



Hailwood rides a Honda in the 1966 Isle of Man TT races. Photo: Gerry Stream.

HERO OF THE ISLAND

TED MACAULEY thinks Hailwood's best race was the 1965 Senior TT

WHAT IS Mike's most memorable race? What aspects of it, for what reasons, make it the one that stands alone, above all the others?

These are questions that could be fiercely argued, because a hundred people could have a hundred varying views, according to their particular ideas of excitement and of what constitutes a memorable race.

Mike, Stan Hailwood and I ran a poll between us on what we thought was the most memorable race. The answers we came up with illustrated in three entirely different views just what does make a race memorable. It showed us, too, that the view depends completely on one's own particular and specific interest.

While our opinions differed widely, we were remarkably unanimous on one point — the place. Out of all the classics run on the world's circuits the Isle of Man TT, once again, figured prominently.

I posed the question as we sat on the terrace of Mike's hotel in Douglas, the island's capital. The answers came back without hesitation. Mike replied, "The 1963 Senior." "Rubbish," said his father. "Your best was the one you didn't win. The Junior of '65." Then they both looked across at me for my answer, which was — and still is — the 1965 Senior, when Mike

fell off, climbed back on and won

The 1965 Senior, I would say, was an unforgettable race. It clearly demonstrated the full force of Mike's will to win, his courage and his determination never to give up while the engine is still turning over, however erratically. This, in my opinion, was his finest hour, the race in which he literally pulled himself off the floor to win in what is undoubtedly the most stirring TT performance of all time.

Towards the end of the third lap Mike was well ahead, with nothing to trouble his mind other than the normal worry about the machine's reliability and willingness to stay the course. The red MV was handling beautifully, the engine-note sweet and unfaltering.

Passing Sarah's Cottage, he pressed his chest more closely against the tank and tucked his chin behind the fly-spattered screen, hanging on tightly as the bike accelerated smoothly and quickly up the hill that forms the exit from the Cottage.

He couldn't see the oil slick filming a puddle in the middle of his line through the next section. Suddenly the heavy bike slipped sideways and keeled over beyond the point of no return. Mike and the MV parted company at around 80 mph. Mike was thrown along the rain-

sodden asphalt on his back. As he skidded and bounced, his arms flung protectively round his head, his race number, tightly stitched to the back of his leathers, was ripped clean off. The MV careered crazily behind him, battered almost out of recognition by the road. When man and machine came to rest, Mike found himself flat on his back . . . looking into the eyes of an amused Giacomo Agostini, who had fallen at the same spot a little earlier.

But if Agostini thought he was going to have his team-mate for company during the remainder of the race he was wrong.

Mike got gingerly to his feet and cautiously felt his limbs. He waved aside the helpful marshals who had run to his aid, and stared at the MV. The windscreen was cracked wide open and flapping loose. The fairing was scarred down its entire length. The trumpet-shaped megaphones were squashed almost flat. The gear lever was buckled, the handlebars bent out of line, and half a footrest had been sliced off.

He heaved the bike upright and propped it against a grassy verge, then set about putting as much right as he could. He kicked furiously at the handlebars until they were as near true as he could get them under the circumstances. He didn't know whether the engine had been

seriously damaged by the beating it had suffered, but he wouldn't give up.

Against all race regulations, he turned the machine round so that it pointed back down the hill towards the oncoming traffic, and pushed for all he was worth. The marshals diplomatically looked the other way. The bike fired; it was still fighting fit. He swerved round in the road and set off towards the pits at the starting point. The crowd, who knew Mike was overdue and had given him up, were startled to see an extremely second-hand looking MV tearing past them, the knife-edge of the damaged screen swishing dangerously close to the rider's face.

When Mike steered the wounded machine into the pits the impact was devastating. Spectators crowded as close as they could to have a look and came away shaking their heads. The thousands of people in the stands groaned their disappointment.

The mechanics looked on in despair at the wreckage. But Mike, as casual as if he were sitting in an armchair, stayed astride the machine, resolutely refusing to quit. He insisted they did what they could, then helped to rip off the shattered windscreen.

There was nothing more they could do, and seventy seconds later he pushed himself back into the race. The spectators who had given up hope rose to their feet to cheer wildly as the familiar ear-splitting note of the MV announced Mike's intention.

Mike was faced with the agony of riding with no protection for his face at 160 mph. The rain was needles on his face, water swilled into his goggles and beaded the outside until he was riding almost blindly round the most dangerous circuit in the world.

