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BAD BOYS & LAUGHS!**



ISSN 0364-1546





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**ON THE COVER:** The 250s take to the air in a dogfight for total supremacy, at the able hands of Shane Trittler, Mike Larson, Jimmy Lewis, Jeff Barbacovi and Pete Murray, who certainly should have known better. Cover design by Dennis West; color separations by Valley Film.

**WARNING:** Much of the action depicted in this magazine is potentially dangerous. Virtually all of the riders seen in our photos are experienced experts or professionals. Do not attempt to duplicate any stunts that are beyond your own capabilities. Always wear the appropriate safety gear. *Dirt Bike* does all of its testing and photography legally on public land, or private land with permission from the owner(s), and we abide by the local laws concerning vehicle registration and muffler/spark arrester requirements. We are not responsible for quality of aftermarket accessories we use.

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# HONOR AMONG OUTLAWS

*Clawing to the top  
in Western U.S.  
hillclimbing*

By the Staff of DIRT BIKE

Western hillclimbers found that the AMA's rule-laden National Hillclimb format cut into the basic thrill of the sport so they set out with their own series. Fewer rules make it easier for new and more difficult hills to be added to the schedule of events, and the "sky's the limit" policy on the open exhibition machines opens the door to the paddle-shod rear tires and unlimited engine sizes for the bikes the AMA prohibits. The Western U.S. Hillclimb Championship's final event was to be held at Utah's time-honored Widowmaker but was rescheduled to take place at DeAnza Cycle Park near Sunnymead, California ([714] 653-5840), home to some of the most horrifyingly steep, long and tractionless grades known to man or bike. The park is almost continuously

open and the hills are there if you've got the guts and the horsepower to challenge them.

A never-before-attempted ledged slope was bannered for the points-earning exhibition and open exhibition runs. To the untrained spectator's eyes the route looked absurdly difficult. Riders passing beneath the hill en route to the park's motocross track before the hillclimb event stared at the hill, dumbfounded. Some returned with friends in disbelief. "That's the hill?" asked one rider, adding, "No way." His friend glanced at the





## STRAIGHT TALK ON RACING STRAIGHT UP

• Here are a few interesting facts about the Western U.S. Hillclimb Championship:

• You don't need a special hillclimbing machine to get in on the action. Stock classes abound and minis are welcome so the whole family can compete.

• The "500 exhibition" class is open to 600cc machines. The class name is a confusing carryover from the early days of hillclimbing. Currently, two-stroke 500s dominate this class. Are the supposedly manly four-stroke riders unaware or just afraid?

• Hillclimbing isn't just for fun. Four classes pay cash prizes, down to tenth place at some events! Zero to 600 pro modified, open-modified, 500 exhibition and open exhibition are the money-paying classes. First-place purses usually range from \$200-\$400. Tenth can be worth \$75. A multi-class sweep can earn a rider \$3000. There's no lengthy qualification process; you can go pro at your first event if you've got the gusto and a properly set-up bike.

• Only the 500 exhibition and open exhibition classes earn series points. •

◀ *Hillclimbing blends enjoyable things like a CR500's power, a near-vertical hill and the sudden appearance of traction into a horrifying witches brew, as Tom Johnson discovers.*

## THE KINGS OF VERT

Whitlock drew early rides for both classes, letting him make early runs up a hill that became more difficult with each run. Mel Kimball bettered Whitlock's time on a late exhibition class run, forcing Whitlock to make a second attempt. Whitlock chose a new line that involved charging at a ledge that the other riders were avoiding. He lost time and the exhibition class championship in the deep, loose powder that had accumulated below the ledge.

Open exhibition competition was just as close. Whitlock drew early rides again, although the hill had become so worn and difficult that fast runs were becoming harder to come by. Mel Kimball again outrode Whitlock to grab the lead. Pat and Tom Johnson also turned in impressive rides, bettering Whitlock's initial time but not Kimball's. Whitlock pointed his Yamaha FJ1200-powered YZ490 at the high-risk ledge line for his final run and roosted to the best time of the day. Kimball's second gave him the points to take the championship. □

signs marking the distance up the climb. "Forget it," he said in agreement. "They may as well have the banners on a flagpole," added a third. Discussions like these were common and most of them ended with, "Let's watch!"

For Mel Kimball and Travis Whitlock, points leaders in the 500 Exhibition class and the wild Open exhibition class, the ques-

tion was not if the hill could be topped, but rather which of the two would climb it quicker and win the championship points races. The two had traded wins often enough throughout the six-event series to expect luck to have some say in the day's final results. Mel's brother Kenny, the Johnson brothers, Tom and Pat, and hillclimbing great Kerry Peterson could grab wins in either class, taking valuable points in the process.



