

BOOCOCK, Eric Henry

Born: February 28, 1945, Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, England.

The younger brother of Nigel Boocock, Eric began his speedway career as a 16 year old in 1961 and became one of the legends of the sport in Britain, both as a rider and administrator. He started at Middlesbrough in the Provincial League and made his league debut at Rayleigh on June 30, 1961 in a side that included the 50 year old Wal Morton, quickly becoming one of the hottest properties in the sport. He scored his first league maximum at the age of 17 and by 1963 had become the second heat leader at Cleveland Park behind Eric Boothroyd who was to become his long time team mate, promoter and team manager.



After spending four years with Middlesbrough the British League came into being in 1965 and the majority of the riders moved to Halifax where the sport was being reintroduced after a long absence. Eric was still just 20 years of age but took the new league by storm with an average in excess of nine points per match despite the fact that he was now up against riders of a higher standard than he had been used to facing. For the next decade Eric was the mainstay of the 'Dukes' side at The Shay and finished at the top of the club's averages every year between 1965 and 1974.

He led the side to a shock league and cup double in 1966 with an average of just under ten and a half points per match and had his best ever season in 1969 when he recorded over eleven. This made him the number one English rider for the first time and arguments often raged over who was the true national number one. Eric certainly had claims to the title on occasions but the 'Dukes' were often an unfashionable club and Eric perhaps did not achieve the recognition he deserved in some quarters who found it difficult to see beyond London and the major Midlands circuits. He made three World Final appearances, making his debut at Wembley in 1967 when he finished in 7th place and later appeared at Gothenburg in 1971 and Wembley again a year later, although he never seemed to do himself justice on the big night.

Eric rode in two World Team Cup finals and was an automatic choice for his country, featuring in three tours to Australasia in a total of 90 international caps. He suffered a badly broken arm at Newport at the peak of his career in August 1973 but he returned to the 'Dukes' line-up for the start of the following season. Perhaps Eric's greatest moment came in that 1974 campaign when he became British Champion, but retired from the sport at the end of the season at the age of just 29.

He quickly entered the team management side of the sport at Belle Vue and was out of the saddle for almost a decade before making a shock return to Halifax in 1983. He rode in 20 official fixtures for the 'Dukes' that season but found that the lay-off had been too long and retired for good after averaging less than two and a half points per match. Eric continued in team management for a host of northern tracks and was still involved in the sport 50 years after his Middlesbrough debut. He will be remembered as one of England's greatest riders of the era and would have few rivals for the title of the greatest ever Halifax 'Duke'.

Year	Club	Division	M	R	P	BP	TP	CMA	FM	PM
1961	Middlesbrough	PL	6	21	18	3	21	4.00	-	-
1962	Middlesbrough	PL	26	107	141	27	168	6.28	1	-
1963	Middlesbrough	PL	26	113	228	10	238	8.42	2	2
1964	Middlesbrough	PL	19	81	166	6	172	8.49	1	-
1964	Long Eaton	PL	5	20	44	0	44	8.80	1	-
1965	Halifax	BL	34	145	327	15	342	9.43	6	2
1966	Halifax	BL	38	161	402	19	421	10.46	11	6
1967	Halifax	BL	36	159	395	14	409	10.29	8	3
1968	Halifax	BL1	32	140	336	20	356	10.17	5	3
1969	Halifax	BL1	39	165	445	12	457	11.08	17	5
1970	Halifax	BL1	36	154	392	14	406	10.55	11	4
1971	Halifax	BL1	38	175	431	15	446	10.19	7	1
1972	Halifax	BL1	34	154	389	10	399	10.36	8	1
1973	Halifax	BL1	21	95	239	6	245	10.32	3	2
1974	Halifax	BL1	26	112	251	18	269	9.61	2	1
1983	Halifax	BL	20	55	32	2	34	2.47	-	-

Individual Honours: World Finalist 1967 (7th), 1971 (12th), 1972 (15th), British Champion 1974.

International Honours: World Team Cup Finalist 1967, 1970, England international – 53 caps, 538 points, Great Britain international – 37 caps, 276 points.

Team Honours: British League Championship winner 1966, British League Knock-Out Cup winner 1966.