

100 MILES OF BANGING BARS

Naylor & Plessinger duke it out in Missouri

By Chris Hultner

Police and fire department barricades blocked the route into and out of town. Large crowds gathered on street corners, rooftops and train trestles. A four-block area of downtown Flat River, Missouri, was completely closed off from the rest of the town. For what reason? Bank robbery? Fire? No, the town was cordoned off so the townspeople could watch the start of the eighth annual Gale Halbrook Memorial Flat River



The Eighth Annual Gale Halbrook Flat River GP was a knock-down, drag-out battle between Scott Plessinger (3) and Ron "Needles" Naylor for most of the 100-mile race.

GP. This was the second year the race started downtown before heading into the St. Joe State Vehicular Park, and the downtown start is a definite high for the townspeople, who turned out to watch the explosion of color as 600 riders went for the overall win, class wins or just bragging rights.

Put on by the Flat River Chamber of Commerce, the Gale Halbrook Memorial GP features a 17-mile loop that snakes through every type of off-road obstacle, terrain or soil type you can think of, including sand-like chat from abandoned lead mines. Deep desert-like whoops form in the chat, giving the event an East-meets-West flavor. The top experts complete six of these loops in just under four hours, due to many sections of tight woods. Usually run as the last round of the National Hare Scrambles and Missouri State Hare Scrambles series, this year the FRGP served as the Missouri Finale, with the Nationals to be decided here at a later date. Even though it wasn't a National, top riders like Ron Naylor, Tony Hendon, Scott Plessinger, Tim Newell, Jim Stanfield and Chris Caplinger came in hopes of taking home the Memorial Cup.

NAYLOR vs. PLESSINGER

Naylor shot into the lead as the expert wave dropped into the stream crossing at the edge of town, and Team Green's Plessinger gave chase. Plessinger missed a turn and got lost early into the first lap, losing a minute to the leader and dropping back to fifth at the end of the first lap. The Team Green rider wicked it on lap two and started hounding Naylor for the lead. Later, hounding turned to pounding. Naylor said, "Scott was a little more aggressive than I was out there. It seems like whenever he gets behind somebody he almost knocks them down to make the pass. I try to give people a little more respect."

Plessinger made the pass and came through the final check with the lead at the end of lap two, with Naylor keeping the leader in sight. This went on for two more laps, with Plessinger blazing the pace and Naylor waiting for a mistake. The dry, rock-strewn terrain was taking its toll on tires, with Plessinger having front-tire problems and Naylor chunking rear knobs. Finally, Plessinger threw it away big time, so badly that Naylor stopped to see if the Kawasaki rider was all



Strange-sounding, metallic-tanked machines were heard trashing about the woods near Flat River, Missouri. When questioned, the U.S. Weather Service attributed the phenomenon to temperature inversions.

FLAT RIVER

right before taking over the lead and taking the win. He crossed the finish line with no knobs and the cords showing through on his rear tire.

Elated, the ATK rider said, "We went back and forth the whole time out there; I just never made any mistakes. Scott went down a few times, once really hard. I was pushing him pretty close in this one rough section and he got way out of shape and caught a lot of air. He went down so hard that I stopped to make sure he was all right. I think I had an advantage riding an Open bike here; I could hear Scott fanning the clutch and spinning behind me."

Plessinger, nursing a banged-up knee and elbow from the horrendous get-off, remounted for second ahead of Hendon. "The front end kept washing out and I fell a few times out there. I got off really hard there on the last lap and tweaked my knee," Scott said. □

RESULTS 8TH ANNUAL FLAT RIVER GP Flat River, MO

- | | |
|---------------------|-----|
| 1. Ron Naylor | ATK |
| 2. Scott Plessinger | Kaw |
| 3. Tony Hendon | Yam |
| 4. Chris Caplinger | Cag |
| 5. Kelly Getz | Hon |
| 6. Jim Stanfield | Kaw |
| 7. Dwayne Miinch | Hon |
| 8. Steve Lejvan | Kaw |
| 9. Ron Ribolzi | Hon |
| 10. Leigh Letellier | KTM |

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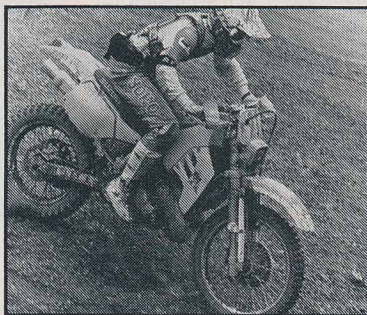
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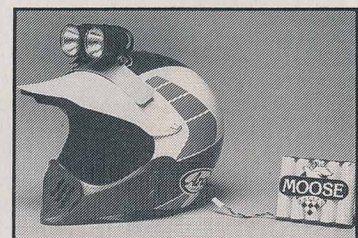
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