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UPDATING OLD BLUE**

**ADB'S FIRST EVER
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VOL. 4 NO. 4

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COVER: Is that a gleam in his beady little eye, or is it a reflection of that Gold Medal he is wearing? Phil Lovett and one of his two ISDT medals: who wouldn't be proud?

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personality

PHIL LOVETT

In 1978, Phil Lovett decided that he wanted to go to Sweden and ride the ISDT. Most of the people who knew him (except, perhaps, his fellow club members) thought that he would more than likely drop out on the third or fourth day.

"Not serious enough," they said.

Phil not only proved them all wrong, but he earned Australia's first Gold medal in the ISDT. He went again in 1979, to West Germany, again rode a 125cc Husqvarna, again came 10th in class, and again won a Gold medal. Back home, his performances are equally as impressive, and his current riding is proving both the value of international competition to him, and also his own determination to get better at the sport he already so good at.

In fact, he has become so good he has formed a new level in the sport of reliability trials, because he has been able to combine his skill on a motorcycle with the ability to read the terrain, the ability to mentally prepare himself for any level of competition, and the ability to do well on either motocross or cross country special tests.

One thing of note is that he literally exploded onto the scene in 1977, at the Hunter 500 two day held near Cessnock. Riding a 125cc Yamaha IT/YZ combination borrowed from a friend, Phil amazed everyone by finishing second outright to Robert Haskins, in what was his first enduro. Since that time, unless he has had mechanical problems, he has either won or been in the first three or four riders outright, every time he has competed.

Phil's riding style isn't the only thing which merits atten-

tion. Along the way he has earned the nickname "Revhead" and has also managed to become accepted as the town clown (some people prefer to think of him as the village idiot, at times). His sense of humour is always one of the first things you notice about him, because rather than keep in the background, he has the attitude that he is there to have a good time and just because he happens to have made it to the top it doesn't mean he has to change that.

He is always the first to yell out to other people at the top of his voice, he never hesitates to sling a good natured jibe at another rider, he consistently flirts and expects kisses off the nearest female whenever trophies are being handed out, and he never seems to be serious about anything.

But he is. His riding comes first. When he's off the bike, that's when he has fun. When he's on it, he is all business. It sounds corny, but there is definitely a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde personality about him, and anyone who has ridden with him in a serious event will testify to it.

His efforts at the Six Day are proof: two consecutive Golds can't be ignored, and he can honestly lay claim to being the 10th best 125cc enduro rider in the world, although he never does.

Beneath all the shyness, he is really quite pleased with the results he has had so far. In Cessnock he is quite a hero, having been voted as Sportsman Of The Year in 1979 in the Hunter Valley. He has appeared countless times in local newspapers, Newcastle TV, and country radio shows, and while I was in Cessnock to do some of the taping for this interview it became quite clear how well he has been accepted there: driving around in his car, it seemed like all he

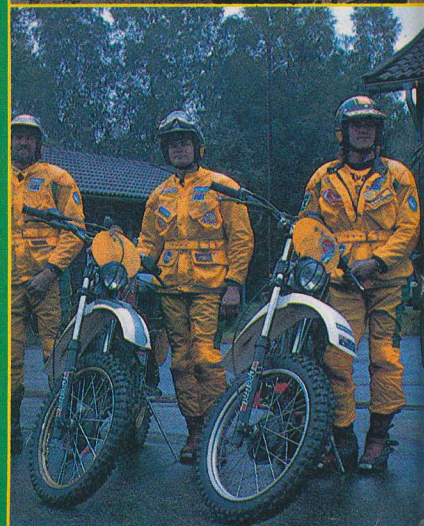
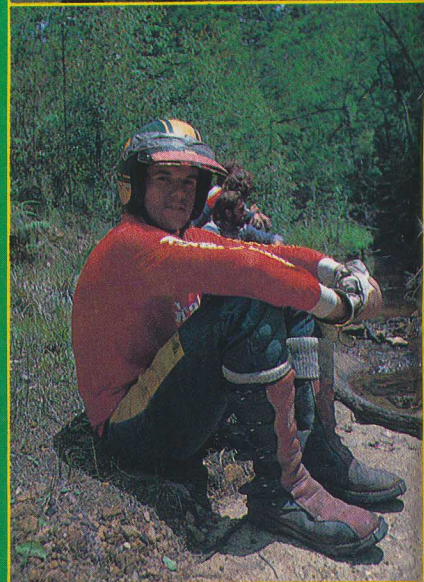
did was wave casually to all the locals, although he wouldn't let me take a photograph of him doing it. There wasn't anyone who didn't know him.

