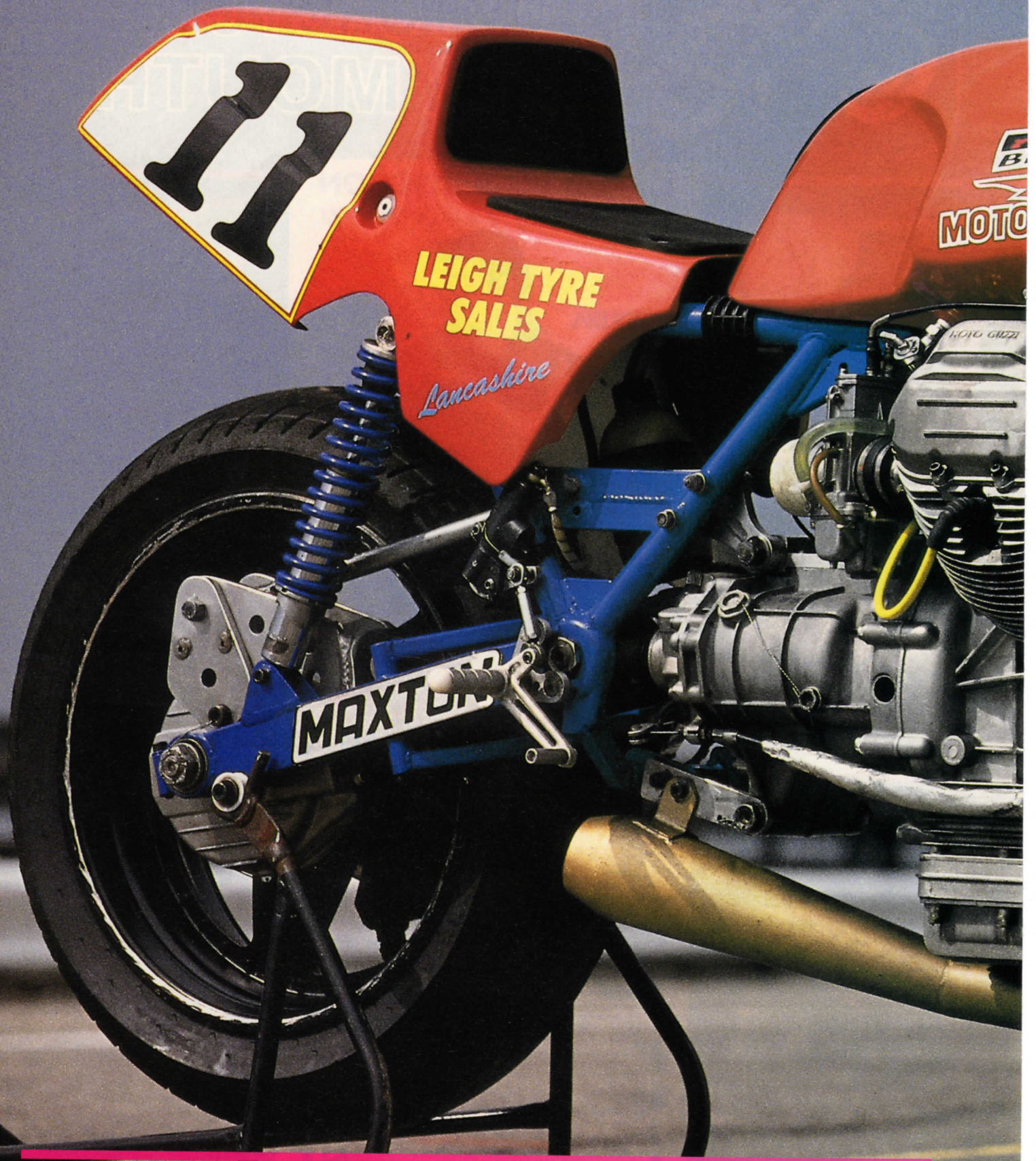
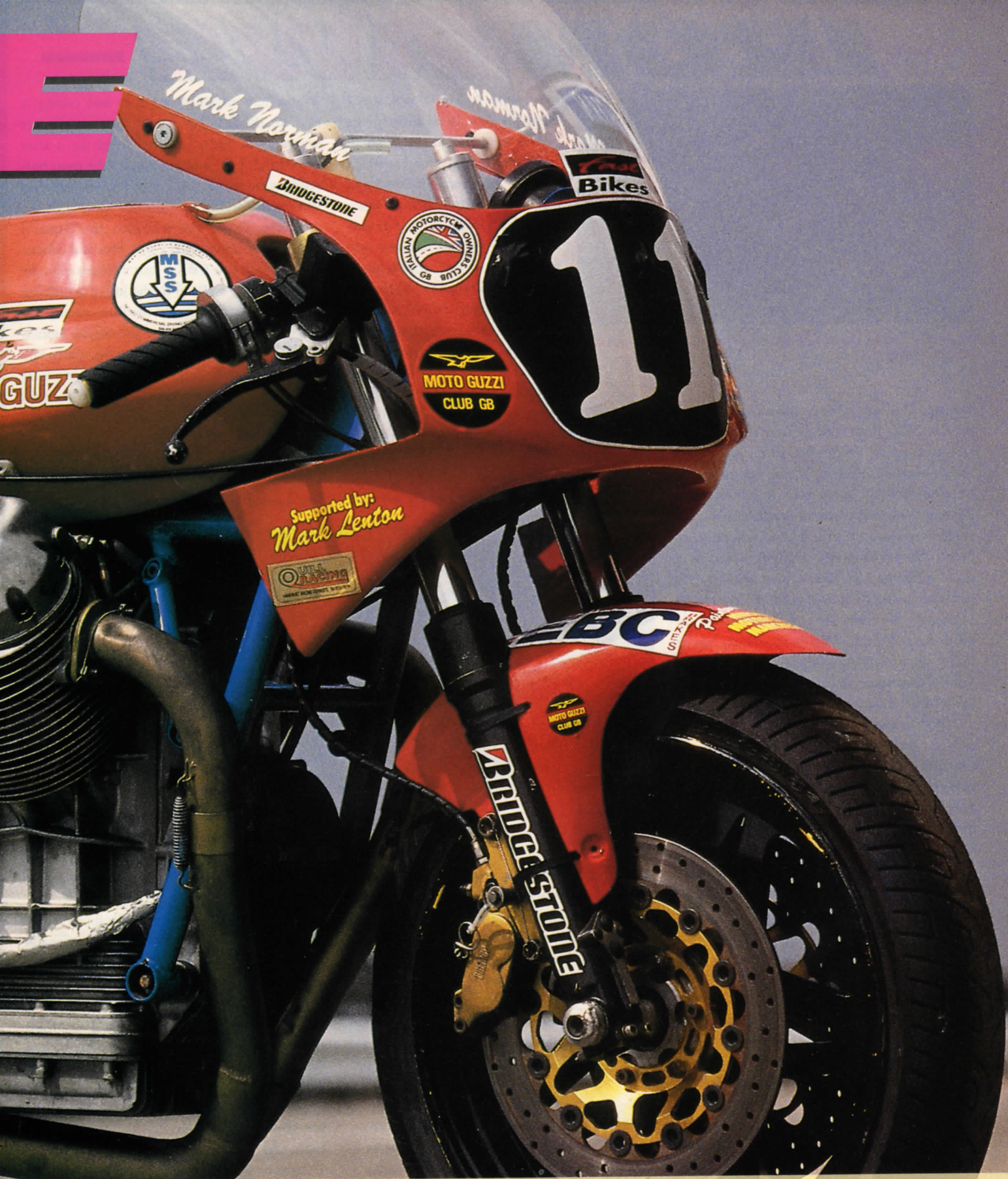


