

Getting

Russ Collins holds the fastest motorcycle e.t. in a quarter-mile.



Recovered, Russ takes a look back . . .

BY RUSS COLLINS

There probably has never been a drag racing motorcycle as famous as Russ Collins' Atcheson, Topeka & Santa Fe.

It was the first triple-engined machine ever built, using three fuel-injected Honda 750 engines, built up to 1100cc.

Collins took the bike through the fastest quarter-mile ever recorded — 7.86 seconds.

During its two years of campaigning, the bike was the most awesome and interesting Top Fuel motorcycle on the circuit.

First, because it never seemed to be quite under control. Collins, who is not a large man, was totally dwarfed lying at the controls.

Its history was one of constant problems — drive chains and later rubber belts constantly breaking or spinning off, or tires going up in smoke. But Collins, Byron Hines, Slim Moffett, Dave Brewer and the others at R.C. Engineering kept the machine running and racing.

On June 5 of this year, it all came to an end.

Collins, going through the eyes at US 42 Dragway in Ohio, crashed.

At 170 miles per hour.

The bike was totally demolished,

but Collins, bruised and battered, lived through the fastest motorcycle crash in history.

This is the story of that crash:

That month was going to be very busy.

First there was a match race at US 42 Dragway just outside Akron, Ohio, the next weekend was another one in Union Grove, Wisconsin, and then the third weekend was the big National Meet at Bowling Green, Kentucky.

And I just had this terrible feeling.

I really didn't want to leave. It was one of those things that you have a funny feeling about.

I was talking to Charlene (ED: Collins' wife) and Byron (ED: Byron Hines, Collins' R&D man) before I left, and I had this almost positive feeling that I was going to crash.

I didn't know on which racetrack.

I kind of thought that logically it would be at Bowling Green, because it's a slick enough track, where the bike could get badly out of shape. The triple almost spit me off there last year.

And I knew that at Bowling Green I'd be pushing that little extra bit, taking those little extra chances that you

do, because Bowling Green is one of the most important races of the year.

So I figured that, well, I'll get through the two match races and I'll probably eat it at Bowling Green.

US 42 Dragway is a pretty nice dragstrip. It might not be of National

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caliber, like Ontario or Indy, but it's fairly smooth, and the shutoff area is plenty long and a little uphill.

The starting line doesn't have all the traction in the world, but it isn't really