

Tests: Yamaha XV750 Virago, Kawasaki KZ305,  
Honda CB900F, Yamaha IT250, Suzuki RM125X  
Features: Route 66, Racing the Clock, Batteries

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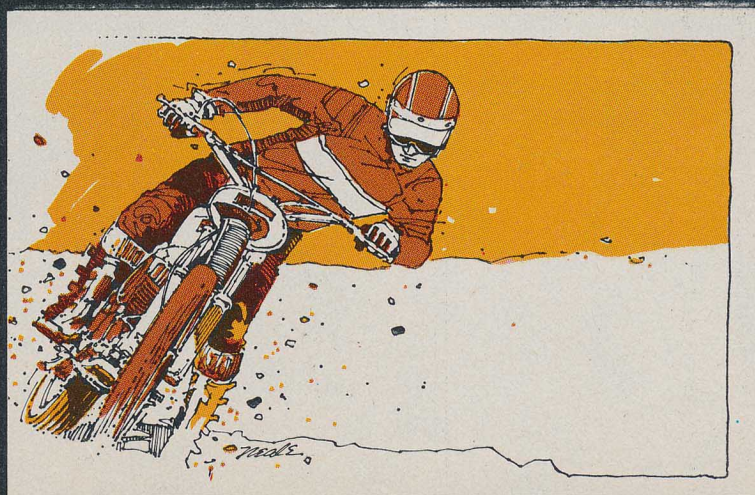
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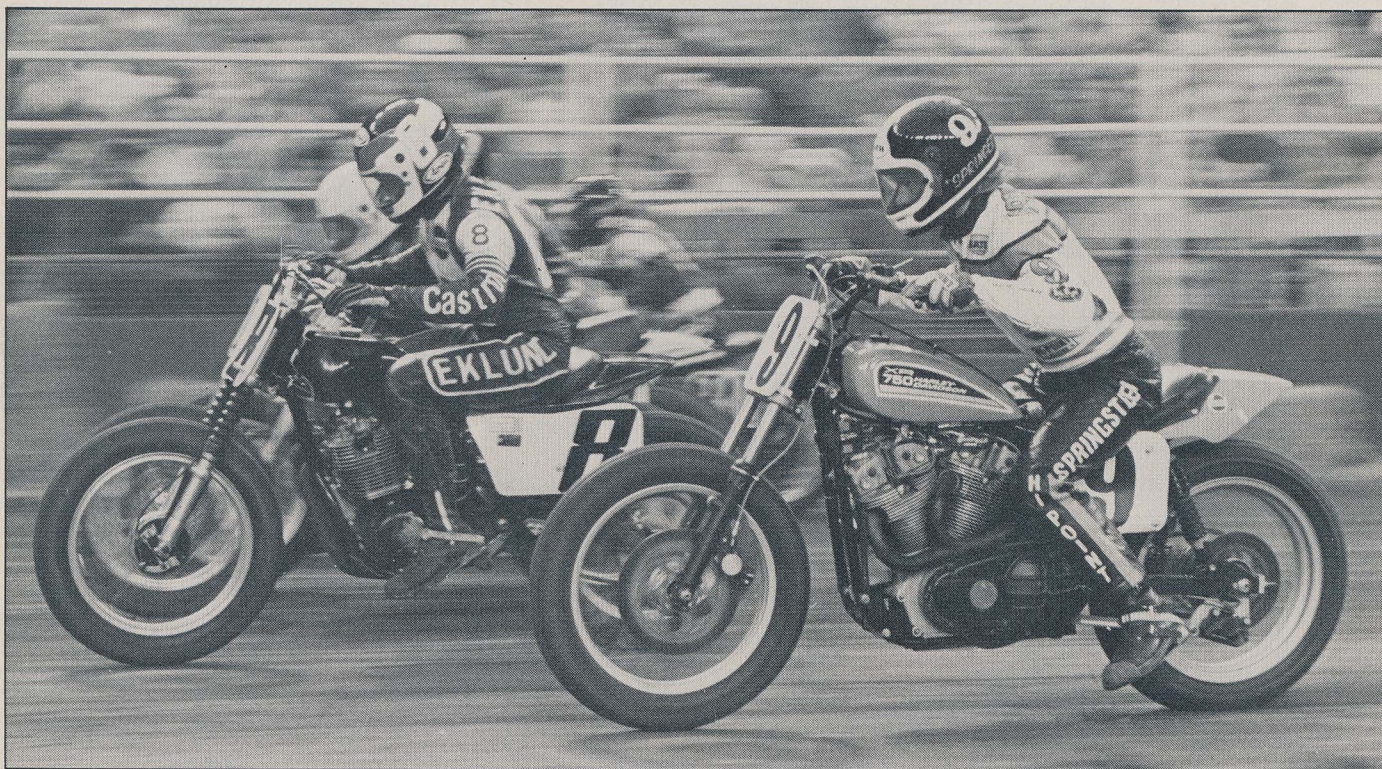
YAMAHA'S FIRST V-TWIN, THE XV750 VIRAGO/Photographed by Ron Hussey.



