

S.A. Speedsters Abroad Found Prices Too Stiff.

by Eric Litchfield, Rand Daily Mail, 16 September, 1951

If you are an international sportsman and a Hamburg, (Germany) restaurant asks 10s. for your meal of steak and eggs what do you do? Or if a first-grade hotel in Odense, Denmark, charges £4 a day per head for dinner, bed and breakfast and includes in the 'extras' 5s. for a bath and 2s. for cleaning shoes, do you pay with a smile? Well, if you are a member of the 7-man South African speedway touring team you pay, force a smile and wait until you get back home to tell the folks. "If you think the cost of living in South Africa is high then try it in Denmark, Germany, Norway and Sweden."

The seven-man team, - Buddy Fuller, Toby Boshoff, Harry du Toit, Bob Raw, Alec Blankfield, Maurice Fenton and Joe Blankfield - , are now home from their three-month tour of Holland and Scandinavia with a very "tall" story of the cost of living in these countries. Between July 3rd and August 7th the riders and their machines travelled about 6,000 miles in a 1933 model motor bus which they had bought for £175 in The Hague. During this time they rode in dozen meetings. Through Germany, Denmark and across the Kattegat to Sweden, a long trip North into Norway and back again into Northern Sweden, and then the return way to The Hague went the 19-year old bus, which was painted green and gold and announced 'South African Speedway Team' .

NO TROUBLE FROM BUS

Of the trip, Alec Blankfield, who did most of the driving, said: "The old bus didn't give us one moment of trouble, not even a puncture." And at the end of their tour the Springboks sold it for £100. What about petrol? On the black market in Germany it cost more than 6s. a gallon. Elsewhere it averaged about 4s. Yes, the cost of living was up-and-up everywhere. Only in "beaten" Germany is everything plentiful. Elsewhere foodstuffs and clothing are scarce, - and at a high price. Norway has strict rationing, - "worse than England" says top points scorer, Bob Raw - , and there's very little meat. What's happened to the famous Continental coffee? There's very little these days, and what there is costs 2s. a cup. Tea is cheaper, but of very poor quality. If you think the price of a "short back and sides" is dear in a South African hairdresser's shop, then take a look at this tariff, - 4s. 6d. for a hair cut in Denmark and Sweden. And take the overseas price of cigarettes, - 4s.6d. for 20 of poor quality in all Scandinavian countries. A cold pint of beer after a hard speedway meeting on a hot day put the Springboks back 2s.

A SHOCK

The 5s. per shirt which his colleagues paid the laundries was mild compared with the shock which little Joe Blankfield got. He sent a pair of flannels to be dry-cleaned. "Perhaps the laundry didn't understand me, but they came back washed and starched," says the curly-haired Joe. But this story hasn't ended. Joe, seeking to replace the un-usable flannels, went the rounds of the outfitters. Could he get a pair without coupons? Yes, he could, and did, for £8 10s. Altogether it was an unlucky tour for Joe Blankfield. He broke his finger before the first meeting at The Hague while helping to load the machines into the bus. Then he had a bad fall in Denmark and fractured his wrist. He's back again, however, and eager to star the new season at Wembley next week. Then there was the time when Maurice Fenton's speedway boot needed repairs. It happened at Burtresk, in Northern Sweden, where the sun never sets. Fenton nearly exploded when he paid the repairs charge for half-soling one boot; -16s. "For all this high cost of living, we would still like to go back again." says captain Buddy Fuller. And it can happen. Sweden is very keen to have a South African team again next season for a 20-match tour. .

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