

# MOTOCROSS & TROPHÉE DES NATIONS WARS OF THE





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# WORLD

Belgium dominates but guess who's coming

By Harry van Hemmen



## Motocross des Nations — Cognac, France

□ The American motocross team of Gary Semics, Steve Stackable, Tony DiStefano and Kent Howerton covered themselves in glory after finishing second to the all-conquering Belgians at the Motocross des Nations at Cognac, near Bordeaux, in the south of France. The American youngsters surprised the European crowd with their skill and determination. The fast Americans finished 16 points adrift of the winners and only two points above Britain in third spot. Tony DiStefano clinched a solid third in the first moto.

After building up a commanding lead in the first moto, which was won by Sweden's Hakan Andersson, the Belgian team of Roger DeCoster, Andre Malherbe, Jaak van Velthoven and Jean Paul Mingels coasted in the second race, which was won by British champion Graham Noyce. For the first time, the FIM used a new qualifying system on Saturday, which meant that the fastest times of the three fastest riders on each team were added together, with only seven teams, including the title-holders, Belgium, allowed on the start line on Sunday. The pace was fast and furious in timed practice. After the dust had settled, Holland, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Switzerland did not qualify and raced in a special non-qualifiers' race between the main events.

The sun was scorching down on the 25,000 French spectators assembled around the stony and dusty switchback Cognac track as the riders came to the line to start the first race. However, there was total confusion as the gate dropped when an official walked across the track in front of the roaring pack. DeCoster, Noyce and Weil only just avoided the terrified man, who scuttled to hide behind a pile of straw bales. Belgian ace Mingels (Montesa) led the first five laps but came under increasing pressure from Sweden's Hakan Andersson, also Montesa-mounted. Hakan took the lead



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on lap eight, with Noyce third after a poor start, Malherbe fourth and van Velthoven fifth. The American team looked very dangerous with DiStefano — riding the injured Gerrit Wolsink's bike — seventh, Steve Stackable — riding a new Maico — eighth and Kent Howerton 15th.

West Germany did not fare so well, with Adolf Weil pulling in to replace a broken brake lever after a tumble and Herbert Schmitz pulling in to replace yet another broken wheel. The Swedish riders were also having front wheel problems on the tortuous course, and Torleif Hansen (Kawasaki) and Hakan Carlqvist (Husqvarna) lost valuable time changing wheels.

Disaster struck Britain on lap 13 when Noyce, who had passed Mingels on the previous lap and was catching Andersson in the lead, became a

victim of the track and had to replace a broken front wheel on his Maico.

Noyce's teammate Neil Hudson had lost a lap changing a collapsed front wheel in the beginning of the race. Andersson completed the race an easy winner, with Malherbe second, DiStefano third, surprising Italian Franco Picco (Villa) fourth after a splendid start, van Velthoven fifth, Stackable sixth despite a tumble toward the end, Howerton tenth and Semics 17th.

At the start of the second moto Belgium led the U.S.A. by a mere five points. To the delight of the French crowd, Daniel Pean (Maico) led the second race with Noyce snapping at his heels. West German Fritz Kobele crashed at the start and was taken to the hospital with a cut face. The Belgians were not so well placed as in

the first race, but were under no threat from the Americans, who were not finding the going so easy. Howerton pulled in and out with gearbox trouble on his Husky and DiStefano was best American in sixth spot.

However, the race belonged to Britain, and Noyce silenced the patriotic French crowd by snatching the lead from Pean on the seventh lap. He also received excellent support from Hudson (Maico) and John Banks (CCM), who were battling through the field in eighth and tenth positions. Former World Champion DeCoster was struggling down in 16th place after another bad start, but he began to pick up places behind teammates van Velthoven and Malherbe to ensure the overall Belgian victory. Noyce continued to dominate at the front and took the flag despite a dreadful front



Jean Paul Mingels grabs the holeshot in Cognac, France. Tall Texan Steve Stackable (12) knows a hot line when he sees it and follows in Mingels' roost.

wheel landing two laps from the finish. Jean-Jacques Bruno overcame French teammate Pean to capture second place at the finish, with first-race winner Andersson following suit to finish third. Malherbe was fifth, with Hudson and Banks finishing sixth and seventh to ensure Britain of a second-race victory. However, with DeCoster 11th and van Velthoven one place behind, Belgium was assured of their overall seventh success over the Americans, who just held a two-point advantage over Britain with Stackable tenth, DiStefano 13th after a crash and Semics 16th.

