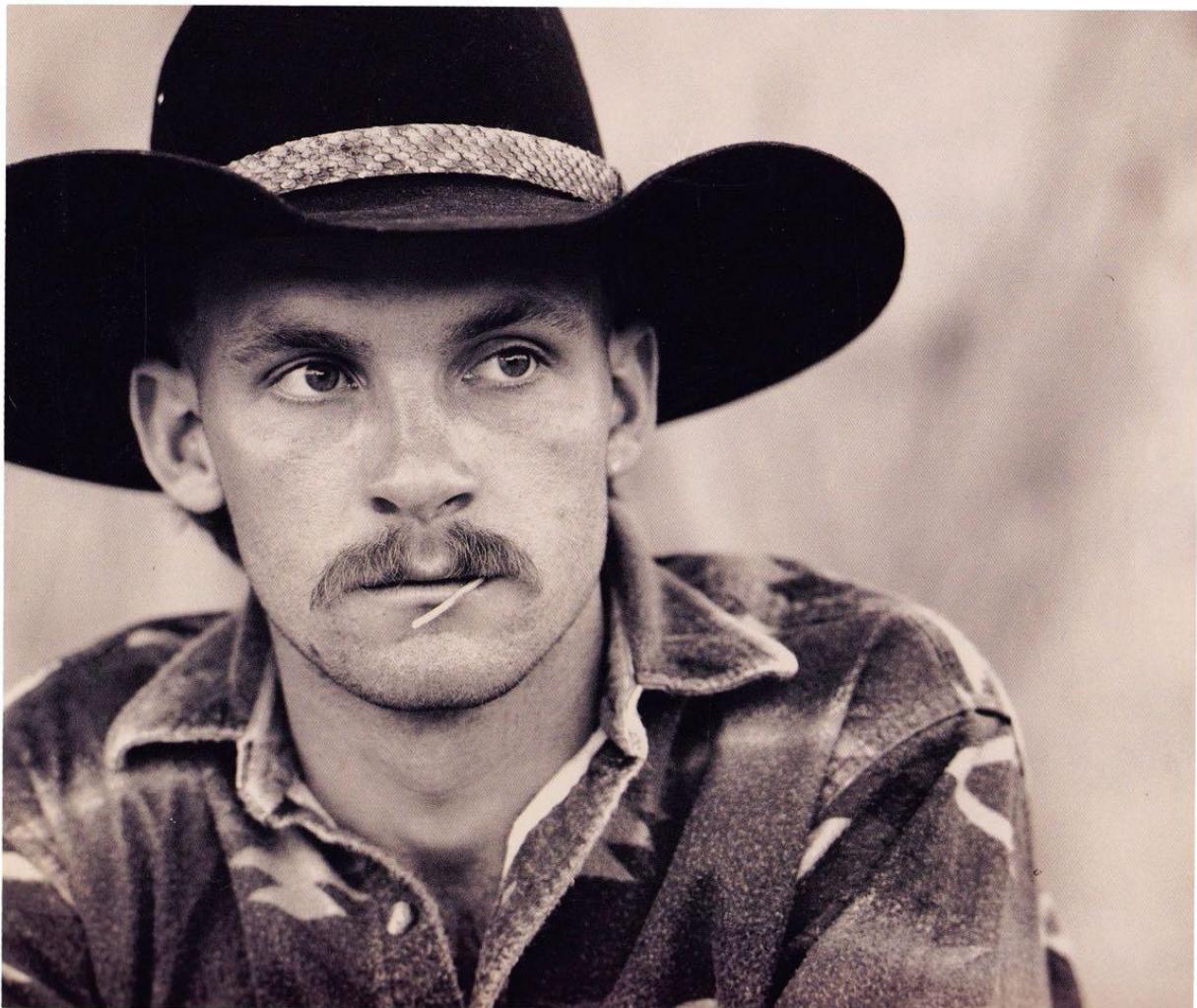


INSIDE
MOTOCROSS

O c t o b e r / D e c e m b e r 1 9 9 3



4

An Exclusive Interview

Bradshaw

What Happened?

S e v e n D o l l a r s



After seeing what they can do with engines, do you think Honda would make a second-rate motorcycle oil?



Before Honda perfects a motor oil, they perfect the motor itself. For 20 years Honda's motocross engines have been powering Honda motocross bikes to more victories and winning more championships than any other bikes in the world. This same engineering expertise is also the heart and soul of the world's most advanced road

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INSIDE MOTOCROSS®

October / December 1993

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(Front) Damon Bradshaw, Claremont, North Carolina, October 4, 1993; (Back) amateur sensation Kevin Windham at the 26th Mammoth Motocross.

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250cc United States Grand Prix, Budds Creek, Maryland.
Photography by Fran Kuhn

■ We all think we know what we want: talent, fame, power, money, more money. And by that measure, the life of a factory

motocross rider seems like certain nirvana. And that's exactly what Damon Bradshaw, the highest-paid, highest-profile and

TOUGH CHOICES

arguably the most talented rider in the sport, walked away from at the end of September. A mil-

lion dollars a year was his for the taking, and he just walked. And he did the right thing, too.

A waste of a career? You could argue that one all day. Sure, Bradshaw possessed an amazing talent, but it turns out he

also faced some of the not-so-amazing problems

every one of us will encounter at some point in our

lives. As important as motocross is to those of us

who love the sport, even a career as a top pro means

nothing if you aren't happy doing it. No amount of

money can change that simple fact. It took a year,

but Damon finally came to grips with the reality of a

very complex situation. He may be back on a bike

next year, or he could, quite possibly, never set a

wheel on another track. But it really doesn't matter,

because he walked away from the paycheck when he

realized that human values mean more than all the

money in the world.

You could say he quit, but what Damon Bradshaw did was for the best, and it certainly wasn't the easy way out. Even if

he never wins another race, he'll leave us with a lot more to think about than clouded memories of just another racer. We all

think we know what we want. If we're lucky, we realize what we really need, and some of us even have the courage to go

after whatever that might be.

—Fran Kuhn



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October/December 1993

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INSIDE

■ Is the AMA's single-moto outdoor format change still a go for 1994? Maybe not. Following a trial run at the final 1993 125/250cc National at San Bernardino, California, the push for a supercross-style main-event format for the 1994 outdoor Nationals has hit a roadblock. The one-moto format was proposed as a means to make the sport more user-friendly to television and the general public, but opposition to the format is gathering based on industry feedback, rider preference and, more importantly, objections from many of the outdoor promoters themselves. The decision now rests with the AMA, which is currently reviewing the situation with input from all concerned parties.

"Our outdoor promoters voted unanimously in February to adopt the single-moto format," explains AMA Director of Professional Racing Roy Janson, "and our advisory committee, in its last meeting, voted in a majority for the single-moto format. All 12 promoters voted on it; however, six of them have changed their views and tell us they now oppose it. Three others don't care, and the remaining three are for it, so we're re-evaluating what we'll do with it and our advisory committee will vote on it."

Among the three promoters currently backing the change is five-time world champion Roger DeCoster, who first proposed its implementation at his MotoLink-produced San Bernardino event in order to enhance its appeal to mainstream media types—television in particular. Janson agrees on that point. "All of our media people are very much for it; all the TV production companies feel that it's a far better way to market our product," he says. "Of course, any time you begin to mess with tradition, you create a bit of controversy. If you had asked me two months ago I would have told you that there was no question that we would have a single-moto format in 1994. Right now, I'll tell you that I think it may be delayed."

And what are the outdoor promoters primary concerns?

"Well, there are some interesting ones," explains Janson. "Some think that when you split the rider groups, you don't have incentive for competition. In a stadium event, where you only transfer four riders

out of each heat, the riders have to kill themselves to get

into that top four. But at an outdoor event, where there might be as many as, say, 16 transfer spots, you don't have to go out and win your heat. The promoters are concerned that guys are going to be out there cruising, and it won't be the quality show they're looking for. Of course, when you start talking about what incentive you can give people to ride harder in the heats—maybe a limited number of points—then you're really back to talking about two motos."

So how did the new format work at San Bernardino? Most thought the qualifying races provided few battles and the riders appeared content to simply qualify for the main events and save their strength and strategy for the one race that counted. One top factory rider—who for obvious reasons wished to remain anonymous—admitted to riding his qualifying heat "at about 70 percent," adding, "I don't want to give away my good lines before the main." Another stated, "I can get a good start from any of 15 spots on the gate, so I'm not going to kill myself to get a spot a few feet to one side or another." And when the main events went off, bad starts by several top riders limited the action at the front of the pack.

Of course, intense 100-plus-degree August heat coupled with the fact that the 250cc National championship had already been decided raises questions concerning the validity of the San Bernardino event as an accurate gauge of the new format.

The promoters' opposition is being led by Dave Coombs of Racer Productions, based in Morgantown, West Virginia. Coombs is the acknowledged leader of the 12 AMA outdoor promoters and produces both the High Point (Mt. Morris) and Steel City (Delmont)

Nationals in Pennsylvania.

"The format change does little to enhance the outdoor races," Coombs insists. "The single-moto format works well for supercross because in a stadium you have good seats, 100-percent viewing and a maze of spectacular obstacles to keep the crowd satisfied. At outdoor tracks you can't see everything and, for the most part, you won't find all the triple jumps and tabletops that help make supercross so exciting. Outdoor races are more about competition and atmosphere in the traditional sense of motocross."

"Changing to a one-moto format is going to hurt the American riders and allow the Europeans to catch back up," reasons Suzuki's racing guru, Pat Alexander. "One moto will cut down on the track time that the top riders have together. In Europe they started doing three motos in the world championships, and look at how much faster they've become. We won't have the best riders in the world anymore."

A pair of 1993 National champions—125cc titlist Doug Henry and 250cc victor Mike Kiedrowski—are against the proposed format; multitime National champion Jeff Stanton is also against the big change. "I think it will ruin the sport of outdoor motocross," Stanton insists. "I know people say this will make it easier for spectators to know who won, but the people I talked to after Glen Helen were more confused than anything. The sport of motocross has strong roots, and I don't think they should rip them out for the sake of television. Besides, the National promoters make their money selling tickets—not television commercials."

Some riders, such as Team Honda of Troy's Erik Kehoe, expressed a willingness to give the new format a try. "I know there's been a lot of mixed emotions about it, but it doesn't bother me," says Kehoe. "I like the way it's been in the past, and I think the two-moto format works to my advantage because I train pretty hard. I think the one-moto format leans toward guys that don't train as much and possibly toward those with an equipment advantage, because the start is going to be even more important than it is now. But to me, it just changes the game and the rules, and you've just got to go along with it. And if it's going to help bring more sponsors and more television coverage, then I think everyone needs to go with it."

As of October the AMA was looking into the possibility of putting the format on hold for at least another year in order to work out the kinks.

Rich Chenet

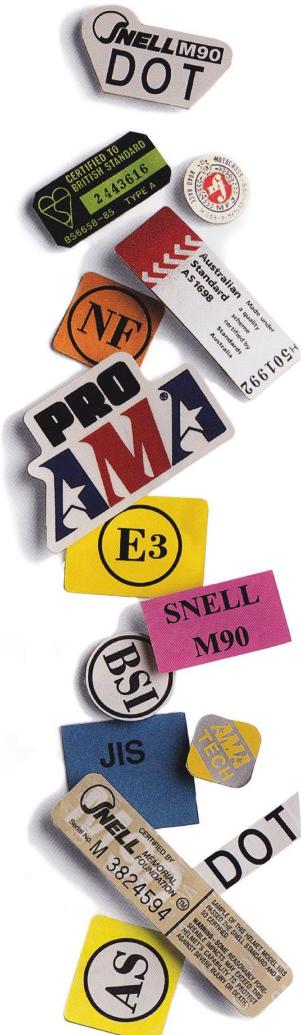
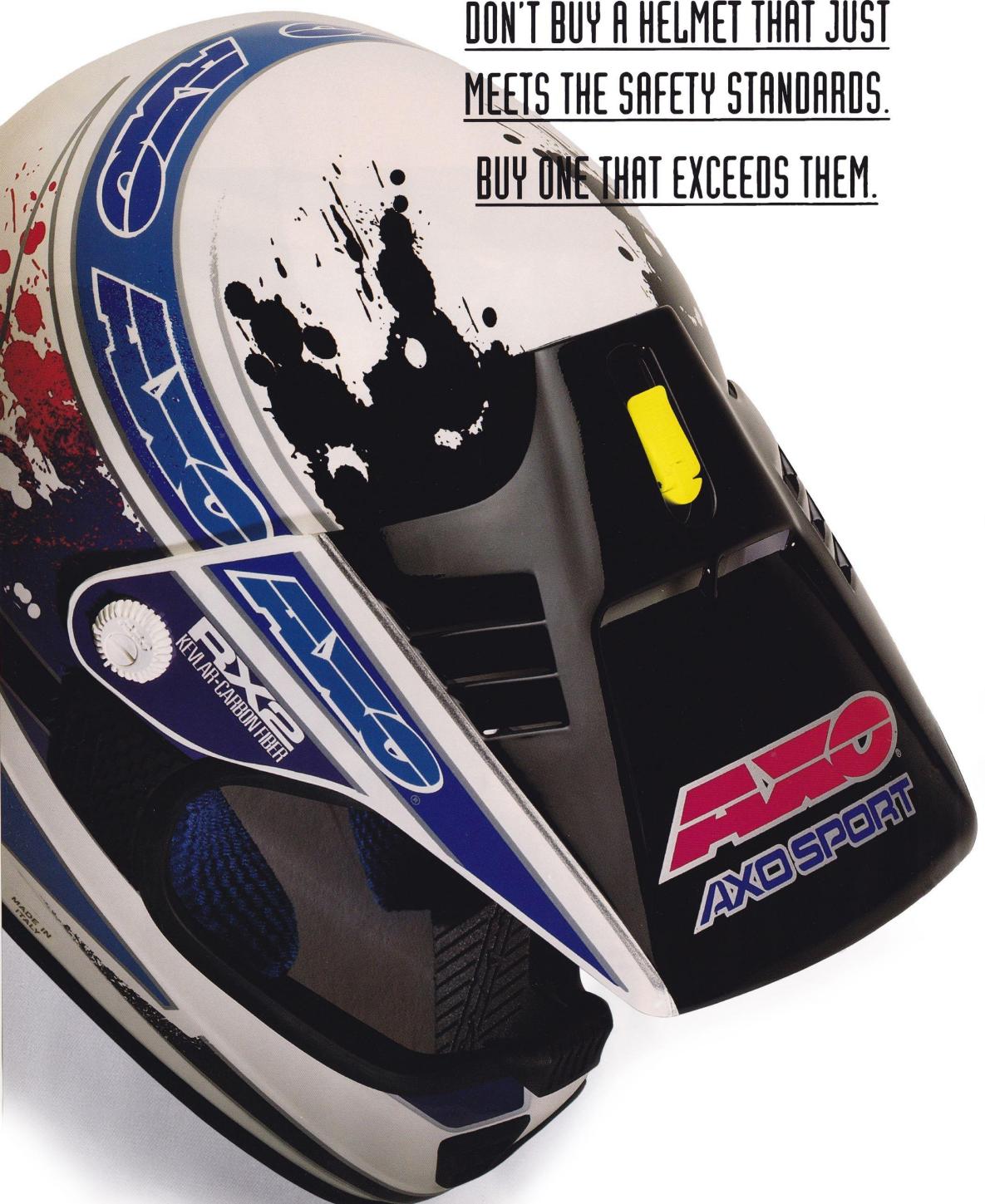


The Big Debate: Many riders, including new 125cc National champion Doug Henry, are against changing the outdoor Nationals to a single-moto format. The debate will likely be settled by November.

UNDER REVIEW

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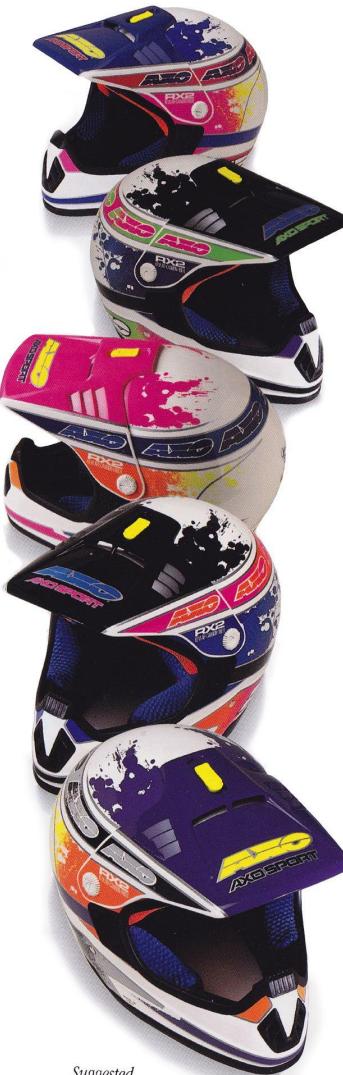
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It started out as a race, and 12 years later, it's a happening. The annual AMA Amateur National Motocross Championships went off again at Loretta Lynn's Ranch in Tennessee, an event that's become the Woodstock of amateur motocross. As usual, over 800 riders made the trip, racing all day and playing into the night. The 1993 version included five days of competition and five nights of various and sundry adventures. The entertainment included everything from talent and fashion shows to horseshoe pitching and the world-famous pasta-cooking contest—and, of course, a concert by rising

HEROES OF AUGUST, PART DEUX

Memphis blues artist Celinda Pink. The big hit, however, was "Radio Fox," a loosely structured pirate FM broadcast hosted by brothers Pete and Greg Fox, with cohosts Davey Coombs and Micky Dymond standing by to offer advice, spin vinyl and make coffee. They went on the air and called Rick Johnson at home. He answered. He spoke to the assembled masses. It was great. And who knows, they may even do it again next year—if the FCC doesn't find out.



Florida's Kevin Foley tied the Loretta Lynn's record with his seventh career title.



Ricky Carmichael (1) ran 1-1-1 and 1-1-42 in two classes. A final moto crash accounted for the 42



Louisiana's Kevin Windham won six motos in two classes for the second consecutive year. He now has a record 12 straight race wins at the AMA Amateur Nationals.



The fastest mini rider on the planet today? Texas bad boy Charlie Bogard

Jeff Stanton's
1993 Factory 500cc Bike



Jeremy McGrath's
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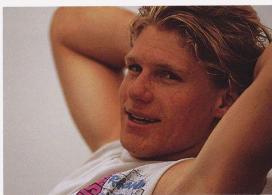
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Giuseppe Gori

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—Inside Motocross, USA

"Albertyn also has his eyes set on an American adventure...he has plans to take residency here in the near future."

—Dirt Rider, USA

"It's goodbye to the World Championship tour, and [Albertyn's] inclusion in an official team in order to battle in the USA Nationals and for his authentic passion, the AMA Supercross Series."

—MX Sport, Spain

"Albee will come to America for sure in '94."

—Dirt Bike, USA

"Greg Albertyn will get an estimated half-a-million pounds to race for Honda America over the next two years...."

—Dirt Bike Rider, England

"I'm definitely coming to America; it's just a matter of when."

—Greg Albertyn at the 1993 250cc United States Grand Prix

"It's no secret that Greg Albertyn desires to soon take his place on the starting gates of America...."

—Racer, USA

"Watch for Albertyn at a National or supercross near you next year."

—Motocross Action, USA

For the better part of a decade, the heroes of American motocross have spent the months following the end of the National season seeking fame and fortune on the international supercross circuit. However, not everyone

THE BOYS OF AUTUMN

one gets to go along on these mercenary missions; plenty of talented domestic riders spent the football season blowing away local competition and waiting for the next year to arrive.

