

# Cycle

MARCH 1977 • 75 CENTS

**KAWASAKI Z1 24-HR.  
ENDURANCE RACER**

**INSIDE LOOK:  
ISDT YAMAHA IT400**

**CAN-AM  
175 & 250  
QUALIFIERS**

**1977 HONDA  
GL1000  
GOLD WING**

**YAMAHA'S  
MUSTY, TRUSTY  
XS650C**



480504 ECH 9740M090 441C JUL77  
MARTY EICHORN  
19740 MC CORNICK  
DETROIT MI 48224



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*This Month's Cover:* What you see here is the classic one-time-only cover shot. Lying flat on his back, and with full understanding of what he was doing and the price he would pay, Dale Boller had his model ride off a ledge and right across Dale's supine body. Judge for yourself if it was worth it.

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● THE MAN IN BLUE TEAM LEATHERS tumbled fearfully, his body smashing and sliding away its fortune in kinetic energy. Behind him, his seized machine bounded and cartwheeled itself to pieces. When he jarred to a final halt, he tried to get up, but could not. His arms were broken. He was back at the beginning again. It was June, 1974.

This same man, Gary Nixon, has this year come within two points of winning the World Formula 750 Championship. No American has ever come so close to winning a championship in international road racing.

In a world of rocket-like factory Yamaha OW-31s, he rode a privately prepared Kawasaki KR-750. In a world of well-paid works riders whose only complaint is that they need tax shelters, Gary paid his own bills, day to day, race to race. In a world of young lions in their early twenties, Gary is a thirty-five year old veteran who bears the scars of many encounters with the earth. He rode this entire season with steel plates and screws in his arms, a legacy of the crash two years ago.

This man has ridden for the Triumph, Kawasaki, and Suzuki factory teams, and has won national races for all of them. He has won two National Championships. His skill today is at the very highest level.

Times have been very good, and they have been very hard as well. There have been many points at which a less remarkable or less determined man might have retired, well-satisfied. He could have retired as National Champion. He might have done so after his horrific Santa Rosa crash in 1970, having filled both the trophy shelf and the record books. He might have gotten disgusted with the Byzantine politics that permeate certain aspects of racing. When Triumph passed him over for younger men, he struggled to the top again. Though Kawasaki gave him less assistance the more he won, he was undeterred.

Gary often has to correct people who ask him about his "comeback" after Santa Rosa, his "comeback" in 1973, or his "comeback" at the present.

"There's no comeback," he says. "I was never away."

Away from the track, he seems full of pent-up tensions that have no outlet. He appears intense and thoughtful much of the time, as though conjuring up mental images of race day. Though he works hard at his business, distributing dirt-track machines and parts, it doesn't engage him fully. It's as though he were doing it by rote, marking time until he can once again be on his way to the races, leaving inactivity and everyday life behind.

Although certainly a man of few words, Gary is good company socially, and enjoys his friends. His comments often contain unique wry humor, but you have to listen carefully.

With all the ups and downs he has had,

he is still not a cynic. He doesn't put people into categories, but forms his views of people on their merits. His view of racing is just as straightforward. Since racing is how he makes his living, that must be why he does it. Simple. No frills.

I asked him about the future, and he replied, "I figure I can earn good bucks for three-four more years — racing. If I can get the strength back in my arms I should be OK this year, best ever."

His speech is low key, often almost muttered, and comes out through clenched teeth. He meters the words sparingly.

Below this matter-of-fact Nixon there are others. His wife, Mary, is fond of saying that he is "a very deep person." Erv Kanemoto, his tuner of four seasons, says that Gary has many personalities. There is the naive Nixon who addresses the large problems of sponsorship and promotion by hoping that he will be judged on his merits. There is an acute and worldly-wise Nixon who insists on start money

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## AN AMERICAN CHAMPION

Well, almost. A season of ocean-hopping, disaster-dodging and bad luck mixed in with worse got Gary Nixon and Erv Kanemoto so close to the FIM Formula 750 Championship that they could smell it. But then the Championship was so fishy that anybody could smell it.

By Kevin Cameron

---

every time and does nothing for glory. There is a sociable Nixon, the funny story teller, or Nixon the friend, making a point of loyalty and fairness, and being well-liked in return. Above all there is Nixon the racer.

It was natural that Gary Nixon should be on the starting line at Daytona in March of 1976. He was astride a semi-works Kawasaki KR-750, because that was the best deal he and tuner Erv Kanemoto could make. Semi-works meant that while machines and parts would be free, the rest of the bills would be all theirs. Suzuki were abruptly out of racing in the US. Yamaha was a closed shop. Erv reckoned that the Kawasaki would be faster than any private Yamaha, and that with work he could make it run, as he likes to say, "half-decent."

As Gary walked out to an early practice, pulling on his gloves, he said, "I'm beginning to get that racy feeling." He

spoke, as so often, through his teeth, but with a half-smile of flickering self-amusement.

Waiting with the running machine was Erv Kanemoto, who has built all of Nixon's machinery since 1973. His unassertive, almost hesitant manner in person conceals a will to excel that parallels Nixon's own exactly. This is one reason why their association has been so productive. Each man takes care of himself in doing his own job, knowing that the other needs no care and feeding to carry on.

