



MICHAEL RUTTER, EIGHT-TIMES WINNER

‘To be successful, it’s all about being neat, tidy and smooth’

Golden Jubilee for Ma



Renato Marques

HALF a century has passed since motorcycle racing occurred for the first time on Macau's Guia Circuit. That is, fifty years of joy and disappointment, with glory and sadness.

Introduced in 1967, the Macau Motorcycle Grand Prix soon became one of the annual highlights that excited the streets of the region and not long after that introduction, it became a legendary race.

Every year, the race repeats bringing a different story of a group of brave men and their bikes that set to challenge the bends of the Guia Circuit for nothing but the laurels of glory.

By the 50th Anniversary, the Times will bring you a brief retrospective of the most relevant moments of the past 49 editions of the most adrenalinizing races across the globe.

1967-1976 THE FIRST 10-YEARS – JAPANESE REIGN



The Japanese riders dominated the first 10 years of the Grand Prix, with names like Hasegawa, Motohashi and Kawasaki among others, making the headlines during those times and becoming the first legends to win the competition.

From that group, Hiroshi Hasegawa is definitely a name that deserves to be highlighted, not only for being the first ever winner of the Macau Motorcycle Grand Prix in 1967, but for taking a second win the following year, becoming the event's first double champion.

Another name to remember in this first decade is Hong Kong's John MacDonald, the winner in 1969 and the only man so far able to win in Macau in both two-wheel and four-wheel races (winning 1965's Guia Race).

1973 was known as the "Big Boom" year for the motorcycle race that gathered over 100 entries, which led to the introduction of a second race called "Organizer's Trophy Race" for non-

qualifiers in the Motorcycle GP.

In this year, Suzuki's Ken Araoka won, setting a record lap time in less than 3 minutes, clocking 2:56.68.

1977-1986 THE 'RECORD BREAKING' DECADE



1977 was the confirming year of the rise of British stars in the Grand Prix after in 1976, and marking the close of the first decade of the Motorcycle GP, Chas Mortimer took the trophy from the hands of the Japanese.

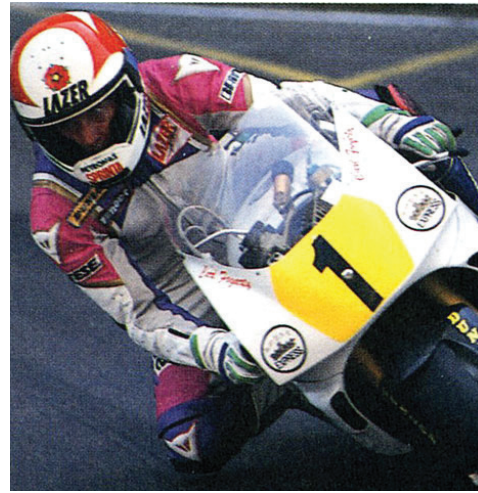
This was repeated the next year with the great Mick Grant taking the victory laurels again to the UK and to Kawasaki. Before the Brit could entirely dominate the Grand Prix, it was time for another Japanese, Sadeo Asami to take home the wins of three consecutive races (1978, 1979 and 1980) making history as the first ever treble winner of the race.

Such an achievement seems to have inspired another British rider, known as the "Rocket" – Ron Haslam, that won the next three events from 1981 to 1983 equaling Asami on the Hall of

Fame of the GP just before returning in 1985 to step ahead of him with two consecutive victories in 1985 and 1986.

The 16th edition of the Motorcycle GP (1982) saw Charlie Williams clocking a lap in 2:35.76, a new record that was untouched for almost a decade.

1987-1996 GETTING FASTER AND FASTER



If the first 20 years ended with the incredible supremacy of Ron Haslam, the next decade picked up exactly where the last had left, with Haslam breaking another record achieving his sixth checkered flag in the first-ever motorcycle race run under the influence of a typhoon (Nina).

The year after brought Macau one of the race's most memorable riders, though by no means its most successful.

Making his first and only race debut in Macau, was American Kevin Schwantz on his mythical Pepsi Suzuki 500.

The American took an expectable win in a cheerful race where he had time inclusively to delight the crowd with long and high-speed wheelies.

1991 saw the event reaching the milestone of a quarter-century, commemorated with the Silver Jubilee edition.

Making his way finally to the top was Belgian rider Didier de Radigues who won the race as well as finally breaking the lap record, setting a new one of 2:35.91.

The record was brought down in 1992 and again in 1993, firstly when Carl Fogarty took his Harris Yamaha 500 to take the win, clocking the best lap time of 2:33.94, and then the following year by Robert Dunlop, who also set a new lap record of 2.33:18.

The third decade of the Grand Prix saw the rise of Scotsman Steve Hislop who took three wins between 1990 and 1994.

1997-2006 THE RISE OF MICHAEL 'BLADE' RUTTER



In the 32nd Motorcycle Grand Prix, Michael Rutter finally took his first victory. On the way, he also smashed the existing lap record by over 2 seconds.

After spending a year out of the top spot, Rutter moved back to the top position in 2000, claiming his second victory in three years.

The battle between Rutter and fellow countryman Jefferies gave the latter a new lap record.