The AMA and several concerned outdoor promoters recognized the

lack of opportunities available to such riders and came up with a solution: the Fall Classic Series.

The series, sponsored by Dirt Shirts, made its September debut at the Red Bud National track in

stomping grounds to chalk up two 250cc/Open-class wins aboard his KX500 practice bike, while Suzuki privateer Barry Carsten led the 125s. A week later the Classic moved to Raceway Park in Englishtown, New Jersey. Long regarded as one of the country's finest race facilities, track bosses Ken Landerman and Jay Irwin changed the format of their annual Kawasaki Race of Champions to accommodate the new fall series program. The Englishtown course is a notoriously tough sand trap, one of the roughest tracks this side of Cocoa Beach in Florida. The result was another overall 250cc/Open-class win by a Kawasaki factory pilot and an upset by a 125cc privateer, but this time it was Mike Kiedrowski and not LaRocco who dominated the big-bike class, while Yamahamounted Timmy Ferry captured the 125cc trophy. The track took a toll on such highly regarded competitors as LaRocco, Ryan Hughes, Billy Liles and Robbie Reynard, each of whom failed to finish at least one of the 30-minute motos.

From Englishtown the series moved on to High Point Raceway in Mt. Morris, Pennsylvania. The Kawasaki factory guys were, by then, off to Europe making bank, leaving the likes of Ferry and Honda of Troy-backed Todd DeHoop to earn the biggest prize money. Ferry topped the 250cc/Open-class, DeHoop the 125s. New Jersey native Barry Carsten led the points standings in both classes at the halfway mark of the series. The final three rounds, to be held in Virginia, Tennessee and Florida, will ultimately decide the championships.

The survival of the new fall tour will depend on good tracks, good competition and reasonably good weather. Only the weather has been a problem to date: Rain has fallen on the first three rounds. But, of course, dealing with the weather is a part of what motocross is all about. If the AMA and the series' promoters can find a way to solicit more factory involvement (perhaps by allowing a true "Open" class with minimal equipment restrictions), the Fall Classic Series could become a welcome addition to the American motocross scene.

Davey Coombs

Kiedrowski:

Taking control

of the 500s—

and the world's largest jump—at Raceway Park. Buchanan, Michigan. Six races were scheduled for the inaugural run, each of which offered a respectable \$7,000 purse. The program is divided into just two classes: 125cc and the 250cc/Open class. This gives promoters an opportunity to feature support classes for youth and amateur racers on the same day as the pros. There are, in fact, no separate pros, and many of the traveling competitors spend their weekends camping at the tracks.

The debut race was a muddy affair: Rain fell throughout the entire weekend (conjuring up memories of the old fall Trans-Am series). Team Kawasaki's Mike LaRocco, once a Red Bud regular, returned to his old



Jeremy McGrath, 1993 250 Supercross Champion, showing off his new good-luck charm: the 1994 CR250R.

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AMA Outdoor Nationals Carolina Ultra Series
AMA Professional Supercross Series GFI Fall Series
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AMA Winter Olympics GNC Good Times National
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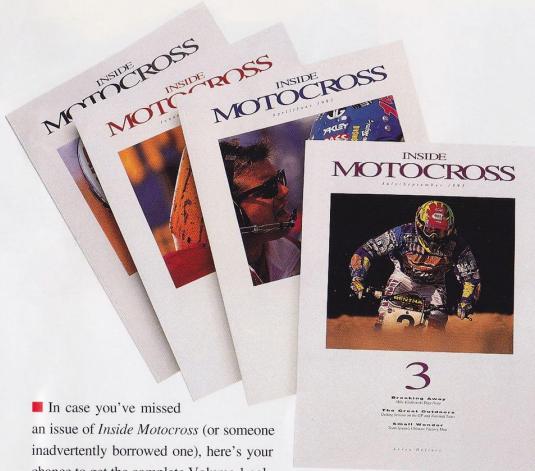
To make a good thing even better, the Honda Rider's Club of America will be providing technical support at selected major events. Just see your dealer for more information.

So get on a 1994 CR today, and get with the program—the CR Red Rider Contingency Program.

And after the race, if anyone tells you that you were just lucky, well, we think you'll know what to say.

HONDA
Rider's Club of America

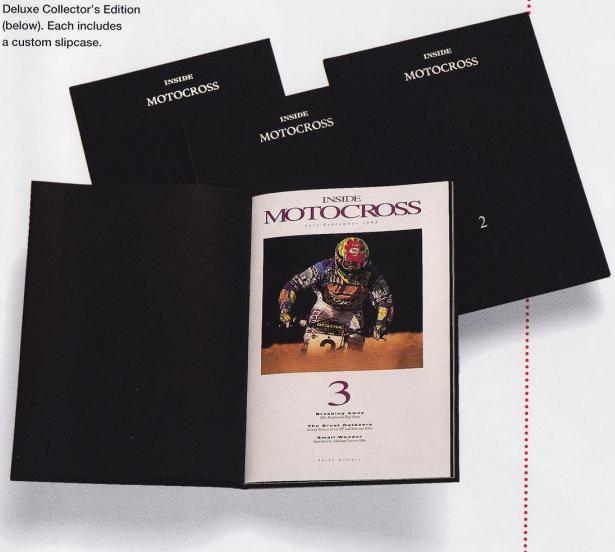
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MISSING SOMETHING?

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INSIDE MOTOCROSS • October/December 1993



Damon

Bradshaw

A

Interview

Meeting

at the

B y F r a n K u h n

Crossroads

On September 27, 1993, Team Yamaha's Damon Bradshaw officially walked away from the most lucrative rider contract in American motocross history. While the news came as a shock to many, it was really no surprise to those who knew him or understood his motivation for racing. Everyone who knew Damon Bradshaw knew he lived to win races. They also knew that Bradshaw really quit racing sometime early in the 1993 season, regardless of the fact that he was still out on the track each week. Damon's poor results were not the problem, only a symptom. Something was dreadfully wrong, but there was nothing but speculation until word came down that Bradshaw was done. One week after making the announcement, Damon talked about what happened.

When did you decide you would quit?

Right after the race in Italy in September. Before I went there I sat down with my dad, and I told him I wasn't happy with the way things were going—that they had to get better for me or I just couldn't handle it. As it was I had gotten a trainer, and I was trying to do better in that way; I thought it would make me feel different from the way I had been feeling all year. It didn't, even though I trained my butt off. It just didn't help anything. So I talked to my dad, and we had a really good conversation; it was probably one of the better ones we've had in a long time as far as me being able to tell him how I felt. He thought I was headed in the right direction and said, "Just go to Italy and have a good time and ride the motorcycle; there's no pressure. You're just going over there to have a good time."

So I got over there and everything was going good. I was out riding and doing good, but on the day of the race I started thinking, "Man, I just don't want to be here. I don't want to be riding a motorcycle." When I feel like that, I feel bad in all kinds of ways. I feel bad for the fans, the people that work on my bikes—just everyone. That was how I felt basically the whole last part of the year.

After the race I sat down and talked to [my business manager] Dave Stevenson, and I told him how I felt and that something had to change. He told me about my options—some ways I could handle the situation. At that point I hadn't told him I was thinking of quitting, because racing was so important to me that I just couldn't bring myself to talk about quitting. I kept a lot of it inside, and it ate away at me and just wore me down. Any time I was by myself—at home, just driving down the road—it ate a hole in me. You know, here I am, going to the races, and I didn't even want to be there. It got to the point where I felt like I was cheating myself and, more important, the fans and the people at Yamaha who had supported me and worked so hard for so long.

When I finally talked to Dave, he told me that whatever my decision would be, it would have to be for myself. I knew one of those decisions would possibly be facing a new challenge in life, whatever that might be. Actually, the idea [to quit] had come to mind all year. I did anything I could to help think positively, and things would be okay for a while, but it didn't last.

When I got back to California I told [Yamaha Team Manager] Keith McCarty I needed to talk to him. It took everything I had to do. I laid in the hotel room all that day, and I thought, "I've got to make a decision because it's eating at me so bad; I can't go on living like this." So I went over to Keith's, and it took the longest time to even bring it up. When I did, I got real upset and was sitting there trying to talk about it because I wanted to be as honest as I could be. That was the first thing that I told him. I've been as straightforward and honest as I can be as far as the sport goes and as far as my relationship with Yamaha or any of my sponsors. I told him that I just wasn't happy doing what I was doing and that I had to do something different. I told him I was accepting a paycheck for something I wasn't doing—that I could hang around for another year and accept maybe another half-a-million dollars and then go on with my life, but I told him I couldn't operate like that, and I couldn't go another day without talking to him. "I had to talk to someone," I said, "and you're the person I'm coming to with my decision." I hoped he could understand where I was coming from, and he was real understanding.

The Past

When did racing stop being fun?

Probably right after the beginning of this year. It got to where I would be out practicing for 20 or 30 minutes and I would say, "Man, I don't even feel like riding." And I'd load it up and go home. Before this year, when I didn't feel good I'd load the truck up, and I'd be back the next day and I'd be a different person—I couldn't wait to go. I had always felt that if I was having a bad day it was best to slow down or go play-ride or load it up, and that was the theory I've had from the beginning of my career. Well, this time I'd go out the next day and still feel like I didn't want to be riding. And it wasn't like there was anything else I had to do or wanted to do. It just wasn't fun. You can't do something if you're unhappy. Sure, there are days you don't want to go to work, but there should be days that you can't wait to get there, too. I had just way too many of those days where I didn't want to do it.

How bad was your outlook?

It's bad to say, but I would sit up in my room and get upset and start thinking about it, and I got to where I didn't want to go anywhere; I didn't want to go out. I wanted

to just stay at home. It got to where I didn't want to go flying and I didn't want to go riding horses because I was so tied up with the feelings about my racing. I'm not going to sit here and lie. Sure, I don't like getting beat in anything, and I got beat a lot this year. But I've had slumps before and climbed out and been as good or better than I've been in the past. But I didn't feel like I was in a slump this year; it was just me not enjoying riding a motorcycle. Everybody's got their opinion about what Damon's problem was, and everyone wants to add their two cents. And that's fine, but nobody could do anything about it but Damon. I'm the only person that could control it, and whatever it meant getting rid of or finding, I was going to have to do it. And if I thought there was anything else I could have done—something I could have given up or something else I could have done—I would have done whatever it would have taken to save my career.

Family

How long have your parents been involved in your racing?

Well, we did racing as a family from the time I was three until I was 16, when I got a truck and a mechanic and was on my own. Then my parents had to become spectators, and that was the hardest thing for them—to be able to back away like that. I owe a big appreciation to them for being there and doing what they did for me, because they'd work during the week and spend every dime they had on the weekends. If it hadn't been for them, I would've never made it this far. They're definitely number one. If it wasn't for them, I wouldn't have gotten what I have.

Were your parents involved with your racing this year?

This year, not really at all. They weren't sure what to do to help me; I didn't communicate with them a lot because I was having a tough year in a lot of ways. We kind of had a hard time because we got to a point where they didn't approve so much of Angela (Angela Rappe, Damon's girlfriend). I think they felt that way because they really didn't have a big part in my racing this year. I had control of the racing situation, and I was the only one who could do anything about it.

Do you think it was just hard for them to let go after having been involved for so long?

I think that might have had something to do with it. But I think it could have been other things, too. Right after my surgery (Bradshaw had knee surgery following the supercross season in 1992) I was up at my parents' house a lot, and I had to stay there because I was having a hard time getting around. Then after Angela and I met I started spending more time with her, which is not out of the ordinary, and I think it was kind of hard for my parents that I wasn't up there as much as I was before I met her. They maybe felt that she was taking time away from them—maybe taking time away from other things I enjoyed doing. But I enjoyed her being around me. I didn't mind if she went riding with me or worked out with me. Then Angela started to get an uneasy feeling when she was at [my parents'] farm. And that hurt her a lot because she felt like she was trying to do everything she could do to help me. Then the magazines started writing things about her, and that made her feel worse. It's bad for [a magazine] to do that, but if they didn't have her to pick on, it would have just been somebody else.

Friends

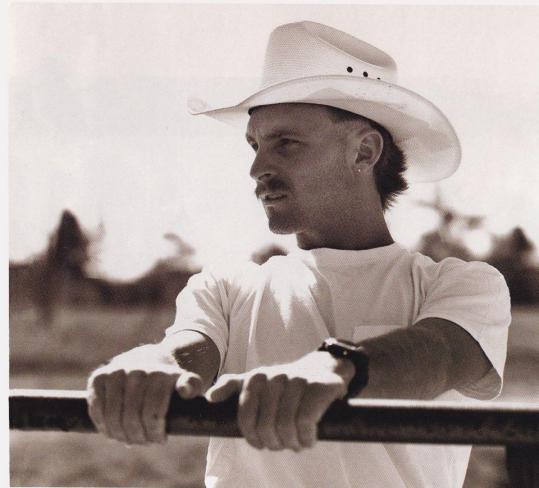
Did your relationship with your girlfriend Angela have anything to do with your decision?

That's something that a lot of people had on their minds; that's what everybody likes to say, and that's everybody's first impression—that this girl had all this to do with it. They want that cop-out; everybody's looking for the one thing. It's bull—. It's just like with Jeff Stanton. People can say, "Well, Jeff didn't have a real bad year, but he didn't have a real good year, either." And people will say, "Oh, he got married; he tied the knot. Maybe he's thinking about having kids," or "They're together so much that she's taking all his time." And that's bull—, because Jeff and Sarah were just as close as they are now during those years before they got married. And Angela and I met before Pontiac '92 and became real close real quick, and I had an exceptional year after that.

Nobody wants to hear this, but to be honest, if it wasn't for her I probably would've snapped a long time ago. I don't know where I would even be right now. There was a night that I sat up in my room with my gun for two hours. It was like, this is the end. I can't handle it no more; I can't live like this no more. This is the only way I know to get out. And I was strong enough to know that

"Everybody was saying, "Oh, Bradshaw's got the big contract now

and he's sandbagging—just accepting a paycheck."



this is not what I want to do; I knew that was a cop-out and that I would have to face reality and be strong enough to do this for myself—make a decision on what to do with the rest of my life.

When I was feeling real bad I got to where I didn't want to do housework; I didn't want to do clothes, where before I did that sort of thing myself. It got to where I was so mentally torn up about racing that I couldn't do anything. One time I told Angela, "I'm thinking about packing my stuff and going somewhere nobody knows where I am; I'm not going to tell anyone." I wasn't even going to tell her—not my friends, no one. I told her, "I'm just so fed up with the way I feel, I've got to do something. Maybe I'll just go away for a while." And she said, "No, you've just got to face reality. You've got to live your life for yourself and not for anybody else. And whatever direction you decide to go, hey, I'll be here." She would come up and clean the house for me or come up and cook me dinner. I'd go out of town, and I'd come home and all my clothes would be washed; I could just walk in and sit down. And all through my knee surgery, she was there. She would drive up to my parents' house after work every day, which is over an hour away. At the time I was in such pain that I couldn't even stand it, and she was there to do whatever I needed to help me.

I've had relationships before, and the first time I'd go out with the girl, they'd give me a bad impression of the way they felt about my racing. And racing meant more to me than anything in the world; you know, if the girl couldn't understand my racing, then there was no reason for me being with her. Even if I liked everything else about her, if she couldn't understand my racing, that was the end of that tune. Angela wasn't like that. She was real interested in learning about it and understanding it—understanding that I had to go out of town every weekend—and I knew she was going to be there when I got back.

The Mechanic

What kind of relationship did you have with Brian?

The first year we worked together we had a lot of changes; a lot of things were going on between us as far as us getting adapted and finding out what made each other work. I think we worked together pretty good once we figured out what made each other click and what didn't. I think Brian changed a lot from how he had worked in the past because the riders he's worked with in the past were differ-

ent from me. Donnie Hansen was one way, Bob [Hannah] was one way and Ricky Johnson was a different way. And I think I was totally different from any of those guys. In certain ways I think me and Bob were alike, and maybe I had a little similarity to Ricky. I think Brian changed a lot, and I think it was for the best. At first our communication was not the best, and I think it was just because it was a new person. Then it got to where it was better because I felt like I was talking to someone I could trust. We got to where we could communicate good about the bike, and Brian helped a lot with testing; he had a lot of neat ideas in that department.

Well, after I started having trouble, it came out in some magazine: "It's his mechanic; Brian's doing it to him. Brian this, Brian that." Well, Brian didn't have a thing to do with my season or with my decision. Brian and I have come a hell of a lot closer this season than we've been before. We've communicated better this past year—even better than '92, and that year couldn't have gone any better for us with the exception of not winning a championship. There were weekends where I was out on the track looking like I had never been on a motorcycle in my life because I was so mentally ripped apart. He still stood out on the racetrack, and I think everyone who knows Brian knows that's not what he would normally have done. Brian isn't afraid to go back to the truck if you're not doing what he expects, but he knew when I was struggling; he'd stay out on the track and give me the chalkboard and keep me going right until the bitter end. That meant a lot to me.

Our relationship is going to stay the same; in fact, it may be better. I might get in a race car, and Brian may be on the team with me. I don't know what will come of that, but I think Brian still can go into whatever he decides to do. He's been a damn good mechanic and a big asset to me. I've heard people say, "Oh, Brian's lost his touch," but you can only do so much when you're dealing with somebody like me. Even if it was somebody else, the rider has to be willing to do certain things before anybody can help him. And there wasn't anything anyone could do to help this. Deep down I knew it, but I just tried to keep going; I tried to shake it. Brian was understanding about the whole thing.

The Contract

How did you decide on a five-year contract with Yamaha?

It was their idea. I wanted a multiyear contract, but I figured on a two- or three-year deal. They came back and said they would like to work out a five-year deal—maybe race motorcycles for the next three and stay in the business for the rest of the time doing something else. They just said, "We want to make you part of the program for the next five years." It made me feel really good as a rider.

The figure we've been told is \$450,000 per year from Yamaha. Is that accurate?

Yeah, that's accurate.

Did Honda ever make you an offer?

They did talk to Dave [Stevenson], but I think the money got to be pretty high, and I don't think they were willing to make that kind of commitment. Kawasaki was willing to make a big investment, then Yamaha came along and they were willing to make a bigger investment. That's where I wanted it to be all along. It would have taken a lot of money for me to leave Yamaha because I've been so happy there for so long.

So did the money cause the problem?

No, because I've always expected the best from myself no matter what I was making. Whatever it took, I just wanted to win. I had been under those same circumstances all of my professional career because I started making a lot of money right from the beginning. Sure, my contract was real big for the next five years, but I couldn't even tell you what I've gotten from Yamaha this year. I know that I make a lot of money, but I don't even know how much of the money I've gotten. That shows you how much concern I have for the money. Everybody was saying, "Oh, Bradshaw's got the big contract now and he's sandbagging—just accepting a paycheck." It was all a bunch of bull— because I knew what I wanted to do and that

"I've had friends say, "Man, I've been around you and I've seen what you go through, and I don't know how much money you get paid, but I wouldn't put your shoes on for anything in the world."

was to win. Anybody can say what they want about the money, but I wanted to win for Yamaha and the sponsors and the fans.

What do you say to people who criticize your salary?

To be honest, you have to think about who that person would do if they were in the position to make that kind of money. I sit here and look at the pro golfers and see what those guys make. And before, I would look at guys like Michael Jordan and think, "Man, that guy is so overpaid." Or I would look at race-car guys—whatever. But those people who complain don't know what I go through or what I do for Yamaha. There's a lot that I have to do. There are shows I have to do; there are videos, ads, testing, press conferences. Plus, I'm away from home every weekend. There's just a lot of things that go along with it that most other riders don't have to do. They have to be at the race on the weekend, sure, but what I do for Yamaha is a full-time job.

