

Cycle

OCTOBER 1980 75P

● Fast And Snappy
Kawasaki KZ550

● Suzuki's Get-Around
SP400T Four-Stroke

THE \$20,000 KAWASAKI FACE-OFF AMERICA'S MYSTERY SHIP MEETS ITALY'S BIMOTA KBI



● Comparison: Nine Tank Bags

● Yamaha's Plucky IT175G Enduro

● Two Tales Of 500 Grand Prix Motocross
Carlsbad Burn-Down And Canadian GP





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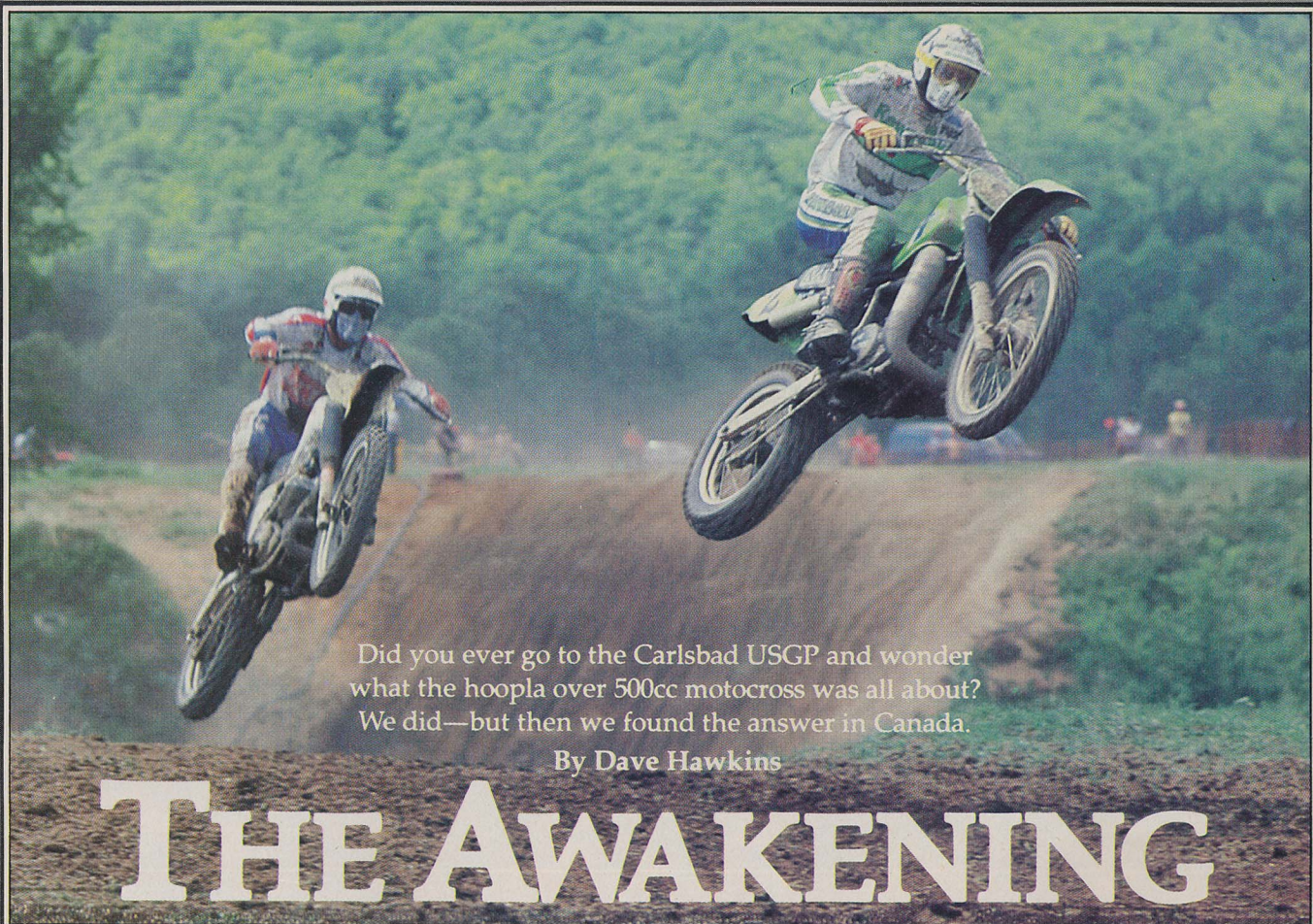
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This Month's Cover: Yes, Virginia, these are street bikes. Both the Bimota Kawasaki KB1 and Craig Vetter's Mystery Ship may look a little spacey and a lot racey, but mere ordinary folks with \$10,000 loose change in their knickers might buy one or the other for a street tooter. Please refer to page 52 for the answer to the question: Can \$20,000 buy happiness? Robin Riggs charged only slightly less to shoot this cover with his Magic Brownie and 147 birthday candles with backing mirrors.



