

Hopkins Takes Aprilia Cup Championship

By Kevin Duke

Young gun John Hopkins, 16, met a serious challenge when the Aprilia Cup Challenge series visited Pocono International Raceway.

The gunfight began when Blackman's Cycles offered younger gun Ben Spies, 15, a ride on the Aprilia usually ridden by the injured Mike Himmelsbach.

"They wanted me to go to see if I could stop Hopkins," said Spies, a WERA/CMRA racer who usually rides a TZ250 and RS125. He is leading the 1999 WERA Formula Two Championship title, with two wins and a few podiums.

The race shaped up to be spectacular. It was the first time at Pocono for either racer, and it was Spies' first time riding the streetbike-based Aprilia.

"I don't want to say anything bad about it," hedged Spies when asked about the typical 57 to 63 rear-wheel horsepower Aprilias. "It's kind of mean saying it's like my 250 on one cylinder—it was my 250 on a bad day. It handled a bit like my 250, but it was more of a cushiony ride." Spies' bike was outfitted with Jolly Moto pipes and Race



The Aprilia Cup Podium at Pocono, winner John Hopkins (center) flanked by second-place Ben Spies (left) and third-place David Rose.

Photo by Brian J. Nelson.



John Hopkins (78) leads Ben Spies (61) in their battle for the Aprilia Cup win at Pocono.

Photo by Brian J. Nelson.