Now I look back and I can say that I don't think that Michael Jordan is overpaid. I can imagine what that guy has to go through, and as popular as he is—somebody has got to pay someone a hell of a lot of money to put up with that. I don't even put myself in that guy's category. I don't feel that I'm on that same level of popularity as Jordan or the better football players or the best NASCAR drivers. And knowing what I have to do, I don't see how those guys can live even anything close to a normal life. Michael Jordan—if that guy wants to do anything at all, he's got to go out to somewhere where there aren't any people at all!

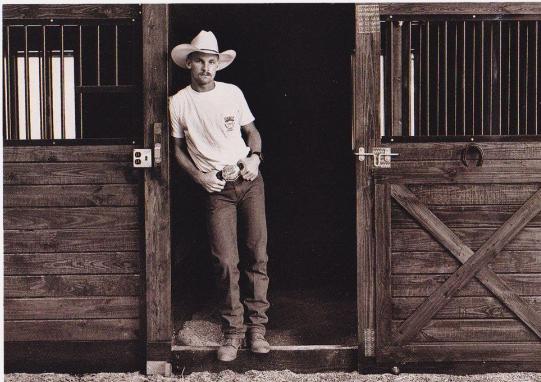
Another guy I look at is Garth Brooks. I mean, sure, the guy makes a lot of money, but there's so much that goes into the job that the public doesn't know about. And the thing about Michael Jordan and his gambling—I mean, hell, it's his money and he's got to go through a lot to get it. A lot of people never look at it like that, and people look at me and say the same damn thing. I've had friends say, "Man, I've been around you and I've seen what you go through, and I don't know how much money you get paid, but I wouldn't put your shoes on for anything in the world." Most people don't understand that; all they see is the money.

The people who say it's all about money—well, let them do what I have to do and see if the money is enough then. A lot of people made it a goal to beat me—to show the people that were paying me all this money that they could beat me. Beating me on the track is one thing, but when you do it plus do all the other things I had to do that go along with the contract, to me, that's what it takes to beat me. Yamaha didn't pay me just to ride a motorcycle, and some people don't understand that. You can't just be a rider; you have to offer the whole package that goes along with it.

The Injury

Was your knee surgery ever a factor in your results this year? That was a pretty serious thing. Everybody told me it could be a career-ending injury if it doesn't heal back the way it should. But all I could do was work my butt off, and I immediately turned it around and thought of it as something positive. It became a game to me. How strong can I make this? How much of a gain can I make this week? I was doing stuff at home, going to therapy two or three days a week and working there for three hours. My knee never gave me one ounce of trouble all year. I never hurt it; I was never afraid of hurting it. In a way, it actually replenished me. Everything was good, and I was real anxious to get back to racing. That's what carried me through a couple of races there in the beginning of the year.

Did having time off while recovering from the surgery have anything to do with your decision? I think it may have had something to do with it. I got to do so much and I wasn't under any pressure whatsoever, but it wasn't the turning point by any means. I was down, but all of a sudden I snapped out of it and I came out swinging. The first



race I did pretty good, and I won Houston, and then I won Atlanta and ended up winning Mt. Morris. But regardless of whether I was winning or getting my ass whipped, I still felt the same way. Even after I won at Mt. Morris, I didn't have that attitude I had before. I got this feeling that I'd never had before—that I just didn't enjoy it. I still liked being around all the people, but I put all the pressure on myself because Yamaha and the public had such high expectations.

Competition

How do you feel about the riders you've had to compete against as a pro?

I think it's a good group; I really do. Everybody I've been on the track with has a different personality and a different riding style, which made it challenging. The only thing that kind of disappoints me to a certain extent is that I never got to be in a hard-core race with Jeremy McGrath like I did with [Jeff] Stanton and [Mike] Kiedrowski—on a day when I wanted to be there and I wanted to go racing. I've raced with Stanton at Mt. Morris and some of the outdoor tracks, and we were at each other's throats for 35 minutes. To me, that's the most intense thing you'll ever do, and there's a lot of people that will never get that feeling; they may never get the chance. When you're in a two-way battle or a three-way battle, there's just so much going on, and it's happening so fast that the intensity is so great that you can't even explain it.

I had the most fun racing with Jeff and Mike Kiedrowski—especially Jeff. I'm not afraid to say that because we had a lot of good races and we always tried to race fair. If it took an aggressive pass to get by the guy, then that's what we did. But we were able to talk about it and laugh about it when we came off the racetrack. With some of the other guys it was different. With Jeff, I knew I could trust him; I knew what to expect from him, and he knew what to expect from me. There was nobody else out there like that. I could race with Kiedrowski, but not as good as with Jeff. We could put on a hell of a lot better show than anyone else. I'll remember those battles with him more than anything else.

At one time I had said some things [in a magazine interview] about Stanton. I think it was a *Dirt Bike* [magazine] deal—something to the effect that I didn't think Jeff had a whole lot of raw talent. Well, I think that Jeff may agree with me to a certain extent. I've never really said anything to him about it, but I think that what Jeff has achieved—and I say the same thing about Mike Kiedrowski—is

from sheer hard work. Sure, you've got to have a little bit of talent to ride a motorcycle, but as far as sheer raw talent like Jean-Michel Bayle or David Bailey or somebody like that, they didn't have it. With Jeremy: he has the talent, but all year you jump off the gate with that guy, and as soon as you get off the gate, if he's in front of you, you'd better watch out because he's gonna cut over on you. He had the holeshot by a million miles many a time and still just cut all the way across the starting line. He didn't have to do that to win races. It's just like the year that I was winning; I'd come from 12th place and win the race by 15 seconds, and Jeremy was in the same boat.

Do you see anyone out there ready to step in and fill your shoes?

It's bad to say, but I felt like I was trying to take over for Ricky Johnson, David Bailey, Broc Glover—to fill in where all those guys had been. And I feel like I did a pretty good job of it because I could speak well and deal with a lot of things, and to me—just the way I was as a rider on the racetrack—well, I don't really see anybody like that out there right now. I know it's bad to say, but I'm being honest.

How difficult was racing when you didn't really want to be on the track?

When you reach the point where you don't enjoy something, you're not going to give that 110 percent it takes to do it. If you don't want to be there, you're not going to give that effort that it takes to win—especially when you do what I'm doing. It's not like I was scared to go racing; I mean, even if you asked me to climb to the top of a radio tower, I wouldn't care. Those kinds of things don't scare me. In a roundabout way, I don't really have a lot of fear about anything. But it got to where I had scared myself on the racetrack, and instead of shaking it off, it would stay with me the rest of the race. That was something that hadn't happened before.

Did you have a hero in motocross?

I always said that I looked up to David Bailey and Bob Hannah. I looked up to David Bailey because of his style—the way he rode a motorcycle—and I looked up to Bob just because of the way he was as a person. And I don't know Ricky that well, but I know what he went through in his career, and he was really strong in a lot of different areas. I think he had a lot to deal with in his racing and in his outside life as well.

The Media

Do you feel you've been treated fairly by the motorcycle media?

To be honest, I feel to a certain extent that I've gotten what I deserve and maybe a little more—good and bad. I think I've gotten a lot of unnecessary bull—, too; things were printed that were just assumed—"We assume this," or "We think this," or "We talked to so-and-so and they say this, but we really haven't talked to Damon." To me, that hurts the most worse than anything in the world. There are magazines out there like *Motocross Action* that remind me of the *National Enquirer*. But I think I've gone through the good and the bad with those kinds of magazines. When I was coming up through the amateurs and at the beginning of my professional career, those same guys treated me like gold. I was really happy about a lot of interviews I did with them, then all of a sudden they changed. I think it goes back to that deal at Perris Raceway [in California]. It was at the supercross race they put on down there, and I remember the announcer brought it up. He brought up something that was in the magazine, and that's when I started talking about it. He said that [Motocross Action] wrote that I hated California and I hated the people, something like that, and that kind of opened the door for me. I said, "By no means do I hate these people out here." I said, "Sure, I've met some idiots out here, but I've met idiots at home, and I've also met a lot of nice people here. The people in California, as fans, have always treated me really well, and I owe them a lot of appreciation." Then I said, "You have to understand that what you read in magazines isn't always true." I said they can't base their opinion of a rider on what they read in a magazine because a percentage of the stuff in there is a lie. It's just like in the [motorcycle] testing part of those magazines. It doesn't matter which bike is the best; it won't be the best in that magazine. It's going to be [the bike from the company] that kisses the most ass. And that's bull—, I don't like things that are judged by people—things that don't have a checkered flag. You should win when you win and you should get beat when you get beat. To me, all that magazine stuff is inaccurate.

How's that?

For example, say Honda, Yamaha, Suzuki and Kawasaki each give a bike to the magazine for a test, and Honda cooperates and says, "Okay, we'll have these bikes out there for you and we'll be ready to rock-and-roll." Well, if everything goes really smooth with Honda, and Yamaha or Suzuki are a little harder to work with and don't want to do it on the day the magazine wants to do it—well, the magazine is already looking to vote for the Honda even if the Suzuki or Yamaha is better.

You seem to have had a lot of problems with *Motocross Action* in particular. Why?

I've done interviews before with them and they've added something to it that I didn't say—something they just assumed. And I've always told everybody, "If I've done an interview with you and you get back and you can't figure out something, just call me! Pick up the phone and call me, and I'll do my damnedest to help you out." But once those guys started treating me like s—, I didn't have anything to say to them, and I'd just as soon not have anything to say to anyone who's going to write something about me that's not true. I could care less.

What about your postrace "No comment" remark on *MotoWorld*?

Yeah, what's wrong with sitting there and saying that? I didn't have a comment. I was pissed off; I didn't want to talk. Was it better to say, "I don't have a comment," or sit there and say something I would wish I didn't say. But everyone took that wrong and it was a big ordeal. And then *Motocross Action* wrote about it—something that they felt about it. Well, what the hell do they know? They probably weren't even there! That's the thing that pisses me off; that's how the stuff they write that's not true comes out. If you have a question about somebody, you normally ask them; you normally don't just assume [the answer] or make it up. And then there was the deal about throwing rocks at Mike Koger and the other guy, Chris Hultner (a reporter and photographer from *Motocross Action*). Here I had crashed bad, and all they did was stand there and take pictures. I was pissed off and threw some dirt at them—big deal! It pissed me off because the last couple of issues they had printed only pictures of me on my ass or something bad about me.

Do you think the magazine did that intentionally?

I don't know if it was or not, but I know it was stupid. But if they feel that kind of stuff sells magazines, then more power to them. Jody Weisel, in my book, is full of s—. (Weisel is the editor of *Motocross Action*.) It's so funny. I was talking to Hannah one time, and I told him I was so mad that I was going to call Weisel and tell him to kiss my ass, and I didn't give a damn if he never wrote about me in his magazine again. I'd just as soon he didn't even put me in it. And Hannah made the comment, "Well, when you tell him, tell him to multiply it by about four or five times and that's what the hell comes from me."

Are the riders afraid of the magazines?

I think, to be honest, the riders are afraid to say what they think. I'm not because to me, at the time, I didn't feel like *Motocross Action*, or any of them, was going to make me or break me. Now, I guess they can; they can make me over the coals if they want to and make things miserable for me or whatever they want to do, but at the time I didn't feel like they were going to make me or break me. Maybe they feel like they have, but to me, they wrote a lot of unnecessary bull—about me that wasn't true. It's so funny. It's like this story they did lately: "What's Wrong With Damon?" Well, here's Johnny O'Mara, Roger DeCoster, Jones, whatever his name is (former National Champion Gary Jones), and all these guys have got their opinions. But opinions are just like ass—; everybody's got one. In my book, those guys were just saying some bull—. They don't know me. I don't know Gary Jones from Adam's housecat, and Roger DeCoster don't know me from Adam. And Phil Lawrence, he knows me and he puts in there, "Damon's spoiled by all the money he's making." Well, if he was getting paid the money I was getting, would he complain about it? Hell, no!

And Guy Cooper. I'm sorry he's ridden his whole life and not made more money than what he's made, but it's not my fault he's never won a supercross. Sure, he's a crowd pleaser, and that's fine. He did good at it, and he was obviously very popular. But if someone came to Cooper and offered to pay him a million and a half for the next three years, what's he going to tell them, "Hell, no?" Yamaha felt I was worth that much, so that's what they were willing to pay me. Obviously nobody felt Cooper was worth that. But the things that some of the people said in [the magazine], I was just thinking, "Man, I can't believe this! I've never had a

"I don't say the rest of my career was like this, but the last year was just turmoil,

and I knew I couldn't keep operating like that."

cross word to say about them."

I've tried not to burn any bridges through my career, but everybody's going to burn some. I'm sure I have with the magazines or whatever. That's just the way it is; that's going to happen in anything. Politics are there in anything you do, and it's bad that they have to be because I think things could be a lot better without all that stuff, but that's something I knew I was going to have to deal with when I chose this road. And, sure enough, I've dealt with it.

The Team

Was there more of a pressure situation at Yamaha than at the other factory teams?

No, but from what I've seen I think there's a lot of pressure on the guys at Honda, just because of the way they've operated the last couple of years. You can say that it's bad, but then you can say they've produced a lot of winners.

To me, I don't think that Honda—if I had the year I did this past season—would have stood by me and respected me the way Yamaha did. That made me feel 110 percent that Yamaha was everything I thought they were. They've never put any pressure on me, and they've been there any time I needed them. They respected what I said and they respected this decision. I told them I wanted to be known as being honest and straightforward; that's the way I've been from the beginning. They told me that the door was open for me whether it was one day, six months or a year—a even two years. "The door's open for you, regardless of what you want to do. We're here to help you." That's the best feeling you can have.

I can look back and tell you that the people at Yamaha, they were definitely the best group of people I've ever worked with, and I think they will always be remembered that way. Keith McCarty and Larry Griffis, guys like Jon Rosenstiel and Bob Oliver—those guys have been there since the very beginning and they've had good times and bad, but they never slacked off on work. I never saw one time they weren't giving my motorcycle everything it took to win. And I know if I was in their position and dealing with a guy like me, it would have been hard to put forth that kind of effort. I respect everybody on that team for continuing on with the way things were going this year, and people like Bob Starr and the people at the ad agency—everyone. And there's Mike Guerra and Cliff Lett and guys I dealt with as an amateur. They've been the same way since day one. Yamaha just hasn't had the best of luck, but they've been the best people to work with, and I think it means just as much to look back and see that as it would to have had the results we wanted.

The Fans

You've always been one of the most popular riders, and you have a lot of fans. How important is that?

More than almost anything. That's something that I want to emphasize. And I would like to be able to go in front of a crowd of people and be able to tell them the decision I've made, but I don't think I could do it; I think I would just fall apart.

When I would go to a race and be with those people, it was almost like I was at home because I had done it for so long. I'd get into that stadium and all those people were cheering for me. I always tried to acknowledge those people sitting in the stands. If it wasn't for them, none of us would be there. They were the reason we had a job. It was always fun to race in front of that many people and to acknowledge and to give credit to them. That meant a lot to me.

In '92, when I was winning all the races, I couldn't wait to get there; I was as confident as anyone could be. I was so confident that I wasn't worried about what kind of start I got. In fact, I knew it would be a better show if I had to come from behind. That was really good for the people; I always wanted to give them their money's worth. The thing that meant the most to me was to be able to acknowledge that they were there and to be able to thank them. A lot of times I'd do those victory laps at the stadium, and the people couldn't know just how much I really wanted to thank them. I could never talk to all of them, but I could do that one lap for them.

The Future

Do you leave with mixed feelings?

It wasn't easy to make the decision I made, but I felt that it was the best thing for myself and my well-being—to do it and to face a new challenge in life. I will always remember the sport, though, no matter what I decide to do. I've seen a lot of the country and a lot of the world; I've learned a lot about dealing with the people, dealing with the media, the traveling part—all about the life you have to live as a professional motocrosser. I know I'll always like to think back to those most competitive races and wins. The Mt. Morris wins mean probably more than anything to me, but probably the most memorable moment was winning in my hometown, the year I won the supercross in Charlotte. And also my very first supercross win in Anaheim; there were 67,000 people there.

I don't say I would change what I did for anything because that was the road I chose to go down when I was 12 or 13 years old. I wouldn't go back and do anything different because I've enjoyed every minute of it up until now. I've learned a lot and it's taught me a lot. I've learned about dealing with the public and about dealing with life.

So where do you go from here?

I still don't know. I don't have any firm plans to do one certain thing; I know that I want to do a lot of things that I haven't been able to do. To be honest, I haven't sat down and said, "Well, since I'm not racing motorcycles anymore I'm going to do this, this and this." I really haven't done anything any different now from when I was racing, but I do know that I've taken a big weight off my shoulders, and I'm a lot more relaxed. I sleep about 900 times better, I eat better. I don't say the rest of my career was like this, but the last year was just turmoil, and I knew I couldn't keep operating like that. As far as planning the future, I've had some opportunities to do some different things—a chance to get into a NASCAR or Winston Cup car—but I don't know. Right now I just want to enjoy living a normal life for a while and doing some hunting—some of the things I've always enjoyed. I know I'm going to be around home a lot more than I have been, and that means a little something to me. To be able to spend some time with my parents; you know, they're not going to be here forever. That's something I've thought about since I've made this decision. But I feel like I still have a lot of life ahead of me.

Are you in good shape financially?

Fine, but I wouldn't say that I'm set for life. I'll have to live a little different because obviously, I'm not going to have anything close to the income I've had for the last 10 years or so. But I'm going to live a comfortable life.

Would you consider coming back?

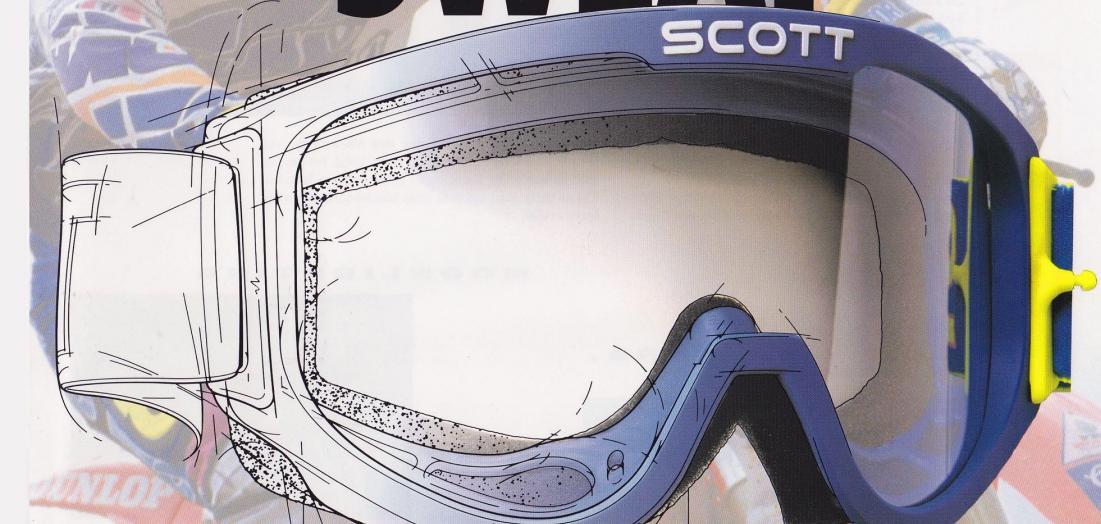
If a year goes by and I'm ready to give 110 percent racing a motorcycle, I'll be back. The feeling that I can win will always be there. I know I can still win; I just don't enjoy the job right now. I've always said that when it wasn't fun or I wasn't competitive, that's when I'd quit. Well, it isn't fun anymore. So I might just completely forget about it and go on living my life and live happily ever after doing whatever I choose to do. Then again, a year may go by and I may be ready to go race a motorcycle again. But if I'm not, one thing I'm not going to do is tap the sport for financial reasons. I'm not going to come back and try to ride just to collect a paycheck. I've got enough common sense to do anything I put my mind to, and that's what I'm going to do.