With all that must be right on race day, it's remarkable how little is said between these two. Gary comes in from a practice, and offers mostly one-word answers to Erv's questions. Many questions aren't even asked, because the answers come from the stopwatch, or from Erv's own attentive observations of the machine all around the course. Although Gary is a competent mechanic himself, he is the first to admit that much of what Erv does to the machine is a mystery to him.

Speaking of pipe-testing sessions at Loudon, he says, "All those pipes he had there — I couldn't even tell the difference on the track, really. Maybe a couple of hundred revs." All the while, Erv kept track of the lap times, the number of shifts per lap, the sound of the engine. All the while the lap times improved.

Erv is a fine intuitive engineer who remembers what he has done and puts it all into a framework of cause and effect. He believes that every problem has a solution. At the same time he is willing to make small deals with luck, which he accepts as an unfortunate element in success; he admits to being a tiny bit superstitious.

He has an endless backlog of ideas that mature in his thinking with time, like eggs forming inside a chicken. One by one, those that are ready are translated into metal. He's a little shy about some of these, for despite his confidence that they will work, he sometimes worries that people will make fun of them.

The frame he designed for this year, made from untraditionally large 1-3/8" tubing, was in his head three years ago, but as he said, "You'd be a little afraid to show up with something like that — people would say, 'must be pretty heavy, eh?', and then you'd feel like getting in a hole. Especially if it didn't work..."

With his increasing success, these small fears have faded somewhat. His confidence in his designs is evident in the detail and thought in every part.

Still the awful fear comes creeping, as it does over every private builder. How can I hope to compete with the factories, with their hordes of technicians, their equipment, their vast resources? There is no better answer than to get back to work. The helpless feelings subside.

To have good ideas takes you only partway to the starting line. Most of the way is long, hard hours of work, much of it routine but still demanding. Erv is there in

his little shop, built in a two-car garage behind his home in San Jose, from morning until late at night, every day, working up engines for upcoming races, maybe thinking about a gas tank modification, chasing down tardy suppliers by phone. Friends or hangers-on come in to visit or just make the scene. He is too polite to chase them away, and endures their chatter.

He has some help, of course. It seems that he has enslaved a large part of the city of San Jose, for there are many who help him simply for the pleasure of being involved. And he pays for a lot of specialized work, too. The big-tube frame, for example, was fabricated (protesting the big 1-3/8" tubing all the way) by C & J in Santa Ana. That was cash. The tank for the machine came from a local welder, and was sent back most apologetically three times for detail modifications.

The man with the tank walks into Erv's shop and Erv, a bit startled, looks up from his work, then takes the tank to explain his wishes.

"D'you think you could just . . .", he indicates with his hand. "Just take this part down another three quarters of an inch? That way he can get his chest down a little better. D'you think . . .?"

He is talking about several hours' work. But the tank man asked for it, and he

knows it.

There are others. There's a fiberglass man, a painter, machinists. There are contacts and friends in the aircraft industry. Lots of people, all willing to have part of their lives focused by this man's energy on the problems of building fast motorcycles.

Often the helpers work hard for weeks, trying to help make the latest deadline. Finally they end up asking this tireless worker why he isn't burned out on racing, because they are. The helpers, paid and unpaid, come and go, but there is Erv, working each day into night, doing the work of preparation, planning, and direction of everything that can get Gary Nixon on the line with the best chance. And, somewhere on the side, he makes a living.

For both Gary and Erv, making a living is more of an avocation. They worry and fret about the bills, but there is always a confidence that they will be successful, that the next event will bring a good payoff.

When you think of it, it's a cheeky way to tackle life.

The Daytona race is the first of the season, and the hardest. The equipment is an unknown, and the factories always make maximum efforts.

Kawasaki, at first offering machines exclusively to private riders Gary Nixon and Ron Pierce, decided at the last mi-

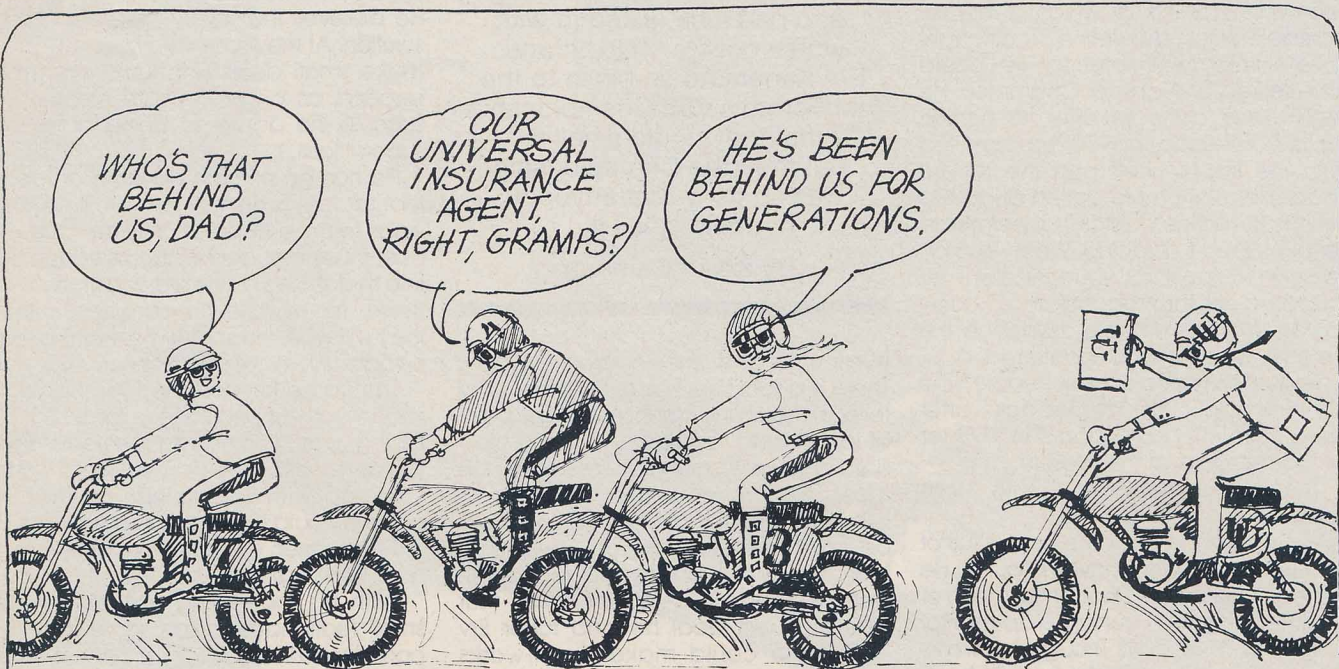
nute to support for one more season long-time factory star Yvon DuHamel. This threatened the all-important supply of parts to the private teams, who would once again be bidding against a factory effort. It had happened in 1973, when only a few of the good parts made it past the race shop to privateers like Nixon and Kanemoto.

