



INDIAN SPORT SCOUT 1936 RACER - AN AMERICAN RACING ICON: A HAND- CHANGE HOT ROD (THE MOTORCYCLE FILES Book 16)

Alan Cathcart

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This issue of The Motorcycle Files focuses on a true American icon of motorcycling, the Indian V-Twin that began winning on the fearsome banked board tracks and dirt oval speedways of the USA in the first decade of the 20th century and was still winning some fifty years later.

Most iconic of all was the Sport Scout from the mid-1930s – the subject of our classic racer test. With 40 bhp produced by its 750cc flathead (side valve) motor, the Sport Scout delivered rugged performance, with just three-speeds literally on hand via its hand-shift gearbox - Low, Intermediate, and High! It was arguably the world's first Superbike and Alan Cathcart details its history - from club racer to Daytona 200-mile winner. This issue is full of historical interest, in fact, as it begins with a full history of the Indian marque that spans over a hundred years.

This is followed by Alan Cathcart's hands-on assessment of the actual hand-change hot rod raced by Will Harding to eight successive titles in the American Historic Racing Class C Hand-shift Championship, including revealing the special techniques required to race a motorcycle with a foot-clutch and hand gear-change.

The test of the bike brings home the reality of American-style racing in the 'thirties. The only concession to modern times is the increase in stopping power. Little in the way of brakes were originally fitted to the bike when new, so later upgraded replacements have been fitted (and approved by the vintage racing authorities) so as to provide an extra margin of safety for racing today. Otherwise this genuine American motorcycle icon is still very original.

Finally, Alan explains how and why the American Motorcycle Association's Class C racing was invented and takes a look at the historical circumstances surrounding it.

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