

australasian **DIRT BIKE**

ISSUE 84 1986 \$2.95 (\$3.75NZ)*

YAMAHA IT200

GOOD ENOUGH
TO PLAY IT
AGAIN,
SAM!



SUZUKI RM125

TRYING HARD TO REGAIN THEIR CROWN

HUSKY 125 ENDURO

PRO HANDLING, BUT IS IT PRO POWER?

WE RIDE A PARIS-DAKAR HONDA!

RALLY OF THE INCAS

JETSETTING IN THE ANDES MOUNTAINS

TEAM PINK

HOW THEY BECAME
SPONSORED

BUMBAGS

WHAT THE EXPERTS CARRY

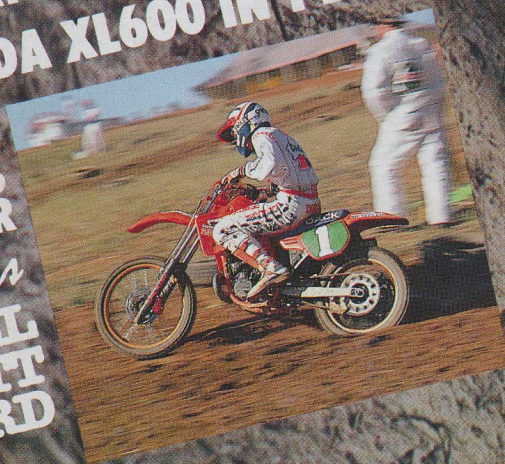
WE RACE A HONDA XL600 IN PERU!

Competition

MISTER MOTOCROSS
BRISBANE 12 HOUR

ADB's experts

GALL
LOVETT
BALLARD



INSIDE!



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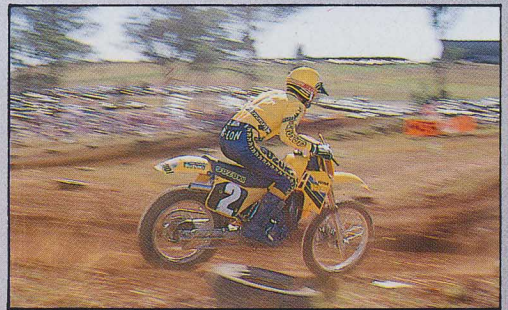
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ABOVE

Something for the Indiana Jones in us all - the Incas Rally in Peru. A real motorcycle adventure and more than just a race. ADB was there. Of course.

COVER

Yamaha's Old Blue - the IT200 - proves that old dogs never die. We shouldn't really call it an old dog, because even though it's not much changed for '86 it's still a damn fine enduro mount.

INSET

Craig Dack scorched 'em at the Mister Motocross opener, filling Jeff Leisk's shoes admirably.

* Recommended and maximum retail price only. The only reason we're not jacking the price up this month is because we were cool enough to invest in German Deutschmarks and we made a killing (sic) when America bombed Libya and they floated the US dollar.



RALLY OF THE INCAS

Indiana Jones rides again!

You've been riding down a dirt road for the past three hours. In that time you haven't seen a blade of grass, a single tree or any signs of human life. Then you come upon a secret control and three hundred Peruvians materialise out of the desert to get right up close and have a look at these strange road warriors with their great big fuel tanks.

They love it. So do you.

by Geoff Eldridge
BACKGROUND

The decision has been made: there has to be a better rally than the Paris-Dakar.

Why? Because riding the Dakar event is nothing more than a road race put on to entertain the French. Everything is done in French. The French riders get all the consideration. And real rally riders have become jack of a race that sends them across endless boring deserts at high speeds aboard bikes that resemble fuel tankers.

In Italy, Franco Acerbis, owner of the giant plastics manufacturing company which supplies tanks, sidecovers and guards to most European motorcycles, decided

BELOW RIGHT
Wally Brissoni (Holy) cuts a line through a typical Peruvian crowd. They loved it.

BELOW
The famous Inca town Macchu Picchu, when they tried to escape the Spaniards.

he was the man to do it. Since his Acerbis Promotions partner Danille (known as Down hill to the boys) had business dealings in Peru and knew something of the place it wasn't a hard creative jump to make to choose the South American country.