Tim Smith, the new team manager, had proclaimed a policy of equality and plenty, and did all he could to promote it, but these last-minute changes didn't inspire confidence.

Yvon's presence did motivate the factory to rent the Daytona track for three days of unofficial practice, which was valuable especially since Japan had sent over a plethora of new-design parts.

Through this practice, Erv worked practically around the clock with long-suffering helpers Chuck Andrews and Karen Germs, to keep Nixon's machines ready and primed with new material for evaluation. Every practice session must tell the tuner something, answer some experimental question. The only way to do this is to build the machine up differently for each practice — a different cylinder or pipe, another jetting combination, another front fork.

I could tell that Erv was running at the limit, because when the heat's on, he takes on a distraught expression, and begins to breathe through his mouth, as



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though he couldn't get enough air for his exertions any other way. His usual work outfit of baggy jeans and Bell tee-shirt seems to fit him particularly badly at such times, and he moves around the shop spasmodically, leaning forward and half walking, half running.

The work area becomes a nest of machines, tools, tires and wheels, interwoven with electric cables and air lines. Presiding over this creative mess is Erv. Cleanup can wait. The next practice can't.

The Daytona days passed, and the shop trash cans filled to the top with fast-food packaging. The food was eaten more for the pause it provided than for nutrition; in the three months surrounding Daytona, Erv lost 26 pounds and became positively gaunt. Yet the work produced a fast and reliable machine.

Between sessions, Gary would often sit on the garage floor with his leathers tied around his waist, maybe offering his famous one-word answers to Erv's questions, maybe just staring his level race-track stare, his mouth a horizontal, expressionless line.

Official practice brought a terrible surprise: the Yamaha factory OW-31, an unobtainium blend of the 500 GP monoshock chassis and an uprated TZ-750 engine. Supplied exclusively to Steve Baker, Johnny Cecotto, Ken Roberts and Hideo Kanaya, these

machines were seconds a lap faster than anything else, a qualitative leap forward in F-750.

In the race Gary Nixon ran a slightly slower pace than the leaders, not by choice, but by virtue of the technology gap between his own machine and those of the leaders. Therefore, he didn't wear out his tires, made no unscheduled stops, and rode every mile of the race hard to bring his Kawasaki home second.

On the spot at Daytona was a certain Dr. Estrada, recruiter for the new Venezuelan F-750 Championship race, only a few days away. The promoters of this event were Venemotos, the Yamaha importer for all Venezuela and sponsor for Johnny Cecotto, the Daytona winner.

Agreements were made with riders as to start money, transportation, and the like. Many things were promised, and more than one rider present had misgivings about Dr. Estrada's facile answers to the many questions.

Teams arriving in Venezuela with their equipment found almost immediately that they would have to pay far more than they had bargained for.

Gary and Erv, out of their depth in an unfamiliar country, and not speaking the language, pressed on. Everywhere were armed militiamen, hard-cases toting machine guns and large-bore revolvers. It was explained that foreign visitors must have adequate protection against ter-

rorism. This inspired little confidence in public safety. There was even a special guard specifically for the factory Yamaha contingent.

The weather? One hundred-plus temperatures in the shade and saturated humidity. Many of the visitors, including Erv, became ill. The track was complicated and its recent pavement was greasy. The pit arrangements were primitive. Fortunately, an American tourist with a well-equipped camper pulled up near Nixon and Kanemoto and offered his hospitality. It was gratefully accepted.

