

Alex has national crown in his sight

By Judith Tonner

THE Scottish superbike championship title remains within Alex Gault's reach after he continued his record of winning every race he has finished since moving up to race four-stroke machines, including setting a new lap record.

He knew that he would have to win every remaining race to take the title after failing to finish the previous two races, but rose to the challenge by being first across the line in both the fifth and sixth rounds at Knockhill.

The Carluke teenager maintained his record of claiming pole for every race by overcoming handling problems to post a qualifying time of 56.027 seconds, edging just ahead of provisional leader Craig McClelland, a former Scottish champion who is one of his main title rivals.

A rapid pit intervention from Eddie Stone of sponsors ERS Suspension then revealed the problem with the bike to be related to the rear shock, and it was swiftly repaired before Alex took his place at the front of the starting grid.

He soon found himself behind another major rival, last season's produc-

tion champion Lewis Farrow, and had to contend with a superb ride by McClelland who overcame a poor start by setting a new lap record of 55.602sec.

The local youngster had stormed into the lead, however, and his rival's efforts were not enough to erase his advantage as Alex completed the final circuit in 55.792sec to secure a narrow but vital win.

Spectators' hearts were in mouths the following day as the three challengers and Brian Nelson, their other main title rival, fought out an extraordinarily close battle in the sixth round of the championship.

Alex was the furthest back of the quartet after making a poor start, but moved up to second by the second lap, and then took the lead in a thrilling fight for position, passing Farrow as they whizzed around the back of the circuit.

He then found himself under constant pressure from McClelland in the closing stages, much to the excitement of the commentators and watching

fans — but the Carluke rider then made a decisive move, roaring away from his rival with a blistering lap record of 55.3sec to win by almost four seconds.

The young competitor's father, Alex senior, said: "This was a fantastic result for Alex, and although it is a tall order for him to win every remaining race to claim the championship, we all think it is possible.

"We are very grateful to Stuart Young and everyone at Team YPE who have done a fantastic job with the bike, Eddie Stone and everyone who helped or supported Alex during the weekend."

Alex's performance was part of a successful weekend for the trio of riders competing under the YPE banner this season; team mate Murray Strathdee recorded first and second places to maintain his lead in the production 400 championship, while Torquil Paterson enjoyed the same combination of results in the very demanding and closely-contested sports production category.