Peru offered vast desert areas, but different to those in Africa thanks to the 5,000 metre high Andes Mountains; at the other extreme there were virtual jungles. In between was tundra, rolling hills, deserted beach stretches and everywhere the unbelievable hospitality of the Peruvian people.

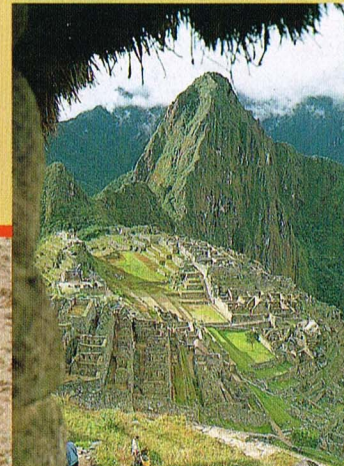
Have they come up with something better than Dakar? As far as I'm concerned they have.

Despite language problems and the fact that non-Italian people were a definite minority, the organisation went out of their way to help us whenever possible. Sure, things were pretty disorganised but the Italians have a flair for organisation that resembles chaos.

The Peruvian government is 100% behind the Incas Rally and in every town the Police lined the

Continued over

COMPETITOR	COUNTRY	BIKE	TOTAL
1. Balestrieri Andrea	I	HONDA 600	27h27.33
2. Signorelli Angelo	I	KTM 300	27h58.02
3. Brissoni Gualtiero	I	BETA 250	30h13.46
4. Ceconi Maurizio	I	KTM 300	30h43.41
5. Pibernart Jose.M.	E	HUSQVARNA 250	32h08.58
6. Pflifner J.Carlos	PE	YAMAHA 600	32h29.00
7. Belmonte Vergara R.	PE	YAMAHA 600	33h58.51
8. Rifai O.	PE	HONDA 500	44h50.17
9. Pollini Davide	I	PUCH 600	44h53.41
10. Dall Ava Orlando	I	KTM 300	46h40.42
11. Sweeney Mike	GB	ARMSTRONG 500	46h47.27
12. Rossi Luca	I	YAMAHA 600	47h57.51
13. Valentini Massimo	I	BETA 250	49h34.50
14. Ayulo Polo E.	PE	YAMAHA 600	52h35.33
15. Paradi Alberto	PE	HONDA 600	53h36.57
16. Ulissi Ino	I	BETA 125	55h04.30
17. Volpari Paolo	I	HUSQVARNA 125	66h24.25
DISQUALIFIED			
Geoff Eldridge	AUS	KTM 300	45h15.33
Toshi Nishiyama	JAP	KTM 600	59h09.29



Peru has more desert like this than you can imagine. Great riding country.

RALLY OF THE INCAS

streets to make sure we were free to roar through ignoring the speed limit. Traffic was stopped on every road we used. And all along the course the people were having a great time supporting us.

If you're after an adventure that's related to racing dirt bikes but doesn't have an overwhelming race tension (like the ISDE, for example) then Peru's the place. Sure, it's expensive (look at \$2,200 in airfare plus freight of your bike and gear, in addition to entry fee, which was \$1,700 US in '86, but it included all accommodation at the finest hotels in Peru), but it's the best thing in the world.

And I figure someone like Phil Lovett could win this thing.

Either him or Indiana Jones.

RIDING AT 4,400 METRES Day 2. Mid afternoon.

The Japanese rider Toshi grows sick of my bumbling around on the zig-zag ascent and finally blasts past on his KTM600 four-stroke. In between trying to feather the throttle to just the right position so the engine of my poor KTM300 would keep running and avoiding the precipice edge that plunged away into the valley floor way below, I felt envious of Toshi.

My KTM was jetted way too rich even at sea level and here at 3,800 metres it was running like a dog. Needle and mainjets were hopeless and the needle wasn't a lot better. I cursed those sunnavabitch Italians who pretended not to understand what I wanted when I'd asked for a spare mainjet a few sizes smaller and struggled on, barely keeping up with Toshi in his bright dayglo orange helmet.

It was getting colder. I was starting to worry about all those stories I'd been told about altitude sickness and the way it affected not only your balance but took away your sense of distances.