Did you ever go to the Carlsbad USGP and wonder what the hoopla over 500cc motocross was all about? We did—but then we found the answer in Canada.

By Dave Hawkins

THE AWAKENING





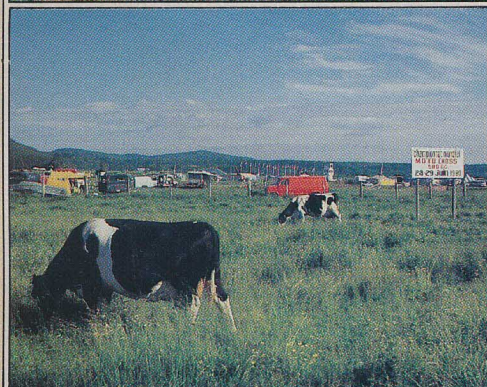
THE AWAKENING



● QUICK! TRY TO name just three 500cc Grand Prix riders in motocross. People with names made up entirely of consonants. Racing in unpronounceable places. On five-hundred cubic-centimeter motocrossers. After Brad Lackey, there's Roger DeCoster—well, there was Roger DeCoster, and then there's . . . Hard, isn't it?

Five-hundreds are just about nowhere in the United States. Here stadium racing is hot, and riders need nothing larger than 250s to jump across 30-yard moats with docking facilities for hungry sharks. When it's stadium time, action—not displacement—counts. Besides, both 125 throttle jockies and 500cc hands can ride 250s. America: land of the 250s, home of the stadium.

Although Americans have gone to sleep on the 500 class, Europeans still work themselves into a frenzy over the big ones. Five hundred is *the* class. New 250 World Champions use their leverage to get 500



factory rides, because the prestige and money lie in the half-liter class. The competition? Fierce, desperate, almost murderous.

In the United States, the international 500 show arrives only once a year—Carlsbad. Americans have watched Carlsbad, year after year, without understanding how good 500cc riders really were. Sure, the European riders reeled off 10 wins in 10 years, *but* every year an American almost won. Sure, the foreigners looked impressive, but never invincible. And what about Brad Lackey?



He dazzled the Europeans in Europe, but in America—whether he was at Carlsbad or in the Trans-AMA—Lackey always seemed to be less than his stature on the printed page.

Somehow something was missing. These international 500 riders were supposed to be better, and maybe the problem was at once more curious and complex than anyone had imagined. At Carlsbad, you



can watch the 500cc United States Grand Prix, but you can't see what world-class 500 riders can do. On those sun-baked adobe hillsides of Southern California, there's an international race with international stars, but not a real Grand Prix in the European tradition.

Stars turned out for the Carlsbad bake-off because the 500 title was down to a pitched battle between Brad Lackey and Belgian Andre Malherbe. The two weeks in North America—first Carlsbad, then the Canadian GP in Quebec—would be crucial to Lackey. Seventeen points down on the Honda-armed Belgian, Lackey could not afford to lose another point to Malherbe.