As if this wasn't enough to worry him, there was more trouble on its way. The engine began to act up, and on lap five he motored into the pits. We all thought that at last he had seen sense and pulled out — and who could have blamed him? It would have been a glorious retirement. But he wanted to win.

Sixty-seven seconds later he was on his way again. The mechanics had fixed a throttle-slide on one of the four cylinders, but as soon as he got going again the slide jammed wide open. For what was left of the race it refused to shut down. It ran on full bore and he had to keep his hand on the brake to hold the bike in check on the corners.

It needs a special brand of courage to ride to win under these circumstances, to ride hard into the corners with an engine that has gone haywire and is trying to take you faster than is safe. The record-books in years to come will show only that in 1965 S.M.B. Hailwood won the Senior at a speed of 91.69 mph — the slowest 500 cc win on the island since 1950. But what a story lies behind that simple, unrevealing result! To anybody who was there — and there were 100,000 people — the memory will last forever.

Mike described it this way. "I would say that the '65 Senior was just about my dodgiest ride ever. I was winding it on up the hill when suddenly I was on my backside, leading the bike by about five yards towards the start and finish. I couldn't believe I wasn't hurt. There wasn't a scratch on me, but the bike was in a hell of a mess. I thought I'd had it for the race. When I picked it up I shoved it the wrong way down the hill to get it started. If anybody had reported me to the organisers for breaking the regulations I'd have strangled him. I had only one thought — and that was to get going again. I didn't care how many laws I broke. I suppose I could have been robbed of the race if anybody had reported me.

The fact is, everybody seemed to know that Mike had broken a rule, but it didn't get to the

TT SUCCESSES

1958	Lightweight 250 cc	3rd	NSU	74.30 mph
1959	Lightweight 125 cc	3rd	Ducati	72.15 mph
	Formula 1 350 cc	3rd	Norton	93.73 mph
1960	Senior 500 cc	3rd	Norton	98.29 mph
1961	Senior 500 cc	1st	Norton	100.60 mph
	Lightweight 250 cc	1st	Honda	98.38 mph
	Lightweight 125 cc	1st	Honda	88.23 mph
1962	Junior 350 cc	1st	MV Agusta	99.59 mph
1963	Senior 500 cc	1st	MV Agusta	104.64 mph
1964	Senior 500 cc	1st	MV Agusta	100.95 mph
1965	Senior 500 cc	1st	MV Agusta	91.69 mph
1966	Senior 500 cc	1st	Honda	103.11 mph
	Lightweight 250 cc	1st	Honda	101.79 mph
1967	Senior 500 cc	1st	Honda	105.62 mph
	Junior 350 cc	1st	Honda	104.68 mph
	Lightweight 250 cc	1st	Honda	103.07 mph
1978	TT Formula 1	1st	Ducati	108.51 mph
1979	Senior 500 cc	1st	Suzuki	111.75 mph
	Classic 1000 cc	2nd	Suzuki	113.03 mph

ears of the officials. Or did it?

It would have been an extremely brave official to snatch victory from Mike's grasp, and there were certainly no complaints from any of the riders who might have seen him. A marshal did take pictures of the offence — but he kept them hidden away for weeks.

Mike added, "The main worry I had was when I got back to the pits after the spill. I wondered if the scrutineers would allow me to

carry on. They gave the bike a hard look, but they said it would be okay to continue.

"You can't imagine what it's like, riding without a screen. I put a strip of red tape over my nose, but there was nothing I could do to protect the rest of my face. It felt as if my cheeks were tearing away from the corners of my mouth. I was almost stone-deaf from the rush of the wind."

"Didn't it occur to you to pack it up?" I asked him.

"What for?" he said. "The bike was still running, and I had a fair chance of winning. I never even thought about the effects of the crash. I dismissed it from my mind as soon as I found I was still in one piece. As I said, winning is too important to give up that easily."

To my mind this was Mike's finest success. It was, I think, the complete answer to all those critics who had given more credit to the machine than to the man. His skill, in my opinion, could not be questioned. His bravery had had little opportunity to show itself in such an obvious way and when it did get the chance he never hesitated for a moment.

Excerpt from Hailwood by Mike Hailwood and Ted Macauley. Transport Bookman Publications Ltd, £4.95.



Above: Up and away, Mike starts the 1962 Senior TT on an MV Agusta-4. Hugh Anderson (Matchless) awaits his turn. Below: At Bray Hill, Hailwood on his way to winning the 1967 Senior TT on the Honda-4. Photos: Nick Nicholls.