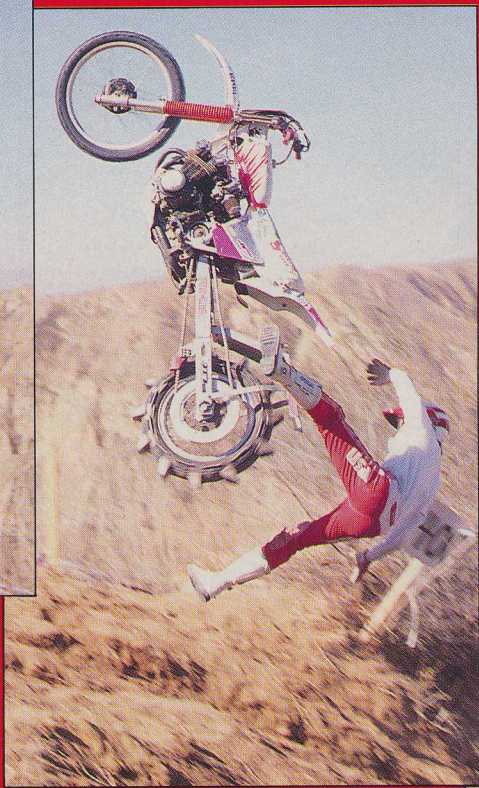
# HONOR AMONG OUTLAWS

**RESULTS:  
WORLD HILLCLIMB  
CHAMPIONSHIP  
FINAL ROUND**

- 500 Exhibition**
1. Mel Kimball . . . . . Hon
  2. Travis Whitlock . . . . . Yam
  3. Kenny Kimball . . . . . Hon
  4. Pat Johnson . . . . . Hon
  5. Kerry Peterson . . . . . Hon
- Open Exhibition**
1. Travis Whitlock . . . . . Yam
  2. Mel Kimball . . . . . Hon
  3. Pat Johnson . . . . . Hon
  4. Tom Johnson . . . . . Hon
  5. Mike Shinnars . . . . . Suz

**FINAL  
POINTS STANDINGS**

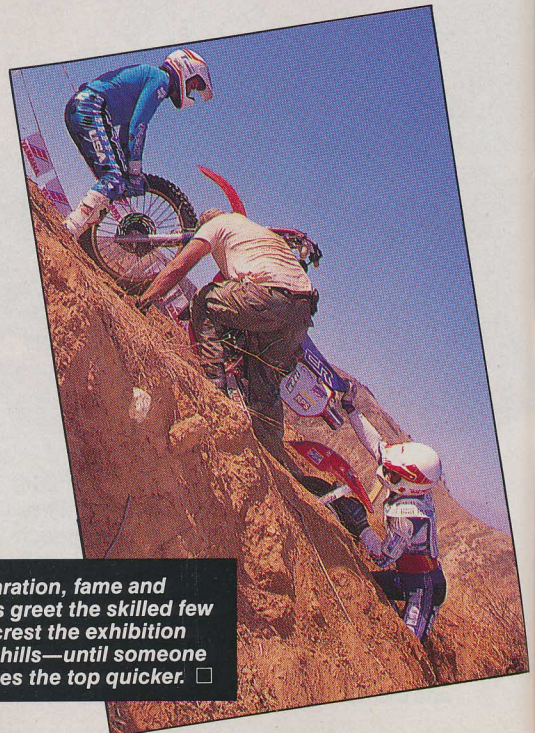
- 500 Exhibition**
1. T. Whitlock (Yam) . . . 112
  2. K. Kimball (Hon) . . . 98
  3. Mel Kimball (Hon) . . . 94
  4. T. Johnson (Hon) . . . 90
  5. P. Johnson (Hon) . . . 89
- Open Exhibition**
1. M. Kimball (Hon) . . . 116
  2. T. Whitlock (Yam) . . . 112
  3. K. Kimball (Hon) . . . 102
  4. T. Johnson (Hon) . . . 88
  5. P. Johnson (Hon) . . . 86



Some riders' machines carry Western Hillclimbing's "sky's the limit" rules for open exhibition machines to the absolute extreme. This Honda's landing sickened spectators and set off earthquake alarms in Los Angeles. ►



DeAnza Cycle Park provided a much shorter but worthy replacement for Utah's famed Widowmaker climb, which was to have been the site of the western series' final round.



Exhilaration, fame and riches greet the skilled few who crest the exhibition class hills—until someone reaches the top quicker. □