

DIRT BIKE DOES THE ISDE

What it's really like to ride on foreign soil

By Robb Mesecher, Mike Rapley & the DIRT BIKE Staff

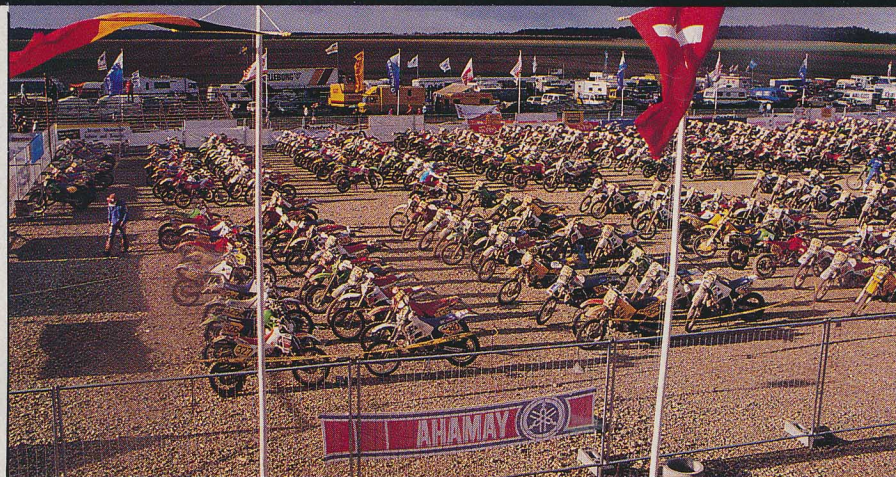
Although America's Ride to Win effort is paying off, we did not set the world on fire at Walldurn, West Germany. Sad but true. So, instead of opening those wounds, let's take a look at what it's really like to ride the ISDE. Robb Mesecher, our advertising account executive, made the trek to Germany as a first-time ISDE rider. Here are his experiences.

FESTIVITIES & NERVOUSNESS

"Before I went over, the guys at Suzuki really helped me get the bike and my mind ready. Charles Halcomb coached me, saying that the trails would be really easy and the special tests would put me in my place, point-wise. We went over a week early and spent three days working on the RMX, setting it up and riding. There was a practice track nearby, so we rode daily. Next to the thrill of riding in West Germany, seeing Stefane Peterhansel ride was the highlight. That guy rides like nobody I've ever seen! He was doing fifth-gear two-wheel drifts in places where I was in fourth.

"All bikes were given technical inspection and the sound test was very stringent. It took me a couple of times to pass. We had to go through a physical, complete with a urine test, and, of course, nobody could do it. There's 50 of us in this room with the faucets running and Gary Hazel comes walking in with a glass of beer, pretending it's his sample, and he drinks it right in front of the German nurses. Everybody lost it!

"The opening ceremonies were awesome, with everyone parading through this quaint German town with cobblestone streets. I was really impressed with the townspeople and how pumped they were to be hosting the ISDE. During the event, children would be in the woods, waving and yelling. There is really no comparison to American race sup-



Luc Verbeke

Parc Ferme ghost town: Easy terrain meant an ISDE that was easy on equipment. Of the 473 starters, 430 earned a medal and the other 33 didn't finish. For the first time ever, all Americans went home with a medal.



Eric Kitchen

port, except for maybe Unadilla.

"The night before Day One, Dave Bertram told me that I would be getting the normal prerace jitters, but I didn't get nervous at all. There was not much pressure on me—a club rider—and I was stoked to be there."

RIDING HIS FIRST ISDE

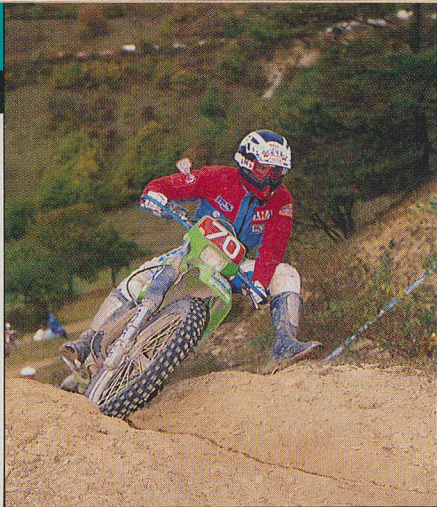
"On Monday I was rested and ready to go. My bike started first kick, as it did every day, but when I got going it felt like I'd never ridden a motorcycle before. I was so nervous my heart was going about 180 beats per minute. You'd come up on a house and there'd be 15 people sitting by the road waving. After a few checks I settled down, until I lost a nut off my linkage bolt. I wired it until the next check. A chase rider fixed me up there. The trails were easy and the highlight of the day was the special test on an old GP track, with lots of plateaus. Watching the Euros ride opened my eyes; they really hold an advantage on grassy tracks because they are so smooth.

