

TRICK-TRACKERS: TRANS-AMA BIKES

# DIRT BIKE

JANUARY 1978

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SEE INSIDE

## BRAD LACKEY

"I'M NOT WAITIN'"

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and OSSA GP III**



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**D TRIALS WRAPS  
SPEEDWAY NATIONAL • 1978 BIKES**

# DIRT BIKE

JANUARY 1978 VOLUME EIGHT NUMBER ONE

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**ON THE COVER:**  
From American Eagle to American hope,  
Brad Lackey keeps getting closer.  
Photo by Jim Gianatsis.

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FOURTH IN THE WORLD

# BRAD LACKEY

*He used to be partly leaky; now he's  
America's first 500 GP winner.*

Photography by Dave Dewhurst, Jim Gianatsis and Staff



“  
**“I decided I'd make  
more money racing  
motorcycles than  
working in a gas  
station with a  
diploma.”**  
”

*Eagles, American Eagles  
America's strong just as long as they  
fly*

*More bombers to attack with  
More bombers to paint the sky  
black with*

*Eagles, American Eagles  
America sings of its wings in the sky*  
Ted J. Baloney, noted  
L.A. radio personality

“For what it was I think it was the best thing going,” says Brad Lackey. He's not talking about bombers, but the open class American Eagle racing bike he rode

early in his career. He had a shop ride. “I was so pumped. That was a killer bike then. It was light and fast.”

A lot of knobs have been ground down since then by America's first 500 GP winner. Our own George Blimpton, already an ancient 26, remembers Brad from the early days. Here, let him recall those glorious days of yesteryear. “I remember being out at Indian Dunes and Brad would show up with this really wasted CZ, no knobs left on the tires, leaking out of every orifice. But it always ran and he won, bad tires and all.”

Brad remembers those days too. Turn of the decade. He got his first Trans-Am action back in '70 on a bike borrowed from Carl Cranke. “CZ'd give us a new tire now and then. They'd measure the tread to see if I needed a new one.”

How did Lackey and Cranke, now one of America's premier ISDT riders and a national Endurance Trial champion himself, get together? “I got in touch with Carl because he was the killer tuner up north. He could make anything run fast and stay together and he'd win all the races. We took all my bikes and he worked on them and I paid him 20 percent of what I won. We smoked everybody and spent the money fixing them up more.”

Brad climbed aboard his first Honda 50 at age nine. He swept floors in a shop to buy a Hodaka. Then he earned \$1265 (he still remembers the exact figure) to buy a 360 Montesa before switching to CZ in 1970.



He's crammed a lot into the last seven racing seasons. Brad's first European exposure was back in 1971. He rode half the 250 GP schedule, dropping out of high school with three months to go. "I decided I'd make more money racing motorcycles than working in a gas station with a diploma." He's quick to add that he doesn't recommend the same course of action to other racing hopefuls. His advice to anybody who doesn't have a factory inviting them to go overseas is to stay in school and get that diploma.



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“*I've been riding ten years. I don't need to go practice. I just have to be in shape.*”

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After returning from Europe Brad was second American in the Trans-Am, finishing a single point behind Mark Blackwell.

In 1972 he won the 500 National Championship for Kawasaki. Brad won five of the eight races (he only rode five or six) and "edged" runner-up Gary Jones, who took the 250 title that year, by a 2030 to 829 point margin. And he was top American in the Trans-AMA series, finishing sixth. That was the year Ake Jonsson won the last nine races. Brad almost matched that. He was top American eight times.

1973 saw his full participation in the 500 GP series. He finished 13th. Back here he won two 500 Nationals, then was fired by Kawasaki. "They were going to fire everybody but Weinert had a two-year contract."

Husky was quick to grab him for the '74 GPs. He finished tenth overseas. A year later he scored his first GP moto win and upped his world placing to sixth while also managing to win a 500 National.

Last year he upped it to fifth in the world, added another GP moto win and finished second in the Trans-Am, the top American.