He isn't just another rider, though, as so many top talents are: he is actively involved in the Reliability Trials Subcommittee, having been elected to it, and he does a lot of work for his own club, Cessnock MCC. At present, he is working on the 1980 Four Day, trying to make it into an international calibre meeting. To that end, he is prepared to not ride in the event both to do the work that's necessary and to let some of the other workers in the club have a ride in it.

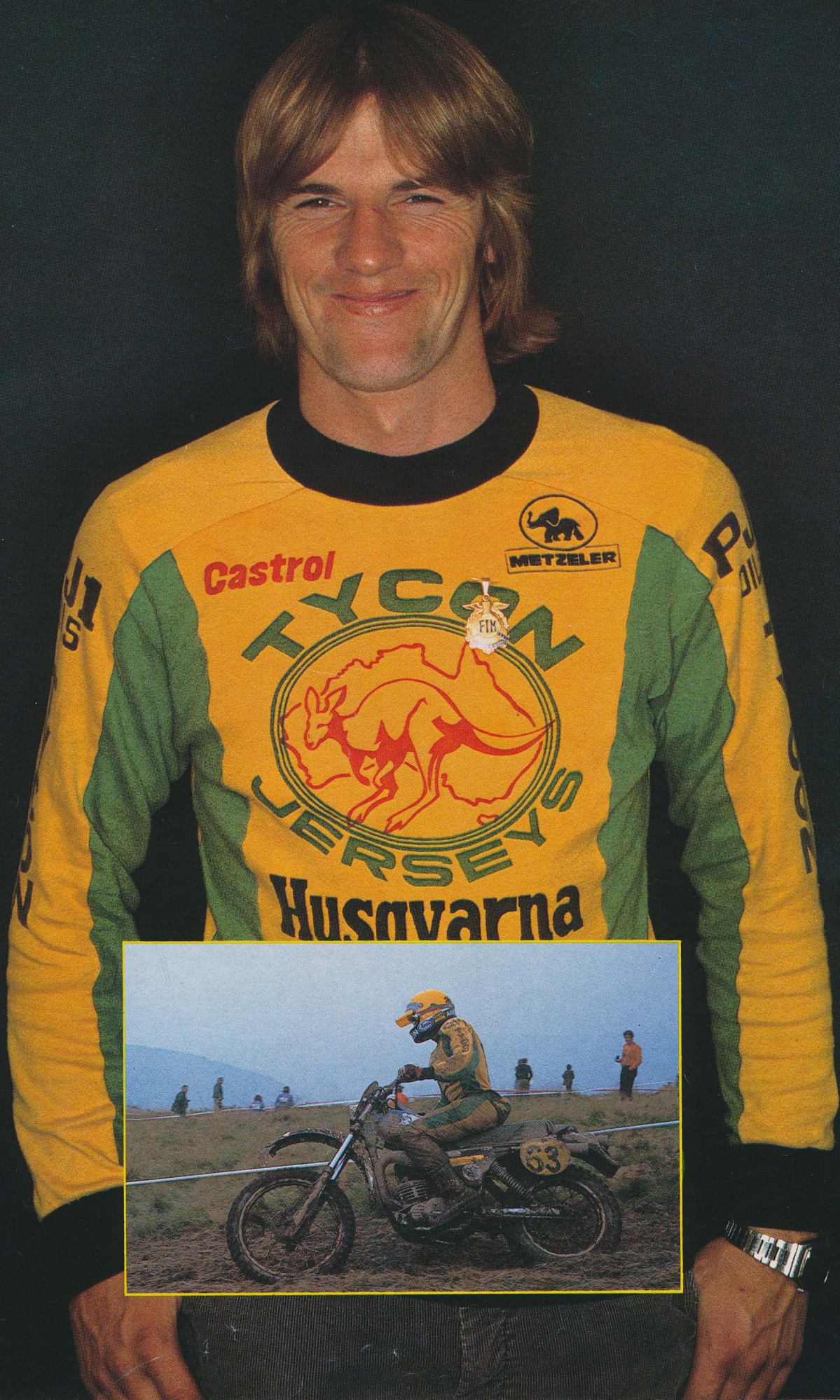
Personally, I think that would be a waste: he is undoubtedly one of the best cross-country riders Australia has ever had, and his style always adds extra colour to any event. Still, it's good to see that he's willing to put something back into the sport he enjoys so much.