IRON AWAY



It looks like the heftiest piece of steel ever to sit on top of a pair of slicks. But the Blomley Moto Guzzi is rather competitive as not a few 888s have found out to their embarrassment



The Battle of the Twins Series in Britain, has always been a hot bed of technical diversity and innovation. The advent of the eight-valve Ducatis threatened to destroy that, however, by producing an almost total domination of the class in recent years. But all the while there have been individuals and teams eager to blood the noses of the 851 lackeys.

With a rule change in '92, came the chance for the more esoteric twins to taste real Glory again, as the Championship was split into two classes: Supertwins, for injected bikes (888s etc) and Pro-twins for carburetted machines. The overall winner was deemed to be the one who amassed the most points in their own class. Last year it was won by Martin Smith on an RGB Wasp, with Blomley's Guzzi, after complet-

ing only a season, the runner up. It's one thing hearing or reading about fast twins, but seeing is believing. Seeing Mark Norman braking into the Mallory hairpin on the Blomley Guzzi and draughting some of the 888s perfectly adequately down the straights is believing in God...

The bike itself is the culmination of five year's work by Jim Blomley and Steve Clover in conjunction with Maxton Engi-

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Whatever quirks the suspension might have, brakes on the Guzzi are superb

neering. The most obvious mods over the standard Le Mans from which it started out, is the rear end. As all Guzzis are shaft driven, the torque reaction inherent in this design had to be eradicated in some way. What the lads came up with was a form of parallelogram suspension system, with the added by product of being able to change the gearing, by means of three different rear wheel drive housings. In addition, a choice of two gearbox drive housings gives the team the ability to change the ratios for any track. This is apparently not as major an undertaking as it may seem, and Mark's mechanic, Ian, assures me that it only takes half an hour.

