

BOOTHROYD, Eric

Born: April 26, 1927, Halifax, West Yorkshire, England.*

Eric served in the Army as a despatch rider in the Royal Signals and had his first taste of speedway racing whilst serving in Germany at the Hanomag Stadium. But for a fall in a championship meeting for serving soldiers, Eric's career in the sport may have taken a completely different path as the winner was to be given a trial at Wembley. On the verge of winning the championship Eric crashed, Jimmy Gooch won the meeting - and finished up with a contact at the Empire Stadium. All was not lost however, as Eric was offered an opportunity to make the grade in the Midlands and made an immediate impression in the Third Division with Tamworth. His form at Fazeley was so good that he was moved up to their sister track, Cradley Heath in Division Two in mid-season and was equally as impressive at the higher level, completing an excellent first year with a Second Division average of just under eight points per match.

Promoter Les Marshall gave the young Yorkshireman the chance to make the grade in the top flight with Birmingham in 1951 and he did not let his boss down with two double figure hauls in the first five league matches of the season and a solid end of season average of over six points per match.

Although Eric was never rated in the star category and was one of the sport's less fashionable riders, he could compete with the best and was given his international debut in August 1956 at his home track against Australasia, scoring eight points. The 1957 season was one of highs and lows for Eric as he served a suspension in the U.K. for riding on unlicensed South African tracks the previous winter and saw the 'Brummies' withdraw from racing mid-way through the season. On the positive side, he spent a useful late season spell with Bradford who had taken over the remaining Birmingham fixtures and also reached his one and only World Final, finishing a creditable tenth with seven points at Wembley. He spent unhappy spells with Oxford and Leicester over the next three years, temporarily quitting the sport on occasions, before revitalising his career with a move into the Provincial League with Middlesbrough in 1961.

He excelled at this level and in 1962 finished at the top of the league averages with a figure of 10.30 points per match, scoring ten maximums in the process. However, the best was still yet to come as, in the twilight of his career, he led his home town club Halifax in the newly formed British League in 1965. Showing some of the best form of his life in 1966 he skippered the 'Dukes' to a league and cup double and forced his way back into the international reckoning. He was still recording heat leader quality scores when he retired from the sport in 1968 and later promoted with great success at both Halifax and Bradford.



Year	Club	Division	M	R	P	BP	TP	CMA	FM	PM
1950	Tamworth	NL3	21	93	164	21	185	7.96	-	1
1950	Cradley Heath	NL2	25	97	164	24	188	7.75	-	-
1951	Birmingham	NL1	34	138	175	37	212	6.14	-	-
1952	Birmingham	NL1	44	137	155	39	194	5.66	-	-
1953	Birmingham	NL1	20	84	130	22	152	7.24	1	2
1954	Birmingham	NL1	30	123	185	12	197	6.41	-	1
1955	Birmingham	NL1	28	136	161	25	186	5.47	-	-
1956	Birmingham	NL1	28	115	177	41	218	7.58	-	1
1957	Birmingham	NL	7	36	55	7	62	6.89	-	1
1957	Bradford	NL	9	47	86	6	92	7.83	1	-
1958	Oxford	NL	20	89	105	21	126	5.66	-	-
1959	Leicester	NL	10	46	54	11	65	5.65	-	-
1960	Oxford	NL	8	23	24	4	28	4.87	-	-
1961	Middlesbrough	PL	11	41	95.5	4	99.5	9.71	3	-
1962	Middlesbrough	PL	26	113	281	10	291	10.30	7	3
1963	Middlesbrough	PL	14	59	129	14	143	9.69	-	1
1964	Long Eaton	PL	11	49	114	0	114	9.31	1	-
1965	Halifax	BL	34	137	249	25	274	8.00	1	-
1966	Halifax	BL	38	164	345	36	381	9.29	3	3
1967	Halifax	BL	37	153	299	23	322	8.42	1	-
1968	Halifax	BL1	38	160	293	25	318	7.95	-	4

Individual Honours: World Finalist 1956 (10th).

International Honours: England international – 2 caps, 19 points, Great Britain international – 1 cap, 2 points.

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