

# SIX YEAR OLD IRIS WAS ALREADY 'CHAMPION'

IF we had women's road racing at the Olympic Games and the world's championships, and if I were manager of the women's team, I would think I was failing the sport if I couldn't talk Iris Miles into making the team.

Why? Because as Britain's fastest-ever woman 50-miler, as an ex-880 yards national track champion, and a competent performer in a bunch on all kinds of surfaces, Iris is potentially this country's No. 1 woman road-racing star. She doesn't ride anything but time trials now because she likes this phase of the sport and everything about it. She does well in it and without a great deal of travelling from her Doncaster home she can keep up a regular weekly programme.

On the other hand she doesn't like the present set-up in women's road racing—she thinks there is too much southern bias about it—and it's pretty certain that she will keep on concentrating on the unpaced game as she has done since the beginning of the 1954 season.

Nor will anybody try to alter her style—but if we had to fight for an Olympic crown or a world title it would be tragic to leave Iris out!

Maybe I'm just a bit biased about the capabilities of the national 50 miles champion and record holder—but then I've followed her every move since she was a 15-year-old club-girl and I know a good deal about her prowess on two wheels that the record books don't tell.

Iris is 24 years old now, married to speedman Ken Miles, and apart from Sundays spends her week much like any other housewife in their trim home just off the Great North Road.

She rode her first race, a ten miles time trial, when she was fifteen, and just beat evens—but her cycling life goes back a good deal further than that! Indeed, the "start 'em young" story is given a new twist by Iris, who rode solo the 50 miles from her home at Conisbrough, near Doncaster, to Nottingham when she was SIX YEARS OLD!

By **DICK SNOWDON**

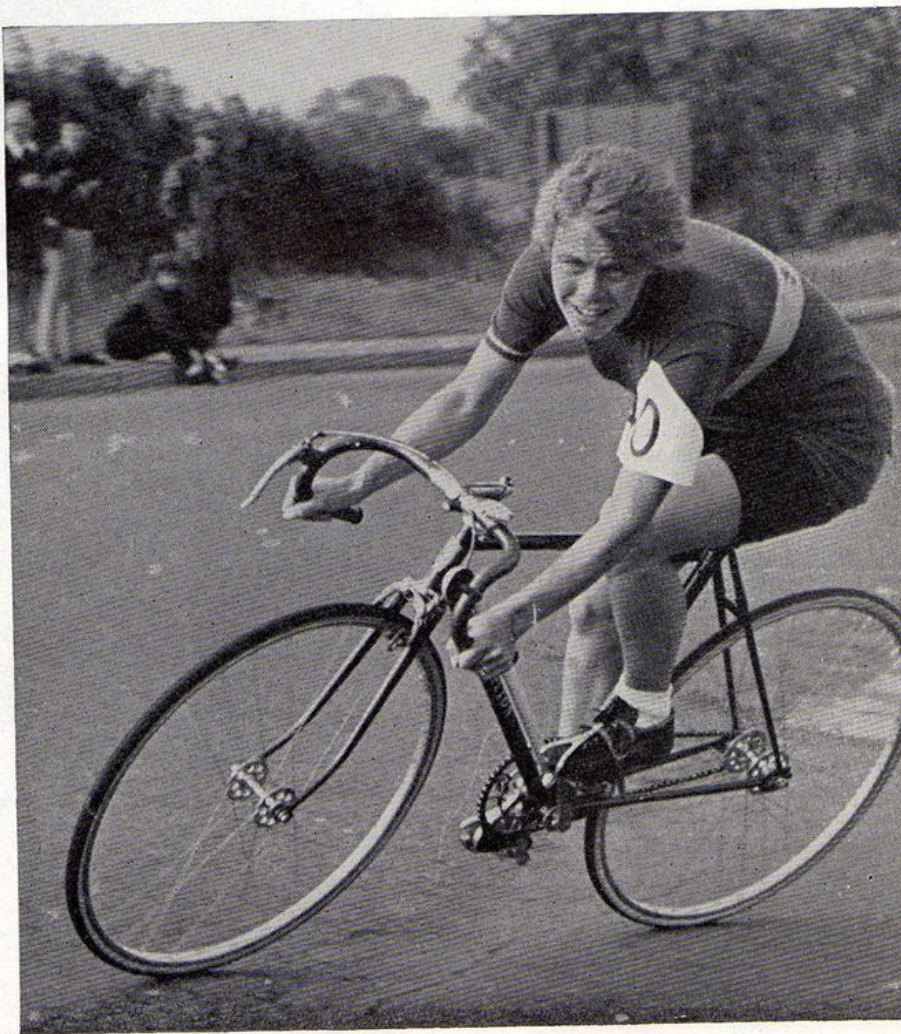
No wonder she has developed into a champion 50-miler!

During the war years Iris, the nipper, did a good deal of riding with her parents—other trips to Nottingham and the places which South Yorkshire clubmen visit on their half-day runs—and soon after the war Miss Iris Hoult started club riding with Conisbrough Ivanhoe.

Switching to Dearne Wheelers as her interest in track racing developed,

she soon showed promise in South Yorkshire Track League racing. By 1950, when 17, she was winning prizes regularly at Yorkshire sports meetings, and ended the year by winning the 880 yards handicap off 63 yards at Thorne sports.