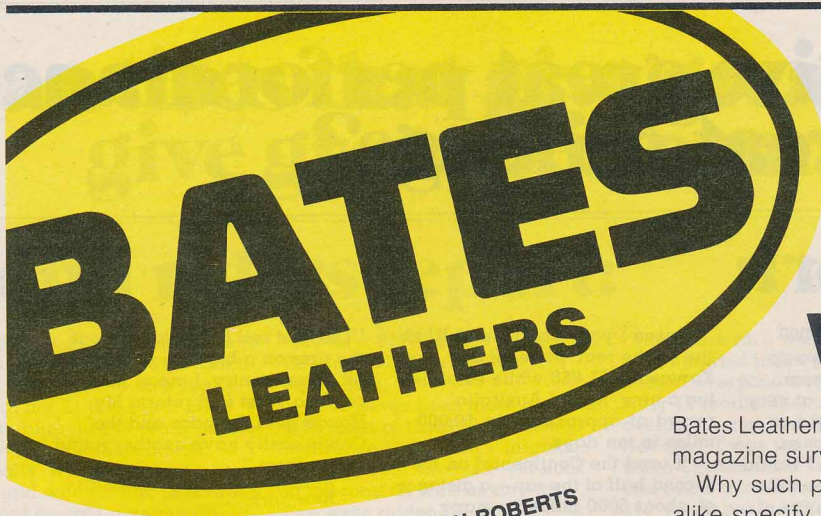
As practice progressed, so did the regulations for the race, with new and contradictory clauses being added daily. In the view of some, the race was a set piece designed as another victory wreath for the national hero, Cecotto.

The engine-killing heat cooked the crank out of Gary's bike in practice, destroying the cases in the process. With an engine borrowed from the Australians, they fired up for the last tiny practice before the final. Steam billowed from the exhaust pipes.

"It looked like a steam engine," Erv says. "The head must have been bent in the blow-up just enough to leak."

Frantically, Erv hand-finished a new head, sending Nixon on foot to the line in hopes of holding his position. At the last possible moment, Erv appeared with the

*(Continued on page 78)*



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**CHAMPION** .....Continued from page 77  
running machine, and the flag dropped.

The early laps were hectic with so many riders running close together. Gary came around an uninspiring fourteenth on lap one, while the Australian, Hansford, led briefly on the other Kawasaki. Minutes later began a chain of events that was to lose Nixon the Formula 750 World Championship. Steve Baker, running in the top five, was forced into the pits. After repairs were completed, he rejoined the race. The exact duration of this stop would be the nucleus of the controversy.

At the end of the first hundred-mile section, Cecotto had won. As machines were aligned on the start grid for the second start, in their finishing order, Baker's machine was wheeled towards the second spot. The grid marshal, with the finishing order on a sheet in his hand, asked why the machine was being placed second when it had finished well back. Second position was Nixon's, he said. An argument followed, with the marshal throwing up his hands and saying, "Very well, I don't care where you start, but you didn't finish second!"

Erv, suffering from the heat and his illness, didn't argue. He thinks now he should have, but that is the way he is. His lap charts showed Baker in the pits for more than a whole lap, in agreement with those of the Suzuki and Elf teams.

Nevertheless, the second section began, and Cecotto led as before. At three-quarter distance he left the race, a severe blow to Venemotos. This left Baker leading, followed now by Gary Nixon, and so they finished.

Based on the official scorers' lap charts, Nixon was declared the winner, having two seconds to Baker's 5th or 6th and a first. He was presented with the huge trophy and photographed on the victory podium.

Then the organizers, Venemotos, decided it was all a terrible mistake. No, Mr. Nixon, you didn't win. Get down off that podium. Here, give back that check. Take this smaller one instead. Yamaha has won after all. Baker wasn't in for a whole lap — just forty-eight seconds. He wins. He lost only eleven places.

Lost only eleven places on lap three of a crowded race in forty-eight seconds? What are you saying? Do you know how closely bunched machines are on lap three? Do you know how many bikes go by in even one second on lap three? Do you guys even know what century this is?

No, we have it all here in our report. You lose, Nixon. You win, Mr. Baker.

Unbelieving, Nixon attended a special meeting with the organizers. He and Kanemoto had seen the four official lap charts in the scoring tower after the race. Two of the charts had Nixon the winner. One of the other two showed Baker in for

less than a lap, while the fourth missed Baker altogether for several laps, and had been filled in later.

Dr. Estrada and others spoke, then the translator announced that for reasons of prestige, the promoters could not permit the results to stand. The new results, supposedly with the original lap charts to back them up, would be sent in to the FIM within forty-eight hours, as the rules provided. They could then be inspected by interested parties.

Gary Nixon was a very interested party. He filed a formal protest, which, he was assured, would be heard by the FIM on its busy agenda as soon as possible.

The meeting with the organizers' representatives ended with an ominous pronouncement that any participants still not satisfied with the proceedings might have difficulty getting their equipment out of the country. The meeting was adjourned.

Tough break, Nixon. You're back to square one. You're minus twelve thousand bucks prize money. You're up to here in politics.

The next F-750 race on the calendar was Italy's Imola 200. Again, equipment would have to be top-flight even to finish. Where is Nixon's equipment? Lost, that's where.

The machine and spare engine were to have been shipped direct from Venezuela to Milan, Italy, but they weren't

# Can tires that give great performance give great mileage?

## Conti riders report:

"Continental tires, also now standard, stick better than the (tires) used in the past and are unaffected by rain grooves; by all indications they wear better as well."

"Cycle World" magazine test of BMW R100RS

"The cornering, braking, traction and long life of the tires is a winning combination."