There was a feeling of pressure around the eyes but told myself it was only a tight goggle strap.

Then we hit the clouds. If I didn't feel all alone before, I sure felt like I was now. I could barely see five metres and was trickling along in 2nd and 3rd gears, keeping an eye out in case I ran into Toshi.

It started to rain very lightly, making it quieter, colder and weirder. Where was sunny Australia now? Still no sign of the dayglo helmet. That precipice was still there to one side, but we seemed to be reaching some sort of levelling out in the landscape.

Then out of the mist appeared a few hazy buildings pretty much when my route map told me they should. There were clumps of dark skinned Peruvian indians standing there solemnly watching, not saying a word to each other. Why the hell they wanted to live in a godforsaken place like this I couldn't even imagine.

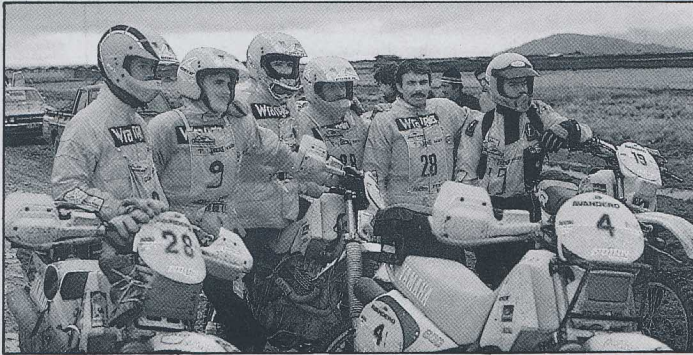
The route map said to go left at a big long building and then into a bit of an open plaza where we were supposed to turn right between the buildings and head out into the mountains again. Toshi was there doing circles when I rode up, and he stopped me in a mass of confusion. It was clear he couldn't see which way to go, but it looked right

to me. I rode over to the gap between the buildings but saw that there were no other tyre tracks there. That couldn't be right because we were about eighth and ninth bikes through. We doodled around trying to figure out what to do and suddenly all the Peruvians came running up waving and pointing in the other direction.

We looked at each other then blasted off where they were pointing. One thing about the indians was that they

BELOW

There was a whole bunch of Peru riders. Great blokes and mostly good riders. They did very well.



TOP

Between the competitive special tests were transport sections like this. The scenery was breathtaking.

were super friendly and super helpful. If they pointed that way, then we should go that way.

Half an hour later the fog had lifted (or we had descended, I didn't know which because the bike was still barely running) and we came to a wide grassy stretch. I was so busy trying to stay with Toshi that I was letting him do all the navigating, but he must have made a mistake and we suddenly found ourselves trying to ride down a narrow

gully studded with giant boulders and with no tyre tracks visible. It wasn't right, that was for sure, but there wasn't room to turn either.

Then Toshi lost his balance – he's only short – and fell down. The KTM landed fair on top of him. I pulled up and stalled my bike, dismounting to lift it off him (he was blocking the track anyway).

By the time I had it upright I was gasping for oxygen till I thought I was going to die. So this was what they meant when they talked about problems at altitude. I looked around at the bleak landscape. It was as quiet as death. Far as I was concerned they could keep this place all to themselves.

was the reverse of getting up there – down a series of zig-zag switchbacks cut into the side of a near vertical mountain. Below cloud level the view was staggering, but there's really no word that does it justice. The only thing that stopped me taking longer looks was the drop over the edge.

That and the fact that the KTM's brakes had both disappeared – even the disc up front. It took three or four pumps of the lever to get even a little stopping power out of it. It becomes so wearing that I eventually stop and get my camera out to record the view and take a rest. Way down below Toshi can barely be made out, still going for it like the madman he is.

Back on the desert floor again the road opens out onto a gently rolling graded sweeper of a road. I'm starting to enjoy it and edge the speed up. Just as I crest one rise I catch a glimpse of two riders on the ground up ahead and I haul on what's left of the brakes just in time to avoid going end for end over a washaway.

Toshi and the other rider haven't, by the looks of it. Up close I discover the other one is Toshi's friend and fellow Japanese rider, Kazuo.

