

1931 World Championship, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

(- Update, August 2013: p.2 -)

Putting together a Fixtures & Results list for the 2 seasons that AJ Hunting promoted in Buenos Aires and Montevideo between 1929 and 1931, taken primarily from 'The Auto' magazine of the day, has highlighted information on the World Championship Series that was run there in the second season.

Having run the Argentine Open Championship in the initial season, - won by Frank Varey - , the following year the stakes were upped when AJH secured the sponsorship from Argentinian tobacco firm 'La Compañía Nacional de Tabacos', (National Tobacco Co.) for a “*super*” championship along the same 2-man-race lines with a \$5,000 prize plus a handsome trophy.

The UK press results that winter for the Buenos Aires season didn't start appearing until December: the Christmas report tells us the '*so called World's Championship started early in the season. The scheme of this World's Championship ... has every rider meet the others 3 times,*' and complained that when the big boys like Sprouts Elder are up against a local Argentine rider it becomes a bugbear with just 2 riders per race unless there were engine problems, etc. The event format on each of these Championship nights was a number of match races from which riders became eliminated during the course of the season, (to the extent that an extra event had to be added to the evenings' programme toward the end of the season when the number of riders involved reduced and only a few Championship match races remained.) The limited reports mailed or available for the first half of the season, i.e. up to the New Year, do identify the Championship as having been run on the Huracan programme on Dec.13th and 27th. From January onward the event was programmed at least 4 times, - 10th, 17th, 31st and Feb. 11th, - it would appear that no World Championship Series rounds were held at River Plate Speedway.

For the meeting of 31st Jan. there was excitement in “*an elimination heat of the 'Pour de Noblesse'* World Championship Series in which Sprouts Elder and Bob Harrison were matched, a rerun from the previous meeting.*” When Harrison again had engine failure on the first lap Sprouts continued “*as if he had the world to beat,*” ignoring the red flag on 2 successive laps, and then the black flag on the last. Over the loudspeakers it was declared a no-race, but SE entered an objection on the grounds that there was no need to stop him in a championship race. In the end he was rightly awarded the race. When seen that evening The Auto's reporter declared “*this 'Pour la Noblesse'* trophy is a lovely pot and carries a \$5,000 cash prize with it. Sprouts has ear-marked it for himself and I rather fancy his chances. He has not lost a single race in the series yet !*”

At the meeting of Feb. 11th local rider Juan Pagano was awarded his round that evening because Frank Varey was injured and unable to partake, and we are told he therefore would be meeting Sprouts Elder in the next round ! There are no more known results after that last date, (- just like today, 80+ years later, once the UK racing season start the overseas news in the speedway press gets bottom priority and dries up,) but clearly the Championship event had still to reach its climax and the World Champion declared, but we do know that Sprouts had not lost a single Championship race and was still in it in February, - the previous years' national championship was concluded on Feb.12th, Hunting was leaving for New York in the third week of February, and Sprouts' next and presumably final race for the Championship was against a local 'newcomer' !

A 1970's biographical tribute to Sprouts presently on the OTS website, (Files/Sprouts Elder,) composed on the occasion of a memorial race in his home town of Fresno and citing facts attributed to Mssrs Stenner, Clymer and Lanning, informs us that “*... he became the International Champion in 1931.*” (See page extract, in Update below.) Whether the word 'International' is a synonym for 'World' or comes from Hunting's company name, it does strongly support the emerging conclusion from the foregoing, made with a high degree of certainty, that the 1931 World Champion, - the first ever World Champion - , was America's **Sprouts Elder**.

C. Jewes,
Rutland, UK. 25.6.2012

Ref, OTS: <http://sports.groups.yahoo.com/group/oldtimespeedway/>

* **Footnote,**

'**Pour la Noblesse**' – “*For the Nobility*” - , was a cigar brand of the National Tobacco Company, its successors being part of today's BAC, - British American Tobacco, its major shareholder. The business was started in Argentina in 1898, the company formed in 1913, and renamed **Nobleza Piccardo** in 1977 after its best selling line, when it had a 63% share of the Argentinian cigar/cigarette market, (- it also produces snuff.) From 1923 it manufactured Players cigarettes under license, along with an extensive range of other US and international brands which today include Lucky Strike, Pall Mall and Camel Blue.

An approach has been made to Nobleza Piccardo in the faint hope that they may have archives that could reveal more about the 1931 World Championship, but having asked around they have found nothing.

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23 Aug. 2013: UPDATE TO "1931 World Championship, Buenos Aires, Argentina."

Browsing OTS recently, a Long Beach, Ca. programme dated 25.7.1933 was spotted. It bears a list of riders, No.4 being Sprouts Elder, (and thus according with the racing number borne in the photograph below, taken from "Thrilling the Millions" by Tom Stenner,) and shown on the front of the programme is a snap of the aforementioned Mr. Elder with the caption "Sprouts Elder, World's Champion".

This contemporaneous item verifies, I feel sure, the outcome of the 1931 competition in Argentina, - that the winner was Sprouts Elder, and that as such he was the first ever World Champion.



LLOYD "SPROUTS" ELDER . . . International Champion 1931, called the Father of American Motorcycle Broadsliding.

7-25-33

Official Program

The World's Finest Speedway

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Sprouts Elder
World's Champion

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LIST OF RIDERS AND NUMBERS

1. George Lannon	30. Tim Witham
2. Ted Morrow	31. Slim Myers
3. May Wahn	32. Ted King
4. "Sprouts" Elder	33. John Baker
5. Elden Campbell	34. Bob Keller
6. Lyle Math	35. Lou Branch

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7. Corby Miles	36. Ed Hinkle
8. Earl Forrest	37. Kenny Brown
9. Ray Grant	38. J. Podetti
10. Burton Albrecht	39. Jack Miller
11. Fott Mossman	40. K. Schufeldt
12. Bill Edwards	41. Bud Johnson
13. Ed Lissau	42. Bob Holder
14. Jim Peck	43. Bud White
15. John Spruour	44. Sid Hares
16. Tom Cox	45. Bob Wynne
17. John Valenzuela	46. Willis Miner
18. Dave Roberts	47. Paul Grogan
19. Bert Lewis	48. Earl Flinders
20. Lloyd McManis	49. Frank Dunco
21. W. Lameroux	50. F. Zimmerman
22. Jesse Glick	51. D. Morrison
23. Jack Mevco	52. John Crooke
24. Fee Woe Callan	53. Garland Johnson
25. Ed Hinch	54. Ed. Nardus
26. Matt Kelly	55. Ralph Feaster
27. Sid Chambers	56. John Hedgesworth
28. Mark Farver	57. Jack Forde
29. Cliff Hills	58. Lyle Weaver

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