"Those Continental Twins stuck like glue in the rain."

Bernie LeBlanc, winner first national "Race for Life" Brainerd, MN.

"The rear tire held up for 7000 miles of hard riding, all two-up and loaded with touring gear. Many of those miles were at very high speeds which are hard on the tires, especially rear ones."

For more conservative use I would expect considerably higher mileage from this tire, in the range of 10,000 to 12,000 . . ."

Rider Magazine report on BMW R90S (December, 1976)

"I (used) your Continental K112 tire on the rear wheel of my Kawasaki KZ 650 while establishing a new 'Round Australia' record of approximately 10,000 miles in ten days."

"I used the Continental on the second half of the run—a distance of about 5000 miles . . . many hours of speeds over 100 mph, 130°F in the north, 400 miles of dirt and rock roads, and twelve hours in the rain. The last stretch of 2700 miles was covered in 50 hours."

"The Continental's flawless performance through all of this was a great help in establishing a new record."

Richard R. Willey, President  
Cycle City Eng., St. Louis, MO.

"The best test for wear is to put the tires on a big bike and take off cross-country. I mean East coast to West and return. My Honda held the pace and the Contis easily have another round trip in them."

Al Lavine, Insurance Executive  
New York, NY.

"Putting on a set of Conti SuperTwins was like putting on a whole new suspension system. The longer I ride them, the better they seem to grip. Ten-thousand miles on my set and plenty to go."

Ron Bose, President  
Madison Ave. Motorcycle Club  
New York, NY.

# The Conti SuperTwins Continental

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there. While investigating at the airline offices, Gary and Erv had the further ill-fortune to have all their luggage stolen, including Erv's years of racing notes. Too bad, fellows. Here's another black eye for you.

Where is the equipment? At first, the airline thought they had located the machinery; in Sydney, Australia. Frantic and expensive phone calls to everywhere produced nothing. Imola practice began.

They tried to borrow a spare machine from the English Kawasaki team.

"We'd love to help you, mates, but our hands are tied. It's right here in our orders. No one but the contract riders on our bikes."

A telex to Japan produced nothing. After all, Nixon, who do you think you are? A real factory rider? Have another black eye. On us.

With the loan of Ken Roberts' spare Yamaha, Nixon went out to salvage what little practice remained. This machine was comfortably rich and had the shift pedal on the left, opposite to Nixon's preference. He did his best, and the watches showed times quick enough to make the first row of last year's race. Not good enough to make the last row of this year's. On race day, Gary Nixon sat it out.

Next was the Paul Ricard 200, a non-F-750 race in the south of France. Here was a chance to make some badly-

needed money, if only they could get a machine together.

By persistent efforts, Erv located another engine and caused it to appear at Ricard. By persistent efforts, he wrung a chassis from the English team. By further persistent efforts, he built his rider a motorcycle, from the ground up. Gary Nixon qualified for the race and started. Would hard work and hard riding pay off? How about a nice crankshaft failure instead, to make it all a joke?

Erv stayed on the long distance line, still trying to zero in on the lost equipment.

"Oh, terribly sorry about all the trouble you've been having, Mr., uh . . . what did you say your name was? Well, we've got good news. Your motorcycle has been sent to San Jose, California."

Even two determined and hard-working fellows could become a little discouraged, having all this luck and being still seven thousand miles from their machine. It certainly looked as if the Venezuelans had made good on their promise. But on to England, for the Match Race Series, where Gary always gets good positions and good money.

The English team now offered use of its shop, and Erv moved in as soon as he could pick up the new-found Venezuela machine at the airport. To save time, he waived customs formalities, electing to pay the duty to get the equipment.

Valuable engine and chassis de-

velopment opportunities had been lost. Instead of refining their set-up through Imola and Ricard, they were no better off than just after Venezuela. They had had to scratch and scabble to get anything at all on the grid. Their Match Race machine was, therefore, plagued with petty problems. In the quiet of his own shop, Erv could have built a fine machine, but service in the field, with limited time and facilities, accomplishes little more than routine maintenance. The front fork was out of clearance, and chattered. Water kept getting into the cylinders. Shocks were troublesome. There was detonation. Despite all, they endured and finished the series, disappointed with their performance, tired, and ready for a recharge.

Gary had more races coming up in England and on the Continent, but to prepare properly, Erv had to return with the machine to his own shop in San Jose. There was also a new chassis to push through development for Loudon, arrangements to make in person with suppliers. And he was very tired.

With Erv tied up, Gary decided to make the trip by himself. In mid-May he flew into London's Heathrow airport, and with more help from the English team, was able to break in his freshened-up machine at Brands.

On the twenty-third of May, at Nivelles, (Continued on page 80)

# Can tires that give great mileage give great performance?

## Conti riders report:

"I've put around 3000 miles on my Kawasaki KZ900 with 'Continental Twins.' I can now really say that my Z1 is a super bike!

"The difference is really noticeable over the standard tires, especially when the roads are damp and when riding in the rain. The Continentals give me an added dimension to my riding enjoyment."

Bryon Farnsworth  
Evaluation Manager  
Kawasaki Motors Corp., U.S.A.

"My new BMW R100S came with Continental Tires as standard equipment.

"I've never been more pleased with a set of tires! They seem to neutralize California's infamous freeway rain grooves, yet stick to the road as well as any tire I've ever ridden."