He first began riding 10 years ago, riding for fun for two years before giving it away for five more years ("I kept wrecking bikes..."). He restarted at 17, riding a Honda MT125 with friends, graduating to 400cc Husqvarna, then switching to a series of three 125cc Yamahas, followed by a YZ250C, a YZ250D, a 125cc Husqvarna, a 250cc Husqvarna and now his current 390cc Auto Husqvarna, "The best of the lot...". He rode for two years in open motocross before rising to B Grade, upon which he switched to reliability trials to ride the Hunter 500 back in 1977. Since that time, he has concentrated on it, and it was the start of his success story.

His current sponsors are John Harris Imports, which helps with the Husqvarna, Tycon Jerseys, PJI Lubricants, and Metzeler Australia.



by Geoff Eldridge





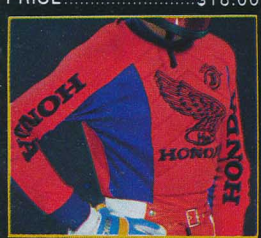
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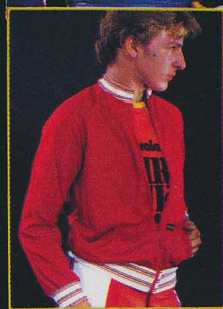


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PHIL LOVETT

ADB: Why have you concentrated on enduros since that very first one you rode in 1977?

LOVETT: There were more enduros to ride than there were motocross meetings, and it was usually easier to go to an enduro.

And ... I was after trophies ...

I always wanted to get one of those sash things at a motocross meeting, and I've never got one yet!

ADB: Were you ever really good at motocross, in your opinion?

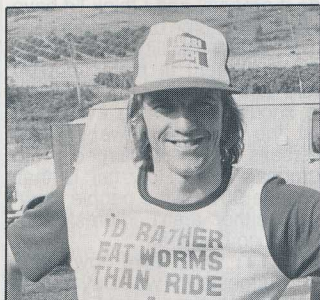
LOVETT: No ... I was a reasonable C Grader, seconds and thirds, never many firsts. I got to B Grade on points from the seconds and thirds. I had an accident and broke my collarbone and the day I came out of hospital, there was a letter saying I'd gone to B Grade! I've only ridden motocross two or three times since that day.

ADB: Do you miss it?

LOVETT: I'd like to do it now, because enduros are getting a bit boring. You get sick of riding the same thing all the time: I was getting sick of riding motocross before I took up enduros.

ADB: What about sporting trials, short-circuit, road racing?

LOVETT: I'd like to do short-circuit, but you've got to have a manual transmission for that. I've had two rides at it, one with the 125 and one with the Automatic. The Auto's no good for sliding. So till I get a manual 390 I'll have to give it a miss.



ADB: Don't you ever have an overall goal you want to achieve in racing, then? I'd have thought you would, after seeing you do so well in two successive Six Day events.

LOVETT: I just don't like doing the same thing over and over all the time. But next year I want to ride motocross and have a go at Mister Motocross. Maybe get fitter, get to know how to ride motocross better for the Six Day in France this year.