Kazuo's XR250 lies in a smashed mess over to one side, he's gasping for breath because his ribs are broken. But Toshi's OK and waves me on.

An hour later he catches me up again while I'm doodling about trying to find my way in the featureless rocky desert. Only occasionally can I spot other tracks and by this time – nearly 200 kms into the special test – I'm as confused as hell with the route chart. Being caught up again is a real boost but all the same I decide to stop him getting past at any cost.

We press on up a rocky ravine that has a V-shaped pass right at the top, way up ahead. As we get closer I can make out a group of people with cameras. Hey! The photographers! Unreal! We must have the right track.

Everything looks the same out here and recognisable features become like treasures.

We blast on and he catches me up just as we get onto the wide sand plains again. According to the route chart there's ten kilometres of this stuff and the only way we can tell where to go are by little metre high white stakes stuck in the sand every kilometre or so. There are only a few tracks, which doesn't add up, but the photographers back there had waved us on, so it must be right.

Toshi and I are flat on our tanks racing each other now. My KTM is peaked out across the sand, the speedo needle flickering between 140-150 km/hr. Toshi's 600 looks awful as it hits small undulations in the sand and he does tankslappers all the time. Mine feels perfect so I grab the chance while he's busy recovering from one to blast into the lead.

Finally we reach the finish of the special test. Because we're so early in the field – fifth and sixth to arrive, someone says – everyone's real excited, but not as much as we are. I can't remember having ever had more fun on a dirt bike and the look on Toshi's face tells me it's the same for him. The desolate feeling of being lost only an hour and a half ago is completely forgotten.

So far this day we've ridden 580 kms. There's another transfer section of

Continued over

My good friend Toshi from Japan. An amazing character, he was most popular personality, most often on a different bike, caused more damage, "borrowed" more parts and said "Toshi very bad boy!" more than anyone.



RALLY OF THE INCAS

130 kms down the Pan American Highway to reach the end of the day in Nazca just on dark after 14 hours of riding, but it's been such a high that I feel as if I could do it all again.

Now all we have to do is work on the bikes.

THE ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME

Where do you start talking about something that's the best thing you've ever done? There are so many vivid memories I can't seem to give any one of them priority over any other one.

For me it wasn't so much a race as an adventure. When else do you stop during a special test to buy süss looking petrol from an Indian at an altitude of 3,000 metres after you've just run out and suddenly remember passing a mud brick hut with an old Honda parked out front a kilometre back? And you're so glad to get fuel you pay him double what you think he says he wants, because you can't understand a word he's saying.

When else do you stop during a timed-to-the-second special test to get your camera out and take a photo of the scenery because you just can't believe it? When else would you even be carrying a camera during a special test – not to say anything of your passport, traveller's cheques and your wallet, plus enough food rations and water to tide you over for a couple of days?

When else do you suddenly meet up with another competitor who's been gone for three days and you thought he'd flown home, but he tells you he's been held at gunpoint for the past two days by a bunch of terrorists after breaking



down during a special test?

Where else do you take an hour late at night to change a tyre because the altitude forces you to try to catch your breath every time you do anything? And where else do you discover after putting the wheel back into the bike that the tyre is too damn big for the swing-arm and there are no other tyre sizes available and it's so late that everyone else is asleep and you haven't even got a spare chain to space the wheel back to gain some room? You know you start riding again at 5.30am next morning and you also know the swingarm will take off every bloody knob right to the canvas?

ABOVE

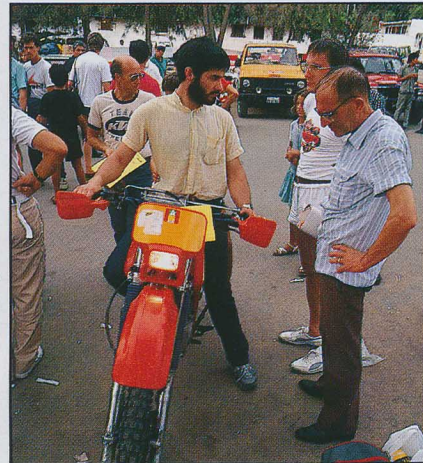
These are all that remained mobile at the start of the final day's special test. Nineteen riders completed the course. By this stage all the sense of racing has disappeared.