# RACE WATCH RACE WATCH RACE WATCH

## Springsteen Leads Winston Pro With Houston Win

SPRINGER IS BACK, HOUSTON WAS A THRILLER AND THE FACTORIES ARE INTO THE ACT



In a capsule, the TT final. Steve Eklund gets the jump on Jay Springsteen, a lead he held to the finish. As a technical note, Eklund's Yamaha 500 uses a double-shoe front brake from the YZ465.

**H**ouston is a terrific place to go to the races. The Astrodome's TT and short track courses aren't like those anywhere else on the AMA/Winston Pro circuit (or even elsewhere in the world) so nothing really is proven by who wins what. But Houston opens the season and brings out the new rider/team combinations and various little surprises the factories and privateers have been working on during the off season, and gives the motojournalists lots of predictions and calculations.

Big news this year was Jay Springsteen, even without his 1-2 punch and early lead for a fourth national title. Last year Springer was still struggling with his mysterious illness, to the extent that before you could ask how he felt, he'd tell you he was tired of being asked.

For 1981, no questions were needed. Walking around in the parking lot-paddock—there are so many riders entered in the two events you don't get indoors until you qualify for the program—Springsteen bounced. He grinned. He joked with other riders, signed autographs for small kids. The doctors said it was borderline diabetes and all he needed was to eat well and often. He'd put on 10 lb., he said, and He Was Ready.

He was that. So were some others. Harley-Davidson has been the mainstay of AMA national racing and the other factories are just finding out where the fans are. Further, the hot new riders come from the dirt, and like the dirt.

So there was Team Honda with a short-tracker based on the motocross CR250R,

with water cooling even, and an XR500R-based TT bike. Number One rider was Freddie Spencer, who naturally got the only water pumper the team had put together yet, backed up by Jeff Haney and Mickey Fay.

Yamaha had (don't giggle yet) a private team. Seems a racing fan named K. Roberts wanted to do a spot of race team managing, so with old pal Mert Lawwill, Roberts showed with YZ-based short track bikes and TT500-derived TT mounts for top privateer-turned Yamaha hauler Mike Kidd and first-year-expert Jimmy Filice. The machines were painted blue, silver and gray, very sharp, too, and when a mechanic slipped and asked Yamaha Racing Manager Ken Clark a ques-

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## RACE WATCH

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Jimmy Filice, 1980 national Junior champion, flies his Roberts/Lawwill 500 Yamaha. Filice finished 3rd in the TT, his first race as an Expert.



Eddie Lawson on the Kawasaki factory short tracker edges Ronnie Jones on the Suzuki factory short tracker.



Mike Kidd (72) slumps forward as his engine sticks for the second time, just as he was about to win the Trophy Final. Wayne Rainey, (60) gets the flag first.

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tion, Clark grinned and steered the man to Roberts. Only one team manager here, Clark said, I'm just looking.

Suzuki had an ST bike and a TT bike, like the others using the motocross two-stroke and playbike 500 four-stroke for engines, for Ronnie Jones, the Oklahoma pro who last year beat Roberts here fair and square, something the GP road racers don't do often.