Will you miss it at all?

I don't really know. I guess time will tell. I do know the thing I will miss is the people. There will be some people I won't miss and certain things I won't miss, but that's just something I'll deal with. I'm going to face a new challenge in life, whatever that may be. It may just be life itself. But I'm going to do whatever it is that makes me happy.

IM

NO SWEAT

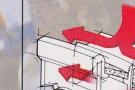


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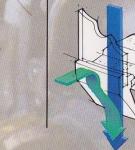
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■ The Mammoth Motocross has always been different—one of those rare events by which all others are measured. And by that standard, not many can come close. If you've ever been there you know that the story of the Mammoth Motocross is as much about the place as it is about the race. No one goes to the Mountain just to spin a few laps; it's not that easy and it's much more intense. From most points in California, getting there takes all day—maybe longer if you care to take in the scenery. One of the more direct routes, State Highway 14 runs north from the Los Angeles area, climbing to the 3000-foot level before stretching out across the arid high-desert basin between Palmdale and Mojave, past Edwards Air Force Base and the old desert-riding haunts of Jawbone and Red Rock canyons, finally connecting with Route 395 and the fertile green of the Owens Valley. Farther on, near the tiny farm community of Lone Pine, the road intersects a point where Death Valley—the lowest elevation in the contiguous United States—and Mount Whitney—the highest—are within a few hours' drive of each other. Continuing northeast, a few miles from the frontier town of Bishop lie the Alabama Hills, a rugged moonscape where Ansel Adams made more than a few memorable photographs. From there the road climbs to just over 8000 feet, deep into the eastern Sierra range where 40 minutes later visitors arrive in the town of Mammoth Lakes.

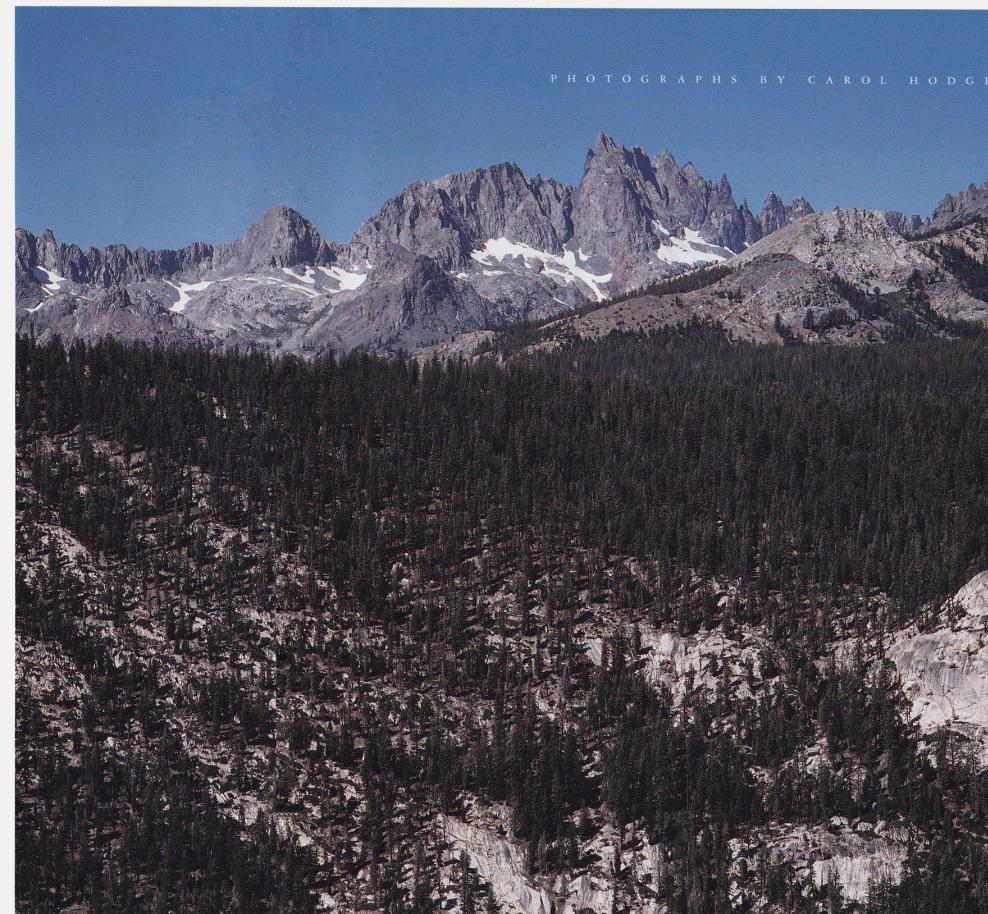
"I love coming 2 6 t b M a m m o t b M o t o c r o s s here; the air's clean and it seems like you can get away from everything," says Team Kawasaki's Ryan Hughes, who was casually getting away from the urban crunch as well as most of his Expert-class competitors. Hughes won both the 125 and 500cc Expert divisions, but the paycheck was one

T h e

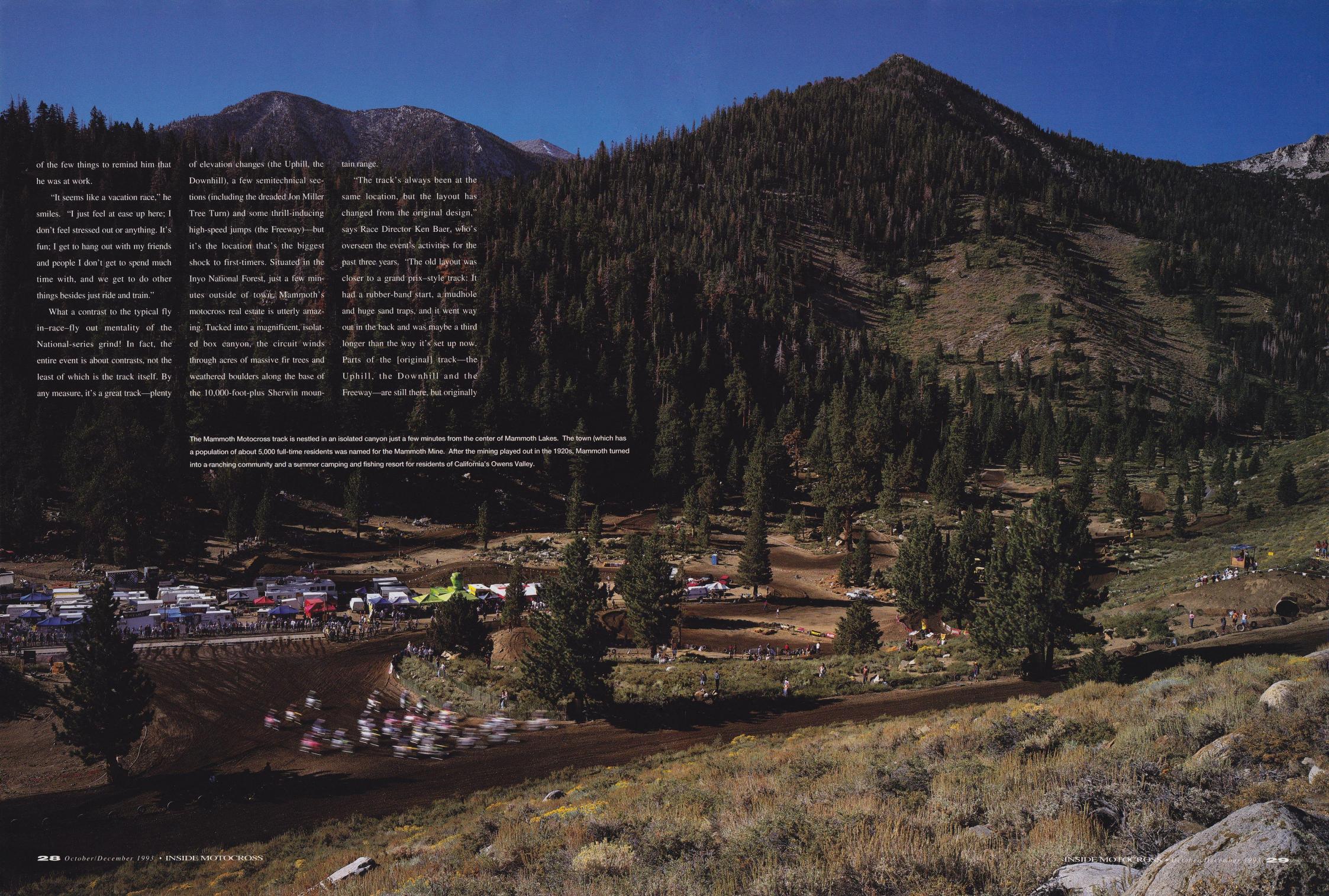
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PHOTOGRAPHS BY CAROL HODGE & FRAN KUHN



of the few things to remind him that he was at work.

"It seems like a vacation race," he smiles. "I just feel at ease up here; I don't feel stressed out or anything. It's fun; I get to hang out with my friends and people I don't get to spend much time with, and we get to do other things besides just ride and train."

What a contrast to the typical fly-in-race-fly out mentality of the National-series grind! In fact, the entire event is about contrasts, not the least of which is the track itself. By any measure, it's a great track—plenty

of elevation changes (the Uphill, the Downhill), a few semitechnical sections (including the dreaded Jon Miller Tree Turn) and some thrill-inducing high-speed jumps (the Freeway)—but it's the location that's the biggest shock to first-timers. Situated in the Inyo National Forest, just a few minutes outside of town, Mammoth's motocross real estate is utterly amazing. Tucked into a magnificent, isolated box canyon, the circuit winds through acres of massive fir trees and weathered boulders along the base of the 10,000-foot-plus Sherwin mountain range.

"The track's always been at the same location, but the layout has changed from the original design," says Race Director Ken Baer, who's overseen the event's activities for the past three years. "The old layout was closer to a grand prix-style track: It had a rubber-band start, a mudhole and huge sand traps, and it went way out in the back and was maybe a third longer than the way it's set up now. Parts of the [original] track—the Uphill, the Downhill and the Freeway—are still there, but originally

The Mammoth Motocross track is nestled in an isolated canyon just a few minutes from the center of Mammoth Lakes. The town (which has a population of about 5,000 full-time residents) was named for the Mammoth Mine. After the mining played out in the 1920s, Mammoth turned into a ranching community and a summer camping and fishing resort for residents of California's Owens Valley.

it went way in the back and over behind the cook shack and actually crossed the road where you enter the pits. I think it was changed around '75 or '76, mostly because the bikes and the sport itself had changed."

The race has run for 26 consecutive years, the first event having been organized by the Sierra Motorcycle Club, which was, as Baer explains,

"just a group of people who worked up here in the ski area. They were riding Huskys and CZs, just having fun, then they got together and put on the first event." In recent years the event has been run by the Mammoth Mountain Ski Area in conjunction with High Sierra Sports, a nonprofit organization that helps young people in Mammoth to participate in the local

junior ski-race program. Additionally, the U.S. Forest Service plays a huge role in the event.

"They're tremendously cooperative," says Baer of the government agency. "The track is on their land—well, it's [the taxpayers'] land, but they're responsible for the administration. I think it has a lot to do with [President] and CEO of Mammoth



Ryan Hughes turned in the week's best overall performances with a 1-1-3 in the Expert division races.

Mountain Ski Area] Dave McCoy's relationship with them—with the ski area and how environmentally conscious he is; his reputation has helped make it a smooth operation."

The event is as famous for its superb organization as for its prime location, a fact that makes

Just a short trip from the Mammoth track is Rainbow Falls, where water from the San Joaquin River drops more than 100 feet to a shallow pool at the fall's base.



Mammoth's \$50-per-class race entries among the most coveted in the sport.

"In a way, the event sort of promotes itself," says Baer, "and that has a lot to do with the way we do things. The fact that the races run on time, that there are no delays for ambulances—those things really help. We run our ski races the same way; we don't spare any expense. Most of the people out there who work the event are employed by the ski area, so we don't have to depend on volunteers. It's a lot easier to make the track perfect when you have those kinds of workers."

Amazingly, the event nearly died six years ago when the ski area, tired of losing money, decided to call it quits.

"At the time it was just too costly, and up to that point we had never asked for outside sponsorship," Baer explains. "But when the town heard about it, all the condo, restaurant and gas-station owners said 'Whoa!' The town actually offered to give us money to help defray our costs, and they've done it ever since. All of a sudden it wasn't costing us so much money. Also, the participation we've gotten from people in the motorcycle industry has been just tremendous. Since then, it's turned into a really fun event. Before it was kind of work; we were losing money and wondering why we were out there.

Team Honda's Steve Lamson (21) had to settle for second behind Ty Davis in Mammoth's prestigious 250cc Expert division race.



Now we look forward to it."

The staff's dedication to perfection is a big part of what keeps riders and their families coming back. It's not uncommon for riders who haven't raced all year to dust off their bikes and head for the Mountain. There are even a few hardened veterans, such as Jim O'Neal of O'Neal USA fame, who have raced every year since the event's inception. Unfortunately, O'Neal was forced to break his quarter century-plus streak when he injured his arm just prior to the September event. Had Mammoth run during the traditional week in June (it was postponed due to the previous winter's

Access to the pits is limited to vehicles carrying race bikes and equipment. Everyone else takes the bus from town.



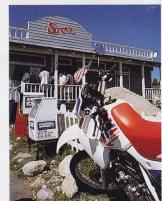
Hitching a ride from the pits back to town is a Mammoth tradition. Goat Breker's '62 Ford Econoline pickup was Mammoth's most stylish form of mass transit.



Watching is as much fun as riding, especially if Dad helps with the view.



The Stove restaurant is one of Mammoth's landmarks, and if you believe Johnny O'Mara, it has the best breakfast in town.



record snowfall in the eastern Sierra range), O'Neal would have been 26 and 0. Semi-local boy Steve Lamson, who's been to the race every year since 1985, remembers riding the 80cc Expert class against the likes of Jimmy Gaddis and Buddy Antunez, though 1992 (when he won the 500s and 250s and was second in the 125s) was admittedly his best year. The latest edition didn't play out nearly as well for the Team Honda rider.

"In the 500s I ended up with a DNF and a first," he explains. "In the first moto I was leading on the first lap, then I lost the front end and fell. I dropped back to about 10th then man-

Time for work: Mammoth's famous clock counts down yet another moto start. The gate drops as soon as the hand passes the red zone.



Race Director Ken Baer oversees the production of the Mammoth Motocross event, while the Mountain's ski area employees handle most of the requisite track work.



Just a short drive and hike from the motocross track is one of the Mammoth area's more interesting geological formations, the Devil's Postpile. Its basaltic columns were formed by an ancient lava flow that cooled quickly then fractured.





The wilderness area near Rainbow Falls is slowly recovering from a 1991 lightning fire. High, dry winds fanned the blaze, which burned for two days and destroyed about 8,000 acres.

aged to catch up to second behind Ty Davis when the front wheel just disintegrated; all the spokes just broke out of it. I think I just landed too hard off one of those back jumps.

"The 125s didn't go too well, either," Lamson continues. "I won my qualifier, then I was leading the main

event the whole way and, with two laps to go, I got behind a lapper on the downhill and I couldn't get around him. I was yelling at him and everything, but he was just going crazy trying to stay in front of me. I was so mad I tried to pass him by going up the inside over a jump into a left-hand corner. He squared the corner and I just nailed him and went right over the bars. By the time I got up three guys had gotten by me, and I finished in fourth." Steve nearly made up for it in the 250s, though. Riding a stock 1994 production CR, he managed a close second behind Ty Davis' Kawasaki.

The Nu Dawg up to his old tricks: Ron Lechien came out of retirement—at least for a day—to race in the 250cc Expert class at Mammoth. He posted a credible fourth in the main.



"We didn't get the bike until Friday, so I really didn't have much time to ride it or jet it in," Steve said, adding that "it worked pretty well anyway. I was really close, but I couldn't quite catch Ty. He always rides well at Mammoth; I never count him out."

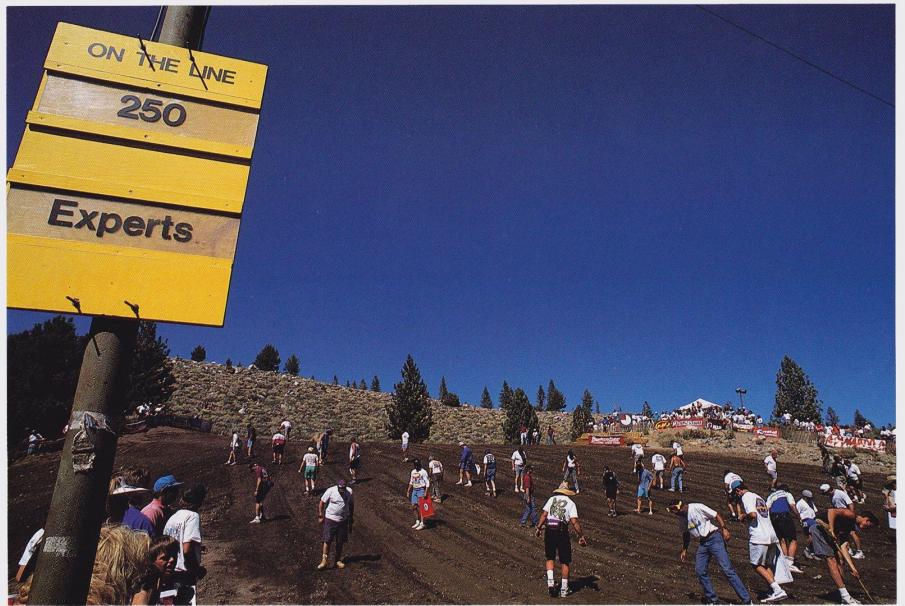
Lamson may not have counted him out, but Davis *did* manage to surprise just about everyone else with an

impressive ambush of National-class regulars in four different divisions: Davis rode a modified KLX650 to a win in the four-strokes-only Sound of Thunder race, then tripled in the two-stroke classes. In the process the 24-year-old former factory rider turned off-road star impressed himself as much as the assembled multitudes.

"The whole goal was to beat the

factory guys—kind of start some trouble," Davis laughed. "But really, for some off-road guy to go out and beat the National motocrossers is just awesome. You know, they write you off the minute you're older or not winning every race. I just wanted to make sure they know that I'm still around and they had better watch out. I'd like to take those motocrossers out to

Located about 15 minutes from the motocross track, Horseshoe Lake is a favorite location for swimming, boating and fishing. The lake's water level was at its highest point in 10 years because of heavy snowfall last winter.

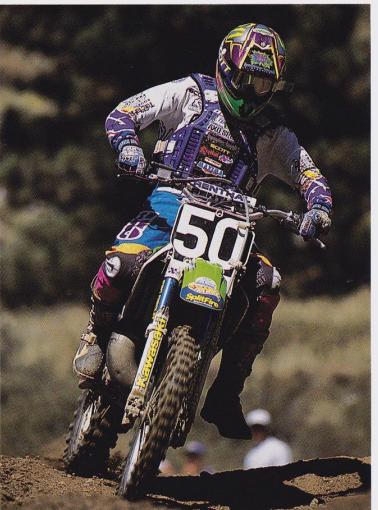


The racers' support crews go to work on the start hill just prior to the 250cc Expert main. Mammoth's races start on Thursday with Vets; Women, 4-strokes, 500s and 80s run on Friday. Saturday is 125cc day, and the event winds up on Sunday with the 250s.

