



BSA Gold Star 500cc (1954)

WA's winning streak: The model that ruled scrambles for a decade

Model	Years	Engine	Suspension	Power (bhp)	Notable Features
CB32 Frame fitted with A DB34 engine	1949 to 1963	499cc single-cylinder OHV, air-cooled	Steel full duplex cradle design (front) with a swingarm (rear)	38hp @ 7000 rpm	4-speed manual transmission, wet multiplate clutch, chain final drive, dry sump lubrication, single Amal Monobloc carburettor, and Lucas magdyno ignition.

The 1954 BSA Gold Star 500cc, specifically the DB34 model, represents the eighth major upgrade in the renowned Gold Star series, and was known for its performance and racing pedigree.

This model was part of the renowned BSA Gold Star series, produced by the Birmingham Small Arms Company from 1949, when the 499cc B34 Gold Star was introduced, until the end of Gold Star production in 1963.

The single-cylinder overhead valve (OHV) engine featured an all-alloy construction, which made it lighter and more efficient compared to earlier cast-iron designs. This contributed to higher power output and better handling for riders.

The CB32 MK II frame, introduced in late 1954, featured two cast lugs replacing the previously welded-on tubes for the front engine plates, which enhanced strength and ease of engine mounting.

The combination was a standout in terms of performance, versatility, and desirability among classic British motorcycles.

The Gold Star series, including the 1954 B34, was highly successful in various forms of motorcycle sport and was renowned for its speed, reliability, and adaptability.

Racing history

In 1954, the Gold Star had a fabulous string of successes, with Jeff Smith winning the British Trials Championship and finishing third in the World 500cc Motocross Championship.

The following year in the Australian Motocross Championships at the Rope Works in Mosman Park, WA, in the 500cc class BSA Gold Star riders filled the podium with Ron Edwards, Bill Watson and Eric Kosonen finishing 1-2-3.

Between 1955 and 1964, BSA Gold Stars won eight Harley Scrambles with Peter Nicol (1955, 1957), Charlie West (1958 and 1959) and Don Russell (1961 and 1964) each winning twice.

During the same period, BSA Gold Stars won 11 National Motocross titles in the Unlimited and 500cc classes, with WA motocross legends Charlie West (3), Alan Nicol (2), Peter Nicol (1), Bob O'Leary (1) and Gordon Renfree (1) winning eight of these.

Restoration

The BSA Gold Star on display is a 500cc DB34 engine fitted into a CB32 Frame, which was restored to its original condition by Ray Wann Senior in 1997 and is now owned by his daughter Michelle James (nee Wann) after he passed away in 2018.

Bill Witcombe (founder of the Motor Cycle Racing Club WA) bought the brand-new bike and used it for road racing. Ray Wann was its second owner and purchased it off Bill in 1958, immediately modifying it to race scrambles.

Ray raced in many Harley Scrambles in Mosman Park between 1958 and 1964, and other scramble events over the years, often with podium finishes. Through to the early 1970s, Ray, his father Donald, and son Ray (junior) raced this bike.

In 1970, when Ray senior purchased a brand new Bultaco El-Bandido 350cc, he retired the Gold Star back to the shed where it lay for almost three decades until he decided to return it to its original glory.

Over an 8-year period, Ray lovingly restored the beaten-up scrambler to its original road condition. After its restoration, the bike only left the shed twice for exhibitions. At the York Motorcycle Festival in 2014, it won the "Best Vintage European" award.

Photos: [Left to right] Ray Wann had immediate success when he bought his 1954 BSA Gold Star and converted it to a scrambler; Ray (24) struggling in the 1960 Harley Scramble up Melrose Slide at the Rope Works, along with R Regan (83) and C Crake (32); and the restored bike now.