Ol' Partly sounds like a real veteran, doesn't he? But the rider Roger DeCoster picks as the American most likely to win a World Championship just turned 24 this past July. The bearded "grizzled veteran" is just three years older than Bob Hannah and Marty Smith.

Partly? Here's Jim Pomeroy to explain. "It's just a nickname now, but in the old days, '70 and '71, it was because he used to be partly leaky. He used to leave me places. He'd leave everybody. Not very dependable at all. He's more dependable now so we just call him Partly."

It was Brad who foisted Jim's childhood nickname, Bimbo, upon an unsuspecting world. Brad overheard Jim's family call him by that name. "Jim begged me: Don't tell anybody. At the next riders' meeting Jim was asked: Is that clear, Bimbo?" Which probably goes to show why Jim used to consider him partly leaky.

The new, serious Partly has a few more responsibilities these days — Lori and Lia. He married Lori in 1975 and Lia was born during the '76 GP season, shortly after Carlsbad. "Almost all motocross riders have girls."

Brad's tuner, advisor and buddy is Steve Whitelock, whose career with Honda dates back to tuning Rex Staten's four-stroke effort. Before that he was a road race fettler for Kawasaki. That's where Brad first met him, back in '72. Steve went to Europe last year too, taking care of business for Marty Smith and Pierre Karsmakers. Brad's quick to point out how much Steve's experience has been a help to him in getting launched on a new bike with a different factory.

Steve's looking forward to another European season as Brad tries to move that sixth, fifth, fourth progression up another notch or two. "Three more years to go, right? Bullshit! I'm not waiting that long. Not saying I was close to Heikki, but Roger and Gerrit — it's getting closer."

A natural question is why the switch to Honda for '77? "I had some problems with the Husky factory in Europe changing bikes around and I was a little bit upset. Their engineers are a lot smarter than me, but they'd bring something completely different to a Grand Prix. I'd be used to riding one way and then I'd have to ride a completely different motorcycle. They just didn't have any respect for me."

"They made a frame modification like the production bikes now so that it steered a lot better and sharper. They brought that to the Swedish GP and said: Here it is, try it. That was it. I didn't have a backup or anything so I had to ride it. In practice I went off a jump, a pavement dropoff, and I got all sideways and I did a big crash. When you're giving 100-percent effort on the limit, major changes like that just throw you off too much."

"There wasn't that much difference in salary going from Husky to Honda. If Husky didn't want to listen to my ideas on how to change the production bike, that was fine, but I needed the bike I was riding the way I wanted it. With Honda personal preference changes are up to the rider. They came so good though, there's not much to do to them."

"Steve and I went over in the middle of February. I rode one race on the '76 bike. Then we went to Japan for ten days testing and then back to Europe for some more international races. We got the GP bikes two days before a race in England and then we went to Belgium for the Easter trophy races. The next weekend was the first Grand Prix. Meantime, somewhere in there at an international, I crashed and broke my shoulder blade. I didn't really know it was broken until after the first Grand Prix."

Brad was third at the U.S.G.P. at Carlsbad despite that second-moto crash that dropped him out of the

lead. Then in Canada he was second overall before England where Brad posted his win with a one-four ride.

"I really wasn't prepared for any of those races. Like the week we came home — I got hit with a rock and had a mild concussion and the flu. Then I flew home sick and had jet lag and I really wasn't ready for Carlsbad."

"I still wasn't strong in Canada. It was hot there and after 30 minutes I got tired. I got passed by Roger with two laps to go in the first race and finished third. I was



The top four 500 world riders. If ID is necessary switch to reading *Popular Guns and Sandwiches Quarterly*.



It must have been some celebration. Here our hero is brought to his knees by bottled water.

leading the second race until five minutes to go when Gerrit passed me and I got second. I could have won in Canada if I had been halfway decent.

"Then England, Heikki fell off and Roger broke down and I was there at the right time. I won a heat, beat Gerrit, but still I wasn't really right."