ABOVE RIGHT

Andrea Ballestrieri, his mechanic (right) and his super trick factory Honda Dakar XL600.

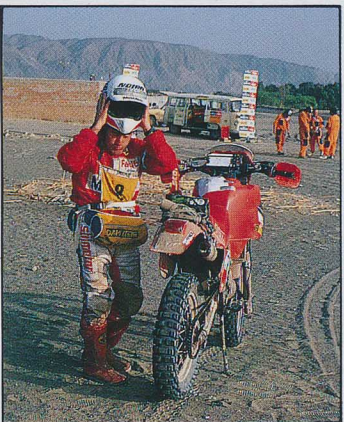
RIGHT

This guy broke down, hitched a truck ride to the next village and was then held at gunpoint for two days by terrorists.



The most welcome sight of all was the tower of flags you can see here to the left. Used to mark the end of the special test, this rider has just completed the longest one – Nazca to Cuzco, 640km.





ABOVE
My blessed American sponser Sperm Cooper is saying, "God-dam it, you Aussie sun-nabitch, look after than god-

damn motorcycle! Look at that tyre for instance..."
ABOVE RIGHT
Brissoni pulling faces.



ABOVE
This is Toshi working on another one of his Peru bikes, you can see by the gleam in his eye he's set to destroy.

TOP
Impound at Cuzco - in a basket-ball stadium.

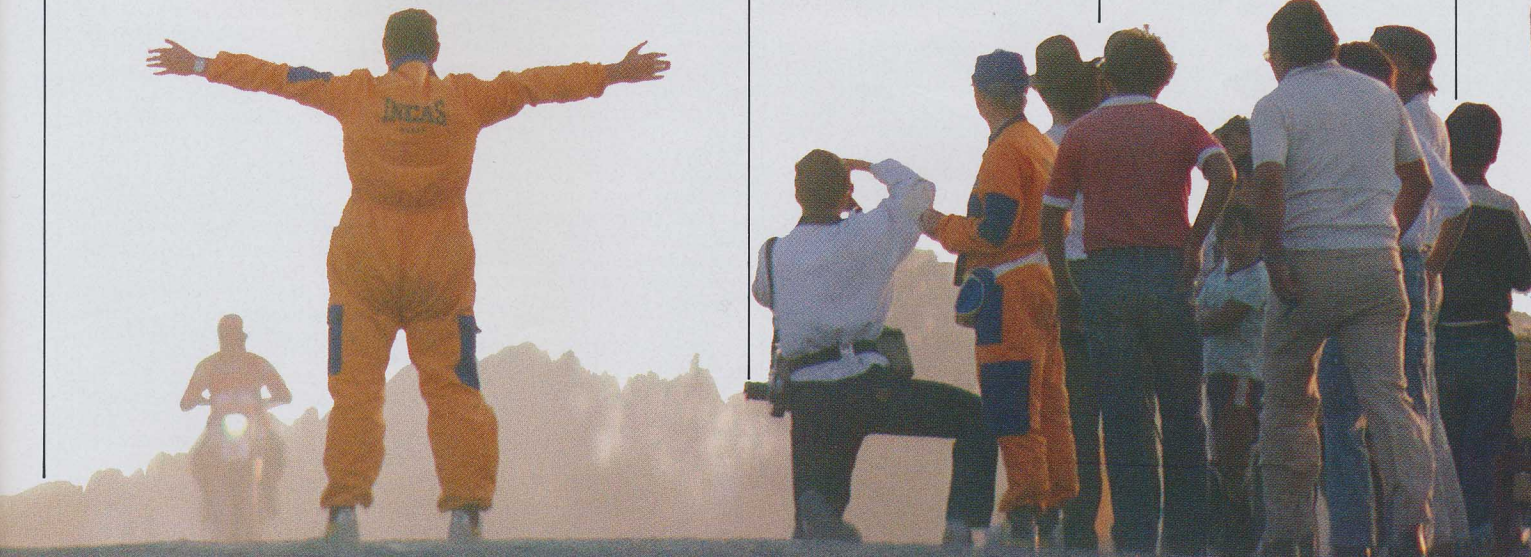
ABOVE
Rally main man was Franco Acerbis (left). Here he's getting feedback from Signorelli about the navigating. It wasn't easy if you didn't speak Italian.