Denis M. Rouse, Publisher  
"Trailer Life" Magazine

"The new Continentals provided me with a superior grip in corners, exceptional straight line stability and improved ground clearance. Their adhesion even under heavy braking was fantastic."

Warren Willings, winner of the six-hour Castrol Oil race

"The entire race was run in the rain. I started in 9th position and passed everyone except the pole sitter (Freddie Spencer) . . . 2nd overall . . . and 2nd Expert at the National! I was the only rider using Continentals, and at the end I had a lot of lookers! I was 100 yards behind Freddie and 1 mile ahead of 3rd."

Jeff Davis, 2nd Place Expert  
WERA National Championship  
Texas World Speedway  
Bryant, TX.

"The RB2's front accurate cornering, even under extreme braking, coupled with the K112's unique brake-away warning, makes the Conti Twins the best and most successful production tires we have ever used."

Wayne Sullivan  
Sullivan/Bettencourt  
Endurance  
Racing Team,  
Hanson, MA.



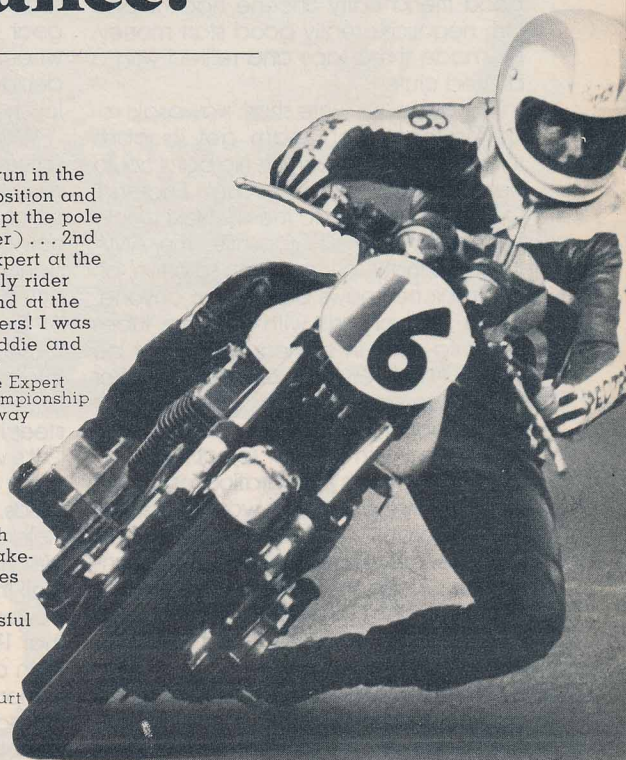
RB2  
Front

K112  
Rear

# The Conti SuperTwins Continental

Conti SuperTwins are available at fine Motorcycle dealers everywhere.

John Bettencourt, of the Sullivan/Bettencourt endurance team, winner (on Conti SuperTwins) in the 500 Km AAMRR Endurance Race, July 4, 1976, Loudon, NH.





Belgium, Gary Nixon won overall, pushing aside bad luck, and thrusting himself back into the F-750 points lead. His Kanemoto engine had performed superbly. This was more like it.

The following Sunday, he ran at Nogaro, France, again a Championship round. In practice, the engine ingested foreign matter and was destroyed. Working by himself, Gary reconstructed the engine, salvaging a discarded cylinder from the English team. With it, he managed to get an amazing fourth place. Remember that riders don't work on machines any more. They don't have to. It's too specialized a job. But here is one who can, and will, when there is no one better able.

Indeed, a protest could have improved his position to third, for one of the top three had failed to stop his engine during the gas stop, illegal at this event. Gary, who prefers racing on the track to argument in offices, did not protest, commenting that the rider in question got no speed advantage from his mistake anyway.

He returned to England with the British contingent, who were by now being most helpful to him. Perhaps too helpful in one respect, for after an engine rebuild, Gary asked the English technical manager why he had left out one clutch plate.

"Oh, that must be an extra. Must've been already on the bench there."

Too bad, Nixon. American Kawasakis have twelve plates. Perhaps English ones have eleven. So sorry. Perhaps administrative error. At Chimay, Belgium, where good friend Barry Sheene had helped him negotiate really good start money, he made three laps and retired with a burned clutch.

By now, parts were short. Kawasaki requires that each team get its parts through its own channels. No parts could be supplied to Nixon through England. Gary had to return to the US. Next would be Loudon, New Hampshire, the AMA National that Gary has won so often, on the track he knows better than anyone.

The new chassis with its huge tubes and big gain in stiffness would not be ready. And even in the States, even after the pre-Daytona promises, there were still parts shortages. Orders were being partly filled with used or reject items.

Erv Kanemoto's preparation for a race is not simply the dirty dish work of freshening up crank and pistons, tying the lockwire, bending on the tires and aligning the wheels. He assumes that factory engineers don't (or shouldn't) go to sleep after Daytona, so he too must keep the improvements coming.

Loudon, like any track, would require a particular exhaust pipe, a certain suspension set-up, a best front and rear tire, a unique carburetion set-up. Without rows of dyno cells and budget to match,

all this testing has to happen at the track. It has to happen on schedule, in a meaningful sequence. These changes may mean a fraction of a second a lap or they may mean more, but even a tenth of a second a lap in fifty laps is five big, delicious, nourishing seconds ahead of where you were. Maybe ahead of everybody.