ADB: People have said that, that you are very oriented to ISDT competition and that everything you are doing in your riding here is to get you ready for over there.

LOVETT: No. What I did last year didn't prepare me for West Germany. But this time I really want to do something about it, because I went to Germany and after the first day I was exhausted. I didn't know how I was going to finish another five days.

ADB: Why was that? You don't get exhausted here.

LOVETT: It's not as hard here as what it was in Germany last year. It was a lot harder and longer than Sweden in 1978. More bogholes, trenches you had to ride in where your footpegs were dragging on the ground, just constantly having to ride faster than we did in Sweden.

See, the times were harder ...

ADB: From what I remember, you were going pretty hard in Swede — you were always earlier into the controls than anyone else ...

LOVETT: Yeah, but then I had two minutes' spell every time I got to a checkpoint. This year we were riding eight to nine hours a day. There wouldn't have been any more than 20 kilometres all up of tar for each day, out of about 340 kilometres. There was a lot of tight stuff like we have in the Cessnock area, a lot of rainforests like up at Dungog, forestry trails like we have in the Watagan Mountains near Wyong, a bit of tight, zig-zag stuff like near Abernathy.

It had everything, and a lot of it.

I also had the wrong front tyre on: I had a 3.25 instead of a 3.00, and the bike kept wanting to climb up out of the trenches. I changed that on the end of the 3rd day, and it was better.

ADB: I heard you impressed them with tyre changes.

LOVETT: Barry Stowe was quicker. I did one every day, which I think you have to do to go over there.

ADB: That relates to our attitude and goals, I'd think. Did you change tyres here in Australia at every event because you simply felt like changing tyres, is it because you get them for free, or is it because the things you do are all in training for something, in this case the Six Day?

LOVETT: No, it's because I've found that when you use a new tyre each day, you get a lot better traction and the bike handles a lot better on the start of the second day than what it was at the end of the first day. I'd like to be able to have a fresh tyre every day I ride. The front tyre I swap every two or three two-day events: I don't really worry about it, because it's the back one you can notice!

With a sponsorship that way, I'd like someone to be able to supply me with tyres so I didn't have to use old ones all the time. Tyres are pretty important to me.

But to be competitive, you need good tyres.

ADB: When you say that, you must be thinking more of yourself than Joe Blow?

LOVETT: Yeah. Most blokes could go six two-days and it would be OK. They'd probably think they wouldn't notice it, but if they were to change one every day they'd find they'd go a lot better in Special Tests where grass was used.

ADB: Did you spend a lot of time perfecting your fast tyre changes?

LOVETT: No. I practised last year before I went to the Six Day, I practised one quick tyre change before

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PHIL LOVETT

we had that tyre changing competition at the Four Day in 1979. I did two tyre changes this year in Sweden before I went down to Germany. I didn't do anything to the bike except put bushes in the brake hub to let it float a bit when you pull the wheel out. Otherwise it's a bit stiff. That's all.

ADB: So far, you are the only rider to have earned two consecutive Gold medals in the ISDT, and you were the first Australian to get one in current ISDT conditions. Yet you have said you are only an average C Grade motocrosser in Australia. Why do you think you've been able to do so well in international competition where a lot of emphasis is on your ability as a motocrosser?

LOVETT: Well, in motocross I'm always a bit scared. I don't try to go for the middle on the start line, or the best position. I just try to go for the outside so I don't get crowded in the first corner. I don't like having blokes run over the top of me! And I don't like being pushed or elbowed or getting handlebars in the stomach.

In enduros you just go out and you do the best you can with no worries about anyone running into you. If you come off you haven't got anyone to blame but yourself, and there aren't other riders there to run over the top of you.

At a motocross meeting, before a race I'm shaking, when I finish I'm shaking. I get nervy, real nervy.

ADB: But reliability trials aren't only motocross special tests. You also seem to be able to go through the bush quickly.

LOVETT: You've got to have good eyes and good reflexes. With motocrossers, if they go fast it's because they've practised the circuit till they know it off by heart. If, say, Gunter was to go out in the bush he'd probably hit the first tree he came to!