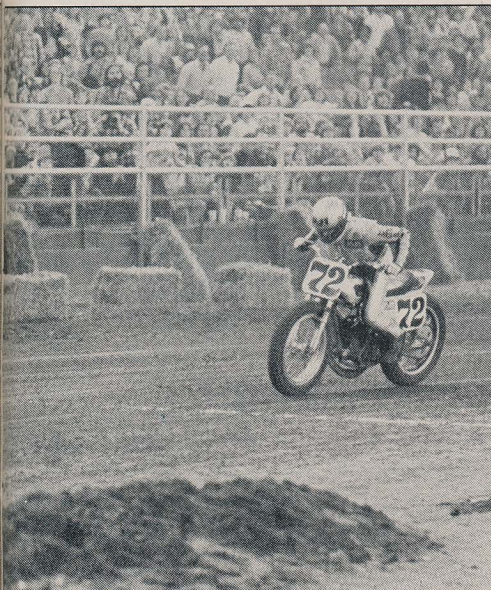
Kawasaki arrived with a short tracker for Eddie Lawson and semi-team rider Wayne Rainey used a motocross two-stroke for TT as well.

Then there was the cast of hundreds, well, 110 entrants for the 48 qualifying spots, including new national champ Randy Goss, Harley; 1979 champion Steve Eklund, Yamaha, nearly national champ Hank Scott, regulars John Gennai, Scott Pearson, Terry Poovey and Steve Morehead.

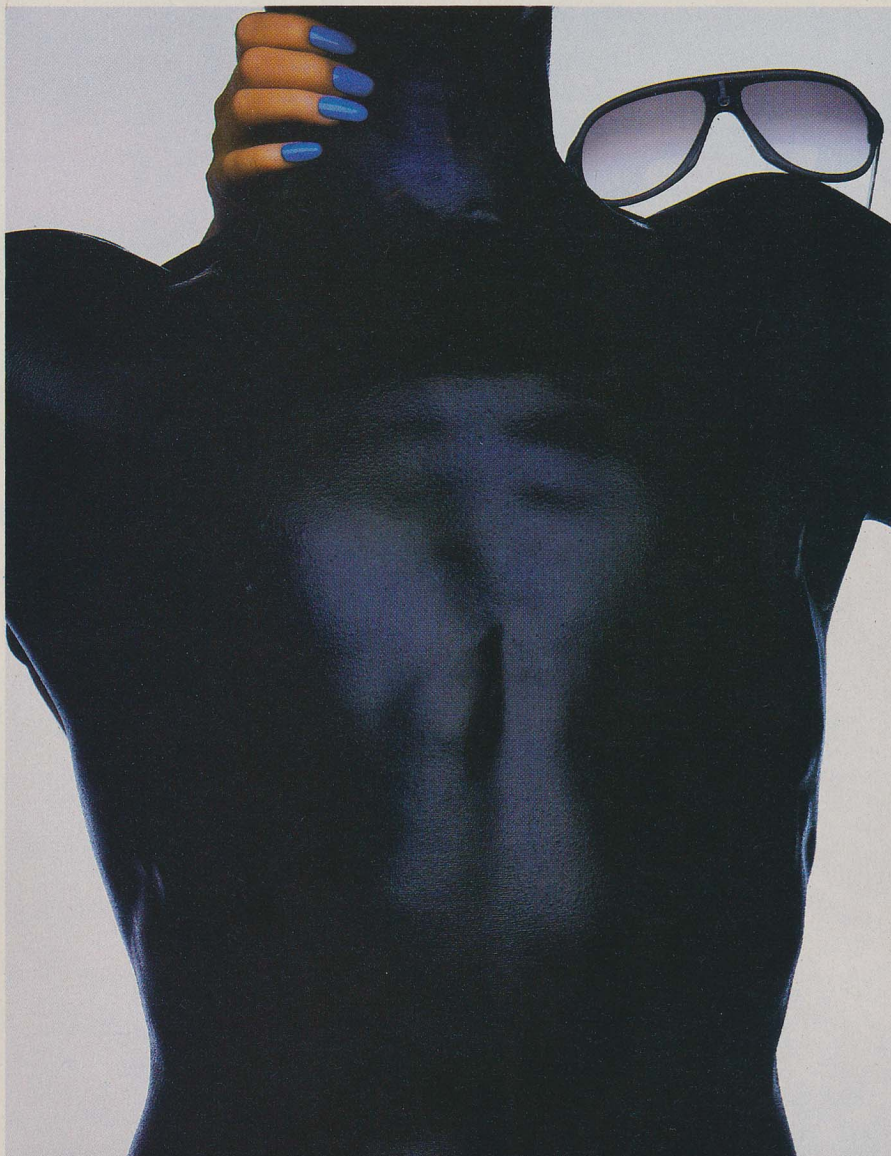
There was drama in every heat. Springsteen won the first, going away. Filice's clutch fried on the line, then the chain snapped just before the flag fell. Spencer's Honda sounded like it had an air leak just before the start, too late to do anything, and the water-cooled wonder cooked itself out.