Early Sunday morning, hoping for the best, Kawasaki Motor Corporation gave away 1000 little American flags to the first spectators. Qualifying times proved Kawasaki was ready. Goat Breker, a local ace with a semi-works Greenie, led qualification with a 2:14, followed by Rex Staten with a 2:19. Andre Malherbe and Hakan Carlqvist posted 2:20s.

While Breker had his throttle absolutely pegged for qualifying laps, the top three GP contenders were

more conservative; Lackey—at 2:21—was not surprised by his fifth-fastest time. "I try to turn competitive times to get a good starting position—but I don't go wide-open. If Carlqvist didn't knock himself silly in practice trying to set the fastest time, he could probably last five laps longer in the motos. It doesn't do you

much good to tell everyone you were the fastest when you don't win a moto."

No one noticed Marty Moates. Supported by a myriad of sponsors, most notably LOP, Moates qualified well back. When ABC's cameramen scurried around the pits taping pre-race inter-

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views, the nearest the television crew came to Moates was on their way to see the Honda camp on coming back from taping Lackey.

Moates popped into the viewfinders when he started the first moto with cannonshot speed and led Breker and Staten and the rest of the field through the first turn. Moates is no stranger to Carlsbad: he lives five minutes away. He knows how to launch off the concrete pad directly behind the starting gate: "I pile dirt on the concrete and make a little ramp. The rear tire spins just a little and I get a good drive. When you hit the dirt in front of the gate, you're gone."

On the opening lap Moates was perfect. Thirty thousand people jammed against the fence and waved their flags furiously. Moates, Breker, Staten, Lackey and DeCoster: so far, no surprises—an American was out front. As Moates hurled down the Carlsbad hill, his chances of winning improved: Carlqvist squared off the berm at the bottom of the hill and cut in front of DeCoster. Carlqvist's rear tire hit Roger's front tire, and DeCoster took a one-way trip over the bars. Roger's loose bike took out Malherbe. Andre rejoined the race but, as has happened so many times at the USGP, DeCoster retired, this time with a severely bruised thigh.

Sometime during the first lap, Lackey lost his clutch lever. Clutchless, Lackey fairly dribbled out of the turns; his ability to negotiate the slick off-camber clay turns had been severely hampered. At the end of the first lap, Brad had faded to ninth. To do well he would have to relearn the track, figuring out what lines would work sans clutch.

Meanwhile Moates rifled along well ahead of Staten and Breker. Just three laps into the race, last year's 250 World Champion, Hakan Carlqvist, put the two Americans back to battle for third as he began to close on Moates.

If the historical script for Carlsbad ran true, the American leader would be passed by a European. On lap nine, Moates succumbed. In the sandwash before the uphill, Carlqvist powered into first when Moates' front tire washed out and Marty tipped over. Danny LaPorte got by him, and Moates dropped to third. This year there was one big difference to the familiar scenario: Moates was not happy with third or thrilled with the role of a choker.

With only 10 minutes remaining, Moates reeled in Carlqvist, who had dropped to second behind LaPorte. Just before the finish line the course has a huge drop-away that feeds into a left turn with one berm. As Carlqvist launched into the air, Moates was just behind him. Marty overshot the landing slope and slammed into flat ground—crunching his bike's suspension. But the move put him right beside Carlqvist as they charged to-

ward the left-hander. Neither rider would shut off for the berm. The two bumped together and shoved each other with their elbows through the berm. Moates, with the inside advantage, disposed of Carlqvist and set his sights on LaPorte.

Moates was on Danny in a flash. Marty pressured the Suzuki rider for nearly a lap, and then it was Danny's turn to make a mistake. On the back section of the track, Carlsbad has an off-camber turn with a small berm. Get into the corner too hot, miss the berm, and goodbye. LaPorte got in too hot. His front tire made the berm—his rear didn't. Still, LaPorte might have saved it had he not seen Moates passing at the bottom of the turn. LaPorte applied a little too much throttle and was gone. Moates went to first; Carlqvist moved into second again. Marty held the lead for the last four laps to become the third American ever to win a moto at the USGP.