I've never seen him ride in the bush or anything, but most of them are like that ...

ADB: How do you rate yourself against the people you've ridden with at the Six Day?

LOVETT: I found with some of the Americans — I haven't met a lot of people over there, really — they thought you were only someone from Down Under and that you didn't know your head from your backside. But after riding with one of them, who had thought I was a bit of a driphead — which a lot of people probably think. Greg Davis it was, everyone calls him a miniature Dick Burleson, he acts so much like him — he changed his opinion! The last two sections every day were pretty tight and I used to put everything into them to make sure I cleaned them: most of our blokes scraped in on their grace. My best was a minute early. On this railway line we had to do, a lot of real deep whoopdies developed from using it each day, and I used to ride along it tapped out in 5th gear, jumping from the top of one to the top of the next. I was just leaving the American for

BELOW: During the taping session, Phil decided he wanted a ride up and down Cessnock MCC's hillclimb run,

where he demonstrated his latest feat — a peace-sign while doing a wheelie. He'd wanted to be able to do it for a long time. It's passe, Phil...



ABOVE: Phil is TYCON's staunchest supporter. Behind him here is George Telfer, co-manager of TYCON with his wife Joan. Phil silk-screens all his own T-shirts and jerseys, which is why they have more writing on them than anyone else's.

dead, and he said so.

My bike went better than his, too. I got a bit of barrel work done by one of the mechanics at the factory. I'd met him the year before and he thought after that we were reasonable types of blokes. We got to know the factory blokes last time and they looked after us pretty good: this time was even better.

The Americans have accepted me, too. It was all because of Sweden, though, because up till then they'd thought the 125 Husky wasn't any god, and I got a Gold on one.

Last year, too, at the factory I had people pushing me around the workshop, revving my bike with my mouth, and the factory guys at first thought I was a bit silly ...

ADB: Is that where you got the nickname "Revhead"?

LOVETT: No, I think you gave me that! I don't mind it anyhow; everyone's got to have a bit of a nickname. I am a bit of a revhead though, I suppose. I tend to use the throttle.

ADB: Why did you stick to the 125 for so long and why did you go back to one in the West German Six Day, after riding the 250 here?

LOVETT: After riding Sweden, in all the sand where big whoopdies developed, I thought that being up the front of the field was better than being back at number 300, and getting the holes bad. I also liked the 125 in Sweden.

This year I didn't know how to ride it properly and I think I'd have felt more at home on a bigger bike.

ADB: With reliability trials at present, we seem to have adopted more and more the attitude that we should be running events so that the riders who want to go overseas are acquainted with European rules. How fair is that, because 95% of the people at an event either aren't interested or able to go overseas?

LOVETT: Well, we're now using the Suggested Two Day Rules which were based on European rules. Something similar to the ISDT rules, that's what I think we've got to run. People who won't ever go over would always like to, I think, and if they rode to those rules they'd know what it was like to do it.

ADB: But the emphasis may be too far the European way, possibly. People here have said that we are starting to have too many motocross special tests, rather than cross-country tests. What are your thoughts on the subject?

LOVETT: I'd rather the motocross special tests, because I like doing them. I don't like having to race through the bush, trying to go quick and not knowing where I'm going. It's dangerous, because you've got to go as hard as you can but you don't know where to.

If they put you over the special test beforehand you can get some idea of what's there, but mostly they put you into a test you've never ridden before. Motocross tests are better that way — at least

you have some idea of what's there.

Blokes who say they don't like motocross tests are mainly people who can't go well in them, where they can go pretty fast cross-country. They don't care about the general safety when they want cross-country tests.

I don't mind cross-country tests, they're all right, it's just that I'd like to be able to ride on them first.

ADB: What about the way they're tightened up the scoring for you to earn medals? Gold used to be 15% of the winner of the class, now it's 10%; Silver used to be 15% to 60%, now it's 10% to 40%. And in compensation you can now change a lot more things on the bike.

