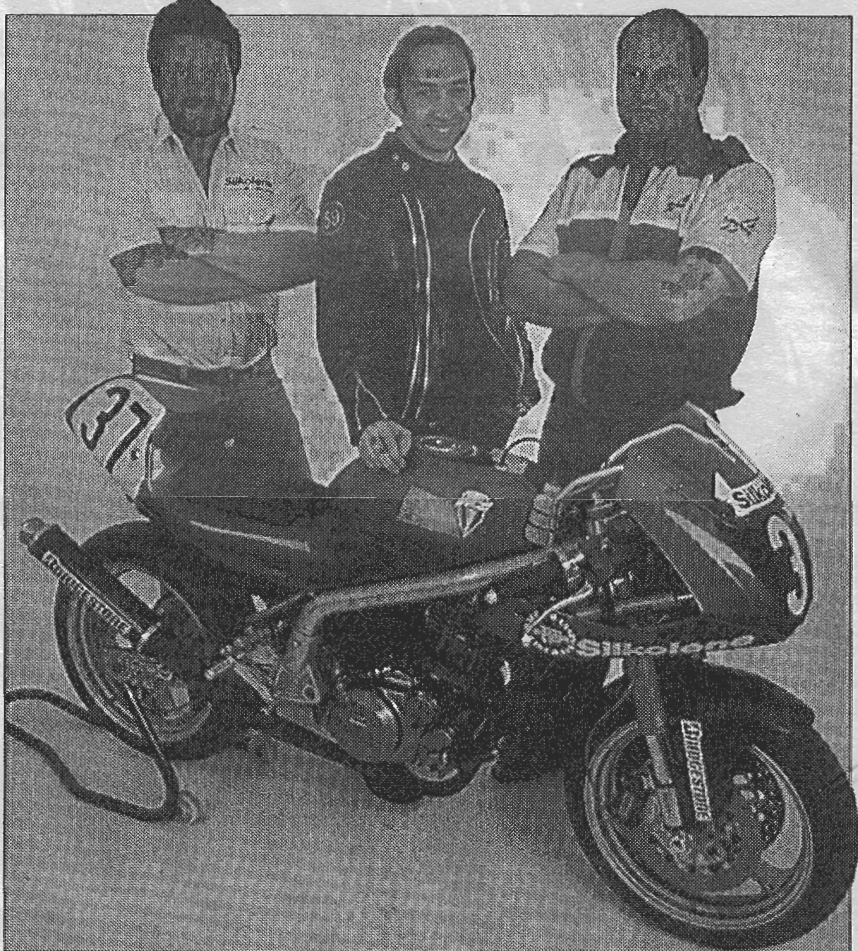
Tigcraft chassis builder Dave Pearce, who built the works MZ Mike Edwards rode to second in this year's Supercup, is one of the many who are critical of the decision.

"It's disgusting. This could be the death knell of the class in this country," says Pearce, who worked on the MZ with designer Adam White and engine tuner Russell Savoury.

"We have been given just one year at the top level, but the quality of the racing and riders we have attracted means we deserve more. Tigcraft will not support a lesser championship than Supercup. We will simply go and race abroad."

Despite this new threat to its market, Tigcraft is set to move to a bigger factory next week in response to rising worldwide demand for its bikes.

Dave Rawlins, former 250 star and winner of this year's singles Supercup championship on a Harris Yamaha, fumed: "We deserve at least another year to establish the class.



■ HAPPIER TIMES: MZ men (from left) Pearce, White and Savoury at the bike's launch

There's a lot of interest and the bikes are often as fast as Supersport 600s."

He also argues that lowering the status of singles in Britain will also lead to the death of the class at the TT. It was only introduced there this year.

Next year's Supercup is set to be run over eight rounds, for 125, 250, Supersport 600, superbike, sidecar and a revised SuperTeen class on 125 production road bikes. The series is likely to be screened by Sky Sports TV.

Singles will get their own

championship, run at other meetings throughout the season, including four internationals due to be screened by the BBC. It's not known whether they will get any TV air time.

The decision to split the Supercup series has been made by the MRPC, the committee of road race promoters who effectively control British racing.

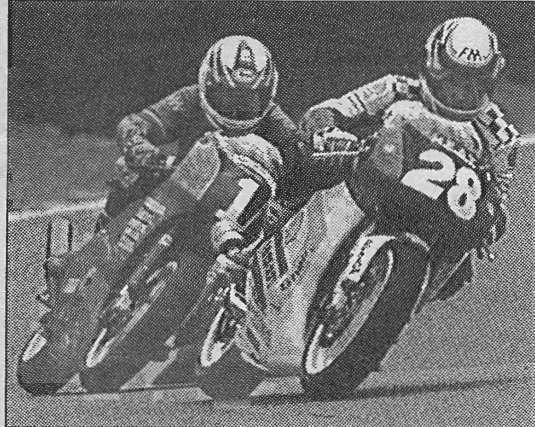
They believe there are currently too many classes to promote properly in Supercup and singles have not got the strength in depth to justify a top-line national series.

Robert Fearnall, boss of Donington promoters Two Four Sport and a member of MRPC, argues singles will still get a good deal out of the changes.

"There's no way, shape or form that we are selling singles short," he says.

"We will be providing them with a nine-round championship at prestigious meetings, some of which are internationals. This will allow them to invite top foreign riders.

"And the promoters are paying for all this, not the singles riders."



■ **LONE STAR: '94 singles champ Dave Rawlins (28)**

HISTORY OF SINGLES

■ **IN the early 1980s, home-built bikes using single-cylinder moto cross engines began appearing in club races.**

■ **THE Kennings championship for single-cylinder bikes was introduced in 1987, but was initially dominated by classic racers.**

■ **IN 1991, singles bike builders Harris, Tigcraft and Hejira joined forces to fund and support a national championship for modern singles.**

■ **THE next year, the series was promoted to national status and grew in popularity.**

■ **IN 1993, Ducati unveiled the world's first purpose-built single-cylinder racer of the modern era, the £18,000 Supermono.**

■ **THIS year, singles were included in the British Supercup championship for the first time, and a singles TT and European championship were introduced.**

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