

Weekender

Sports

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Markham battling in tug-of-war

When Markham District High School (MDHS) Junior football coach Jim George says it's a close battle in the York Region loop, you can believe him. In fact, three of the five teams in the league are currently separated

by only two points in the fight for first place. Markham managed to gain sole possession with a win and a tie in its past two outings. Last week's Newmarket contest turned into a definite oddity—a 14-14 draw.

"I'd have to say it was a very strange game," said coach Jim George. "We had our moments when we were flat as pancakes, and when we were as high as kites." Despite coming away with a point, though, he was not pleased

with the overall effort. "I was trying to get the guys up for the game, but I think I overdid it because we just came out flat," he explained. It took more than half the game for either club to break a scoreless

draw. And when that came, it was Newmarket who did the damage with a pair of quick third-quarter touchdowns (one of them unconverted). According to George, "we sort of settled down and finally put our act together" in the final quarter. The result was a pair of Markham majors.

Andrew Gallifent had a hand in both of them. After Mike Chellico powered his way in from seven yards out, Gallifent grabbed the ball in a two-point conversion. Late in the game Gallifent took off on a 55-yard sweep that ended in the Newmarket end zone. The one-point conversion kick was blocked—which allowed Newmarket an opportunity to knot the count.

It did so on a drive that was capped with a single. Coach George admitted his error by noting, "I thought they were going to expect the two-point try. But that missed convert proved to be very costly."

Both Newmarket and Markham remained tied with 3-1-1 records. But they also fell to second place, thanks to a King City victory.

However, that fall from grace did not last long for MDHS. A 13-6 decision over Aurora's Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary school on Tuesday catapulted it back into first place.

This win was a far cry from the two schools' earlier meeting, though. That contest was the first of the season for both teams, and Markham cruised to an easy 42-0 annihilation.

On this occasion the coach noted both overconfidence on the part of his troops, plus a "dramatic" improvement by the first-year Williams squad.

Another problem was the dreaded fumble, which hounded Markham during the entire 1984 campaign. It returned during the Williams outing, as Markham gave up the ball four times—twice on scoring drives deep in opposition territory.

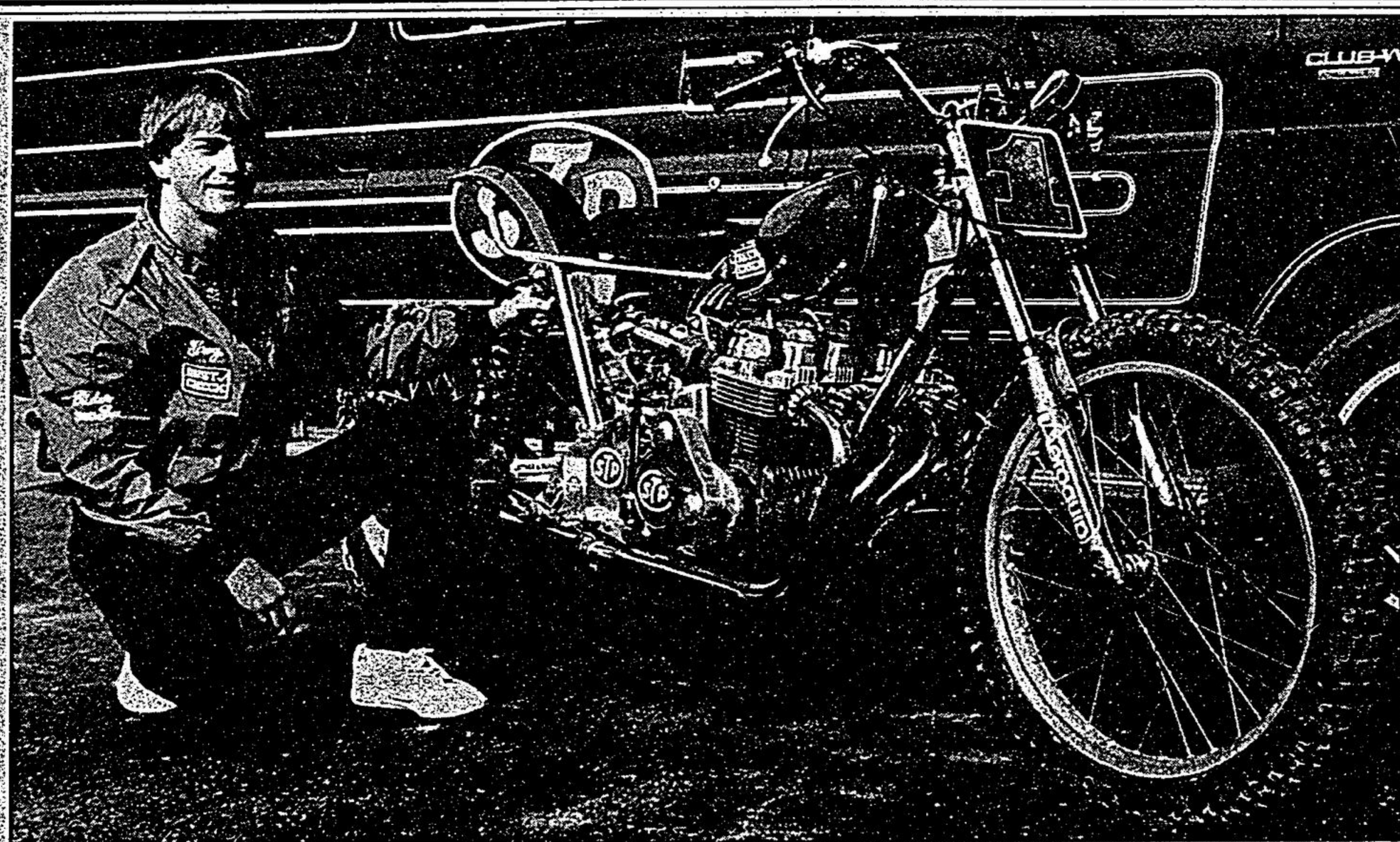
Markham's first points came in the first quarter on a 25-yard sweep by former defensive stalwart Jeff Johnson, who seems to be doing very well in his new offensive position.