The year 1951 saw her biggest successes in track sport, starting with a win and a second at Yorkshire Main Colliery sports, and ending with a treble win at Thorne Colliery sports. In between she won her first national title, the 880 yards grass-track championship at Harworth Colliery sports.



By 1952 her handicap mark was shrinking, but she showed her ability to ride fast, and handle a bike under difficult conditions, by scoring three wins on the Sheffield Stadium track. This was an unbanked cinder track where, in 1952, a Sheffield promoter launched an ambitious scheme to bring big-time racing to the city. He succeeded in that respect, for Reg Harris, Arie Van Vliet, Ray Pauwels, and some first-class amateurs speeded and skidded round that cinder circuit to provide good sport for the South Yorkshire fans. But, with a well appointed stadium, lined nearly half-way round with covered stands, he was thinking in terms of five-figure crowds, and when these did not materialise, the scheme folded up.

Yet it provided another link in the Iris Miles story, for the girl who is now rated just a time-trials rider rode that difficult track brilliantly to win the women's point-to-point race at the April meeting, win the half-mile handicap off 42 yards at the May meeting, and win again off 38 yards

in great style at the June meeting.

Iris lost her national 880 yards title that year at Harworth sports to Brodsworth R.C. girl Margaret Beevers, but at that same meeting won the six laps pursuit race in record time 4 min. 15 sec., and the following year won this 1½ miles event again in 4 min. 14 sec.—a track record which is still standing.

By now, one chapter of the B.A.R. champion's career was ending and another one, in time-trials racing, was starting. Early in that 1953 season she had won the Don Valley "10," then the Brodsworth R.C. "10" in 26-39, and after several placings in West Yorkshire events did her first fast winning "25" in the Meersbrook C.C. event in 1-6-54.

By 1954 Iris—still Miss Hoult—was a time-trials specialist, and really hit the headlines with a 1-4-35 winning ride in the Central District Ladies' C.A. Muriel Hunt Memorial "25" which was to prove the fastest in women's racing that year. She had joined Scala Wheelers at the beginning of that season and was soon helping that club to national fame.

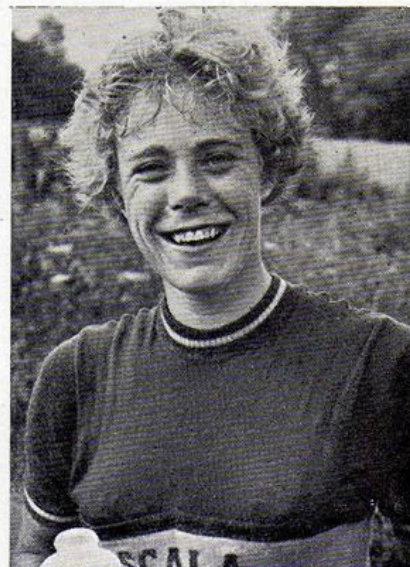
That season she tried her first "100"—and filled third place behind the Scots girl Janet Sutherland in the championship with a 4 hr. 48 min. ride. Coupled with her fast "25" and a 2 hr. 14 min. "50," that ride earned her third place in the women's B.B.A.R.

Remarkably enough, it was 22 months before Iris secured another placing in a national championship, though in 1955 she won open time trials on some ten different courses in the North and Midlands, and improved her "50" record to 2-12-31 in winning the Bradford Olympic event.

At the end of the 1954 season she had married Ken Miles and set up house in Doncaster—and maybe the change of routine put her out of her stride somewhat, for that year she dropped back to fifth place in the B.B.A.R.

Iris started 1956 racing fit and fast, settled in as a housewife, into a good training routine, and when she won the West Pennine R.C. "25" with a 1-4-45 ride, and then the Solihull "25" in May, it seemed that she must snap out of her national championship blues. But came the 25 miles championship, in Yorkshire, with Iris in the role of leading contender, and she was pushed back to eighth place—without any excuses.

Then, on June 24, Iris regained the headlines with a competition-record "50" of 2-11-13 in the Preston



Wheelers' event, and with the "50" championship a fortnight away, she decided she must do something about that championship jinx.

So far she had—to use her own expression—"coddled herself" before the big events, taking it easy the previous week, and obviously had done a good deal of worrying. For the "50" she decided on a different routine, preceding the title race with a week's tour in the Yorkshire Dales, returning home on the Friday, and riding down to Nottingham on the Saturday.

Maybe she thought about her trip as a six-year-old on that tree-lined undulating road through the Dukeries—but whatever she thought about, she certainly forgot championship jitters. Five years after winning her track title she won her first national time-trial championship, demolishing the opposition on that sunny morning in Nottinghamshire with a 2-10-39 ride which made another competition record. A few weeks later she slashed her "100" record to 4-35-47 in winning the Dragon R.C. event, then improved her "25" record to 1-3-39 at Goole, and made quite sure of the women's B.B.A.R. with a new record speed of 22.76 m.p.h.

So to 1957—another "50" record (2-10-2), another "50" title, a string of 25 miles T.T. wins, a new personal "25" record (1-3-3), and by Bank Holiday weekend a new women's B.B.A.R. record average of 22.85 m.p.h.!

She's a great girl this Iris—a great time-trials rider, a great track rider—and I still say it—potentially the greatest road-racing girl we have ever known.