Lucerne for an enduro! In hare scrambles they might do pretty well," he adds, "but I don't know. Those trees are pretty tight, and there are no berms to bounce off or people you can ram."

Still, Davis' semiremarkable 250cc performance was only mildly surprising compared to the trick Ron Lechien pulled.

"I think I came out of retirement for a day," said the Dogmeister after an impressive fourth in the premier 250cc event. Ronnie timed the gate perfectly and wheelied to the top of the Mountain ahead of all but Ty Davis' Kawasaki. Lechien quickly pulled even with the desert star on the trip back down the hill before relinquishing the inside line to a startled Davis. "Yeah, I kind of like that downhill," Lechien smiled. "I've always been able to just fly down it. But I haven't ridden for two months,



America's latest motocross prodigy, Kevin Windham, smoked to wins in both the 125 and 250cc Intermediate classes while turning Expert-level lap times.

Team Green's Ty Davis holds the outside line on the infamous Mammoth Downhill while winning Sunday's 250cc Expert main.



T H E R O O K I E

Though he's been riding since the age of three, nothing in 15-year-old Kevin Windham's racing experience could quite prepare him for what he saw on his first trip to Mammoth.

"The scenery is beautiful," says the Baton Rouge, Louisiana, resident, "We don't have anything like that back home. Where we live it's about 48 feet above sea level, and the highest it gets in the whole state is only about 500 feet. We don't have any of these thousand-foot altitude differences."

Though Windham quickly adapted to Mammoth's 8000-foot-plus altitude, he had to spend some time figuring out the track.

"Yeah," he admits, "it took a little while to get used to. I don't know exactly what it is; the turns are kind of off-camber or something. Something about it is totally different. I had a lot of trouble getting used to the way the ruts form in the turns."

At any rate, his results didn't suffer: Windham smoked two packs of Intermediates on both the 125 and 250cc days, collecting a pair of class wins while posting lap times amazingly similar to those of the fastest Experts. As for the Intermediates, no one else was really close.

"Casey Johnson was there, especially at the beginning," says Windham of his competition. "A couple of times he'd get the holeshot and lead and we'd dice for a few laps, but at the end of the race I think they said there were something like 10 seconds between me and him, then 50 seconds between Casey and whoever was third. Everyone said my lap times were pretty consistent with [Team Kawasaki's Robbie] Reynard and Ryan Hughes."

Windham's talent is remarkable for one so young; what's even more remarkable is the fact that he lives in a state that doesn't have a single motocross track.

"When I first started riding," says Kevin, "they had a few tracks in the

area, but now we have to travel everywhere. The closest track that's really worth riding is five hours away. But my dad always thought it was kind of a blessing because people in, say, Texas, they only race in Texas, and the people in Florida only race in Florida because they have so many tracks. If you do that you get a case of hometrackitis: You can't race anywhere but your home tracks."

All the traveling and experience seem to have paid off for Windham.

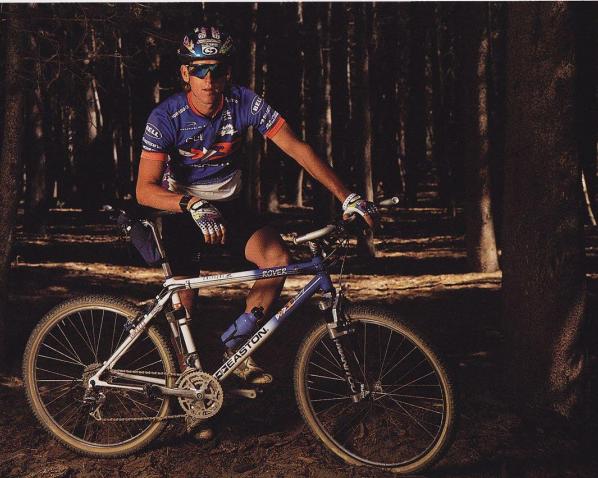
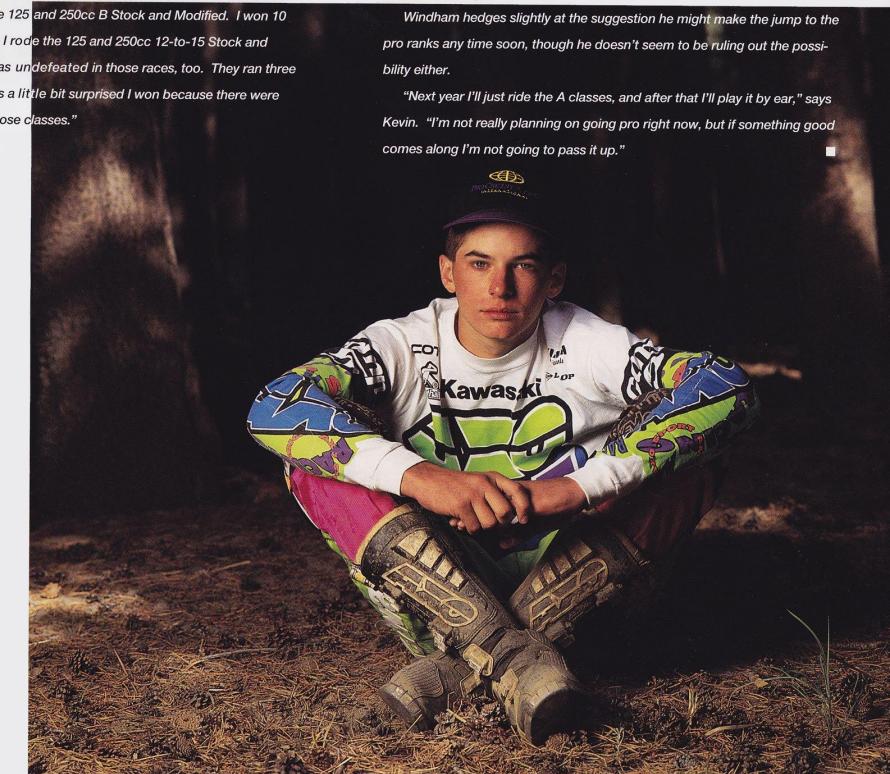
"I had a great year, especially at Ponca City and Loretta Lynn's," Kevin says. "At Ponca I rode the 125 and 250cc B Stock and Modified. I won 10 motos there. At Loretta's I rode the 125 and 250cc 12-to-15 Stock and Modified classes, and I was undefeated in those races, too. They ran three motos per class, and I was a little bit surprised I won because there were some really fast guys in those classes."

So what's his secret?

"I try not to force anything; I let things happen naturally," says Kevin. "Sometimes I'll come off the track and it felt like I was going so slow, and if you were watching it looked slow, but then that's usually when I was going the fastest. Whenever I go into a corner I try to think about the straight after it. I set up the corner to get a good line on the straight. Sometimes I look at people's lines through a turn and I think that my line is twice as slow, but I can still come out ahead when I get to the end of the next straight because I'm set up for the straight so much better."

Windham hedges slightly at the suggestion he might make the jump to the pro ranks any time soon, though he doesn't seem to be ruling out the possibility either.

"Next year I'll just ride the A classes, and after that I'll play it by ear," says Kevin. "I'm not really planning on going pro right now, but if something good comes along I'm not going to pass it up."



T H E V E T

Even though it's been over 18 years, Johnny O'Mara still has fond memories of his first trip to the Mountain.

"I went there as an Intermediate in 1975, and I rode the 125cc class," says the former 125cc National and 250cc Supercross champion.

"Actually, I don't really remember how well I did, but I remember the place; it was a big eye-opener. That's why I go back every year; the place is so great, and it doesn't seem to have changed much over the years—with the exception of the motorcycles. I remember Brian Myerscough won the Expert race that year, and I think Broc Glover rode and Jeff Ward, too. I was watching those guys in awe! In '78 I came out and rode the 125cc

Expert class, but there were a few years in between where I didn't ride because I was just getting my pro career going and I was out on the Nationals. I came back in '82, then in '83 I won all three classes. I won all three again in '86, and in 1990 I won the King of Mammoth title. I didn't win all three classes that year, but I did win the overall title on the best combined scores for all three Expert classes."

And what was his toughest battle in all those years?

"I remember once I had a good battle with Lechien there in the 125s," smiles O'Mara. "I thought I won, but everyone's been asking me this year, 'Hey, remember when Lechien smoked you here?' I was National champion on the 125 that year, and I think he spanked me—and he was 14 years old!"

also remember one pretty good battle with Doug Dubach; I think it was in '91. In the last corner I was guarding my line, and he railed the outside and passed me. But the years that I won, I did it pretty convincingly."

Since retiring from his full-time pro motocross career at the end of the 1990 season, O'Mara's been on hiatus as an expert-level mountain-bike racer. (Coincidentally, Mammoth is as much a mecca for the pedal pushers as it is for the throttle jockeys.)

"This year I was hoping to get to Mammoth for the NORBA National," O'Mara explains, "but I hurt my foot and couldn't make it. I broke my heel in February, and I'm not anywhere near being 100 percent. The doctors tell me it's an extremely bad bone to break because it takes so long to heal. They

seem to think I'll feel it even after a year, but I'm hoping I'll get back to where I'll be able to do some running or basketball or anything like that. That's the reason I pulled out of the [AMA] 125cc Nationals this year; it made me totally alter my riding style to compensate. But I was really looking forward to Mammoth from the beginning of the year as far as the motorcycle race," he continues. "I healed up a little bit, and I thought I would maybe just do the Vet class. I had very little training, but I just love the Mammoth race. I'm glad I did it. I didn't put too much pressure on myself; I just basically came here to have fun. Plus I get to eat at The Stove; you know, they've got their famous breakfast where you get a little of everything: eggs and your choice of pancakes, a waffle or French toast. No way could I miss that!"

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"It's harder to defend the title than to win it." Jeff Emig smiles as he speaks, but he says the words with conviction. He knows from experience: On the heels of his freshman year as a professional motocross champion, Emig had his 125cc U.S. National title pried away by a determined Doug Henry. It's been a tough year for Team Yamaha's rising star, though one that's had its share of high points as well.

"Everyone's expectations are so much greater when you're the champion—even your own," Emig admits. "You think to yourself, 'These guys were nothing last year.' But they're working even harder to knock you off. Anything can happen in this sport. Nobody is guaranteed a win."

While professional motocross has its share of unlikely heroes, Jeff Emig isn't one of them. From his days as a mini-cycle terror to his championship-winning 1992 season as a factory Yamaha rider, Emig has been destined for greatness on the track. Since beginning, the focus of his life has been directed toward being a champion, and Emig's journey to racing stardom followed a textbook-perfect path to glory: minibike hero, amateur sensation, Pro-Am contender, factory rider, National champion.

But that road has not been without its hardships. Along the way Emig was denied many of the experiences that a normal kid's life has to offer—things as simple as just hanging out after school or spending the weekends with friends. Instead, Jeff's younger years were spent practicing, racing, training and traveling. He spent much of his time competing with his older brother, Bryan, under the watchful eye of

J E F F E M I G

Sophomore Blues

their father, Gary, who was at once his sons' mechanic, coach, mentor and sponsor. When it became obvious that Jeff was going to make it and Bryan was not, the family's attention began to center on Jeff alone. Predictably, Jeff's relationship with Bryan suffered, and when Jeff finally made it to the professional level and began to climb in the rankings, it was soon apparent that he would have to go on without Gary as well.

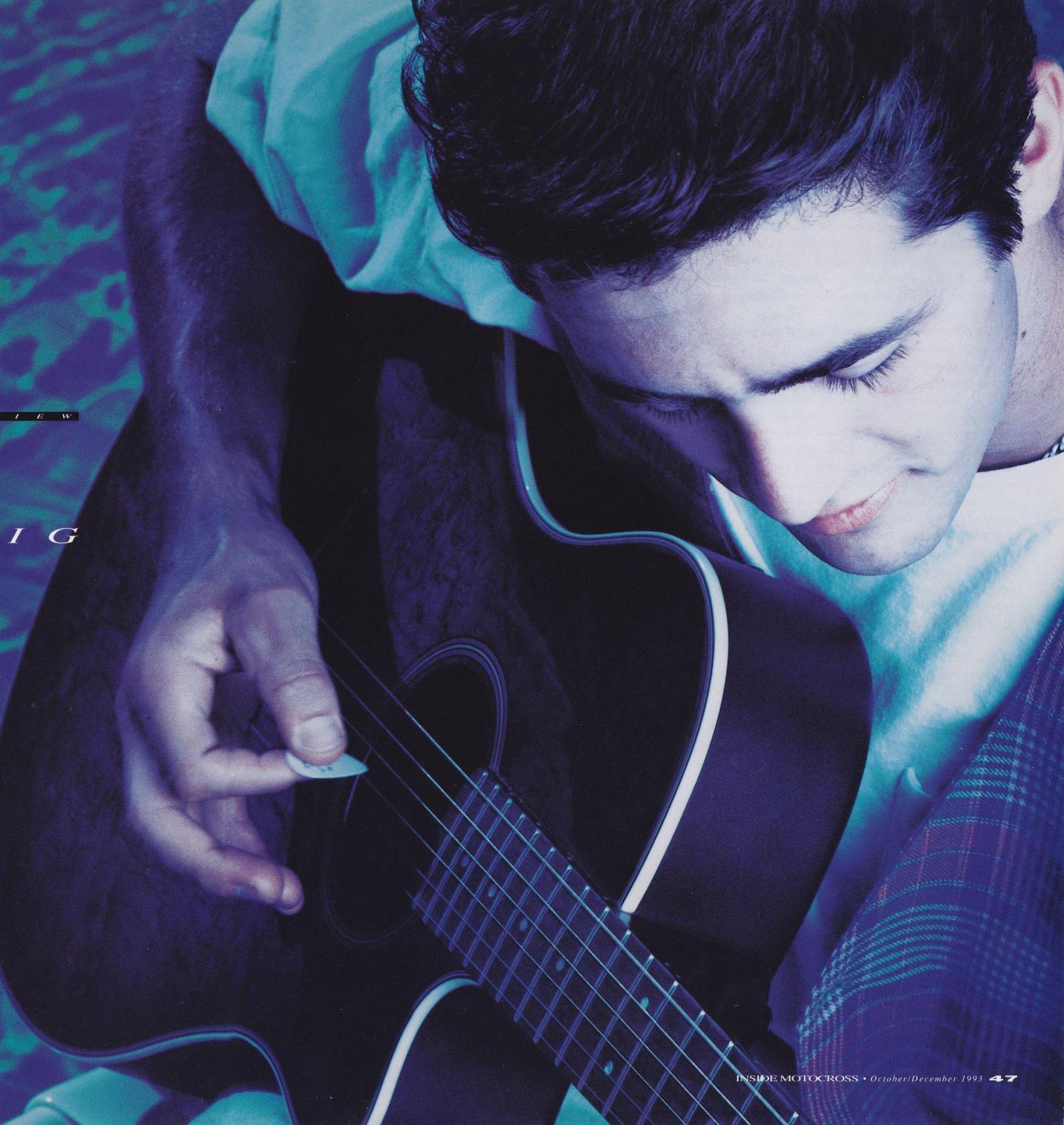
Now, four years after his professional career began, Jeff Emig possesses a U.S. 125cc National championship (1992), two 125cc world individual titles at the Motocross des Nations

Photograph by Carol Hodge (‘92 and ‘93) and numerous 125cc National and supercross victories. He's taken up residence in Highland Ranch near Riverside, California, and spends most of his time traveling to and from motocross races all over the world. Emig has also made a considerable effort to keep his family involved in his career, though the days of Dad spinning the wrenches, Bryan setting the pace on the track and sister Paige cleaning air filters are gone forever.

Just a few days after winning his second Motocross des Nations 125cc title, Jeff talked about how a kid from Kansas got to the top in one of the world's most competitive professions—and what it will take to stay there.



By Doreen Coombs



■ **When did you decide you wanted to be a pro motocrosser?**

I never actually decided to become a pro motocrosser; it just happened. From the moment I started racing minibikes I was taught to do the best I could at every level. I just kept going and climbing.

■ **Did you ever plan on doing anything else, such as football or music, as a career or hobby?**

Not much in my life is ever really planned; it keeps things fun and interesting. I played basketball in sixth and seventh grade, but I only got into two games. I was the bench warmer! But my life was always directed toward motocross. In that way I was kind of sheltered from other things. Racing was all we knew, my brother and sister and I. Everyone always had to do what they could to help Jeff and Bryan. I know things were hard for Paige growing up. She was always told, "Don't upset or mess with Jeff; don't wake him up because he has to race in the morning; don't do anything to affect his racing."

■ **As a Midwesterner, when was the first time you raced against National-level competitors?**

I wasn't as isolated as you might think. I saw guys like Denny Stephenson and Chad Pederson at every regional event. We went to Oklahoma and Texas all the time. A lot of good minicyclists were racing in the South during that time. I raced with so many of these guys who were born stars: Mouse McCoy, Scott Brown, Kyle Lewis, Paul Dennis, Jason Langford, Jason Schultz, John Kitsch, Eddie Hicks. I remember guys like that who've had spectacular mini careers, and I've watched them make mistakes in their careers. I tried to remain focused. You have to keep away from all the hype because as soon as you think you're somebody, you'll be nobody.

■ **Which pro riders did you look up to?**

At certain times there was always a different hero for me; sometimes your taste changes and your perception changes. For a while I was a real Broc Glover fan. I'm not sure whether or not it was true, but people used to tell me I rode like him—not a lot of mistakes, never really hanging it all out. I guess that was a Glover trademark: Win smooth or don't win. I was into David Bailey, too, because he was the king of smooth. Rick Johnson was definitely a great rider and a good role model.

The funny thing about motocross heroes is that once you get to the level of turning pro, you don't have to look up anymore; you look over across the starting gate and wonder what made the other guys so good.

■ **Was your father Gary a doting motocross parent or a win-at-all-costs coach?**

My dad was always working for us—always trying to make that extra money so we could go to the races. He was a pretty famous race-car builder back in the Midwest; he did a lot of stock-car and drag-race stuff. They used to call me Mister 105; I had the fastest 105s ever. I was always blessed with great bikes. People always thought my stock bikes were cheaters, but they were just fine-tuned, and a lot of people always overlooked that. And thank God my dad was a little pushy! He was pretty serious about our family's racing, and that made things hard at times. I know now that he just wanted what was best for me. When he knew I wasn't riding that well he would get upset. He would get so mad at a bad race, but then he'd cool off in a day or so—no big deal. He knew I had the ability before I knew, and that pushed him. We have a good relationship now. The morning after I lost 16 points to Doug Henry at the National in New York, he was really positive with me on the telephone. He said for me to go win those last two motos and whatever happens, happens. That's different from when I was younger. He knows that I put enough pressure on myself; I don't have to call my dad for motivation.

■ **Why did you ask your family to stay away from the final race at Budds Creek last year when you won the title?**



Jeff Emig battled all season to defend his 1992 125cc National title.

In the end, Team Honda's Doug Henry (16) took the championship in a dramatic final-moto showdown at the penultimate round at Pennsylvania's Steel City track.

Racing is a very emotional thing for me, and there's some pressure that comes from having those who are close to you at the race. I saw that as a weakness that had to be avoided. At last year's Motocross des Nations in Australia, I saw how it affected Mike LaRocco to have his family so close, and I knew that weakness would work against him. And I realized at the same time that it was important that I didn't fall into that trap myself.

