

HUB-CENTRE OF ATTENTION

All-new, British-designed
racer wows the crowds in
its Isle of Man TT
race debut

TT'95

■ **HEAD-TURNER:** Harris thrashes the unusual TAG Suzuki out of the Gooseneck in last week's Formula One TT

BY ROB McDONNELL

A RADICAL new British-built hub-centre steered race bike made its debut last week around the torturous TT circuit.

It was the first time the TAG Suzuki, brainchild of London-based engineering graduate Mike Tryphonos, had been used in anger.

Trial runs don't usually set the world on fire and the TAG Suzuki's debut was no different. Qualifying was beset with a series of niggling problems. The Formula One race offered no improvement – water from an earlier practice session found its way into the electrics and forced a retirement.

And Kiwi rider Shaun Harris picked up some debris on the rear tyre in the paddock. An embarrassing crash followed 10 yards into his practice lap. The high point was finishing 11th in Friday's Senior TT, lapping at 116.87mph.

But the small team is enthusiastic about the bike's potential and is determined to get it into production as both a road and race bike in the near future.

Harris' TT ride on the bike came after he spotted the machine being ridden around London.

"I saw the bike and then I saw a picture of it in Motor Cycle News, so I rang them up and asked if they wanted to race at the



■ **TAG TEAM:** Harris and Tryphonos show off the steering

TT," said Harris.

He is used to riding unconventional bikes – he raced a Britten in the TT in 1993 – and it was the TAG's unusual characteristics which attracted him.

A few practice laps at Castle Coombe convinced him the bike would be useable around the fast, bumpy and hilly 37.73-mile course.

"Coming out of fast corners it would shake its head twice then correct itself. It was very stable," said 31-year-old Harris.

TAG stands for Tryphonos Alternative Geometry, after the bike's builder, an Englishman with Cypriot parents.

His first version was built in 1991. This is the third. Both Tryphonos and Harris say it's still over-engineered to prevent breakdowns, which accounts for its 160kg dry weight.

The chassis is aluminium. The main cradle is solid aluminium, the front swingarm fabricated aluminium

and the rear swingarm is from a 1995 Suzuki GSX-R750.

The front steering system has two rods running above the arms of the front fork. The left one steers the wheel through rose-jointed linkages, the second arm locates the hub centre bearing to maintain rake and trail during suspension movement.

It is similar to Bimota's Tesi design. But where the Tesi's spindle is held by bearings at each end, the TAG's is clamped. TAG claims that increases rigidity.

It uses a front disc from a GTS Yamaha and a Koni front shock modified by Maxton. The engine is from a GSX-R750, tuned by North London Suzuki specialist Perfomoto. In addition to its normal head and valve work, the firm has lightened and polished the crank, fitted a close ratio gearbox, factory ignition, a bank of 38mm flat slide Mikuni carburettors, Yoshimura exhaust pipe and pistons and Carillo rods.

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