OFF TO A LOUSY START
It's two days after I arrive in Peru to get ready for the Rally. The time is 7.00pm the night before it officially gets under way at 5.00am and my TT350 still hasn't turned up in Lima. I've travelled halfway across the world at top dollar rates, paid a fortune to crate my bike and airfreight it to Peru two weeks before the race starts and I'm wandering around with nothing to do, no bike to ride, not even any damn helmet or boots to wear. Everyone else has had their bikes assembled, scrutinized and impounded.
Organiser and main man Franco Acerbis has faithfully promised he'll get me a bike if mine doesn't show, but it's a real mixup of a situation and I can see myself spectating. As soon as he sees me walk in the door of the

Organization he knows the deal and without saying a word he marches down to the impound area and walks up to a 1985 KTM300 that is sitting there, another rider's numbers fastened to it.
Franco pulls it off the stand and wheels it out of the impound around to the examiners and says something to them in Italian. They don't look real happy, looking first at the bike, then at me, then at him. He glares at them and they get the message. With obvious reluctance they start removing the numberplates of the other rider.
I'm amazed. This is someone else's race bike! When I ask what's going on Franco explains in fairly basic English: "Peru rider, my bike. He buy bike for Rallee, but cheque bounce. I repossess!"

Holy cow! I'm getting a bike repossessed the night before the rally! Lima isn't noted for peaceable citizens (they even have a nighttime curfew) so I

Continued over



RALLY OF THE INCAS

figure I'm not going to get far before I find myself shot or bombed or beheaded or worse.

I wobble off into the darkness to try to hunt up a helmet now I know I'm riding. I need a jacket too. And tools. And parts. What the hell am I going to do if I need parts? All mine are in the missing crate with the bike.

Everything's looking great. Just great.

THE ORGANIZATION

Everything is handled by something the Italians refer to as The Organizacione (my spelling), which sounds to me a lot like how they refer to the Mafia (it isn't, but every time I hear it said it makes me chuckle). 1986 is the very first Incas Rally so they're really trying hard to

create a good impression.

All the journalists from the European motorcycle publications have been invited and that was how I originally came to be part of the deal – they figured that if they could get good press then next time the event would be a boomer. Good thinking.

As it turned out, of the 43 "entries" quite a few are journo's who aren't planning on riding and after you subtract all the mechanical and physical DNFs the final tally dwindled to a mere dozen. Of that number, two were disqualified for "changing frames," technically disallowed.

One was me when the KTM unceremoniously dumped its electrics and I was lucky enough to have it happen at the precise spot

where the only American rider in the event withdrew after injuring his knee. Sherm Cooper was his name and a great bloke he is too. All of sixty years old that sunnavagun was riding his stock XL600 faster than a lot of other riders.

