

Introduction

Motorcycle sport has fascinated me since my first interest in motorcycles and I have always admired Yamaha for their firm commitment to motorcycle competition on both the dirt and racetrack. Clearly a motorcycle company is in business to sell motorcycles and racing is the medium that Yamaha have chosen to achieve this. But a feeling I had while writing *Yamaha Two-Stroke Twins* has been reinforced while writing this book. Yamaha's success on the racetrack, and hence in streetbike sales, is primarily due to the efforts made by Yamaha's international and not domestic organization. The company's attitude towards enthusiastic owners of their products is at best lukewarm and at worst one of total disinterest.

My own encounter with this incomprehensible attitude of Yamaha in Japan occurred when I requested copies of a number of photos from the company archive, that I had previously been told were available. After numerous unanswered requests on my behalf by the European Yamaha HQ, I was informed that they were 'too busy' to locate and send the dozen or so photos I wanted. In contrast, Allyn Fleming of *Cycle* magazine spent what must have been a considerable amount of time locating and clearing the copyright of some 66 photos from the magazine's archive. Fran Kuhn of *Dirtbike* magazine responded immediately to a panic call for some shots of Broc Glover and Ricky Johnson, which were in my hands within ten days. It would

be easy to attribute this attitude to a difference in culture, but I don't think this is the cause. I believe it is a poor PR department that presents an unattractive side of the Yamaha corporate personality which should be improved.

Fortunately, most of the people I encountered during the writing of this book were more positive in their reaction and helped as best they could. Vital background information was provided by riders who were involved in the Yamaha European motocross team during the 1970s. Jaak van Velthoven, Gerard Rond and, in particular, Torsten Hallman were able to recall the details of their time with Yamaha, and Sten Lundin talked of his involvement with the Hallman and Lundin four-stroke 500 cc motocross bike. Heikki Mikkola is thanked for his willingness to write the Foreword and the speed with which he got the job done.

Several people at the Dutch and European Yamaha HQ in Uithoorn helped in the difficult task of tracking machine development. David O'Neill was able to loan me some Yamaha parts books and service manuals and kindly supplied data for the machine specifications. Cor Soetens allowed me to rummage through his spare parts warehouse and measure up as many YZ cylinders as I could find, as well as helping with my endless search for parts books. Anneke Meijerink did her best to help me with my fruitless communication with Yamaha Japan and provided some photos of the more recent Yamaha

models. In the US, Yamaha International racing team manager Kenny Clarke threw some light on the early days of Yamaha's involvement with the National motocross series. Bob Pritchard kindly supplied me with copies of the excellent 'wrench report' series of newsletters, detailing performance modifications for Yamaha competition models since 1979.

Early on in the project, it became clear to me that the only photographs that were accessible for many of the models that I was describing were to be found in the archives of US magazines. These would be so crucial to the completeness of the book, that it would have been meaningless to produce it without them. It was therefore with some trepidation that I made my first contact with Allyn Fleming of *Cycle*, with my enormous list of the photographs I wanted to borrow. I needn't have worried; she couldn't have been more helpful. The quality of the photographs was especially high and the copyright owners, Dave Hawkins, Robin Riggs, Steve Broadday and Scott Darough, are thanked for their permission to use them. In the UK, Brian Woolley of two-stroke tuning fame and now faced with the massive task of bringing some order to the 80-year-old *Motor Cycle Weekly* files, helped me locate a few unexpected gems.

In the Netherlands, Derk Evers once again generously gave me *carte blanche* to ransack the rich archives of *Motor* magazine and to come and go as I pleased. A drawing is worth a thousand words and Piet Cornet exercised his considerable artistic talents by drawing the five stages in the Yamaha monoshock rear suspension design evolution, thereby illustrating the indescribable. Finally, Jan Heese responded to my request for a jacket shot of a Yamaha in

action, with a flood of high-quality slides, that made the choice extremely difficult.

The accuracy of the story of the development of Yamaha's dirtbikes is directly related to the quality and quantity of the research material that would act as my source. Many people deserve credit for the enviable collection I was able to accumulate. Meko Books of Haarlem kindly donated a number of service manuals for the early T series. Thanks go to Neil Collins of South Australia, who supplied me with a number of parts manuals, which I had been unable to obtain, out of his comprehensive archive of Yamaha documentation. My friend Fedor van de Pol helped me sort through his ten-year-old collection of US magazines, which resulted in some 300 plus Yamaha dirtbike-related articles. In fact it was these articles more than anything that provided the most useful information and consequently a special thank you goes to the US motorcycle journalists of the past 15 years who have so conscientiously tested and critically reviewed Yamaha off-road models, recorded their results so articulately and still managed to have a good time.

Peace and quiet are essential ingredients to the successful completion of any book and with a year-old baby daughter in the house, they are often both in short supply. Marian was instrumental in keeping her happy and contented despite Cara's involuntary donation of the attention she rightly felt she should be getting from me. Without their sacrifice, I'd still be writing this book now.

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