World Champion Heikki Mikkola missed the Motocross des Nations, while the Russians and the Czechs were off racing in Cuba. Dutchman Peter Herlings (Maico) led the non-qualifiers' race from the first lap to



**Kent Howerton discusses problems with his mechanic, Eric Crippa, while his wife Jill keeps an eye peeled for the Eiffel Tower.**



**The all-conquering Belgian team. They left no doubts about who was best. The team is DeCoster, Malherbe, Mingels and van Velthoven.**



**The almost all-conquering United States motocross team — Gary Semics, Kent Howerton, Steve Stackable and Tony DiStefano.**



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Roger DeCoster leads a parade down a cobby-looking French hill.

the finish. His team won with Frans Sigmans fourth, Math Hensen tenth and Toon Karsmakers (Pierre's brother) 18th after a puncture.

## OFFICIAL RESULTS:

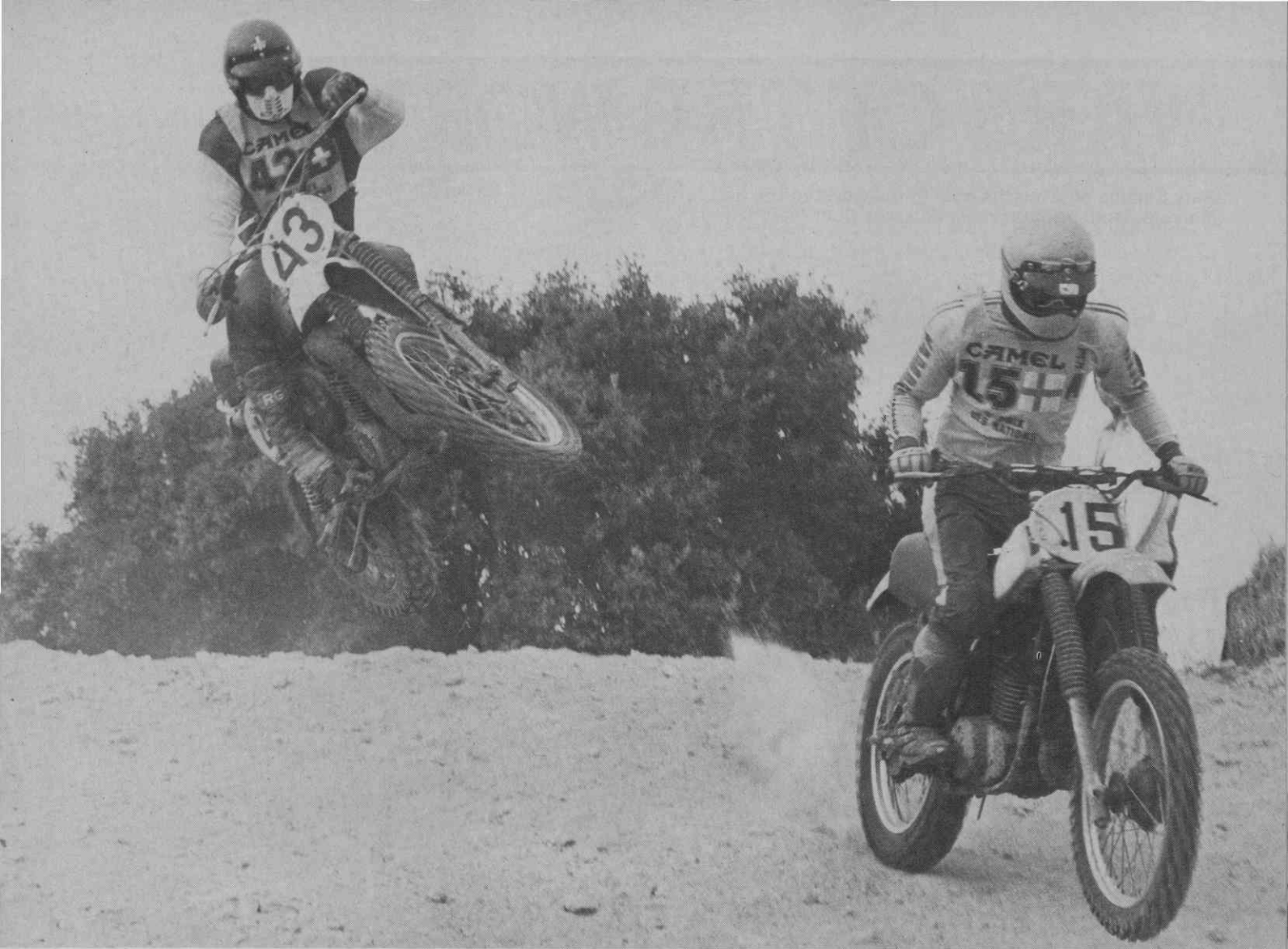
1. Belgium	42
2. U.S.A.	58
3. Great Britain	60
4. Sweden	73
5. France	74
6. Italy	76
7. West Germany	101

## Trophee des Nations — Markelo, Holland

Former World Champion Roger DeCoster led his Belgian team to their ninth successive 250cc Trophee des Nations victory at Markelo, Holland. DeCoster dominated both motos, helping teammates Jaak van Velthoven, Harry Everts and Andre Malherbe to a 17-point victory over Sweden.