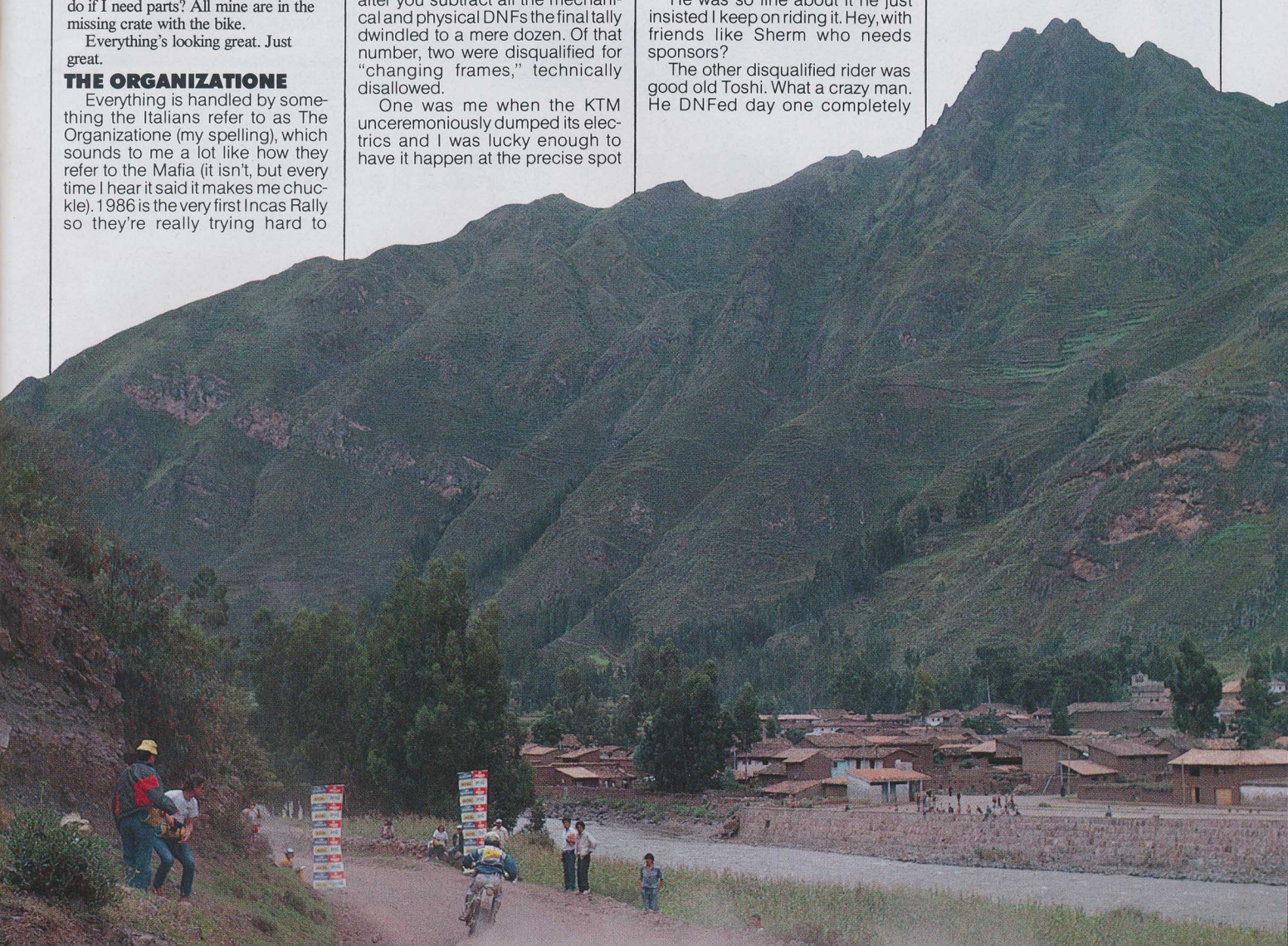
It seemed easier at the time to ride his bike to the finish rather than try to cram it in the back of a Toyota Land Cruiser and squeeze in with it for the twelve hour trip to Cuzco.

He was so fine about it he just insisted I keep on riding it. Hey, with friends like Sherm who needs sponsors?

The other disqualified rider was good old Toshi. What a crazy man. He DNFed day one completely

when his KTM cam belt broke, then it happened again on the fourth day but this time he bent his valves and that was the end of his KTM. For the 5th day he "borrowed" a Husky 430 but he destroyed that, so he spent half the night repairing the electrics on my old KTM and proceeded to

Continued on page 83



ABOVE
Italian journalists Luca had a great sense of humour, made lots of jokes about the English, and wouldn't stop posing in front of Llamas.



ABOVE
More tyres than you can count and none of them fitted my XL600.



ABOVE
The Beta of Valentini was a work of art with a 60 litre fuel capacity. he needed it too. I've never seen anyone get lost so much.



ABOVE
Typical scenery

RALLY OF THE INCAS

Continued from page 69

ride that. On day 6 he got a flat front tyre and in the resulting crashes he just about totalled it. Using his silver tongue (Toshi could bludge ice from an Arab) he found enough parts – including a new pipe, cables, headlight, taillight and plenty of carburettor jets – to get it running again, but he forgot to richen the needle clip position from where I'd put it in an attempt to get it running at altitude, so he finally blew the engine to bits at sea level on the second last day.