And then we reached the 36th edition of the Motorcycle Grand Prix. In an unusual Sunday race (due to a rainy Saturday the day before), Michael Ru-



Macau two-wheel road racing

Rutter joined the club of triple GP winners.

What followed were three more years of complete supremacy for Rutter, winning the 2003, 2004 and 2005 editions. His four consecutive wins elevated Rutter to rival the achievements of the "Rocket" who had secured six Macau victories.

Then another Brit, Steve Plater, denied Rutter's fifth consecutive title by winning both editions of 2006 and 2007.

2006 was also the year of the introduction of a new class in the motorcycle race, the Supersport 600 Class, that ran until 2010.

2007-2015 A MAN ON A 'MISSION' AND THOSE THAT STOPPED HIM



Plater's achievements brought the fourth decade to a close, buying the time of another Brit to interrupt the ambitions of Rutter - Stuart Easton - that in a snap showed complete dominance by taking three consecutive wins between 2008 and 2010.

On the year that closed the participation of the 600 Class Joao Fernandes made it to the podium by being third after Frenchman Amaury Baratin and Hong Kong's Cheung Wai On.

The year of Rutter consecration finally arrived. After a long wait of five years, Rutter came prepared with the best to take the mission very seriously in the Ducati 1198R.

With a dominant win, Rutter became the most successful rider in Macau Motorcycle Grand Prix history by winning his seventh GP and finally breaking the record of Haslam.

Crowned as the "King" of Macau's two-wheel race, Michael Rutter did not let the achievement blur his vision and he was back on his motorcycle aiming for an eighth win aboard an SMT Honda in 2012.

In a year of not so good memories, the motor sport community suffered from a fatal accident that took the life of Portuguese rider Luis Carreira, which led a few riders to pull out from the race in respect for his memory as well as others that still raced, although in a mourning mood.

Rutter was in winning form, setting the



fastest times in both qualifying sessions.

Due to the rain that fell on Saturday, the race was once more pushed to Sunday as the last event of the Grand Prix.

Run under lowlight, Rutter made use of his broad experience and took home

another win, extending his lead in the GP Hall of Fame.

Returning in 2014 after a three-year absence was Stuart Easton and, once more he was unbeatable. This made it four wins in four races.

Closing the fifth decade, a surprise by Peter Hickman, the 28-year-old, who showed a stellar performance during the race. Coming from third on the grid he took the lead around halfway through the race and never let go, finishing with a lead of 6.3 seconds over Martin Jessop.



MACAU MOTORCYCLE GP WINNERS LIST

YEAR	RIDER	COUNTRY	MOTORCYCLE
1967	Hiroshi Hasegawa	Japan	Yamaha RD56
1968	Hiroshi Hasegawa	Japan	Yamaha RD05
1969	John MacDonald	Hong Kong	Yamaha TD2C
1970	Benny Hidayat	Indonesia	Yamaha YS1
1971	Akiyasu Motohashi	Japan	Yamaha TR3
1972	Ikujiro Takai	Japan	Yamaha TR3
1973	Ken Araoka	Japan	Suzuki TR500
1974	Hiroyuki Kawasaki	Japan	Yamaha TZ750
1975	Hideo Kanaya	Japan	Yamaha YZR500
1976	Chas Mortimer	United Kingdom	Yamaha TZ750
1977	Mick Grant	United Kingdom	Kawasaki KR750
1978	Sadao Asami	Japan	Yamaha TZ750
1979	Sadao Asami	Japan	Yamaha TZ-OW 34 750
1980	Sadao Asami	Japan	Yamaha YZR500
1981	Ron Haslam	United Kingdom	Honda RS1100R
1982	Ron Haslam	United Kingdom	Honda RS1100R
1983	Ron Haslam	United Kingdom	Honda RS500
1984	Mick Grant	United Kingdom	Suzuki RGB500
1985	Ron Haslam	United Kingdom	Honda RS500
1986	Ron Haslam	United Kingdom	Honda ELF RS500
1987	Ron Haslam	United Kingdom	Honda ELF RS500
1988	Kevin Schwantz	United States	Suzuki RGV500
1989	Robert Dunlop	United Kingdom	Honda VFR750R RC30
1990	Steve Hislop	United Kingdom	Honda VFR750R RC30
1991	Didier de Radiguès	Belgium	Suzuki RGV500
1992	Carl Fogarty	United Kingdom	Harris Yamaha 500
1993	Steve Hislop	United Kingdom	ROC Yamaha 500
1994	Steve Hislop	United Kingdom	Harris Yamaha 500
1995	Mike Edwards	United Kingdom	ROC Yamaha 500
1996	Phillip McCallen	United Kingdom	Yamaha YZR500
1997	Andreas Hofmann	Switzerland	Kawasaki ZXR750RR
1998	Michael Rutter	United Kingdom	Honda RVF750 RC45
1999	David Jefferies	United Kingdom	Yamaha YZF-R1
2000	Michael Rutter	United Kingdom	Yamaha YZF-R1
2001	John McGuinness	United Kingdom	Honda CBR954RR
2002	Michael Rutter	United Kingdom	Ducati 998SP
2003	Michael Rutter	United Kingdom	Ducati 998SP
2004	Michael Rutter	United Kingdom	Honda CBR1000RR
2005	Michael Rutter	United Kingdom	Honda CBR1000RR
2006	Steve Plater	United Kingdom	Yamaha YZF-R1
2007	Steve Plater	United Kingdom	Yamaha YZF-R1
2008	Stuart Easton	United Kingdom	Honda CBR1000RR
2009	Stuart Easton	United Kingdom	Honda CBR1000RR
2010	Stuart Easton	United Kingdom	Kawasaki ZX-10R
2011	Michael Rutter	United Kingdom	Ducati 1198R
2012	Michael Rutter	United Kingdom	Honda CBR1000RR
2013	Ian Hutchinson	United Kingdom	Yamaha YZF-R1
2014	Stuart Easton	United Kingdom	Kawasaki ZX-10R
2015	Peter Hickman	United Kingdom	BMW S1000RR

