

Book reviews

Modern Sports Helmets by James A. Newman

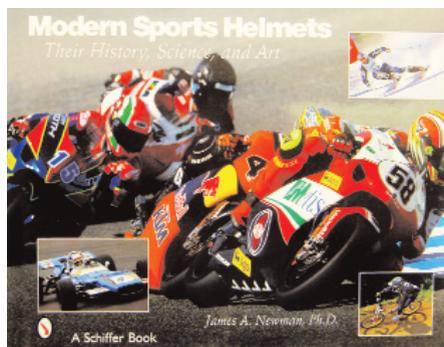
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review by Scott Rousseau

IF YOU COULD keep only one piece of safety gear with which to ride your motorcycle every day, chances are it would be your helmet. Sure, the proverbial “one percenters” who ride around us might argue that flying their colors is more important than sticking their head in a “bucket,” but most motorcyclists are well aware of the impact that a well-designed, certified helmet can have on their safety—pardon the pun.

James Newman knows. And with over three decades of experience in the field of human head protection, having worked both with Bell Helmets as well as with his own company, Biokinetics and Associates, Ltd., he shares that knowledge in *Modern Sports Helmets*, an all-inclusive look into the history, evolution and art of helmets for sporting use.

This 256-page hardcover book begins with a brief but interesting introduction to the origins of sports helmets which, in fact, weren't used for sport at all, but rather for military combat. Newman cites the biblical *mano y mano* between David and Goliath as an example of how early helmets left a lot to be desired where it pertains to protection; when your head is cut off with your own sword in the hands of a kid who just walloped you in the temple with a small stone, that ought to convince your design team to go back to the drawing board. Moving forward, the book delivers insightful discussions on the biomechanics of head trauma, helmet design and protection parameters that have evolved to combat them, and the never-ending quest for better helmet certification standards. Newman discusses the crash that claimed the life of sports car racer William “Pete” Snell and spurred the Snell certification standards with which many of us are familiar. Newman speculates that if Snell's Triumph TR-2 had been properly fitted with a rollbar, he



might not have suffered the fatal head injuries that motivated the research leading to the development of safer helmets. And we'd probably all be riding around on BMW C1s.

Modern Sports Helmets comprehensively addresses helmet use history in six major

sports, including automobile and motorcycle racing, skiing, football and my personal favorite stick-and-ball sport, ice hockey. Each section features color illustrations of helmets used throughout the decades. Motorcycle fans will appreciate the book for its automobile and motorcycle racing section alone but will also gain a deeper understanding of how other sports have contributed to the comfort and safety elements in the contemporary motorcycle helmets we wear and, so often, take for granted. Furthermore, Newman treats helmets not only as safety devices, but also as art. The book's photos depict many helmets with wild custom and/or factory paint schemes. No doubt, you will likely spot among them a model, or two, that either you used to wear or that was the signature model of a racing hero.

Modern Sports Helmets isn't a motorcycle-specific read, but it is worthy of space on your personal library shelf. If only Humpty Dumpty had known...

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Mann Of His Time by Ed Youngblood

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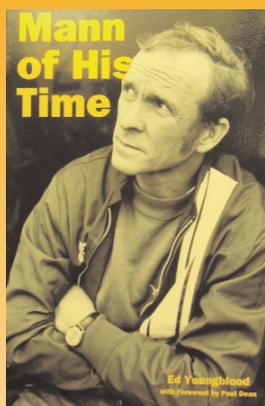
review by Scott Rousseau

THE MOTORCYCLING UNIVERSE should be forever grateful that Dick Mann was effectively cut from his high school football team.

Set to celebrate his 75th birthday this June, Mann, affectionately nicknamed “Bugs” by his boyhood pals, had dreamed of being a professional linebacker while growing up in Northern California in the late 1940s. It wasn't all that realistic, a point made when his coach refused the 5'6", 130-lb. Mann a team uniform. Undaunted, Mann turned to another love—motorcycles—and through gritty determination, dedication and innovation, he went on to become one of the most versatile, accomplished and revered American motorcyclists of all time.

That's the message that author, historian and former American Motorcyclist Association President and CEO Ed Youngblood so clearly and eloquently delivers in Mann's biography, *Mann of His Time*, perhaps one of the greatest books ever written about any sports figure, let alone a motorcyclist. The 288-page book offers a detailed discussion of the lifetime of triumph and tribulation experienced by Mann during a professional racing career that spanned nearly 20 years and produced two AMA Grand National Championship titles in two separate decades, back-to-back Daytona 200 victories in highly unlikely fashion, and in which Mann became acclaimed both in racing and in the motorcycle industry at large as an innovator and the most versatile rider America has—or maybe will ever—produce.

Complete with a plethora of black-and-white photographs, *Mann of His Time* is an accurate chronicle of everything from Mann's earliest motorcycling experiences, to his years on the



rugged and politically turbulent AMA National circuit, a career that began by racing against the feared Indian factory team and that concluded by competing with one of the few American racers of his same caliber, a young man named Kenny Roberts. Readers are guided through every step of Mann's life; his career as a factory dirt-tracker and road racer; his contributions to motorcycle chassis design, his role in expanding the burgeoning sport of motocross; the achievement of qualifying for the brutally tough International Six Day Trial; his leadership and inspiration in the vintage motorcycle racing movement of the 1980s, and perhaps his toughest personal battle, against cancer in the 1990s. Simply put, there is so much more to Dick Mann than the brief glimpses that most people know from Bruce Brown's 1971 motorcycle documentary, *On Any Sunday*.

Through it all, the reader comes to know Mann, not only from his own achievements but also from the perspective of his peers, thanks to Youngblood, whose exhaustive research and interviews of Mann's numerous contemporaries is worthy of some sort of award in itself. Even Mann was impressed with the depth of Youngblood's fact-checking.

The reward for fans of motorcycle history is *Mann of His Time*, a true story, larger-than-life saga that ought to be required reading for any self-respecting hard-core motorcyclist.

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Whitehorse Press—\$19.95; P.O. Box 60; North Conway, NH 03860; 603-356-6556; www.Whitehorse Press.com