Again he rebuilt it so he could ride to the finish, but I beat him in the "Disqualified Riders Class" because he'd changed more bikes. By that stage neither of us was really concerned that we were out of it.

On the points I scored I'd have finished 10th. I couldn't seem to struggle any higher than that even though one day I scored 4th and on two others was 6th, because things kept going haywire.

HAVING A FINAL FLING

On the final day the shock on the trusty old XL600 has completely had it, so the rear of the bike bounces wildly all over the desert anytime I hit someth-

ing. I resolve to cruise to a finish during the last 170 km special test, especially after having found the airfilter wasn't seated right and a tonne of dirt had gone through the engine.

The way it was burning oil I figured I better nurse it or walk.

Then the Pommy rider Mike Sweeney catches me on his British Army Armstrong, a bike every bit as Pommy as he is. No way I'm going to be hosed off by an Armstrong so I tuck in behind him. They've warned us that navigation will be difficult this day since we are going into unmarked desert nearly the whole way; I figure they're right, the way the route charts have proven to be so inaccurate.

After forty miles we hit the beach. Trouble is, the route chart says we should head inland to the mountains but someone had said we should follow the beach the first time we see it. I pull up because I can see Sweeney headed for the sea, but half a kilometre ahead of me is another rider headed straight for the hills. Minutes pass and they both stick to their flight paths, only adding to my confusion.

Finally I decide we're headed for Lima and that's up the coast, so I make a beeline straight for where Sweeney is. On the way I ride straight over one sand dune only to discover to my horror that there's what seems like a thirty metre high cliff on the other side.

Hey, who said XL600 forks were basic? Mine saved me! Eventually I reached the beach. There were only

three tracks on it – not good. What the hell. I sped up in an attempt to catch Mike but wasn't making much ground. Just when I could see myself getting lost again I crested a dune and there was Pappa Claudio, the guy who'd set the course! Salvation!

Obviously he was worried no-one would find their way so he'd trekked into the desert to assist.

Eventually I caught the Armstrong on a long top gear downhill dune that led straight into the ocean. There were three of us now, all crouched down on the tank, throttles wide open in the deep sand. I just knew my engine was going to run out of oil and blow but there was no way I was going to let go of these two.

Another rider swooped down on us from up in the mountains, so the four of us raced across that beach like crazed madmen on the moon. Way up ahead I could see a huge sand dune – probably the one they warned us about – so I stayed glued to the tank and held the throttle wide open. The XL needed 3rd gear to crawl over the top but I was in the lead and kept going. After half a kilometre I glanced back and only the Armstrong had made it over.

Mike caught up to me and that's how we ran. Side by side through that featureless desert, speeding inland away from the coast, neither of us able to make head nor tail of the route instructions.

There was something about the moment, though. Somehow we both

knew we were on the basic course and there was no way we were going to but-ton off.


Where I lost track of which way to go, somehow he knew, and when he couldn't make sense of it then I'd suddenly spot something that tallied with the route chart.

On and on we rode. The instructions would say "72.5 miles: veer left around sand dune." (in Italian, of course) but if you looked there were twenty sand dunes and no telling which one.

But we were lucky. Features started becoming more obvious. Then we burst over a ridge and spotted a vehicle so we made a beeline to it. Long before we reached it I could make out the tall figure of my Swedish friend and room mate (he spoke English) Bjorn Renvall (Bike Magazine, Sweden), so I waved because I was happy to know we were on the right track, even though we weren't there yet.

Then it was all over. Ahead was the Finish line banners and dozens of people dressed in Acerbis orange suits waving at us and we raced into a reception I'll never forget.

Franco was there. All I can remember is the way he kept whacking us both on the back and repeated over and over, "Magnifico! Magnifico!" with a big grin on his face. Apparently we'd finished 3rd and 4th, just behind the two outright leaders Balestrieri and Signorelli. He just couldn't believe it.

Nor could we. 



Toshi, transport section. Sore bum.



ABOVE Final day, I'm glad to see the photographers here in the middle of the bloody wilderness.

ABOVE A Peruvian gets a taste of water. Rare stuff!

ABOVE My room mate Bjorn (right) was a born again genius when it came to the barter system with natives. Just look at the stunned look of amazement on Balestrieri's face.