LaPorte was left with third, and Lackey, having altered lines to compensate for his leverless Kawasaki, finished sixth. Malherbe was out of the points with 12th place.

Moates was both nervous and hopeful between motos. "An American has never won both motos. I know Jim Pomeroy and Brad have won one apiece—but never two. If I choke—I choke. But one thing is sure, I'm going for it." Marty was out on the starting line early, building his dirt ramp. Behind the starting patio, Lackey had another approach. "My bike is almost too tall now. I can't start on a ramp." He planned to set up in the dirt behind the patio and roll over the concrete.

Marty was the first again to the first turn to start the second moto. Marty Smith had a great start too, but he overshot the turn leaving third to Gibson. LOP's other GP entry, Gary Semics, was fourth. Slotted into fifth was the first European, Carlqvist. Lackey was well back entering the first turn, thanks to a bad start, the result of his innovative approach to the starting ramp. Brad slashed upfield when he squared off the first turn; he cut in under everyone else and salvaged about 15 positions, exiting in seventh.

The biggest GP news of the second moto was the fate of Andre Malherbe, the points leader. He failed to leave the starting line. His Honda's transmission broke a gear leaving him powerless. As his 12th-place finish in the first moto failed to earn him any points (the FIM pays points to the top 10), a DNF (or DNS) in this moto rated as pure tragedy.

At the conclusion of the first lap, Moates had a 20-second lead on second-place rider Jean Jacques Bruno, on board a Suzuki. Staten was third; Semics fourth. By lap three Lackey had moved into third and was closing the gap between himself and Bruno with every turn. Six laps into the race Lackey was second, just 16 seconds behind Moates. In

three more laps, Brad was right on Moates' fender.

The battle of the two leaders came at the downhill. Nicknamed the Carlsbad freeway, the downhill is so long and fast that a horseshoe turn was put in at the bottom to slow the riders. Lackey would take the far inside line down the hill, safely away from the huge whoops in the middle of the track. Moates preferred the outside. Brad would then toss his bike into the berm at the bottom of the hill and square off the turn. Moates, on the outside, would simply bend into the berm and ride through the turn. Just past the moto's halfway mark Brad held the gas on and plowed into the berm just ahead of Moates.

Lackey led for the next two laps. A moto victory would have given him 15 points—enough to strip the points lead from Malherbe, who was cooling his heels in the pits. Brad figured Moates would be happy with second in the second moto which would have given Marty the overall win. Moates calculated things exactly in the same way, "I just pulled in behind Brad and followed him around for a couple of laps. Then I thought, 'I can pass him!' And he was right. At the 30-minute mark, Moates took the lead again.

The American duo pulled far away from LaPorte who was secure in third—16 seconds back. Danny rode fantastically. On the first lap he was involved in a spill, with Danny Chandler. After doing a tumbler LaPorte charged back from 19th at the end of the first lap to third with 10 minutes remaining.

On the downhill, Lackey decided to re-pass Moates, by pulling an instant replay of his earlier move. Marty was prepared. Moates complicated Brad's would-be pass by holding on the gas longer than usual, and Brad's on-board computer signaled collision. If Brad hit the berm the way he usually did, his point of impact and Moates' location on the berm would be the same. "I didn't want to crash into Marty. So I swung to the extreme outside. I hit the huge whoops and they tossed me up in the air. You can't brake when your wheels are off the ground. So I decided to go over the berm and then ride back up. I still would have been second."