But it's a lot of work. Erv had the combinations prepared and scheduled. He had the pipes and the cylinders and the gearboxes ready, and he had made arrangements for pre-official practice. It all worked perfectly. Nixon repeatedly broke the lap record in practice, won his heat in the fastest time ever, and generally made the others look like they might amount to something in a few more seasons.

In the final, the fates had another hearty joke to play. On lap seven, extending his lead and getting up to racing speed, Gary lost front wheel traction and crashed, out of action.

A post-race photo shows Gary and Erv, with helper Karen Geromo. Erv looks simply shattered, his staring eyes deep black pits of despair and disappointment. Gary, his chin jutting out characteristically, looks resolutely and even defiantly at the camera.

Following Loudon, a clash of dates between F-750 and an AMA national was eliminated by the cancellation of the Finnish and Swedish rounds.

Laguna Seca, California was the next order of business. Despite the usual rate of work, the new chassis with all its supporting hardware wasn't ready for testing until just before the start of official practice. A few laps showed that the planned short swing arm was just too short. First gear acceleration was loffing the front wheel all too easily for Laguna, with its dead-stop hairpin. A lot of time could be lost here.

With a longer arm fitted, the new bike arrived at the circuit in the back of Erv's old El Camino, without even a coat of paint on the new frame. After the first comparison test, Gary told Erv to park the standard bike. He wouldn't be riding it any more.

"The standard chassis, when you get it loose, seems to give a big shake, goes into a wobble, and tries to high-side. Erv's chassis is more like a car — you can just steer it out of a slide," Nixon says.

It's what you might expect. The limber stock chassis winds up under cornering loads. When it breaks traction, it unwinds violently, producing a kick that upsets everything. Since round tubes of constant wall thickness gain stiffness as the fourth power of the diameter, it's not surprising that 1 3/8" tubes make a far stiffer frame than conventional 1 1/8".

More juggling had to be done to get the right gearbox to better control the wheelies, the right engine and pipes, the right everything. Against the OW-31 Yamahas of Roberts and Baker, every

tiny scrap of power or handling would be imperative.

Right up to the last call to the line there was welding and fitting in progress, as Erv had made a last-minute engine and pipe switch.

The man to beat was undoubtedly Steve Baker. This has been his year, for his riding has reached a very high peak, and his equipment has been well looked-after by capable Bob Work. But there would be no beating him today; he led and won the first section of this twin sixty miler handily.

There was Nixon, though, duking it out for second place with Ken Roberts. The decision in this battle, with all its human and mechanical variables, went to Gary Nixon.

Again, the strange aura of the miraculous descended upon the Nixon/Kanemoto combine. They were no different, but you could see the wonder in the faces of the onlookers. This is what legends are made of.

Preparation for the second leg is confined to one hour. Not only must the normal wear and consumption of the first leg be made good, but also the combination must be honed for the second go.

This time Roberts was able to get away, with Baker still cruising in first. Gary clung to third, working hard, knowing that he had to be in range in case either of the leaders slowed. Then he crashed.

Trying to reach the top means being prepared to fall a long way.

When people ask Gary if there might be some problem with the Michelin tires he has used this year, he strongly defends the tires and, as at Loudon, places the blame on himself.

"I must have got in too close and got on the line there, painted on the track — just got in a little low, or something, and phtt." He made an expressive gesture with face and shoulders for emphasis.

There was no letup. There were more races in Europe, more engines to build, plans to make.

In England, Silverstone's 200-miler had more punishment in store for these two. With one hundred miles on each of two days, there should be plenty of time to make the machine letter-perfect each time, but the first race brought crank failure after running sixth or seventh. The second day a disagreement about start money cancelled the whole effort.

Two following English meetings were also missed after problems with start money, which is central to all European racing. Most of the purse is paid as start, rather than prize money, so a breakdown in starting money negotiations may mean racing for nothing. Gary will not race for nothing.

Now deciding to treat themselves, Gary and Erv rented a color TV for their hotel room, and prepared to enjoy the layoff until the Dutch 200 mile F-750 round at Assen.

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After a fourth-row start, Nixon suffered blurred vision as rain began on lap five. Cecotto had a spectacular get-off, his machine bursting into flames and being destroyed. Nixon hung on for a seventh in the first round, then improved his position considerably in the second, only to be out of the race with a fatigued shift shaft. No shift, no race, no points, no money.

This made two victories in a row for the excellent Spanish rider Victor Palomo and his reliable private Yamaha. With the large amount of non-factory sponsorship available in Europe, it seems that private Yamahas there are faster than their US counterparts. While our private sponsors are large dealers or accessory firms, in Europe it is the cigarette and fuel companies, with their vast resources, who are the top "privateers." They have the kind of money that allows things to be done properly. European privateers of this class don't drive ten-year-old cars and mortgage their homes to buy parts.

The final and determining round of Formula 750 was to be the German Hockenheim race. If Gary were to win, he would be the new F-750 Champion even without resolution of the Venezuelan dispute. Were he to lose, his tenuous hold on the Championship would dissolve into a memory and a hope that still the FIM might decide Venezuela in his favor.

After seizing in practice, Gary came home seventh in the first section, with Palomo in fourth. With the pressure tremendous, Gary went to the front in the second section and won, but Palomo came in second for the higher score overall.

