



Let's face it, apart from a few notable exceptions, enduro riders are a bunch of Joe Averages when it comes to riding a motorcycle. Many of them are refugees from the too-competitive world of motocross, hiding behind myths that motocross riders can't ride over unfamiliar terrain and have little in the way of endurance. What a bunch of dreamers. They talk about endurance and fitness but all that ever gets any real exercise is their jaw. The enduro scene is wide open for good motocross riders with a little dedication, but there are a few stumbling blocks. John Hand, as one of the top enduro riders in the country, would have to be classed as one of these stumbling blocks. He trains with a determination rarely seen in an enduro rider and has gained himself the reputation of being one of the fittest racers around.

Phil Geillis is always coming up with plans to make money and after our rejection of his last article, he asked, "Well, what do you guys want?"

We told him we wanted a good story on Mackay rider John Hand because everyone was carrying on about how tough he was. Lo and behold, a couple of weeks later, the story, along with some good photos, arrived in the mail. We chopped the story around beyond recognition and this is what we ended up with:

Like so many top riders, John started out riding trials near Mackay, north Queensland. He rode club trials but drifted into trail bikes when all his riding mates did. Eventually he got himself an IT Yamaha and became involved in enduros. He was still riding at club level when he began to take notice of two riders who were doing a lot of winning at the time. Those two riders were Peter Payne and Jack Alford and though they probably didn't realise it at the time, John Hand wanted to be as good as them. It didn't take John long to figure out that to do this, he would have to be a lot fitter. He threw himself into his training and started getting results.

He rode the Four-Day at Cessnock in 1979 and loved it. During the next twelve months he put a big effort into his riding with the result that he was winning everything in sight. At the 1980 Four-Day he rode the International class, finishing second outright behind US enduro master Dick Bursleson. John had well and truly arrived on the enduro scene, but no sooner had he arrived than he left again.

Work pressure back home on the farm in Mackay kept him away from he races in 1981 but it didn't take him long to get back into his winning ways, turning up at major motocross and enduros just to let everyone know he hadn't lost his touch. He capped off his 1982 season with a great win at the Weipa Two-Day on a 500 Husky and switched to PE175 Suzuki for the Four-Day in West Oz earlier this year. The smaller capacity machine didn't slow him down much. His ride was fast enough to give him a

PROFILE

JOHN HAND

Definitely not the enduro rider's enduro rider

If anyone's approach signifies the beginning of the end for Australia's old school of enduro riders, it would have to be John Hand's. In an effort to reach the top, he has successfully applied the techniques and training programmes normally only ever found among serious professional motocross riders.



short-lived overall win at the trouble-plagued event.

So what does John Hand consider to be the secret of his success? "Practising motocross technique, a sensible approach to diet, plenty of hard work and a vigorous training schedule to aid muscle tone and flexibility. I've never had a day off work due to a motorcycle accident injury. That's the main reason I train. I can't afford to injure myself."

And how much does fitness contribute to his success?

"A lot. There's no other way to attack enduros. You have to be strong to hold onto the bike. Especially a big bore. Your cardio-vascular system must be able to keep up the oxygen supply, it's no good running out of breath thirty minutes into a forty-five minute moto. And you have to be flexible to roll and bounce along after a big crash and not hurt anything."

How would he prepare for the Four-Day?

"After New Year's Day I stop

drinking and start training. Usually running and gym work two nights a week. I start with a programme doing fairly heavy weights, not to increase my size but just to get back to where I was before. I've done it before. I reckon it takes me a month to get back to my normal fitness level. I don't go for high repetition at this stage. I do running as well. Maybe three or four times a week. About five miles each time."

What does he think about running being bad for the knees?

"I think it's a load of rubbish. You fall off on your knees all the time. Mine are still all right. Some people are just tough and others like to find an excuse not to train. I run on the road. There's too many snakes around the farm. There are heaps of taipans around here. Anyway, the hills out on the road make you work hard. I like to do sprints. Especially just before a race like the Four-Day. A four-mile run is hard enough but then try to sprint for the last mile. It's great. The last five min-

utes you work damn hard. It's about as long as a special test takes. Your body gets used to giving it everything for a short time, just like a special test and that's important."

Does he change the programme at the gym after he gets back his previous fitness level?

"Yeah. I switch to lighter weights and a lot of repetitions. Going for fitness rather than strength. I go for a lot of isometric exercises and stretching exercises. I like to do these once a day. They really help your flexibility. I learnt a lot about this from speaking to the guy down at the gym and also at Stephen Gall's motocross school. He (Gall) thinks flexibility is most important."

As for food, John has a healthy attitude.

"I've always eaten good food. A good variety of vegetables and fruit. Fish. Meat, which I eat almost raw. Just a variety of food which has proved to be good for your body."

Also on his farm is an old farmhouse which he uses to do even more training. "Well, it's set up like a gym. A few of my mates come around and we work-out there. It's set for circuit training. There are different exercises in each room and you race from one to the other. It's good with other people pushing you. Sometimes we'll train there for up to four hours."

Naturally, living on a farm means training isn't the only way he stays in shape.

"Sure I work hard, and during crushing season I like to get up early and cut some cane by hand. We pick up rocks by hand as well. We've got machines to do this but it's all good training to do it by hand. I also make time to play basketball and squash. A bit of touch football. I like waterskiing. I like to ride whenever I can. I have motocross tracks and riding country right at the door, which helps. I ride whenever there's a spare minute. I might ride up to the top motocross track and ride flat-out for twenty minutes, stop and check the bike over and then ride another twenty minutes around the track in the opposite direction. As I get fitter I just go up there and ride as hard as I can until I run out of gas then push the bike home. It's about a two-mile push."

Sounds serious doesn't he? Not at all like the average enduro rider we criticised at the beginning of this article. More like the good motocross riders we mentioned, and with no shortage of dedication either. John is in fact a very good motocross rider and his determination doesn't seem to be waning.

On the large farm where he lives in Central Queensland he is building up what is already an impressive rider training centre which includes two motocross tracks, a supercross track, miles of enduro trails, a special test course, a large gym, a workshop, camping facilities, and a video equipped lecture room. Riding schools are already operating with John doing the teaching or bringing in some name riders for his motocross and enduro schools. If you live up in that area it might pay to look John up. Chances are he could teach you a thing or two.