■ **It must have been especially difficult for your father.**

I'm sure it was hard. I think he wanted to be there more than anything, but I think the separation was part of his maturing as well as mine. My dad had enough respect for me as a man to let me go. "Jeff's a big boy, and this is what he has to do." I would have loved for everyone to be there, but this is a business and you have to treat it like a job. Racing is one hell of an emotional job, but it's a job nevertheless.

Over the past few years our relationship has changed, but it's for the better. My dad worked on my bikes all my life—all the way through my first year as a pro. I think we both knew it was time to move on. Some of these motocross fathers need to let their kids mature on their own. It would make them better people and better riders. Steve Butler is my mechanic now, and when I look Steve in the face after I've had a bad race, he knows how to keep me motivated and make things

You have to keep away from all the hype because as soon as you think you're somebody, you'll be nobody.

work better. When you have to look your father in the face it makes you feel like you let him down. You and your mechanic have to be there for each other. I guess what I mean is "Keep your dad until it starts to hurt."

■ In what ways is your family still involved in your racing career?

Dad will always be the coach. I talk to him just about every day on the phone. He doesn't see all the races, but he knows me well enough to know what I'm thinking. Sometimes it seems like he knows me better than I know myself. But now that Steve is my mechanic, Dad and I have much more of a father-son relationship than we ever had. My brother Bryan lives 15 minutes from me. I get to see him once a week or so. I grew up chasing his rear fender. He was two years older, always faster. I could count on him to show me the way. Then I got faster and things got hard for us. Bryan wasn't lucky, and he broke too many bones to move up. Then came time for the separation. It was like, "Jeff is the racer; Bryan; you need to be whatever you can be." That was hard for everyone.

■ Your sister Paige has always been there for you, too.

Yes she has, and put that in bold print! Paige... I can't even explain her. She's very overprotective! She's the biggest help in my life right now. She's always there to help me with my racing. I know it was hard for her when we were young because everything and everyone was focused on the racing careers of Jeff and Bryan, but she was always right there with us. Now she's even my financial manager; my girlfriend calls her my wife! She helps me out a lot with personal stuff, though not as much now as when we were growing up. Whenever we talk now I always look forward to it, even though she probably doesn't know that. But Paige doesn't go to many races anymore; she thinks she's had luck! She waits by the phone every *Racing is one hell of an emotional job, but it's a job nevertheless.*

■ How many more years of your life do you plan on being a professional motocrosser?

Tough question. I never really set goals, even when I was little. When I got to be a top 80cc-class expert I just kept going. As long as I still win, or at least am still happy, I'll stay in the sport. Good fan support can extend your career one or two years; Guy Cooper proved that. But fans can run you off, too. They pissed Bayle off, so he kicked everyone's ass and left. All the people wanted was to see him get beaten, so they booted him. No one deserves to be booted.

■ Do you feel as though you've been in Damon Bradshaw's shadow at Yamaha?

Not at all. I know he's had a bad year and all, but we get along better now than we did before, maybe because it's more even now. Damon is incredibly talented, no doubt about it. I know I can learn a lot from him. He's been at the top for several years; he's the number-one most wanted rider in the world. Our careers paralleled growing up. We were both taught the right things growing up; we just haven't actually used them yet. It sucks that Honda is up there in supercross; it should be us.

■ This year you were the 125cc National series points leader with two races to go, but then everything fell apart in the last two weeks of the season and Doug Henry took your title. What happened?

I guess you could say that I just had a lot of negative vibes. This year didn't feel like last year. I got sick at the beginning of the season, three days before the first race. I rode the GFI supercross and felt great, then I got sick. I couldn't breathe, I couldn't eat. I felt weak, and I ended up taking two races off. I knew all along in '92 that I would win the title, that everything would be all right in the end, even though I was way behind [Mike LaRocco] in the points. I just didn't have that same feeling this year. No matter how hard I tried, no matter how hard I worked, things just didn't feel right. In the end the title went to someone else.

■ 1993 marked your second year on the Motocross des Nations team.

■ Unfortunately, you were supposed to be the best man in Buddy Antunes's wedding on the same weekend. Didn't you already have a tuxedo?

Yeah, and I lost 20 bucks on my deposit! I wanted to be there as the best man for Buddy, but I told him if I were chosen for the des Nations I would go. It's an obligation to the country. Besides, you don't want people to think you wussed out on the competition. I went there last year to prove I was the best 125 rider in the world. Then [Greg] Alberthy didn't show up, and I was a little disappointed. This year everybody was there, and I think I proved that I was faster than all of those guys. There was a lot of pressure on the team, especially on Jeremy [McGrath], but we did it again. It was a very satisfying race for me.

■ Are you going to try anything different in preparation for the new season?

I'm going to do things a lot differently. I plan on working more and riding more, but not necessarily racing more. I'm not going to spend all that time in Europe doing the international races, and I'm only planning on doing two in Japan. That's all I want right now; the season here is long enough.

■ What is it people don't know about Jeff Emig?

"I don't feel like I'm the same as a lot of racers; I don't think about the future the same way. The stereotypical racer thinks about who has the newest T-shirt or helmet or who has the newest tennis shoes or the trendiest clothes or junk like that. There are a whole lot of these young factory riders who worry about being somebody before they actually are somebody. You need to be the opposite; you need to become a star before people make you a star. A lot of the young factory riders think that they've arrived. I thought the same thing and now, four years later, it's a whole new ball game. Now you have to go do it; before, you could get by with the excuse, "Oh, I'm young; I'm just learning." Sometimes I think I'm too emotional with my racing. What you want to do is get past winning races on emotions. In '92, at Budds Creek, on the whole last lap, all the way around the track, people were just cheering and screaming, and I thought that was pretty cool, but when I turned the last corner and looked up and saw the checkered flag and knew what was happening—I get chills right now just thinking about it. I've had a lot of reasons and motivations over the years for the races I've won, but the one thing I was thinking about was, "Okay, Dad, here we go; this is what we've been working for." It's like that championship was for him. And I did it for myself, of course, but it was the payback for the last 12 years. There's nothing better than being able to call up and say, "I did it." But I think from now on the rest of them are definitely going to be for me. **IM**





THE
QUICK
&
THE
DEAD

By Jack Burnicle

I was a curious theory, one put forth by a fairly knowledgeable British observer. "In motocross," he postulated, "you have the quick and the dead. And that's more than true in America, but not so true on the continent—at least not anymore. If you race in the States, you must win—or you die. Not literally, of course, but you won't last very long over there unless you can win. There aren't any rewards for getting seventh, so before long, you go back to school or take a construction job. But the grands prix can offer a fairly good living to the fellow in 10th. Good start money, good sponsors, a decent lifestyle by most standards. So there's not as much incentive to move up in the order. That's what keeps the Yanks ahead—at least as I see it."

Austria is full of delightful joints like Gmunden. It sounds like a place for people with no teeth, but it's actually a beautiful lakeside resort in Salzkammergut which dates back to the 13th century. Sitting proudly on the mouth of the River Traun, Gmunden overlooks the 10-mile-long Lake Traunsee, which is bordered by spectacular purple mountains rising

sheer from its shores. The Romans, occupying Austria 2000 years ago, called Traunsee "iacus felix," which means "the happy one." Great composers like Johannes Brahms and Franz Schubert have enjoyed its restful banks.

The grandly named Hotel Austria, a vast pale yellow and cream edifice, was built at the head of the lake in 1870 to house vacationing members of the Hapsburg monarchy. It was to this imposing palace that the Irish and Dutch squads traveled for this year's Motocross des Nations. Their teams represented both extremes of this great contest. The Irish, with Phil Neill, little Brian Steele

and wild 250 find Mark Farrelly, typified the no-hoppers—a band of happy-go-lucky holiday makers popping up the hotel bar with a bunch of zany Celtic chums. The Dutch, oddly lining up new 125cc world champ Pedro Trager on a 250, old 125cc world champ Dave Strijbos on a 125 and fast 250cc GP runner Edwin Everts on a 500, typified the genuine contenders—contrastingly quiet, almost conspiratorially confident, with that arrogant air of assumed superiority and beautiful girlfriends for company—challengers, as ever, for the prestigious prize of toppling the seemingly impregnable Americans.

With a record 29 countries entered, no-hoppers were in the vast majority. The crumbling of the Iron Curtain meant a mottled assortment of Eastern European teams made the relatively short trip to Austria. Old die-hards from the former U.S.S.R. spattered their unpronounceable ranks: Andres Krestinov headed "Estland," Andrei Ledowskoi (who rode Cagiva in 500cc GPs in 1983) led "Russland," and Alexandre Morosov fronted the Ukraine. Slovenians, Croatians and Lithuanians were also proudly present for this unlikely ride of their lives, sharing the track, however briefly, with a trio of American superstars.

Twelve miles away from Gmunden lay Schwanenstadt, where the *Motorsportvereinigung Schwanenstadt* had gradually, over the past 15 years, ousted rocky, worn-out old Sittendorf as Austria's premier motocross venue. Schwanenstadt first hosted a 250cc grand prix back in 1977, the spoils shared by that legendary KTM-mounted Russian duo Gennadi Moiseev and Vladimir Kavinov. A year later Czech hero Jaroslav Falta (CZ) won a race, and by 1984 Schwanenstadt had snatched Austria's 500cc GP from its traditional home at Sittendorf. It was an epic as reigning 125 and 250cc world champions Eric Geboers and Georges Jobe traded race wins in their first-ever 500cc GP! France's first world champion, Jacky Vimond, swept to a double win on his 250cc Yamaha in 1986, and Jean-Michel Bayle won a 125cc moto in 1987. Bayle was back a year later, trading wins with his archrival of that exciting era, Dave Strijbos, who was back this year with the Dutch squad.

By now Schwanenstadt commanded a grand prix every year. Dave

"IT'S CRAZY... THE AMERICANS NEVER MAKE A MISTAKE." — YRO VESTERINEN



■ The first moto at the Schwanenstadt circuit pitted the 500s against the 125s. Swede Jorgen Nilsson is already gone; Belgian Mamicq Bervoets (4), Austria's Siegfried Bauer (25), Britain's Jared Smith (7), Finland's Miska Altonen (58) and Dutch star Edwin Everts (19) gave chase. Russian Andres Krestinov (76) tumbled as Mike Kiedrowski (1) fought French 125cc hero Yves DeMaria (12) for the inside line.

Luc Verbeke



■ Team USA's Jeremy McGrath carried number two and the pressure of rookie status.

Davey Coombs

"I'VE BEEN THINKING THE WHOLE TIME THAT I CAN'T LOSE FOR AMERICA." — JEREMY MCGRATH



■ The remarkable Jeff Emig captured his second 125cc des Nations title with a 2-1 score.

time National champion Jeff Stanton. Jeff blitzed his way through the pack at Vimmerby, in Sweden, on his 250cc Honda, flattening Belgium's Dirk Geukens for good measure en route to stealing the verdict by a single point.

In 1991 Stanton was at it again, hurling his mighty 500 through the black, wet sand of Valkenswaarde to snatch first place from Belgium and Holland and save America's bacon a second time. That year also saw long-time U.S. Team Manager Roger DeCoster bow out, leaving a relatively inexperienced squad under the supervision of AMA kingpin Roy Janson in Australia last year. Stanton and his great rival, Damon Bradshaw, declined that trip. Mike Kiedrowski, uncertain of who else might be chosen, also decided against going. But Billy Liles, Mike LaRocco and new 125cc National champ Jeff Emig stormed to a resounding win; America's "B" team had kept the stars and stripes flying. This time newly crowned 250cc champion Kiedrowski was back riding a 500 and confident that Emig and 1993 supercross sensation Jeremy McGrath were the men to handle the pressure. McGrath, however, was somewhat less certain.

As hero and champion of the 1993 American supercross season, McGrath was elected by popular vote to represent the United States in the 250cc class. He had, after all, won 10 of 16 main events and a couple of 125cc outdoor Nationals. The problem was that the Schwanenstadt circuit was no supercross track, and McGrath had very little outdoor experience on a 250cc motorcycle. The Euros knew that Kiedrowski and Emig were capable of winning; it was McGrath who they considered to be the weak spot. The pressure on Jeremy was huge.

"I've been thinking the whole time that I can't lose for America," admitted McGrath. "I don't want to be known as the guy who messed up. That's the hardest part of the whole race. I know I can ride fast, and I know there are fast European riders, but it's going to be easier for them. The pressure's on me."



■ Blazingly fast Frenchman Fred Bolley's (11) third-moto placing would eventually seal the American victory; Bolley's second-place—and a precious few seconds—cost Belgium a certain win.

Luc Verheke

Davey Coombs

Thorpe (Honda) dominated the 500s in 1989, and Alessandro Puzar (Suzuki) dominated the 250s in 1990. Puzar has won a race on every visit since, sharing the stage with Trampas Parker's Honda in 1991 and Jamie Dobb and Bader Mannah last year. That 1992 250cc GP suffered some of the most processionals races of the season.

Fortunately, the Motocross des Nations doesn't know the meaning of the word processionals. The best outdoor event of the year bar none, its turbulent mixture of machinery and men almost guarantees explosive action as world stars from different classes and continents clash in a one-off annual treat. When America first launched its regular trans-Atlantic attack in 1981, it arrived with the Honda U.S. squad. They scraped home at Bielstein, in West Germany, thanks to a blinding charge by Danny LaPorte and a broken gearbox on Graham Noyce's HRC Honda. It wasn't to be their only narrow squeak. The difference was the opposition. Belgians rather than Brits almost snatched the verdict in Finland in 1984, in Sweden in 1990 and in Holland in 1991. America's savior on the last two of these occasions was six-

"By the look on his face I know that he's pretty nervous," added Emig. "He has a lot to uphold. If this was a supercross track, forget it. You would see that guy long gone, whipping it sideways, fully playing it up. He would not be nervous one bit." Added Emig in defense of his teammate. "Maybe Jeremy wasn't the best choice for this track, but he was picked because he earned it. This is what the fans wanted to see, just like they wanted to see me on the 125 and Mike on the 500. None of us are the National champions in the classes we're riding today, at least not anymore, but I don't know who else you would pick. The 250cc class is the toughest. Jeremy has the hardest class out of all of us."

Between 1947 (the inaugural event) and 1967, Great Britain won the world team contest 15 times. Since then, never. Those other great motocrossing nations—Belgium and Sweden—don't even make double figures. So America's round dozen put them a powerful second in the history books. Yet the Yanks were worried. When an angry Janson burst in with the grid-position ballot, all sorts of silly accusations began to fly. "We've got almost the worst position," snarled Janson. "Albertyn's next to us on the line. Sweden always gets the best gate. Where's Holland? Make sure there's a restraint on that first gate so Sweden can't go next to one another like they did last time." (This is presumably a reference to Sweden's flying starts from the inside berth at Vimmerby in 1990—rather similar to the amazing American getaways from the inside gate at Maggiora in 1986!) In fact, the starting gates at Schwanenstadt somehow got switched around so that the poor Swedes were way out on the extreme, unfavored left. "The U.S. complained," claimed Dutch Team Manager and five-time Carlsbad GP winner Gerrit Wolsink. "They were backed by the Belgians and got it changed around."

On Saturday evening the teams were presented to the public on horse-drawn carriages in the center of Schwanenstadt. Only the Dutch did not attend. "It was bad timing," said Wolsink. "Athletes need to rest and sleep. So I sent the mechanics instead of the riders. It was also a protest. There are too many countries on the start line. They should run A and B groups like they have before. When I

"WE'VE GOT ALMOST THE WORST POSITION." — ROY JANSON

was a rider, I wouldn't accept the second row. You have to eat mud all day long."

Following heavy overnight rain, Schwanenstadt's fast, sweeping hill-sides were in perfect condition on a bright, blustery Sunday afternoon. The earth there is slightly spongy, absorbs moisture and stays firm and grippy. Race one pitted 125s against 500s, many of which were being ridden by 250cc and even 125cc GP regulars! Sadly, Marnicq Bervoets, riding Johan Boonen's factory 500cc Kawasaki, was shaken by news of his father's death the Friday before the race, yet somehow summoned up the will to compete. "He wanted me to ride this race," said the brave Belgian. Other 250cc GP stars taking to their Open-class Kawasakis with panache included Italian Michele Fanton and Dutchman Edwin Evertsen, while little French 125cc GP regular Frederic Vialle, who raced in the States early this year, also looked comfortable on an arm-wrenching 500cc Kweeker. Several teams, including Italy and France, put their 125s on the front row of the grid. Yves DeMaria (125cc Suzuki) took full advantage of this treat and, despite spinning on lap one, lay fifth behind the 500s of Jorgen Nilsson, Bervoets, hometown hero Siegfried Bauer and Vialle. Kiedrowski held ninth place, just in front of 125cc Honda duo Strijbos and Andrea Bartolini, with Swede Jocke Karlsson's 125cc Suzuki 15th and Emig, stuffing Belgian 125cc rider Werner DeWitt, 19th.

Even holeshot ace Nilsson was amazed he'd made it up a steep hill to the hairy first turn across the face of the pack. Sweden actually led until a crucial lap midrace when Kiedrowski, carving away at the pack, snatched the lead off Nilsson as Karlsson collided with a backmarker and went down. Strijbos seized his Honda motor, and the meteoric DeMaria wrenched a knee so painfully that he had to pull out. Emig's mercurial progress brought him onto Bartolini's back fender on the exciting final lap as New Zealander Darryll King nailed Fanton for sixth place just ahead.

Emig, all over Bartolini in the last turn, couldn't quite pass the Italian's Honda. But Kied and Jeff's 1-2 score-line had given America a clear-cut



■ The fastest man on the track in moto three, Belgium's Stefan Everts made an innocent mistake that eventually cost his team dearly.

Jack Burnicle

lead over Sweden, Belgium and Italy. Yro Vesterinen, former world trials champion, shook his head in despair. "It's crazy," lamented Vesty. "The Americans never make a mistake, never have breakdowns, never crash. Occasionally they have bad starts, but that makes no difference!"

The 250s entered the fray next, taking on the well-warmed-up 125s. Alex Puzar holeshot, Stefan Everts took over, Englishman Kurt Nicoll was briefly, brilliantly passed by Greg Albertyn, then Greg fell. Three weeks' torrid partying back home in South Africa resulted in the new 250cc world champion struggling to find form all day. Albee's crash left Nicoll free to focus on his young buddy McGrath in third place. The pair had gotten acquainted during the U.S. 250cc GP at Budds Creek in July, and no love was lost as the world's best scrambler took on the world's best supercrosser. The scrambler won! "He was so easy to pass," grinned Nicoll facetiously. "I got the little s— once at the bottom of the hill but couldn't stop. He was slower than me in the turns. In some places he's quite quick. He just rides differently than the way I do and the way everyone else does."

Emig, meanwhile, stormed magnificently through the field. DeMaria, initially in Jeff's wheel tracks, fell heavily, hurt his already injured knee and retired, ending French hopes. Bartolini (Donnie Schmit's new Chesterfield Yamaha teammate in 1994) crashed on lap one, and Werner DeWitt was knocked off in a horrendous midair collision with ebullient Irishman Farrelly (250cc Honda). Though both Bartolini and DeWitt fought bravely back to fourth and fifth in their class from way downfield, those first-lap calamities had seriously dented Italian and Belgian team chances, and Farrelly had proven once again that no-hoppers have a big part to play in these dramas!