Now it had come down to an administrative matter only. The gray old men of the FIM would decide the matter of the Championship in chambers.

Before the FIM meeting, however, there was one last AMA National to run; Riverside, California. Replacing the former Champion Spark Plug Classic held at the moribund Ontario Speedway, Riverside is characterized by fast, sweeping turns — a tremendous test of handling where Gary's new machine might have important advantages.

Yamaha racers can buy their racing parts over the counter from any dealer in the world who stocks them, and there are many. Kawasaki racing parts are unique to the racing department, for today's KR-series water-cooled racers share no parts with street production. Kawasaki's race parts supply has always been problematical, and now Riverside would be another inimitable Kawasaki Klassic.

Rebuilding the European motor meant a new crankshaft. Since Kawasaki issues these one at a time, Erv had to apply for one now. For reasons known only to Kawasaki, the racing parts supervisor issued him a crank with five hundred racing miles on it, while there were two brand new fresh cranks in the transporter.

There was no mistake. Erv was told the crank was old, but that it was the best they could do.

He rebuilt with the used crank, and they rolled out to practice. Just seven laps later, the used crankshaft welded itself to junk. With practice passing them by, Erv went again to ask for a crank. This time the secret stash of new cranks was revealed, and he was given one of these.

He went off with the new crank, doubtless thinking that some things never change. He had seen it all before.

With only Sunday morning's practice to break in a new engine, get the bike right for Riverside, and bring the carburetion down to the bone, there was simply not enough time. Gary went into the race jettied conservatively and rode a hard race just to get into the top ten.

Now added to the many incredible events of the European season was this inexplicable behavior of Kawasaki. While you would expect a manufacturer to favor a rider who was so close to winning a Championship for them, here was the used crank. Why?

Remaining now was the hope that the FIM would compel the Venezuelans to produce the original lap charts and that, based on them, Gary would be declared the winner and new Formula 750 Champion.

Gary is not a cynic. Being originally from Oklahoma he is much like a man of the frontier in his attitudes. He judges others on their merits, and he expects others to do the same with him. He would go to Belgium for the FIM meeting and present his facts. The matter was clear-cut to him, to Merv Wright of Suzuki, to the Elf team, indeed to anyone who would make a serious study of the affair.

He made arrangements to have Merv Wright come to the meeting with his charts, and tried to motivate the AMA to take his part in the matter for, as he said, "I'm their oldest living competitive member."

The AMA representative, already in Belgium, telephoned. Don't bother coming. Save your money and your hope. The matter is settled.

In growing desperation, feeling that there were no sympathetic ears anywhere, he tried to round up moral witnesses in the form of American journalists. At least if he were to be cheated, he reasoned, everyone should know about it. No magazine had money for this.

With the only strong voice on his side being his own, Gary got on the plane for Belgium. He wouldn't, couldn't just sit at home while others decided his case. At least he would be heard.

He was. The FIM ruled that the race results could only be decided on the basis of official, original documents. Gary's account, the lap charts from Suzuki, the obvious contradictions in the official accounts, none of these qualified. The Venezuelans had not only failed to produce the original lap charts

within forty-eight hours of the race, but had never produced **any** lap charts of any kind. Yet the results stood.

These are the things that "Make you crazy," as Nixon says. Later, in the lobby of the meeting hall, he caught a glimpse of a man he thought was the infamous Dr. Estrada. What was he doing here? If anyone knew what had been done with the missing lap charts, it should be he. Gary did some sleuthing, discovered the man's hotel room, and confronted him with the obvious questions. Gary must have been extremely persuasive in his arguments, offering unusual incentives, for now things started to happen.

Costa, the Italian FIM observer who had been at the Venezuelan race, suddenly showed up at the meeting with "reconstructed" lap charts! Nixon, who had seen the originals, knew these were phonies, for they were on fresh, clean sheets of paper, not smudged and stained like the ones he had seen in the control tower.

Even the FIM was not able to accept them. With the makings of real trouble on their hands, they threw out the Venezuelan race from the F-750 series altogether as indeterminate. Palomo was confirmed as the F-750 Champion.

The Venezuelans were given a rap on the knuckles, of course. You boys have been a little naughty, so we shall take away your F-750 date for 1977. But don't cry. We'll give you a few GP sanctions instead. How about 125, 250, 350, and 500, just for starters?

And what was the official explanation of the missing lap charts? Lost. Must have misplaced them. So sorry.

Our fellow-countrymen Gary Nixon and Erv Kanemoto are making plans to go racing in 1977. No cigarette or fuel or any other sort of company has offered to back them with the budget anyone can see they deserve. They have no real sponsorship save for the usual offers of a few free products. They plan to operate again as a business, profit and loss, gambling on their skill alone to stay in the black.

They are a terrific advertisement for admirable human virtues. Determination, hard work, intelligence, skill, commitment, all these are part of the American Ideal, but they don't pay contingency.

Nevertheless, that is the way these two men are. Racing is a hard road on your own, but that doesn't stop them.

If they were racing for money alone, they would have stopped a long time ago. If they were racing for glory or fame, they have certainly earned their share already.

With all the disappointments, the politics, the uncertainties, the hard work, what keeps them at it?

Neither man is a philosopher. Neither is much given to answering foolish questions. They like it. They like racing. That's enough. ●