LOVETT: The only things marked now are the frame, the crankcases, the wheel hubs and the exhaust pipe. If you have a seizure you can

here is a good thing, I think. It stops a lot of cheating, because you can't afford the time to stop and change anything between controls. It has made it easier — you don't have to concentrate so much on the reliability side of it, but if you do have trouble the times are so tight you're going to lose time anyway.

There was nowhere near as much cheating in West Germany as there was in Sweden.

ADB: Did going to West Germany make you feel you had to do as well as you did in Sweden the previous year?

LOVETT: No, I just went over to do the best I could. I don't think you should go over to get a Gold. On the other hand, you don't just go over to finish. You've got to go to do your best.

You get a pace to ride at, which

(laughs).

ADB: You have to admit you seem to be trying to give people the idea that you don't take any of it seriously ... We watched you there in Sweden pulling wheelies through that puddle of water trying to impress those girls!

LOVETT: If you'd seen me at the factory, too, when they were pushing me around, that's why everyone thinks I'm a bit of a drip-head ...

ADB: You must do that on purpose! You're a bloody stirrer. You go up to people with a grin ...

LOVETT: There was no girls in Sweden, anyhow! I wasn't doing it in front of girls. I didn't mean to be doing it in front of girls, I was just having a bit of a muck about. You've got to amuse yourself. If you're just riding serious all the time it gets too boring, and you

ADB: Some people seem to have a knack of landing a lot of sponsorship. Aren't you the same? After all, with two ISDT Golds you've certainly got something to trade on.

LOVETT: Some people have got the gift of the gab. I haven't. When I go to talk to someone I end up paying them money instead of them helping me.

Tycon jerseys has been one of my best sponsors, over the last few years. I always wear their gear, because I like it best.

ADB: Do you think there is any possibility that we'll ever see an international event here in Australia?

LOVETT: Yeah, I'm trying to work something at the moment through Cessnock Club to make the next Four-Day an International event. I was talking to Dick Bureson and Larry Roessler from the States, and

“
You don't go to the Six Day to get a Gold. On the other hand, you don't just go over to finish. You've got to go to do your best.
”



“
You've got to amuse yourself. If you're just riding serious all the time you start making mistakes, so I just try to pop a few wheelies, go as high as I can over a jump ...
”

pull the barrel off and fix it. You can use any tools, too. You can use tools supplied in replenishment areas.

In West Germany, it was the first time I'd ridden an event run that way, and I think it was a lot better. It was possible to lose time from only falling off once.

ADB: It seems that it would probably suit our riders better, since they are usually fast on the trails and slow on the special tests.

LOVETT: Yeah, most of our guys were cleaning it OK, even our riders who aren't all that well known. I think it's from the trail times being so tight over here.

Our going to the same system

will let you keep on the bike and keep the bike together till the finish. Teams don't mean anything to me: if I go anywhere, I go to do my best, and if the rest of the team finishes, well that's good. You can't let yourself get let down by someone else.

If I DNF, that's stiff. Too bad. Can't do anything about it.

ADB: Which of your Gold medals means the most to you?

LOVETT: Oh, I think the Sweden one, because it meant getting one of the first Golds for Australia. To think that I could do it, because there were people who thought that I couldn't finish six days. I didn't think I could either ...

start making mistakes, so I just try to pop a few wheelies, go as high as I can over a jump and throw a crossup, something like that.

I might be a bit of a showboat, I don't know. It gives your sponsor more value; gets your picture in glossy magazines like yours. If people see a Husky go higher than anything else over a jump and still land safe, people will think it must be a good bike. And if they see a Metzeler sticker, or a PJI sticker, or a Tycon sticker on it, it might stay in their mind. It's just good for the sponsor — normally they don't get anything out of it, much.

Normally I don't get anything out of it either! (laughter).

they said if it didn't cost them anything they'd come out. We've got to get bikes for them, which I think John Harris would do, but we'd probably only try to get Bureson, we could get a car from one of the local dealers I think, accommodation would be no trouble. It's just getting the money for the airfare: Hungry Creek was interested, in return for him to run some sort of enduro school.