Pedro Tragter perished in this race, so the Dutch were done for. The States still led the world, but discounting their worst score meant that, despite their setbacks, Sweden, Italy and Belgium were uncomfortably close. Emig was happy to go 2-1 in the 125cc class after clashing early with DeMaria. "The guy is fast," admitted Jeff, "incredibly fast. But he hit me so hard on the first lap. He's

"I THINK KIEDROWSKI SHOULD BE ON THE FRONT ROW NEXT RACE. THAT'S ALL WE NEED." — JEFF EMIG



■ Kiedrowski's (1) less-than-perfect third-moto start and McGrath's first-turn spill put the U.S. win streak in jeopardy. Kied recovered, but Jeremy suffered through the first lap in 50th place.

Davey Coombs

just not very fair. I didn't know Albertyn was behind me until after the race. I got held up behind that number-29 250 (New Zealand's Shane King). He was hard to pass." Jeff tenderly fingered a cut on his chest. "Now I know the roost from a 250 hurts as bad as a 500. I really focused on going forward. At the start I hooked up with McGrath. I was surprised he didn't get the holeshot, but he was nervous."

As for Jeremy, the second race proved the European critics to be right again. McGrath was indeed out of his element on the long and fast Schwanenstadt track, which was practically void of the slightest technical elements. The rookie was admittedly stiff and nervous, but he still managed a valuable fourth-place finish behind Everts, Italian hero Puzar and the outspoken Nicoll.

"I was really tight," said McGrath. "I wasn't riding as good as I could have. I know that fourth isn't the best score, but I'm just glad it helped." As it stood, the Americans had a comfortable lead going into the third and final moto, and barring an unforeseen disaster, Team USA was going to win again going away. Emig was confident. "I think Kiedrowski should be on the front row next race," he said. "That's all we need."

Jeff got his wish, but Kiedrowski seriously fluffed his start and McGrath, who went down in turn one, was buried back in 50th place. Mike himself emerged ninth, but the front men—headed by Nicoll and Frenchman Fred Bolley (250cc Yamaha)—were long gone. Everts, off a second-row start, lay 10th! Ten minutes into a tense race Kiedrowski, who had by now fallen three times, was still only sixth 500 and Belgium—with the heroic Bervoets leading his class—led the overall competition! As Nicoll and Bolley dueled for individual supremacy, Bervoets held off Albertyn, Nilsson and, briefly, a frighteningly fast Everts. Then a huge gap had opened up back to Soren Mortensen (500cc Kawasaki). The 33-year-old Dane had been presented with a cake commemorating his record 21 consecutive appearances in world team competition and was showing majestic form as he fended off Didi Lacher (250cc

Suzuki), Sigi Bauer, Everts and Kiedrowski in a frenzied convoy.

But perhaps the most critical moment of the entire contest came midrace as Everts caught his bitter 250cc GP rival Albertny and pulled a classy outside pass. Greg, trying to retaliate, caught the Suzuki's back wheel and fell. Their acrimonious relationship has simmered all year. Distracted at the implication that he might have deliberately felled Albertny, Everts almost stopped, hand held high in apology. It proved to be a devastatingly costly gesture. As he tore across the line 15 minutes later, Stefan was just three agonizing seconds behind a fast-fading Fred Bolley, and had he passed, the Belgians would have ended the Americans' streak.

The vital, final move, however, came 10 minutes from the end. McGrath was buried in 20th overall, 10th in the 250cc class. By now it was obvious that Jeremy's third-moto score would be thrown out as the lowest. It would all come down on Kiedrowski. The American Kawasaki rider, meanwhile, had been passing and repassing Everts in a sizzling duel, Belgian team members urging on the gallant Dutchman. Pandemonium reigned in the American camp as they tried to figure out the scores. With only three laps to go, the verdict came down: Kiedrowski needed to pass three riders to clinch another American victory. "Kiedrowski can't do it. He's not Stanton after all," I wrote in my notepad. As Mike burned through the signal area his mechanic, Shane Nalley, waved the board advising Kiedrowski of the now-desperate situation.

"After I saw that board all I was thinking was, 'Three more places, just three more places!'" said Kiedrowski. "I knew I had to get going; I could tell by the look on Shane's face that it was serious. It was time to win it or lose it! I got my head back together and started riding smooth and smart."

Then suddenly, in one compelling lap, it all happened: Mortensen stalled, Everts finally yielded to Kiedrowski and, as Mike swooped downhill into the fast final corner, he blazed around Bauer. The U.S. was back in front! Three laps later the boy from Acton crossed the finishing line, arms aloft in triumph. America had won an unlucky 13!

Meanwhile, to the joy of a clutch



■ New 250cc world champ Greg Albertny (47) suffered from a postchampionship hangover. The South African could only watch as England's Kurt Nicoll (8) hunted down McGrath.

"I KNEW I HAD TO GET GOING. . . IT WAS TIME TO WIN IT OR LOSE IT!" — MIKE KIEDROWSKI

Luc Verbeke



■ Out of the hunt by virtue of a poor start, no amount of support from the crowd could help the flying McGrath (2) in the final moto. It would all come down to Kiedrowski.

of excited English fans, Nicoll had won the race, recapturing the advantage from Bolley, and the Brit had finished an unexpected, if somewhat distant, fourth behind Sweden.

So what became of Italy? Well, their team manager and his cronies were so busy discussing whether Puzar or Fanton should take the front line that they managed to miss the parc fermé by 30 seconds. They were disqualified. A heartbroken Puzar turned away in silent agony. He knew how many passionate Italian fans had crossed the border to support their team and help create a record-breaking crowd of 20,000—the biggest ever to attend a motocross in Austria. Histrionics were pointless. The Italians were tragically excluded.

Team managers were interviewed. "This is the toughest one we ever had," blustered Roy Janson. "I never thought I'd be rooting for a Brit, but Kurt Nicoll's my hero. I love the man. We won thanks to an Englishman winning the third race and Kiedrowski getting through to third."

Bitter Belgian Johnny Strijbos had his say. "It shows I choose the best team despite all the criticism," he alleged, mystifyingly. Stefan smiled

sweetly. "The first race was a lot of fun. The second race I start second line and have a good start. Unfortunately, my team is second again, but I am getting used to it!"

Marnicq Bervoets wasn't smiling. He had won the 500cc class and lost his dad. "It was difficult to ride, but if I didn't the team couldn't win anymore. So I did my best. It was all I could do." His father would have been proud.

Stefan sent a Belgian beer across to Emig. McGrath sat absent-mindedly signing posters for eager race fans. "I was more nervous than for any other race in my life," confessed the baby-faced bad boy with the Jeffrey Dahmer beard. "I don't like two-row starts. I have never started second row. I got caught in the crash in the first turn of the third moto. Mixed feelings. I could have done better, but this track was very hard to pass on. That was the most pressure I've ever felt in my life; it was the toughest thing I've ever been through."

A voice rose above the cacophony of the crowded American camp: "Here's to Jeff Stanton. We owe this streak as much to him as anyone," shouted American journalist



■ Kiedrowski's shining moment of glory at the finish of moto three marked the 13th victory for the Americans. It was arguably their closest ever.

Davey Coombs.

And what of the man who did a "Stanton" after all? Kiedrowski cracked open that buck-toothed schoolboy grin of his. "Time can play a part," he reflected. "Thirty minutes plus two laps. Luck played a part today, too. The 500 is a tough bike to ride. When I was sixth I fell twice. I didn't lose any spots, but I had to really get on the gas and start moving. I was thinking maybe they might shoot me!"

IM

The U.S. now sits just two short of Great Britain's record. They may simply want it more than the Europeans. And until another team matches that desire, Mike's right; the States will extend their winning ways, probably into the next century. They'll be the quick—and the rest of the world will just have to hope for a resurrection.

Results

- 1 United States, 11; 2 Belgium, 12; 3 Sweden, 15; 4 Great Britain, 29;
- 5 New Zealand, 34; 6 Germany, 36; 7 South Africa, 37; 8 Austria, 40;
- 9 Denmark, 45; 10 Norway, 61

"I felt comfortable and confident with McGrath and Emig. They can handle pressure. They can ride to win and support me. When Stanton and Bradshaw said they weren't going to Australia I said, 'S—, who else can go? That was one reason I backed out. It felt really good I could pull the team to victory like Stanton did in the past."

Mike claimed the promoters had put the U.S. team in a hotel two hours from the track. "It was way up in the mountains. Good views of Austria! So we had to find a motel in Wels last night. We've had a lot of fun. We did one day's practicing. It was a four-hour drive there and four hours back, but I guess it paid off. We won number 13, a bad-luck number, right? So we'll keep right on winning it now!"



■ One more time: Team Manager Roy Janson (left) accepted the honors with Emig, McGrath and Kiedrowski as Swede Jorgen Nilsson shared the podium.

Photos: Jack Burnicle



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The Dog Days

Given the choice, most riders would rather surf during the summer than ride a moto. Motocross is as physically demanding as any other top-level athletic endeavor, but there are few other sports where the participant must deliver a grueling 30-minute-plus performance while wearing three layers and 20 pounds of protective apparel. Any combination of heat, dust, mud and humidity must be anticipated and dealt with as it arises. In hockey, at least there are breaks in play and you work in a reasonable climate! But in motocross, you race when you can—regardless of the conditions. All summer long, riders around the world did what they could to survive the dog days—some with better results than others.



The champion feels the pressure: As the battle for the 250cc world title continued through the summer months, it became obvious that American Donny Schmit (1) would lose his grasp on the crown. Schmit eventually finished third, relinquishing his championship to brilliant South African rider Greg Albertyn.

Photo: Giuseppe Gori

The rugged Millville, Minnesota, track saw its last-ever battle for the U.S. 500cc National title: Mike LaRocco (5), Mike Kiedrowski (1), Steve Lamson (21) and Jeff Stanton (2) led the second-moto charge. With the series dropped from National-class status in '94, LaRocco becomes the first-ever 500cc champ who will not have an opportunity to defend his big-bike title.



Mike Kiedrowski's defense of his U.S. 500cc National crown ended on a hot, humid August day in Millville, Minnesota. Mechanic Shane Nalley gets the word from his rider: A stuck throttle has cost them a second shot at the title.

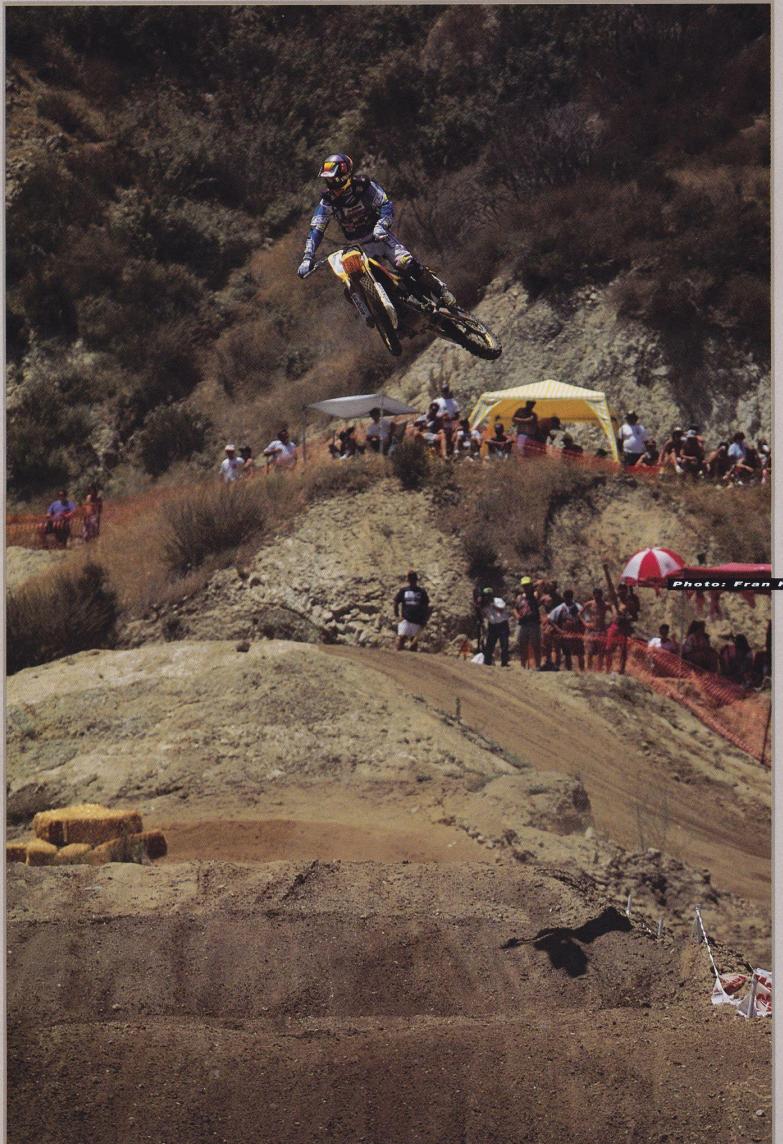
Photo: Fran Kuhn National

A summer of drought would eventually turn Unadilla's lush grass carpet into swirling clouds of dust, but it didn't stop Mike Kiedrowski from winning the event and his first-ever 250cc U.S. National Championship.





The remarkable Belgian, Stefan Everts, roosted Photo: Toshimitsu Sato through the pack in Budds Creek, Maryland, to become the first European rider in 11 years to win the 250cc United States Grand Prix title.



The extraordinary summer heat at the Glen Helen 125/250cc National wasn't the only thing remarkable about the event. Suzuki's Ezra Lusk demonstrates.



They say the 500s are gone forever. If so, Jeff Stanton's **Photo: Rich Cheneet** ride on the big Honda at Steel City was his last ever in National competition.

Never back off:
Sweden's Peter
Johansson *Photo: Fran Kuhn*
(9) and England's Paul
Cooper (32) compare
strategies at the 250cc
United States Grand
Prix in Budds Creek,
Maryland





Honda of Troy-backed Todd DeHoop kept the privateer team in the spotlight all summer long. DeHoop has gained a reputation as a quick starter and a consistent finisher.



American 500cc champion Mike

Photo: Toshimitsu Sato LaRocco was chased by Chesterfield Yamaha teammates Alessandro Puzar (4) and Donny Schmit (1) and JHK/Honda riders Takamasa Takagi (72) and Greg Albertyn (57) at the final 250cc GP of the year at Suzuka, Japan. LaRocco finished second behind Puzar at the notoriously hot, humid event.



With the end of summer closing in fast, the little guys have to wrap up their titles before school starts. James Stewart Jr. dominated the Peewee class at the AMA Amateur National Championship held in August at Loretta Lynn's Ranch in Tennessee.

Photo: Fran Kuhn



The heartbreaker of the season: A brutally dusty track caused John Dowd's KX250's engine to seize while he was holding second with less than a lap to go at Unadilla. It was a long walk home.

Photo: Fran Kuhn



■ Italian grand-prix veteran Alessandro Puzar held on through the brutal heat and humidity of the Japanese 250cc grand prix at Suzuka, winning his first world-championship event of the year. He celebrated appropriately during the trophy presentation.

DESIGN

FORKS:

UPSIDE-DOWN VS. CONVENTIONAL

Recently, significant attention has been given to conventional telescopic forks for motocross bikes—a supposedly obsolete design that's been almost universally replaced by the supercross-bred upside-down fork (also known as a USD or inverted fork). While nearly all late-model production motocross bikes feature USDs, several aftermarket manufacturers are now offering conventional-style forks, which, for the most part, disappeared from production bikes in the late

'80s. It's interesting to consider how we've come seemingly full circle in such a relatively short time, how upside-down forks came to dominate the market and the reasons conventional forks appear to be making a comeback. The questions are obvious: First, how do these two designs differ mechanically? And more importantly, is one really better than the other? Let's look first at the USD design.

Most current motocross bikes

Upside-down forks eliminate many of the weaknesses of conventional designs, but they are still not perfect. Suppliers such as Showa, which manufactures the fork shown here for Suzuki's RM motocross models, are constantly searching for the magical combination of stiffness, rigidity and supple ride control.



come with inverted forks, and the conversion from conventional to inverted began in 1980 when Steve Simons, a designer from Northern California, first developed the modern USD design. Brad Lackey used a version of Simons' fork in winning the 1982 500cc World

Championship, and when Lackey took the title the scene was set for the battle of conventional vs. unconventional. Soon after, Simons licensed his patented USD fork design to White Power, a shock-absorber manufacturer in the Netherlands. White Power quickly became the world's largest maker of this particular design, and KTM became the first manufacturer to offer an inverted fork—a White Power model—on a production motocross bike.

The Japanese manufacturers, meanwhile, were hesitant to produce inverted forks, though they were indeed looking for suspension design options of their own. In the early '80s Honda experimented with unconventional fork designs such as the Ribi Link, a monstrously complicated Rube Goldberg-type device that offered characteristics such as constant wheelbase and predetermined antidive. Honda actually built a Ribi prototype: an all-aluminum, CNC-machined version with a linkage-operated shock just behind the front number plate. Not surprisingly, this design never really progressed past the experimental stage.

With the advent of the AMA's production rule in America—by now the world's most influential market—the factories were faced with the task of building production motocross machines capable of being converted for use in top-level supercross competition. And, where production-only is the rule in racing, production design changes are influenced primarily by three factors:

Factory Race Teams: Race teams are always looking for a technical or psychological advantage over the competition. When winning is everything, technology is forced to evolve, and when winning must be done on production-based equipment, the production bike must evolve.

Market Forces: The motocross-bike trade, being consumer-driven, is under constant pressure from the public to have new visual or technical advancements. Such new developments often come not from the OEMs, but from aftermarket manufacturers (which, in the case of forks, was aptly demonstrated by both Simons' and White Power's USD designs).

The Media: In the U.S., this means magazines, especially motocross magazines, which, by virtue of their trend-conscious audience, continually require something trick and new to demonstrate their influence, increase circulation and garner additional advertising revenue. Hot new aftermarket items (such as USDs in the mid-'80s and today's new-



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DESIGN



The 1994 Suzuki RM lineup features the latest in upside-down fork technology. This Showa-designed unit features a unique sealed oil cartridge to help eliminate cavitation and improve damping consistency.

The media's influence on what type of fork we would eventually buy also began in the 1980s when White Brothers Inc., the exclusive U.S. distributors of White Power USDs, was remarkably successful in selling the benefits of this design to the American motocross press. As a result, White Power forks began to show up on nearly every motocross bike tested in American motocross magazines. The Japanese manufacturers were seeing conventional forks removed from test bikes and replaced with the White Power inverted design, usually just after the initial stock-bike tests were completed. After initial testing, magazines traditionally modify machinery to enhance personal comfort and performance. In this case the manufacturers weren't just seeing the usual modifications, such as bars, grips, pipes and porting; they were seeing entire subassemblies removed and replaced with a completely different design. This was unsettling, to say the least—sort of like seeing the engine removed and replaced by a Husqvarna or a Maico. On top of that, some magazine editors were trumpeting USDs as the wave of the future, even though the first-generation inverted forks were actually far from perfect for anyone but top professionals competing in supercross environments—and not nearly as good as the conventional designs of the day. In doing so the American magazines, in their own convincing way, sold the public on the idea that conventional forks were antiques that should be relegated to the dustbin of motocross history along with dual shocks and air-cooled engines.

Ultimately, the popular acceptance of USDs wasn't due directly to an inherently superior design, but to an orchestrated series of events which created an atmosphere that fostered this suspension evolution. But is one design really better than the other? Yes and no, and to better understand this paradox it helps to look at the basic mechanical differences between the two designs.

First, what do they have in common? Both USDs and conventional utilize two legs secured in a common head set (the triple clamps). They both employ a type of viscous-fluid damping device to control compression and rebound. They both use springs to suspend the machine's weight and to store and release energy from impacts. They both utilize leading-axle designs (a feature used to allow an increase in the tube-stanchion overlap without increasing the overall length of the fork leg). There are a lot of similarities, but perhaps the reason the inverted design is evolutionary rather than revolutionary is that both types utilize a hard-chromed-steel load-bearing surface (the fork leg) surrounded by an

wave conventional forks) are a sure-fire hit with many motocross-magazine buyers. Heavy exposure of such items—whether or not they truly merit such attention—can not only improve a magazine's sales, but can actually influence the development of future production machinery.