Lackey's plan went haywire when he turned his over-the-berm Kawasaki to get back to the track. The bike slid out and into the crowd-control fence. As Brad's bike hit the fence, the wire mesh tangled in the Kawasaki's rear tire. Fans began tugging at the fence to help Brad free his bike. Brad was out of the race: "If I had gotten back in the race Honda would have protested that I received outside assistance."

Brad had lost his shot at retaking the points lead for the World Championship.

Moates was surprised. "I didn't know Brad had crashed until a fan gave me a

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huge-lead sign in the back. I looked behind and Brad was gone. Then after the downhill there Brad was. He gave me the thumbs-up sign and I nodded back. It was a great feeling."

Both riders knew Marty would be the first American ever to win the USGP. He was a surprising winner, and a deserving one; he had dominated both motos.

The celebration for Moates had barely begun before the international entourage of riders packed up and pointed themselves toward Quebec and the Canadian Grand Prix. Some 3000 miles lie between Southern California and Quebec, but in motocross terms a continent separates the two places. SoCal is America; Quebec, Europe.

Consider the differences in the courses. Under the burned Carlsbad hillsides, the pavement-hard adobe had rubber skid-marks on its surface. St. Gabriel, about 50 kilometers north of Montreal, fairly bloomed with a summer greenness; the soil under this lush carpet felt moist and cool in your hand. Carlsbad, not far from creeping condominium sprawl, strains under the load of weekly motocross action. At St. Gabriel only a few times during the year do the grazing cows relinquish their clover domain to motocrossers. Small wooden bridges span the bases of abrupt downhill/uphill sections in order to keep riders out of the stream that criss-crosses the pasture. St. Gabriel is a natural motocross track—in the European Grand Prix tradition.

Differences run beyond the track conditions. Carlsbad had television coverage and 30,000 spectators, a boisterous, cheering lot that swilled beer in the California heat and tore down fences to stand trackside. In Quebec, spectators numbered 6000—counting the cows. These onlookers did no wild cheering—just a lot of polite clapping.

At Carlsbad 40 riders packed the start-gate; in Canada 27 riders went to the start. With a few local stars, the field was composed of international riders contesting the World Championship. Riders had more room everywhere, and more time. Tapani Pikkarainen stopped by Brad's tent to show him a red-velvet sombrero from San Diego. Wolsink dropped by to borrow some tape for his hands. Carlqvist ambled in, talking about lap times.

To see Carlqvist in practice in Quebec is to awake fully, to understand 500 Grand Prix Motocross. At Carlsbad, Hakan Carlqvist looked conservative, restrained, and—for someone who had been 250 World Champion in 1979—very ordinary. Once off the slick California adobe, Carlqvist was transformed. He sailed 50 feet off jumps, throwing the bike sideways in a huge cross-up just to land pointed toward the next turn.

Then Malherbe showed why he was leading the points race for the title. Together with Lackey, Malherbe is the fast-

est open-class rider since Roger DeCoster dominated the 1974 and 1975 Trans-AMA series. Lackey and Malherbe circled the track at speeds never seen in American motocross.

With practice over, the gate pounded to the ground and Herbert Schmitz (Maico) and Malherbe were gone like a double-barrelled blast from the same shotgun. Canadian rider Pierre Couture followed the two leaders with DeCoster and Lackey just behind. By the end of the first lap the Canadian had taken the lead, and the crowd showed they could cheer after all. Schmitz crashed out of second on a fifth-gear straightaway when his Maico, covering a series of whoops, bottomed its suspension so hard that Schmitz left the bike *via airmail*. Lackey moved into second, and he and Malherbe picked up the pace, putting the heat on the Canadian, Couture.

Pierre, a local starting at the front, was riding way over his head. On a steep downhill that bottomed out on a wooden bridge and directed the riders straight up the next incline, Couture plunged headlong into trouble. While Couture hit the base of the hill in fifth, his combination of speed and skill did not mix. Misfortune caught up with Couture at the crest of the following hill. His Yamaha's rear end caught one last whoop before the bike went totally airborne and swapped ends. When Couture hit the ground, he was facing Lackey and Malherbe; these two were just ready to sail off the crest themselves. Brad paused before making a final commitment. "I had to wait for the guy to stop bouncing to decide which way to go." Malherbe went outside and pulled a couple of seconds on Lackey. With Couture in a heap, the order read: Malherbe, Lackey, Carlqvist.