"The beginning of the season was a lot better. Usually, for me, it's the second half. The first GP with my bad shoulder was a waste, but I got third in the next one, then won a heat in the next and maybe could

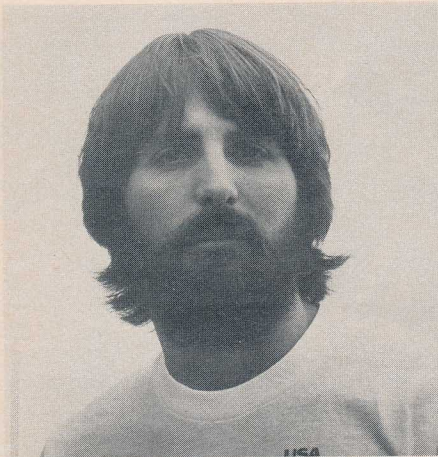


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***“The AMA will do all kinds of things as long as it doesn't involve work.”***  
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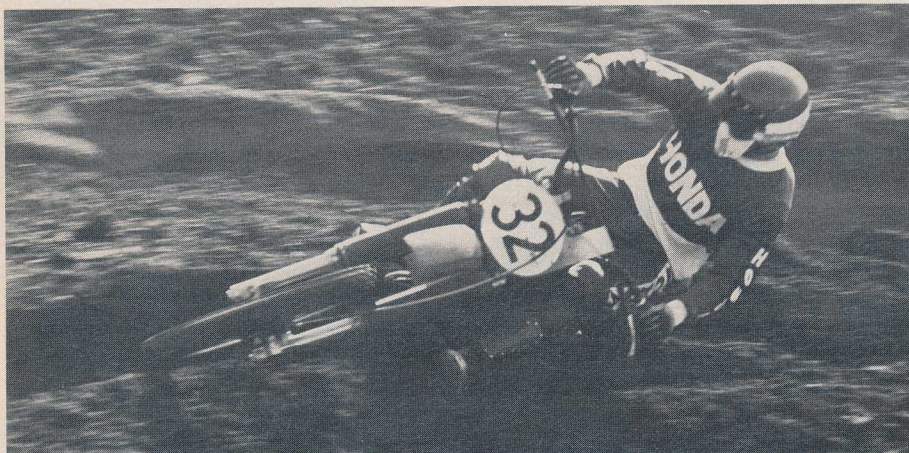
have gotten an overall if the chain hadn't fallen off. Then Finland, I was second and third for second overall.

"When I went back for the last three GPs I was 21 points behind Roger. The first race was Belgium. I got two thirds. In Luxembourg I got a fourth and fifth. I didn't have my suspension set up quite right. And Switzerland, all I got was a seventh. I had a flat in the other moto."

Curious about the reason Brad hasn't ridden the world team motocross events for the U.S. the



Steve Whitelock is the main man with the mean machine. Problems with the Honda during '77 were virtually nil. A thrown chain and two flats. Steve finds the European officials a lot easier to get along with at the races.



“  
“You can look at  
the way it's going.  
It probably had  
something to do  
with Mike  
Goodwin.”  
”

last couple of years?

"I never heard a word from the AMA. If they had approached me at the right time so we could have set our schedule, even halfway through the season, I'd have ridden.

"If they want to win the races their system is ridiculous. I personally think it should be the best America has to offer at the time. I think they should contact all the factories and get them all in on it and put a little money aside or have the AMA pay for it, whatever, and then have a meeting with all the top guys at one of the Nationals. Everybody knows who's winning

the races, they know who's the fastest. Pick it right then. Like, for instance, this year I would have picked Marty (Smith) and Hannah and the two fastest guys in the 250.

"Jim and I are the ones who got the whole thing started. We walked into the AMA and said, we are going to have a team. Let's go. Fix it. They send 85 AMA guys and spend a million dollars on Six Days (said with deliberate exaggeration), but motocross? No interest. We tried a lot of years and did the best we could and got no support from them. And then they do stuff like not picking the team until the day before and then say: OK, you guys ready to go? They did that to us last year. We said, you had all year to figure it out. It's too late now, we're not going. So that's why they hate us. Last year Jim wasn't approached at all and I was approached really late. They need somebody pushing them every second to do anything."