From what I know of Bureson, he's the sort of bloke who will talk to you, and he's the best in America.

I won't be riding, though. There's too much to do, and too much

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PHIL LOVETT

publicity about local riders in local events, not that it ever worried me. People have written stories about me — Kel Wearne for instance — riding local events and how I knew where the course was. Denis Lock was another bloke, too, who used to get heaps.

You can see what happened last year at the Four-Day: I was a local and I still missed an arrow and got lost! Fair enough, I know most of the terrain, but I don't go out and set the course.

ADB: Knowing the area is still better than not knowing it, though, but that still isn't cheating. You have to ride the course. You have to keep your bike going.

LOVETT: Yeah, but you take most people who ride enduros these days, unless it's a new club running an event, everyone has ridden the territory anyhow, especially the better riders because they go to everything. Courses aren't that much different

burn them out in half an hour in mud. That's wrong, because I rode mine for five hours in mud up in Lismore and it was as good at the end as at the beginning. And I was two laps ahead of everyone else.

They're the best thing I've ridden since sliced bread!

ADB: Do you think that the six-hour Pony Express type events are going to be the way things will go?

LOVETT: Oh, well, at present it is because clubs can't get enough people to run reliability trials. But other people are coming up — Denman and Macksville Clubs, for example. They always run good events, they're friendly and they have the locals on side.

ADB: What do you see yourself as: what sort of image do you think you project to other people?

LOVETT: I don't think I've got one. What do you mean by image, anyhow?

ADB: What do you think an image is?

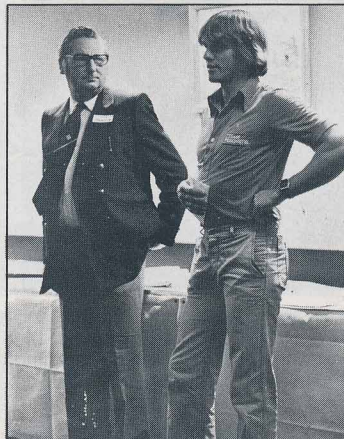
LOVETT: I don't know. I'm a

BELOW: Cheekiness is one of his strong points, but only when he's not on the bike. This shot is taken after Day 2 Sweden, as he gets an air filter ready for the following morning's work break.

BELOW CENTRE: Another strong point is giving speeches at presentations. This one is at the ISDT presentation in Albury.



“
At a motocross meeting, before a race I'm shaking, when I finish I'm shaking. I get nervy, real nervy.
”



“
I'd rather motocross special tests, because I like doing them . . . but mostly, with cross-country special tests they put you into a test you've never ridden before. It's dangerous.
”

from year to year, because there are only a limited number of trails which can be used.

I could remember a lot of the Orange Qantastic in 1979 from riding in it in 1978, for example. I can always remember the dangerous spots.

ADB: Surely most people would like to see how you, in particular, would go against Burlinson? If you don't set the course, why not ride?

LOVETT: I've put my name down for organising, so we'll wait and see.

ADB: You've now decided to ride the 390cc Auto Husqvarna in the French ISDT. Do you think it can take it?

LOVETT: Yeah. I should have ridden it in West Germany. They'll last six days, if you put them into gear right.

Mine's getting older now, it'd be about 10 months old. We've never changed the engaging gear: we changed first gear around a bit and my brother came up with a new idea. Instead of the clutches being pulled outwards by the springs and causing wear, I've now got the springs around the back so they keep the clutch straight in the drum.

Down in Melbourne they reckon the autos won't last, that you can

dumb bastard! I 'spose they probably see me as a bit of a driphead.

ADB: Can you really blame them? You can't sit there and tell me with a straight face that you do anything to discourage them thinking it.

LOVETT: No, well, I stir a lot of people up. Someone's gonna smack me in the mouth one of these days!

Some people take it as me being serious, when the only thing I'm serious about is when I get on a motocross track and I've got to do something desperate to win it, or something like that.