Pearson got the holeshot in the second heat and was followed into the final by Randy Goss, charging out of the pack. Billy Labrie barely edged Mickey Fay in the third.

Mike Kidd won all but the last 10 feet of the fourth heat. The engine stuck just as the checkered flag went up, and he pushed across the line after Garth Brow and Russell Gourley, inches from making the final the easy way. >



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## RACE WATCH

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Eddie Lawson nipped Ronnie Jones in the first semi, so the factory Kawasaki was in, the factory Suzuki was out. Meanwhile, back in the pits Team Roberts/Lawwill peeled the top off Filice's engine and popped it onto Kidd's. So Kidd went out and began to run away with the second semi . . . and the second barrel stuck. Harley chief Dick O'Brien says he knows why, but Yamaha spectator Ken Clark looked too mad for reporters to risk speculation on O'Brien's theory.

In the main event, Springer was brilliant. He was on the pole, in neutral, when the green light went on. He grabbed five spots in the first lap. He worked his way up behind Poovey and pressured him by diving inside, powered his way through and then kept tight and close, holding off Pearson who'd followed Springsteen past Poovey. That was that.

(Later note: the Big Four have super new motocross engines for their short trackers. All Harley has is that old Aermacchi, the one not enough people wanted to buy. But when Harley sold off the last bunch, O'Brien scooped up a supply, because he knew the Aermacchi was a racing engine).

Cast for the TT was mostly the same except that the machinery was different. Houston is tight and on this occasion the track was damp, rough and tacky. Not the best place for 750 Twins. Fast qualifier was Jeff Haney on the factory Honda. Second was Springsteen. Not just his Harley, but Springsteen. On his first qualifying try, Goss did a spectacular rolling lowside, with cases and bars on the ground but rider in place and bike moving. He didn't fall but he did wave off and his second shot was too slow to make the field.

After Springer came Kidd, then Spencer, Filice and—another surprise—Eklund, national champion in 1979, winless and dispirited all through 1980. Eklund's tuner is now Storme Winter and Eklund too looked revived and ready.

Jorgensen and Filice were one-two in the first heat, Springsteen and Eklund ditto in the second. Kidd got even in the third, which was just like his ST heat except that he wheeled across the winner instead of pushing for third.

Fay led Spencer in the fourth heat right down to halfway through the last lap. Then Fearless Freddy Figured. He went flying past on the outside, did a J-turn and powered over the jump in front and to the win.

The TT final was almost dull by comparison. After some sorting out, Eklund led, followed by Springsteen and Kidd and Filice. Kidd kicked his bike into neutral and Filice dodged and passed and that's

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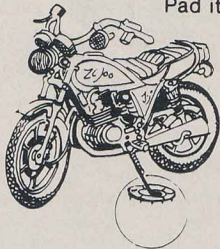
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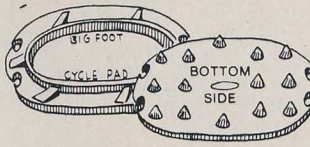
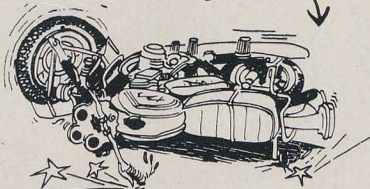
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# RACE WATCH

continued from page 158

the way it was until the finish, except maybe for Freddie Spencer. He stalled in mid-pack, fell to last and then something must have gone wrong—the team isn't talking—because suddenly he wasn't out there any more.

Houston is lucky points, the racers say and maybe so. But after the first national race of 1981, Springsteen was the points leader, followed by Eklund, Pearson, Jorgenson, Poovey, Filice, Kidd, Goss, Richard Arnaiz and Morehead.

\* \* \*

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For the past 10 years or so it hasn't worked out quite that way. The British disappeared and left Harley alone in big Twin racing on the dirt. The fiction that 25 units makes a production motorcycle left Yamaha's TZ700 and later the TZ750 ruler of the pavement. Bultaco and Ossa survive in short track, an occasional Norton, BSA or Triumph wins in TT, but mostly we've had a national title decided on dirt. Not one of the top 10 AMA racers in 1980, for instance, collected any points in road racing.