Part of any athlete's dedication is his training program. "You need to practice on a bike something like you're racing. I didn't do that much last year because of the bike changes. Some of these guys 18 and 19, it's really still fun to them, but I've been racing a long time. If I had to go practice three times a week besides race every Sunday, the race wouldn't be exciting.

"I try to do the running and all the outside training so when it's Sunday and I haven't ridden all week, I'm ready to go. I've been riding ten years. I don't need to go practice. I just have to be in shape.

"At the beginning of the season you have to run, even though it sounds stupid and it's no fun. But it's very important. A half-hour to 45 minutes of continuous running. Five days a week, and then when the GPs start you're riding Saturday and Sunday so maybe you take a Monday off from running.

"A lot of stretching is really important. Nobody does that much. The more limber you are, the less chance you're going to be hurt.

"Not too much on weights, a little bit on the upper body, with barbells and isometrics. No heavy stuff. Isometrics have to be the hardest to do and I think they do the most for you. I use 12-pound weights, holding them out without moving for ten seconds, ten sets. I have a program that has 24 different

positions. It doesn't sound like much, but to get yourself to do it every day, it's serious. (*Editor's Note: Watch for a future article detailing Brad's training program in greater depth.*)

"In the beginning you're waiting for the season to start and you have a goal. If I trained every day of the year I wouldn't be mentally happy. So I quit when I get tired mentally. If you've been training all year you won't get out of shape in two weeks."

Brad did want to make a few comments about stadium motocross. "You can look at the way it's going. It probably had something to do with Mike Goodwin. He moved right in and took over Saddleback and that was gone soon enough. (*Editor's Note: According to Vic Wilson of Saddleback the race had lost money during the past three years.*) And now Carlsbad is gone. There are so many Southern California enthusiasts who want to see a good motocross race and they have two choices: Superbowl and Anaheim. Somebody's doing something because there aren't any real races anymore and there should be.

"You have what at a Trans-Am? 5000 to 10,000 people, 12,000 maximum and the promoters pay the purse and they're happy as a clam. They're making money. What's Goodwin got? Sixty thousand paying up to 15 dollars a ticket and he pays a purse that's not much bigger and he says he doesn't make a penny. The riders can't do a thing about it. A lot of the guys don't like to ride those stadium races, but Goodwin is smart. Anybody gives him a problem, he just goes above them.

"Stadium racing should pay a big purse according to how many people go, a percentage of the gate, like car races. We should make more money because there's more risk. I heard that some high school racer got snuffed at Anaheim. (*Editor's Note: That is apparently true. The 1975 event was not AMA-sanctioned and they could not confirm or deny a fatality. The AMA eliminated high school racing from the program with their 1976 sanction.*) It's not good to hide the fact that stadium motocross is more dangerous and should pay more money.

"I'm not trying to get on

Goodwin's case. I'm just trying to have the public be able to see some racing. I don't want to see spectators taken away from stadium motocross. When stadium racing started they said it would bring out a lot of first-time viewers who would then want to go see the real racing too. But look at the way it's going. They cut back on the real races and up the stadium events."

In seven years Brad Lackey has matured from being Partly Leaky to becoming America's Great White Knobby Hope. No Friday morning fly-in, Sunday night fly-home for



him during the GP season. No contingency purses, few promotional contracts, miniscule GP purses and the continual hassles of border-crossing, currency exchange and strange-sounding words. But he's going for the big one, the one that means it all among the world's best. It's a lot easier to be a hero in your backyard and probably more lucrative these days, but there's something about being the best in the world that transcends money and convenience. At least Brad Lackey thinks so. And that's all that counts. Bring it all back home, Brad. Real soon. ⚙

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“We said, you had all year to figure it out. It's too late now, we're not going. So that's why they hate us.”

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