When I'm stirring someone, I'm not serious. I still joke when I'm riding, but not as much. I yell out at blokes I know, give them a hard time. I like getting a few laughs!

I don't want people to think that because I do all right in events that I won't talk to them, because I'm not like that at all. I'm not a snob. A lot of blokes talk to you and you don't know their name, and I feel embarrassed, sometimes it's hard to talk to them. Like Alan Pond: I didn't know his name at first but I called him Cowboy because he wears a big cowboy hat.

He calls me Revhead, so possibly he doesn't know my name either!



ABOVE: He only knows one speed through the bush — flat out. He says that if he goes any slower, he messes things

up. His mechanical knowledge is not great, but he manages to keep the bikes together to the finish.

Continued on page 78

PHIL LOVETT

Continued from page 28

LOVETT: A lot of blokes complain about events where you do a course more than once to make up the distance. But you take the Forest 300 last year; that wasn't too bad at all.

What wrecks it for us aren't the events as much as the riders who turn up afterwards with their mates, and try to ride the area where the event has been. They don't get permission, they leave gates open and generally give us all a bad name.

ADD: Do you think events here are now too serious?

LOVETT: No, I think it might be getting a little more lax, now that the rules have changed. When people are marking out events, they should be a little more realistic with their times. They shouldn't be too easy, but they shouldn't be too hard. I don't think you can work it out on paper. My idea would be for me to go out and time a course by riding just steady. Have all the times the same pace.

ADD: Wouldn't that still be a lot faster than most people?

LOVETT: You've got to have someone ride the course, someone who can ride, and have him go through steady. But you can't make the times so loose that everyone cleans the day, all the bad riders. The good riders pass them, then catch up at a check and they have to be passed again.

When I say realistic times, I don't mean that if I ride flat out I come in only two minutes early. If I ride flat out, maybe I should come in six to eight minutes early.

That gives a lot of leeway to a lot of blokes.

Even though you have to encourage more people to ride, you can't make a trial for the average Joe Blow who can't ride out of sight on a dark night.

ADD: What about the two different concepts we seem to be getting in NSW now: pony express events versus reliability trials? Do you think there is much of a future for reliability trials, considering the hassles with noise, forestry and other landowners? Or do you think the easier-to-run private-property multi-lap events are our future?

LOVETT: I hope there's a future for reliability trials, because I like to ride them. I think it has dropped off these last four years to what it

used to be. Maybe we've been trying to run them too seriously, I don't know. But I think rules are rules. If you don't have, say scrutineering, someone could have a crash because he didn't pick up a problem.

ADD: Surely, though, it would be more realistic to make each control a scrutineering point, because although most bikes start out perfectly safe, during the event things happen and they start to fall apart.

LOVETT: Oh, I still think you should have machine examination before an event.

ADD: But if you are acting as a machine examiner what is there to say you know all the possible weak points of the various bikes you are going to look at? If you have never ridden a Bultaco, how can you be qualified to examine one except to do it superficially?

LOVETT: But the main things can be checked: spokes, handlebar plugs, countershaft sprocket covers.

What about noise, too? That's important. I think the ACU should look into getting noise meters, not just having a few. And the meters should only be used to check whether or not a bike is within the limits, rather than as a trick to catch riders. They should be used at the start of each day.

At the Six Day, if they thought your bike was too noisy, they just slapped a test on you. They didn't measure everyone. It was at the end of the day, but that's better, because you got overnight to do something about it.

ADD: Let's get back to reliability trial versus pony express.

LOVETT: Well, bikes are getting harder to get registered, so maybe it might come back to riding trial bikes with blinkers and things, which is silly. Most of us only use our bikes for the events anyhow; they are roadworthy, probably more than some of the bikes getting around anyhow.

But, really, I don't know what's going to happen.

ADD: Well, Maico, Husqvarna, KTM, Bombardier, Suzuki, Yamaha, Kawasaki, Montesa: all these manufacturers have been able to pass compliance testing, so it looks as though registration won't be the problem.