This won't last. The superbikes have revived public and professional interest in road racing, the GP rules with big stock-block four-strokes competing against the pure-race 750 two-strokes have made factory effort more feasible, and the sales and marketing and racing departments have suddenly discovered where the fans are.

The 1980 season went down to the last race and was settled by one point. One point. If Hank Scott had run just once on the pavement...

Here's a wilder way to look at it. Suppose, just for fun, that the 1981 season hasn't begun yet. A factory discovers an unbeatable rider, a superhuman talent equal to Jay Springsteen, Freddie Spencer, Ronnie Jones, Mike Kidd, Eddie Lawson and Wes Cooley all in one. Put this hero on a bike and he wins. Just like that.

No factory could use this man fully. First place in an AMA national is 20 points. There are two STs, 40 pt. Four TTs, 80; five road races, 100; six miles, 120, and eight half miles, 160, on the 1981 schedule.

continued on page 166

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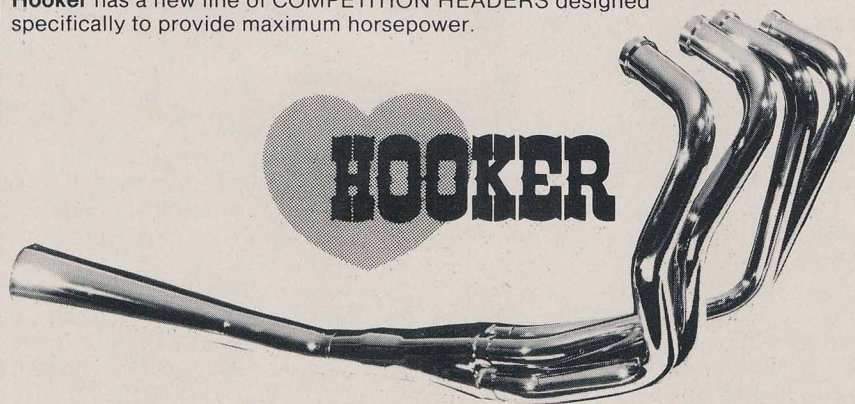
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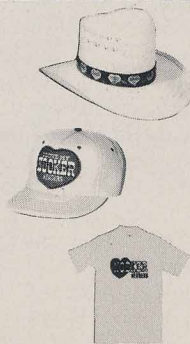
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## RACE WATCH

continued from page 162

If our hero rode for Harley, he'd win all the short tracks, all the TTs, all the miles and half miles and he'd have 400 points. But Harley has no road race equipment, nor are they likely to build any. The Sportster Twin can't hope to match the Fours, never mind the Yamahas.

Yamaha comes closest. On a Yamaha, the unbeatable man would win ST, TT and the road races, for 220 points. But wait. At this writing Roberts and Lawwill and some other sharp cookies are working on the XV750 engine. It's accepted by the AMA as a production engine. Still pretending, let's say the Yamaha V-Twin arrives in mid-season and wins *half* the dirt track events, for a year's end total of 360.

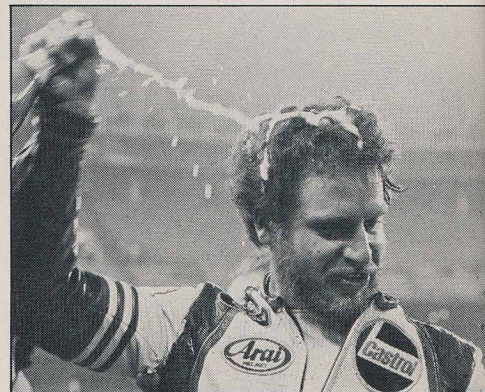
With the mythical rider, Honda would win ST, TT and road racing. No dirt track machinery so although the Honda guys are smugly silent about what they'll announce at their press conference after this is written but before it appears in print, the skunks, we'll assume they've already shown us what they'll have this year.

Suzuki is just like Honda, with ST, TT and road racing, but no bike that can be made into a dirt track racer and no secrets to keep secret. Kawasaki likewise, except that their road racing commitment is more for the separate superbikes than for the GP four-strokes that run for AMA points.