But Williams came back with an unconverted major just before half-time to close the gap to 7-6. Then Gallifent went to work in the third quarter, and scored on a 23-yard sweep to round out the offence.

George was less than thrilled with the performance of the defence, but he was pleased with the work of defensive back Dave Sturgis.

Meanwhile, he thinks first place is still up for grabs.

"This league is so close, than among the top three teams (Markham, Newmarket and King City), anyone could finish between first and third, which makes for pretty good football."



Greg Williams shows off the motorcycle that he rode to the 1985 World Hillclimbing Championship.

Champion in 3 years

By FRANCIS KING
Sports Editor

Markham's Greg Williams apparently believes in doing things the logical, methodical way—especially when it comes to driving a high-powered motorcycle up a 500-foot gravel hill.

After all, how else can one explain his season finishes during his three years in the sport? He was third overall in his first season, second in 1984 and first—the world champion—this year.

The 22-year-old 14th Ave. resident also believes in following in his father's footsteps. John Williams, 45, is a five-time world champion and heads up the team with 24-year-old son Wade.

And the 500-cc Honda STP/Rust Check Special Greg uses is the same won John rode to four of those titles.

What was so alluring about such a potentially dangerous and expensive sport?

"I've always wanted to race ever since I had a mini-bike," Williams recalled in an interview on Wednesday. "So it was logical to get into hillclimbing when I was old enough."

But why hillclimbing over the better-known motor sports? "At one point I would have liked to get into motocross racing, but with Dad away on weekends it would have been almost impossible to get to all the competitions."

And this sport lends itself to a longer career, as well, he continued. "It's not an endurance event. You're only on a motorcycle for 7-8 seconds. You find a lot of the best riders are older. They get better as the years go by."

One would think that, if anything, can age a hillclimber, it's the travelling to and from meets. The Williams team logs about 15,000 miles in their van attending the 11 or so annual competitions.

"I don't really see the travelling as a disadvantage," Greg disagreed. "Actually, I enjoy it because we get to see a lot of places I wouldn't normally be able to visit."

Back on the topic of championships, Williams said the reality of reaching the pinnacle of his sport only dawned on him two days after recording his record time on the Dayton, Ohio hill.

But winning it all has been his goal since the '85 season started. "At the end of last year I really thought this would be the season to do it," Greg recalled. "The bike was running at full potential, so it was just a matter of me riding it right."

Riding it right seemed to come easy for most of the campaign. But there were some difficulties.

"In mid-stream (after finishing seventh and ninth in consecutive races), I thought the championship was slipping away from me," he explained. "I went through a spell where I was really starting to doubt whether I was riding well."

Part of the reason could have been the pressure. After strong finishes

in his previous seasons, the only way Greg could do better was to earn the championship.

Looming as an obstacle to that goal was a formidable opponent—Ohio's Jimmy Clark, who beat Greg out for the '84 crown and led the way most of this year.

The pressure kept up right to the end. Both had won two meets, and Clark was ahead in the all-important points standing. To catch him Greg had to win the last two hillclimbs.

"At that point (during the slump) I was trying too hard," he related. "I had to tell myself before each race to settle down."

Greg seemed to be able to do so well enough to win the second last meet. The grand finale was another story—a dramatic record-setting duel between the two riders that only ended with Greg's record-time finish on his final ride.

To accomplish that, Williams studied the hill until he found the spot where he could shave precious milliseconds off his time.

He also took his father's advice and put the rear wheel of his STP/Rust Check special into a rut—thereby stopping its habit of sliding sideways upon starting.

The third thing was possibly the most important.

"I made a conscious decision to relax and sit back a little on the bike so I could see that first landing on the hill," Greg explained. "I figured if I could catch Jimmy, it would be right at that first landing."

And starting that run he was "totally calm. It was like there was no emotion inside me. That's probably what won me the race."

Greg and motorcycle unexpectedly parted company almost as soon as he went through the finish line and set the 6.4 second record time. The bike skidded alongside one of the embankments along the course, and Williams jumped off so his weight wouldn't make the machine crash head-on.

"At that point," the crowd was just going crazy. The announcer was saying "He's done it! He's done it! He's the new world champion!"

Greg's major plans are to use his race-winning purse (about \$1,300) to attend the American Motorcycle Association (AMA) banquet in California in January and pick up his award. There's also a hillclimbers' banquet next month in Ohio to attend.

And he's slowly getting into some other aspects of the sport. Under John's tutelage, Greg's learning about the ins and outs of selling the sport and the Williams team to sponsors—both retaining old benefactors and securing new ones.

A full-time hillclimbing career like John's is a possibility, but the Markham District High School graduate is taking things slowly, and examining other possibilities as well.

It seems sure Greg will be a success in any of them, as long as he uses the same trick that gained him the world championship—relaxing and not trying too hard.



ANDREW GALLIFENT Leads Markham offence