

# First time on new bike marred by bad luck for young Carluke racer

By Judith Tonner

**ALEX Gault's flawless start to the motorcycling season came to an abrupt end with a disastrous outing at Knockhill in the Scottish Championship.**

The 15-year-old, from Carluke, was making his debut for his new YPE Power team in the fourth and fifth rounds of the national series, but destroyed his engine after just three practice laps on day one and retired with mechanical failure after a crash on day two.

He was riding his new RVF400 machine for the first time, but his first testing session came to a premature end when his engine blew up spectacularly, with plumes of smoke billowing from an exhaust pipe.

The youngster owned up to causing the problem with a mistaken gear change, as the shift pattern on the new bike is the opposite of the arrangement on the bike that he rides in the CB500 Cup.

However, team owners Stuart and Dougie Young immediately ordered a new engine and raced back to their workshop in Edinburgh, working into the night to ensure that Alex's bike was ready to be ridden on race day less than 24 hours later.

It seemed that the team's luck had changed as the teenager posted the fastest time in practice and, despite having to make mechanical pit stops during qualify-

ing to adjust the suspension, produced an astounding lap to come from the back of the field and take pole position for the fourth-round race.

However, soon after roaring away from the starting line, he crashed out after a collision with championship leader Craig McClelland, which saw the brake lever break off the YPE bike and saw it return in the recovery van in a sorry state.

Team Gault's mechanics worked frantically to repair it in time for the fifth round, resorting to literally holding it together with tape and even borrowing a windscreen from a spectator's RVF road bike.

Although the patched-up cycle passed scrutineering and Alex even managed to move up into third place by the end of the second lap, he was then forced to withdraw due to mechanical failure.

It was discovered that a small electrical wire had been damaged in the crash and, during the second race had shorted, draining the battery and meaning that there was no power to run the ignition system.

Alex is now 36 points behind leader McClelland in the Scottish series standings, with eight races remaining.

The young rider's father, Alex senior, said: "We are bitterly disappointed — after everyone's hard work, it boiled down to a piece of wire that put us out of the race.

"It was our worst meeting for as long as I can remember, but his chances are by no means over; we just hope that our season's bad luck is now over from that one weekend."



**WEEKEND OF MISFORTUNE:** Carluke's Alex Gault suffered a series of problems at Knockhill. Photo Ref: WP151406F