Renato Marques

NICKNAMED “The Blade,” Michael Karl Rutter is a well-known figure from the Guia Circuit having started to race here 22 years ago.

Holder of the record of the most wins at the Macau Grand Prix (8), the Times spoke with Rutter ahead of the 63rd edition of the prominent annual event, which will be celebrating its 50th Anniversary. He shared information about the motorcycle race and provided an insight to learn about what it takes to be the “King of the Armco.”

Macau Daily Times (MDT) - 50 Years of Motorcycle GP in Macau, what does this milestone represent for the racer that has won here many more times than anyone else?

Michael Rutter (MR) - It's a massive milestone without doubt. Some of the events in the UK have been going longer but for Macau to be where it is in the world and still be going strong is a major achievement. It's the only event of its kind on that side of the world so it is very unique and a testament to the organizers over the years that it has not just made it to its 50th year but grown from strength to strength.

MDT - Racing here for 22 years, how do you see the evolution of the event? What changed?

MR - Over the years, I think the motorbike GP has become more prominent and it's not simply a support race that it once was. The organizers, and Macau people in general, have noticed and realised just how popular the bikes are and moved us to a timeslot later in the day, which represents a huge benefit.

When I first came, we had two [race] legs and we were essentially racing down the seafront but now we are racing for about a mile surrounded by skyscrapers. The standard of the entry has also improved over the years and there have been lots of other changes. The one thing that has barely changed though is the course. With the exception of some of the corners being altered to make them slower, it is still the same course as in 1994 when I made my debut.

MDT - What should a rider possess to win in Macau?

MR - It is a good end of season event for us so to win puts you in a good place going into the winter especially as it has got more and more coverage in the media these last ten years. To be successful, it is all about being neat, tidy and smooth. You have to be accurate and

Q&A **MICHAEL RUTTER**
EIGHT-TIMES WINNER OF MACAU MOTORCYCLE GRAND PRIX

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There at least four riders who are very strong and committed, none more so than my two team-mates Peter Hickman and Stuart Easton.

also a bit conservative – you cannot be hanging off loads and scratching round all the corners. Each corner leads into the next and if you mess one up, you'll still be paying for it half a lap later.

MDT - Name the most difficult and the most fun

points of the Guia Circuit?

MR - For me personally, the most difficult corner is [the] Mandarin [bend]. It is 160mph+ when you tip in and you have to get it right to carry your speed along the following straight.

On the approach, you cannot really see the corner either – all you can see is Armco so experience is key. The best bit? Coming out of the last corner on the last lap and seeing the chequered flag!

MDT - If you had to choose one edition for its special relevance to you from all your races, which one would it be and why?

MR - Winning my eighth race, as it is something I did not think it would happen. I had not won for a few years so I did not expect to in 2012 but conditions were right for me and everything came together.

Due to various delays, the race got pushed back later

and later in the day and when we were racing the streetlights actually came on. With my experience, I knew where I was going and it was such a great feeling winning again after quite a long time without a victory.

MDT - Are you going for your ninth title this year?

MR - Definitely. I am not coming to make up the numbers but I am also realistic as there at least four riders who are very strong and committed, none more so than my two team-mates Peter Hickman and Stuart Easton. Peter is riding fantastically well and has had a great season whilst he is, of course, the reigning Macau Champion. Stuart's had four wins previously so he'll be tough to beat as will Ian Hutchinson. He's [Hutchinson] had a great season on both the roads and short circuits whilst Gary Johnson will also be tough to beat. I

rode the Penz13.Com BMW in Germany and it is a great package.

MDT - Last year was dominated by BMW bikes, is it another year for BMW to shine?

MR - I think so. The BMW is a great bike and you only have to look at the results worldwide. It has dominated at the likes of the TT and North West 200 so is well suited and proven on the roads. I would say the BMW has got the edge over the likes of Kawasaki and Honda but one surprise person this year could be Glenn Irwin on the Ducati. He is riding really well and has had a good season in BSB [British Superbike Championship] as well as previously proving himself at the NW200 [Northwest 200] and Ulster GP. He is making his debut so it will be a huge ask to win but you never know, stranger things have happened!