Back to the real world. No one factory will have a grip on Winston Pro. All the ifs in the world won't effect the racing rule that nothing wins out of the box.

What all the points calculations mean is that road racing's 100 points can't be ignored. It could even mean a better chance for one of the top privateers, say Steve Eklund or Hank or Gary Scott. They aren't forbidden a complete choice of bikes while the factories wouldn't allow Springsteen and Spencer to swap a spare XR750 for a back-up RS1000.

Already there have been some friendly deals. Yamaha doesn't plan a full factory effort, remember. However, Robert's for-



Steve Eklund takes a champagne shower after a year-long drought.



mer pupil is Skip Aksland, in semi-retirement and Aksland's brother Bud tunes for . . . Mike Kidd. "Hey, bro, you using your TZ750 this Sunday?" The conversation was invented but Kidd did borrow Skip's 750 for Daytona.

We're back at Square One. Road racing will play a bigger part in Winston Pro than ever before, the five factories are involved, there will be some surprising machines unveiled.

And nobody who watched Springsteen ride at Houston will bet against him for another No. 1 plate.

### HONDA'S V-TWIN FLAT TRACKER

**A** month after the races at Houston, Honda held a press conference at Daytona and announced its rumored and previously denied 750cc V-Twin. It is a development of the CX500 engine, bored and stroked and still liquid-cooled. The difference is that the race bike will have the engine turned sideways and there will be chain drive. Bikes will be built for Freddie Spencer and Jeff Haney. The bike will be called the NS750.

### ISDT BECOMES ISDE

**S**tarting this year, the International Six Days Trial will be known as the International Six Days Enduro. The event will feature six classes: 80, 125, 175, 250, 500cc and Over 500cc Four-Stroke.



continued on page 171

Illustration by Kristin Cooper

YAMAHA SUZUKI HONDA KAWASAKI SUZUKI

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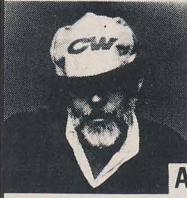
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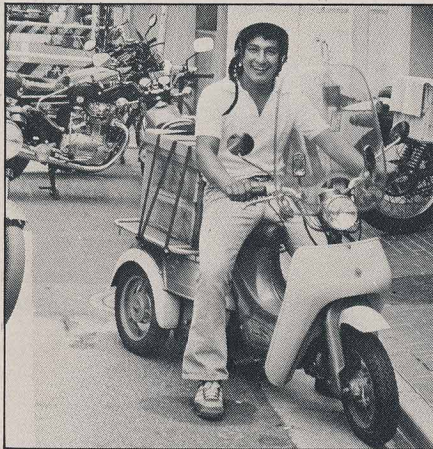
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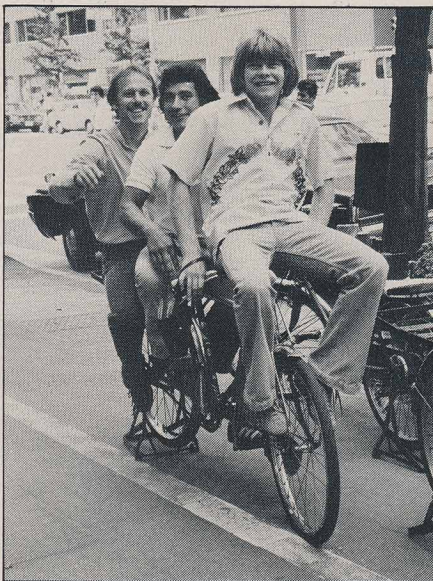
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# RACE WATCH

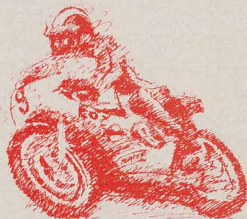
continued from page 167



Shown here is David Aldana trying out a prototype racebike in Tokyo, Japan. The first reader to correctly identify the brand of Aldana's new mount will win moderate fame (His or her name printed here) and Aldana's autograph on the original print of this photo. Send your guess to **Racewatch Contest, Cycle World Magazine, 1499 Monrovia Ave., Newport Beach, Calif. 92663.**



Moving right along, note that Wes Cooley, David Aldana and Ron Pierce are testing another new machine in Tokyo. The first reader to explain what it is that makes this machine a racebike wins a little fame (your name here) and the original print autographed by all three riders. Address as above.



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