The bike also uses Twin Shocks, as this was a prerequisite to run in the Norman Hyde Championship last year, but a Monoshock version of the frame is due to appear, hopefully in June of 1993. White power forks support the front with adjustable inserts in the yokes to allow changes to be made to the steering geometry. The headstock itself has been chopped and re-welded at a steeper 24 degree angle in any case, so it's starting from a completely different baseline compared to the standard model (28 degrees).

The engine is the most unlikely motive power behind a competitive race bike that could ever be imagined. Actually, there are two engines, a 950 and 1,000cc and two gearboxes, one with a high and one with a low final drive ratio. Even more remarkable for a bike putting out just over 100 horses is the retention of its pushrod operated two valve head. As yet, no-one in Europe is running a four valve head model which is putting out comparable power to the two-valvers, although that'll soon change when the factory's Daytona model is more widely used as a donor bike for racing.

The engine features factory heads, Carillo rods, Cosworth pistons and a lightened flywheel (together with the clutch weighing less than two kilos) to let it rev more easily. Pushrods are titanium, cam-followers hard-faced titanium (weighing less than half the originals) and the heads, featuring twin plugs,

are ported to Jim's own spec'. Straight cut duralumin gears replace the standard chain and all the cogs, along with camshaft and crankshaft are polished and balanced to extremely high tolerances. In addition, the Guzzi benefits from two exhaust systems, one with two separate pipes and a two-into-one system so that the engine can be tuned for different circuits, although the motor pulls cleanly on either from as little as 2,000 all the way to 8,000rpm. In addition even

the compression ratio can be varied from 10:1 to almost 13:1 and cam timing varied via a twenty position vernier adjuster.

Weight saving has been achieved by the usual methods of eradicating every piece of



Jason gets his first taste of what it was like to race in the seventies and thanks his lucky stars he hadn't spat the dummy - has now though

surplus material on the bike. To this end the distributor assembly's been binned in favour of an electronic ignition system running from a trigger system, measuring pulses at the crank and mounted where the generator used to live at the front of the engine. This has facilitated the use of the battery which wouldn't disgrace a truck, mounted alongside the engine although a set of dry cell batteries are apparently on the way, to lose a couple of Kilo or so.

RIDING

My test on the Guzzi was at Snetterton, a week after lobbing my CBR at the Esses on a new front tyre, so Mark was understandably a little nervous. Just starting it was a gas; Mark stuck the rear wheel on some rollers linked to the van and it cranked it into life as soon as the Merc was stuck in drive; and do I mean life - this was one loud bike. Mark's instructions to me after he'd warmed it and the tyre up were simple; don't take it past eight grand or you'll bend a valve, somewhat different to a Duke which revs round to twelve thou. Gears were the production way up - ie, one down and four up. Even as I set off down the pit-lane the

engine felt incredibly torquey and taking it easy for the first lap everything seemed quite normal. But when I started to go for it after the second, I got a major shock - the most horrendous pattering going into Richies and then into Sears forcing me to drift wide onto the concrete. Down the straight, the Guzzi'd weave from side to side - shit, this is a culture shock after the CBR - but fortunately the Brembos were well up to the job of scrubbing off speed and tipping into the Esses. Going left was easy, but the other way the engine motion would try and stand the bike up. Onto the bombhole and the forks were at it again whilst the shocks felt rock hard - I never realised Snetterton was so bumpy. Into Corams, it was terrifying though the brakes were impressive again at Russells. Pretty soon I was passing the pits and thinking of any other riding style I could possibly adopt to stop the front-end pat-

tering. I tried entering slowly and putting the power on earlier but instead of pattering mid-corner it'd start on the way out whilst every bump from the rear end made even a ZXR feel like a waterbed by comparison. I managed about fifteen laps before a noticed oil on my boot and was forced to retire - what a relief.

Mark admitted there was, er, a slight problem at the front end, a problem that they'd spent so much time trying to sort out they'd concluded could well be something more fundamental than the forks such as steering geometry

after all the hacking they'd had to do to get the head angle steeper.

Notwithstanding that, it's still a superb bit of engineering. It looks great and sounds great and it's pretty fast too. Don't forget, at the Anglo-French meeting at Donington in '92 Mark finished fourth behind Jeremy McWilliams (888) Michael Rutter (888) Ian Cobby (Jim's 888) and 32 seconds ahead of the rest of the Dukes. But it's no Fireblade he's riding, let me tell you

and the boy's a bit of a hero. So when you see him flashing p a s t r e m e m b e r, it ain't easy. He's a lot braver than I am.

You want forks sticking through the yokes? You could hang your washing on these