After their brilliant showing the previous week in the Motocross des Nations, the American team did not fare so well and only finished fourth, 16 points adrift of Britain in third spot. American Gary Semics led the first moto, but was soon overhauled by Dutch 125 star Gerard Rond. Steve Stackable held on to third with Andre Malherbe fourth. Everts and Finland's Tapi Pikkarainen led DeCoster, who was already menacing in seventh place. One lap later Roger was up into fourth place, while Stackable started to slip away from the leading group. British champion Graham Noyce was making tremendous progress through the field after a bad start. Rond held on to his lead, much to the delight of the home crowd, but behind him DeCoster was beginning to look very dangerous. On lap five Roger passed teammate Malherbe to capture the runner-up position and set off after Rond. Semics retired with a broken piston ring and Stackable, unused to riding in the thick Dutch sand, started to fade.

Suddenly on lap seven the whole pattern changed when Rond crashed when he got crossed up on a downhill jump and DeCoster swooped into the lead. The young Dutchman struggled to his feet and held on to second place, just in front of Malherbe, Everts, Noyce and van Velthoven. One lap later



**The American influence definitely touched the Swiss, as Kalberer shows the crowd a trick that Husky rider Kent Howerton taught him.**

Malherbe dropped from the fray with a broken gearbox on his KTM (Russian Ovchinnikov's GP bike), and DeCoster started to pull out a lead at the front.

Three laps later Rond ruined both his own and Holland's chances of success when he crashed his Yamaha in the sand again. He remounted but was too far down the field to make any impression on the results. DeCoster took the checkered flag, with teammate Everts second and Noyce third. Van Velthoven was fourth, with Sweden's Hakan Carlqvist fifth. Dutchman Peter Herlings, 20th after the first lap, just held off Torleif Hansen, although Peter nearly shut off too early. Another Swede, Hakan Andersson, finished eighth, while Dieffenbach and Neil Hudson completed the leaderboard.

Steve Stackable dropped from seventh to 16th position when he crashed on lap ten. Howerton started in eighth position but finished only 21st.



**Gerrit Wolsink lent Tony D. his own bike for the Trophee des Nations.**



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Gary Semics smoked the best in the world to the first turn in Markelo, Holland. Stackable (20) was right there with him.



Roger DeCoster swept both motos in Holland. It brought a little sunshine to a rainy year.



Injured Gerrit Wolsink had to sit out the races, while Gerard Rond took over as highest-placed Dutchman.



Steve Stackable was born in Europe, but he didn't feel at home away from Austin, Texas.



Gary Semics dreams of a Big Mac and an order of fries, or, as they are known in France, pomme frites.

Tony DiStefano worked himself up from 18th place after the first lap to 11th place.

DeCoster led the second moto from start to finish, but there was plenty of drama and excitement behind him. Rond made an excellent start again and held on to second place despite the constant attacks by Andersson. Noyce made a better start and was sixth at the end of the first lap behind Everts and Mayes. Noyce soon passed Everts and set off after Andersson, but Britain's chances slumped when Mayes' chain broke and he had to push back to the pits. Rond hit the dirt once again when his Yamaha crashed with a rear wheel puncture.

Noyce then slipped past Andersson to race into second place, although the flying Swede held gamely on to the British champion. Young Dutchman Peter Herlings was making sensational progress through the field, and started to challenge Andersson after being well down in 16th position at the end of the first lap. Then, with the runner-up spot in his grasp, Noyce was relegated to the back of the field when he caught a whoopdie wrong and crashed through the ropes, breaking down marker posts in the process. He lost almost a lap getting himself organized and straightening a bent gear pedal.

However, any thoughts Andersson had of an easy ride in second place were dispelled when Herlings raced into the runner-up position (17 seconds behind DeCoster), where he stayed until the checkered flag.

Hakan Andersson held on to third place in front of van Velthoven and Hansen. Everts assured Belgium of overall victory, despite a twisted leg, by finishing sixth, while Carlqvist did a similar job for runners-up Sweden by finishing seventh. Hudson was eighth in front of top American Tony DiStefano and Andre Malherbe. Tony D. worked himself up after a crash in the first corner to 25th after one lap. Howerton was then 22nd, Stackable 20th and Semics 15th. With Wolsink's knee still in plaster, Tony DiStefano raced his works Suzuki.

#### OFFICIAL RESULTS:

1. Belgium	18
2. Sweden	35
3. Great Britain	59
4. U.S.A.	75
5. Holland	76
6. Denmark	12
7. France	16
8. Italy	32
9. Norway	37
10. Ireland	51
11. Switzerland	20



Britain's Graham Noyce forces Swede Hakan Carlqvist to do a little high stepping during the second moto of the Trophee des Nations.