The beginning of the end for conventional forks, from the Japanese manufacturers' viewpoint, came in late 1984 when Rick Johnson, then riding for Team Yamaha in the Motocross and Trophee des Nations, privately tested an Ohlins version of the inverted fork at the company's factory in Sweden. At the beginning of the 1986 season, when Rick made the switch to Team Honda, he continued experimenting with USDs, this time a Japanese Showa design. After Johnson's electrifying clash with David Bailey at that year's Anaheim supercross (which Bailey won), Rick switched back to conventional, though he continued working with Showa technicians to refine their version of the upside-down design. By the end of the '86 season Rick was the new champ—and fully committed to the inverted design. Psychologically (if not technologically), RJ had an advantage over his competition, and the writing was on the wall. The last holdout among the Japanese manufacturers was Kawasaki, and although they would eventually offer the finest conventional fork ever to go into production—the 1989 46mm Kayaba—from a marketing and competitive standpoint Kawasaki, too, would eventually have to switch. After all, how can you sell a conventional design to a demanding, curious and faddish public when they see that the championship-winning bike is fitted with an upside-down fork? (Interestingly, the 1985 supercross champion, Kawasaki's Jeff Ward, was the last rider to win the title using a conventional fork.)

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DESIGN

Marzocchi's Magnum 45 is one example of the new wave of conventional-style forks.

Many grand-prix riders prefer the attributes of this type of fork for high-speed outdoor work.

aluminum casing that carries bushings and seals (the stanchion).

While early conventional forks were far from perfect, it was the requirements of the long-travel suspension era that made their deficiencies obvious. One of the more apparent deficiencies was excessive slider overhang—that is, the amount of fork slider that extends below the axle. This excessive overhang often caught on track obstacles such as severely rutted turns or the deeply rutted ramps of double and triple jumps. Conventional forks also lacked adequate tube-to-stanchion engagement (the area where the fork leg overlaps the stanchion) to prevent severe flex in long-travel applications. And, by virtue of their design, conventional forks are unable to utilize the tube area between the upper and lower triple clamps to increase engagement and reduce flex. (On the other hand, the USD design is able to utilize this area between the clamps because the leg, which travels inside the stanchion and never encounters the triple clamp, is free to move its entire length. This allows for substantially increased overlap, which in turn increases stiffness and reduces flex.)

To the conventional fork's credit, the design does have some positive attributes which are undeniable—and actually desired by some riders. This is where the subjective-objective line becomes blurred. Suspension performance is always a matter of personal preference, and what one rider considers a liability another may consider an asset. That's why grand-prix competitors like two-time world champion Donny Schmit, Alessandro Puzar, Trampas Parker (also a two-time world champ), Mike Healey, Kurt Nicoll and others continue racing with conventional forks. These riders consider the conventional fork plusher and more forgiving in outdoor situations where speeds are typically higher and riders are inclined to let the bike work underneath them.

As for upside-down forks, they have successfully overcome many of the liabilities of the conventional design. Eliminate excessive fork-leg overhang? Done! Increase tube-to-stanchion engagement? Done! Reduce flex and increase steering response by providing a stiffer triple clamp-stanchion assembly? Done! But these new forks didn't materialize without their own set of shortcomings. One that has yet to be overcome is the USD's "pencil-through-a-bent-straw" dilemma. Here's the scenario: The same forces that act upon conventional forks are also at work on USDs, and these forces manifest themselves as distortion. When a fork impacts an obstacle it deflects or bows, and when a USD fork bows, the stanchion becomes slightly deformed or "kinked" just below the lower triple clamp (which is the point of highest leverage). Now, imagine trying to slide a pencil (the fork tube) through a bent straw (the kinked stanchion), and you begin to see the problem. This distortion of the stanchion makes it difficult for the upper bushing to pass through the affected area. The result is binding—a big problem in the earliest production USD designs. In order to eliminate this binding the manufacturers have been forced to run much looser internal-component tolerances. This eases the binding while creating another problem: excessive slop in the fork assembly. And this, believe it or not, increases flex—one of the main problems the USD design was employed to eliminate!

While USD forks offer some significant benefits, the design is still far from perfect. Thanks to numerous versions from Simons, White Power, Ohlins, Showa, Kayaba, MDS, Marzocchi and others, they are in a state of constant evolution. And even though the inverted design is being examined, and even criticized, more than ever, it is unlikely that any one group or individual will dictate the fork designs we'll see on the motocross bikes of the future; that will be left to the combined force generated by manufacturers, marketing departments, racers, the media and the buying public.

In the end, trendy fads or the opinions of a chosen few won't dictate what you see on the showroom floor unless the all-important demands of the buying public force such change. Ultimately, it seems we get only what we're willing to pay for—even if it's not what we really need.

—Bruce Hollingshead

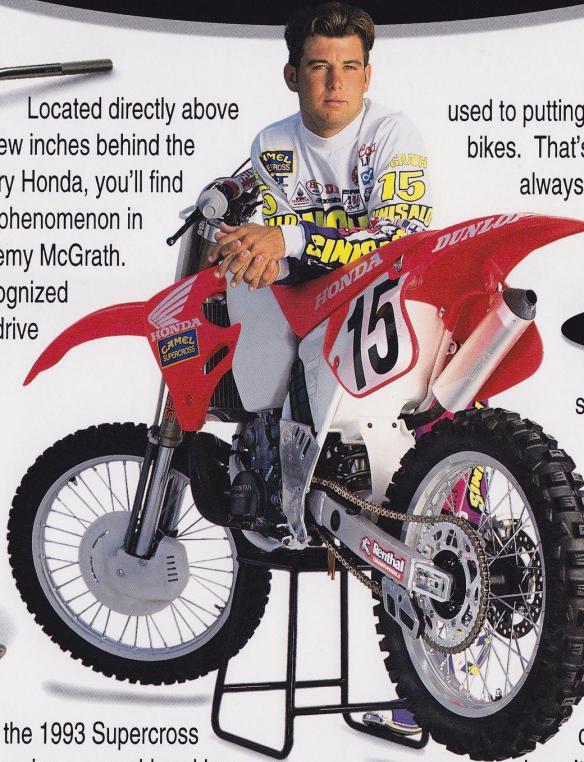


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■ Jacky Martens (11) at work aboard the big four-stroke Husky. The Belgian's 1993 World Championship marked the first by a thumper pilot since 1965.

THE FOUR-STROKES FIGHT BACK

By Jack Burnicle

Graham Kent is usually a raucously cheerful chap, brash and full of bonhomie. But at the Swiss Open Motocross Grand Prix the 28-year-old Englishman was ashen-faced and anxious, a pasty shadow of his customary self. The pressure was on for the factory Husqvarna mechanic. Three races stood between him and his second world motocross crown.

Two years ago Kent sat stunned alongside the finish line at Suzuki, in Japan, after his rider, Mike Healey, had missed out on the 250cc title by four miserly points. This time, history demanded the right result. Husqvarna, having built its first

motorcycle in 1903, was celebrating its 90th birthday. Now it was within reach of its 14th world motocross championship—and the first by a four-stroke motorcycle since Jeff Smith and BSA won in 1965. A tough, muscular Midlander, Smith achieved his world-championship successes in 1964 and '65 on a 440cc BSA that was developed directly from the factory 250 on which he and Arthur Lampkin contested lightweight GPs in the early '60s.

Subsequently, the engine was enlarged to a full 498cc, but Smith was never able to repeat his success against the onslaught of two-stroke CZs and Husqvarnas. The writing had actually

Photos: Toshi Sato



■ Much of the four-stroke Husqvarna's technology is directed toward reducing weight. Producing adequate power is not a problem.

been glimpsed on the wall at Hawkstone Park, legendary home of the British 500cc Motocross Grand Prix, when Smith, en route to his 1965 crown, was beaten in the second moto by archrival Rolf Tibblin on a 360cc CZ.

Now resident in North America and executive director of the American Historic Racing Motorcycle Association, Smith was reunited earlier this year, at the British Bike Bonanza in England, with his famous 1968 factory BSA, which had languished for four years in the National Motorcycle Museum. Still fit, Jeff led a British team in a "Trans-Atlantic

Challenge" and thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

"It's terrifying to ride now," admitted the rugged 58-year-old. "A startling machine—it seems much stronger than I remember it. Part of that, of course, is growing old. I used to think I was master of a 500! It actually feels so good and works so well that a very fit young man could do well on it nowadays. It just needs a lot more suspension. It's not quite as forgiving as modern machines. You can get into tanksplatters, but as long as you have some throttle left you can get out of them."

Even by modern standards, the bike is very light. "She weighs 205 pounds with a gallon of gas," observed Jeff affectionately. "We used as much magnesium, titanium and aluminum as we could make and poked holes in wherever we could. We thought light weight was the answer, but we were barking up the wrong tree. It worked for a time, but suspension

was the real solution."

Husqvarna won its last world motocross title courtesy of Hakan Carlqvist in 1979. It never came close again until, joining the four-stroke renaissance, it signed up Belgian Jacky Martens, a talented test rider, to develop its thumper in 1992. Martens, already 28 years old, had just missed out on the 500cc world title after choking in the penultimate grand prix on his KTM. His father, Leo, a Dutchman, was three times a European Amateur Champion. Jacky had ridden KTM's since commencing his GP career in 1983, because Belgian importer and former grand-prix star Jaak van Velthoven lived right next to the Martens' family home in Lommel.

In 1984 Jacky won his first grand prix—the West German round—and finished fifth in the 250cc world championship won for KTM by Heinz Kiniagdner. This landed him a factory contract—for the 1985 125cc GPs! A race win and eighth in the final standings proved the versatility of this six-foot-three-inch beampole, but knee injuries thwarted his subsequent return to the 250cc GPs. Finally, in 1987, Jacky hit the 500cc GPs, to which he has remained devoted ever since. "In 250, the engine is never fast enough," grim the modest but quietly confident Martens. "For me, 500 is the nicest racing class."

Eleventh in the 500cc series in 1992 on the Husky, Martens constantly, quietly complained that it was impossible to find a young mechanic who knew anything about four-strokes. Graham Kent did! After winning the 1988 250cc World Motocross Championship with Yamaha and John van den Berk, Kent spent a year developing a brand-new 250cc KTM with Broc Glover, their efforts crowned with victory at the final GP in Belgium. But following the frustration of missing out with Healey in 1991, Kent sought fresh pastures in Formula 3000 car racing. He learned a lot—especially about composite carbon-fiber stuff—but he didn't enjoy himself. Essentially a loner, he couldn't handle being just one of a crew. Graham let it be known that he was back on the motocross market. First Jacky Martens called, then Husqvarna.

Kent used to bunk off school to work in his dad's motorcycle shop from the age of 12. At 14 he was working on four-cylinder four-stroke superbikes. Then he attended Honda V-twin training schools. Two-strokes he learned about later!

At their autumn congress in 1992 the FIM had decided to allow four-strokes up to 650cc capacity to contest the 500cc



■ Martens won convincingly at Namur. It was there he realized that the world championship was truly within reach.

GPs. This was sensational news for Husqvarna. Martens and Kent teamed up and set to work testing every day of the week until the first grand prix at Hawkstone Park in April. The fact that Jacky is an outstanding mechanic and test rider makes Graham's life a lot easier. "With Healey I had to be running around the track like a schoolboy's dad, because he couldn't tell me anything. Jacky's well clued up. He knows too much! We basically did the bike in three months."

And did it so well that, surprisingly, little had changed by the time they clinched the title at that dramatic final round in Switzerland. Engine capacity increased from 575 to 633cc for Austria's second round, and at the same time a lighter swingarm with a new profile—production for 1994—was fitted. They also messed about with the Ohlins preload adjustment on starts. Graham laughs. "It's a hydraulic thing which deactivates when you step on the rear brake pedal, but Jacky gets nervous on the start line and stamps on all the pedals, so I attached it to a thumb lever under the handlebar and he forgot to switch it off altogether in Holland. It spat the hydraulic hose off over the first big tabletop!"

They also worked with Ducati (Husqvarna—originally a Swedish company—was bought by the Italian Cagiva group in



■ Jeff Smith with his famous 1968 titanium BSA. Until Martens' win, Smith's 1965 title was the last by a four-stroke in world motocross competition.

■ The Husky's 633cc four-stroke power plant hides such exotica as titanium valves and a hand-fabricated clutch. Special works ignition and fuel-injection systems are in the prototype stages.



1986) on electronic ignition, and there's been a fuel-injection engine at the factory for 18 months, but they won't be used in anger until they're right. The 633cc engine has to be detuned on the exhaust pipe, even for Jacky Martens. Titanium valves, nuts and bolts, shock spring and brake discs weigh in the Husky, complete with tire mousse, at 106 kilograms. That's lighter than a production Honda but, at 2.205 pounds to the kilogram, a startling amount heavier than Jeff Smith's BSA!

The most crucial change to the Husky came, however, before the Belgian grand prix at Namur. Martens had been plagued by poor starts due to clutch problems, and even his GP victories in Finland and Italy—the first by a four-stroke in 24 years—came from midpack charges. The engine simply had too much power, and the clutch plates had too much grip. Graham decided to approach his car-racing cronies, who produced some special, softer compound plates. Kent used three of these plates with three standard ones, and the solution proved perfect. Martens won convincingly at Namur, with good starts, and he knew the world championship could be his. One month later, and a week after his historic victory in Switzerland, Jacky Martens received a fax from Honda Japan asking if he would help them develop a new four-stroke motocross bike. Who said the thumpers were dead? **IM**



Karl Ockert
Howard Beach, New York

■ A freelance photographer since 1979, Karl regularly shoots with the best in the sport while attending major motocross, supercross and road-racing events across the U.S. His photos appear in many American motorcycling publications, including Cycle News, Dirt Bike, Motocross Action and Road Racer Illustrated. When he's not out photographing, Karl can be found hanging out, drinking coffee and shooting pool at Eddie's Kosher Delicatessen on East 47th Street in New York City.

Naoyuki Shibata
Tokyo, Japan



■ Since retiring from professional baseball in 1984, "Shiba" has been photographing major American motocross and supercross events for many of the world's top publications. Some of his pictures looked pretty good, so we printed them. Shibata also covers many international motorsports events for Japan's Riding Sport and Dirt Cool magazines, and his outstanding photography often appears in Dirt Bike and Dirt Rider magazines in the United States.

Carol Hodge
Hollywood, California

■ A graduate of the prestigious Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California, Carol is this really short person who has scratched out a meager living as a professional photographer since birth. In addition to her editorial work, she photographs advertising campaigns and product catalogs for clients such as American Honda, Rental and AXO Sport America. She lives in a big white house on the side of this really steep hill in Hollywood, right down the street from Madonna's new place. Really.



Toshimitsu Sato
Kayoko Sato
Sapporo, Japan

■ Since 1983 this husband-and-wife team has attended major motocross, road race, trials and enduro events around the world, shuttling from Japan to the U.S. and Europe several times each year. Their race reports and photos are featured regularly in Japan's Riding Sport, Trial Journal, Road Rider and Japan KART magazines. Kayoko and Tosh live in Sapporo, Japan. Between them they smoke six packs a day.

INSIDE MOTOCROSS



Pierre Catellier
Springfield, Massachusetts

■ Pierre attends many AMA Nationals and supercross events (primarily those on the East Coast), and his photographs have appeared in the top U.S. motocross and off-road magazines. Pierre presently edits and publishes MX Racing magazine, which reports on New England motocross racing events, as well as coaching many NESC youth-class motocross riders.

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Davey Coombs
Morgantown, West Virginia

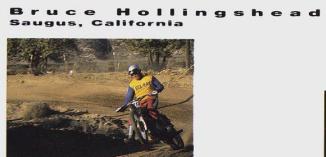


■ Inside Motocross' editor-at-large, Coombs regularly reports on the American and world motocross scenes for several publications, including Dirt Rider and Cycle News as well as Britain's Dirt Bike Rider magazine. Along with Pete and Greg Fox, he is the cohost of "Radio Fox," a nationally syndicated weekly motocross call-in talk show based in Bozeman, Montana (population 21,645). In addition, Coombs publishes and edits Racer, a regional motocross/off-road newspaper, the latest edition of which features the prestigious Motocross Flagman Hall of Fame nomination ballot. Only the greats are enshrined in the hallowed halls of the MFHF, and remember—your vote counts!



Jack Burnicle
New Brighton, Merseyside, England

■ Most readers will remember Burnicle as the man who finished second to American Frank Shorter in the 1972 Olympic Marathon in Munich. Now a full-time taxi driver, Jack supplements his regular income by selling his stunning race-action photos to British and American motocross and off-road magazines. Jack was the personal driver for Team USA at this year's Motocross des Nations in Austria and got all the gossip from the Yanks while shuttling them between the track and their hotel. His report begins on page 52.



Bruce Hollingshead
Saugus, California

■ A former motocross racer and longtime motocross and automotive racing enthusiast, Bruce's interest in the technical aspects of motocross machinery comes in part from his work as a contract aero space welder and fabricator for companies such as Rockwell International (where he was employed in the production of components for the space shuttle's main engines) and NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California. He also learned a lot about how things work (or don't work) from fixing his CZ.



Paul Buckley
Woburn, Massachusetts

■ Paul's action photography seems to be just about everywhere these days. His photos have appeared in all the major U.S. motocycling publications as well as many motorcycle manufacturers' advertisements. Sometimes he actually manages to get paid for them, too (the check's in the mail). In addition to his freelance work, Buckley is the publisher and editor of the world-famous Moto Sports magazine, which covers off-road motocycling in the New England area. Hey, Paul, send a new photo of yourself. Please.



■ "If a year goes by and I'm ready to give 110 percent racing a motorcycle, I'll be back. The feeling that I can win will always be there. I know I can still win; I just don't enjoy the job right now. I've always said that when it wasn't fun or I wasn't competitive, that's when I'd quit. Well, it isn't fun anymore."

—Damon Bradshaw
Mooresville, NC
October 4, 1993

Karl Ockert

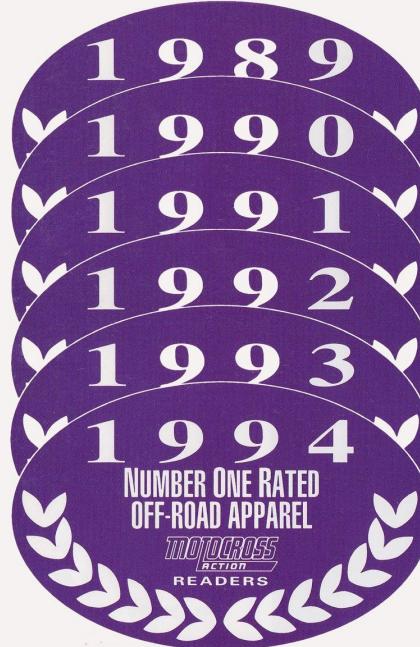
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the same poll, AXO jerseys, AXO pants, AXO gloves, AXO chest protectors and AXO kidney belts also ranked significantly higher than the competition.

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READER SURVEY RESULTS		
CATEGORY: BOOTS		
YEAR	BRAND	RATED
1994	AXO	#1
1993	AXO	#1
1992	AXO	#1
1991	AXO	#1
1990	AXO	#1
1989	AXO	#1

*Source: 1994 Hi-Torque media guide. Compiled in June, 1993.

the sixth consecutive year in a row.

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