

on a powerful 500cc Yamaha but he was then tragically killed in a horrendous 250cc-class pile-up in the third round at Monza. MV and Ago were once again left in almost total command. But MV's plans to develop a new four-cylinder model eventually saw Agostini relinquish his 500cc ride to Englishman Phil Read — and then move to Yamaha in time for the 1974 season.

Agostini made his U.S. racing debut in the Daytona 200 in March of 1974. The race that year was loaded with talent, including Kenny Roberts and Barry Sheene, as well as all the top U.S. riders. Agostini led early, but then had to battle Sheene, Roberts and Gary Nixon. For half the race, the quartet staged some of the most exciting laps ever turned in the 200 (that year reduced to 180 miles due to the oil crisis). Eventually, the other three riders fell by the wayside due to bike problems or crashes and Agostini rode to victory in his first attempt at Daytona. Winning the 200 not only added immensely to Agostini's popularity in America, but it also helped solidify the Daytona 200's standing as a world-class motorcycle race.

After winning his final world title in 1975, Agostini enjoyed his last competitive year in 1976 when he managed to notch up Grand Prix wins in both the 350cc and 500cc class. Fittingly, his last career victory came at the Nurburgring, the German venue where he had won his very first Grand Prix race back in 1965.

After retirement, Agostini became team manager for the Yamaha Grand Prix squad. Under his guidance the team won world championships. Ago has won numerous awards and accolades over the years. He was the first motorcyclist recognized by the World Sports Academy. ■

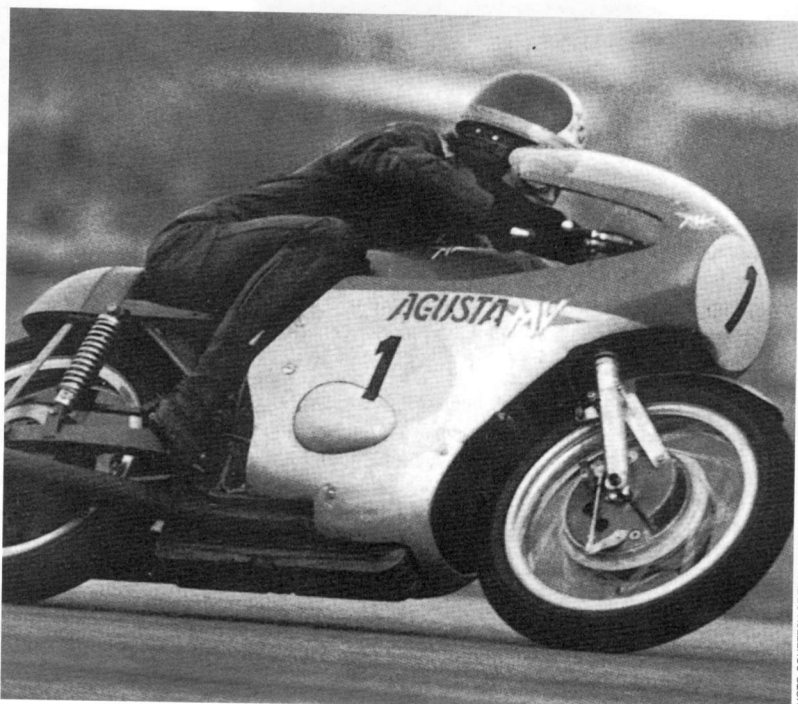


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