For the first time since the Finnish GP, Lackey and Malherbe went head-to-head in the same moto. After a tricky uphill section of jumps Lackey cut inside Malherbe before the next downhill. As they circuted the track the leaders looked as if they were on a dusty roller-coaster. At the end of a straightaway Malherbe wrestled his way past Brad. Malherbe dived to Lackey's inside and used Brad for a berm. Brad went over the berm nearly falling, losing a couple of seconds. By the time the two approached the spot of the first Lackey pass, Brad locked on Malherbe's fender and again made the same pass.

By the eighth lap, Lackey managed to put two seconds between himself and Malherbe, who then had to fight Carlqvist for second. Malherbe tried his bounce-and-roost pass on Carlqvist. Carlqvist, having suffered from an elbow-pass the week before, refused to lose another arm-wrestling contest. The two bounced and elbowed each other right off the track! Gerard Rond (Suzuki) swept by both of them for second, only to fall victim to the track's vicious whoops. Rond,

lapping a rider in the swirling dust, crashed when he didn't see a huge hole. Halfway into the moto Lackey had a seven-second lead over Carlqvist, who headed a coasting Malherbe.

Carlqvist started to take seconds out of Brad's lead, and when Lackey received the white flag signaling two laps remaining, Carlqvist was just one second behind. Brad responded, holding the Swede off for the two remaining laps. Malherbe was third, DeCoster fourth and Rond fifth.

Between motos, Lackey reflected on the first round. "This is what GP racing is about. People see me race only once a year, and if I do well, everybody thinks 'What a cakewalk.' Then if I don't do well, everybody says 'Well, those European guys don't even race hard.' Now you see how those guys race. Carlqvist doesn't quit charging and Malherbe tries to knock you off. This race was like all the other GPs Americans never see."

To start the second moto, Malherbe hit the gate perfectly. By the first turn he had a five-bike-length lead over second-place Rond. Andre Vromans (Suzuki) was third, then Ross Pederson, (a Canadian on a Yamaha) and Gerrit Wolsink. Brad was back in 10th.

On the first lap, Carlqvist charged from sixth to take the lead; Lackey moved to seventh. By lap two the positions up front had stabilized. Carlqvist was in charge with Malherbe stalking in second. Third was Vromans and then Rond. Lackey was fifth, 10 seconds back.

The first few laps, Carlqvist and Malherbe were turning the fastest laps of the day, two-zip-fours. In the next four circuits Brad fell off the pace at a startling three seconds per lap. At the halfway flag, Carlqvist still held the lead. In a tight section the Carlqvist/Malherbe train came up on some slower riders who didn't notice the leaders until Carlqvist was just behind them. In their haste to make way, they blocked Hakan off the track, and Malherbe swept into the lead on the outside. This misadventure put Carlqvist six seconds behind Malherbe, a margin impossible to overcome. When Malherbe received the checkered flag he was five seconds ahead of Carlqvist, 15 up on Vromans and 17 ahead of Lackey.

Malherbe's third and first tied him with Carlqvist's two-two finishes so the time-keeper decided the overall winner. On the watches Carlqvist (88:58.30) beat Malherbe (89:17.03). Lackey was third overall with a moto win and a fourth. His combined time was 89:17.16. Just thirteen-one-hundredths of a second behind Malherbe. That 0.13 of a second meant two more points lost to Malherbe.

To those who understand—awake and sensitive to the reality of 500 GP motocross—it seemed a pity: that the Carlsbad multitude could never see a real Grand Prix, and that the genuine thing was lost on the cows.