



**SMOOTHLY DRIVEN:** Gault negotiated this corner well but came unstuck later in his first race due to gearbox problems.

# Disappointing end to Gault's season following injuries

By Andrew Weston

**ALEX GAULT'S** rookie season in the National Super Stock Championships ended in disappointment last weekend after a high-speed crash in practice – resulting in damaged ankle ligaments and a swollen elbow – hindered his efforts throughout the season-ending event.

Last Friday's free practice for the final two rounds of the year at the Brands Hatch Indy Circuit, Kent, saw the Carlisle kid make a promising start, topping the leaderboard until the 14th lap when a massive 'high side' at Clearways threw the youngster from the bike at more than 100mph.

The crash damaged the bike badly, although Gault remarkably escaped relatively unscathed but the injuries he sustained were set to plague him throughout the weekend.

The event took place as a double-header, held as normal supporting the British Super Bike series.

And with temperatures reaching the mid-20s on the Saturday it was the best weekend weather of the entire championship.

It had also attracted the biggest entry since the start of the year, with 61 riders vying for 36 slots on the grid.

The first-qualifying session on Friday afternoon proved to come a little bit too soon for Gault.

Although the team mechanics repaired the damaged bike, it was not done in time for the start of the session and meant Gault joined with only a few laps remaining.



**TENTH SPOT:** teenage racer Gault finished in a creditable 10th position in his debut season in the National Super Stock Championships.

His woes continued after only four laps when the drive chain broke and his bike rolled to a halt at the side of the track.

The fault was later traced to a bent suspension link which had been missed in the initial re-build.

The second session, held on the Saturday morning, was Gault's chance to improve on the provisional 34th place on the grid for the race.

But the 17-year-old had to retire early, despite setting some of the fastest times of the session, after his ankle problem made

changing gear extremely difficult.

In his second effort at producing a good qualifying time, Gault struggled to 25th in the grid with a lap time of 49.544 seconds, the 24 riders in front of him only separated by 0.9 of a second.

It was no surprise, however, when the Carlisle rider had to withdraw from the first race due to the pain as a result of his earlier accident.

But in warm-up for the second race on Sunday, Gault looked good, setting the fastest time – 49.536 seconds.

Despite a brave effort in the race, after only four laps, the luckless Gault hit a false neutral under heavy braking at a corner and went onto the grass.

By the time he had recovered, he was at the back of the pack and to make matters worse the gearbox would not select another gear so Gault he had no choice but to retire.

The unfortunate finish to the season meant Alex ended up 10th overall in the main championship and fourth in the David Jefferies Award for riders under the age of 19.