"Day Two was the reverse of Day One, so it was easy, but the tests were challenging. Near the end of Day Three it started raining. I couldn't believe how slippery it got. I slid out in a little woods section. I picked

Twin brothers, different mothers: Larry Roeseler (5) and Italian Marco Rossi campaigned the ISDE on almost identical KX80/125s. Here L.R. blows by Rossi in the final special test, but Rossi came out on top in the final standings.

No joy in Mudville: DIRT BIKE's Robb Mesecher threw it away in the rain, bending his shift shaft. Suzuki's Mark Mangold coaches him through the most nervous 20 minutes of wrenching in the ISDE rookie's life. ▼





Eric Kitcher

Elder statesman: Jeff Freddette, besides earning a gold medal in the 125 class, helped America by coaching the riders with later numbers on strategy and bike preparation for the following days.



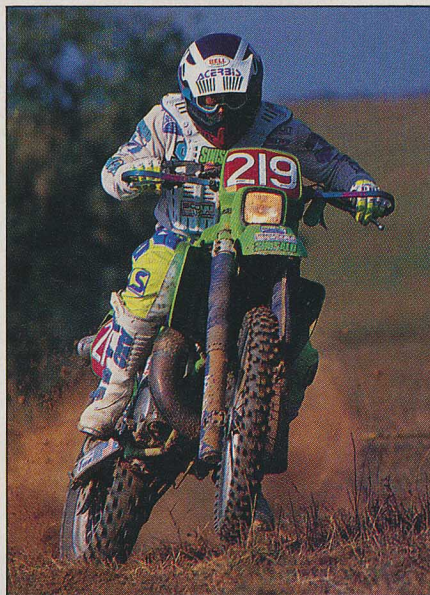
Eric Kitcher

Not a 125: Frenchman Laurent Pidoux threw his Husky 510 around like it was a 125 throughout the West German ISDE. He led overall at times and won the Open Four-Stroke class handily.



Eric Kitcher

Miraculous weight loss: Stephane Peterhansel survived a high-speed crash and his bike being found nine pounds too light to take the overall ISDE victory, his second in two years.



Luc Verbeke

The West German ISDE was like a street ride. Kurt Hough stifles a yawn on his way to Gold.

the bike up again, thinking, 'No big deal.' Later it began jumping out of gear. Then I lost third gear. I nursed it to the end of the day and all through the next day but lost more gears. My test scores suffered, with only fourth and fifth.

"The stress from the bent shaft had caused the locator pin to fall out. Mark Mangold talked me through the teardown and handed me tools. I came in 14 minutes early to tear it down and had ten minutes the next morning [Day Five] to put it back together. I woke up in a cold sweat several times that night. Mangold talked me through it and I got it together and only lost one point. People were standing three-deep, watching me wrench in the cold. The schedule was picked up that day, so it was challenging, and I rode as hard as I could.

"Going into Day Six I was 29 seconds off of Gold. The last special test was long enough that I could get back on Gold. The start of the moto was hairy, with a sharp, grassy first turn. I got a fourth-place start but in the third turn I was trying to pass this guy and his rear wheel slid out and tagged my front wheel. I went down and had to ride by Braille to try to catch up in the dust. I ended up missing the gold medal by 26 seconds, but there's always next year!" □

RESULTS: TEAM POINTS, 64TH ISDE
Walldurn, West Germany

WORLD TROPHY		JUNIOR TROPHY	
1. Italy	469.50	1. Finland	921.20
2. Sweden	805.80	2. W. Germany	953.40
3. W. Germany	1163.40	3. France	1025.99
4. Czechoslov.	1165.00	4. E. Germany	1365.57
5. E. Germany	1308.30	5. Czechoslov.	1654.61
6. USA	1771.10	6. Sweden	1673.63
7. Great Britain	1992.70	7. USA	2047.79
8. Holland	2034.60	8. Poland	2746.75
9. Finland	2584.80	9. Holland	2283.72
10. Austria	3153.40	10. Mexico	2746.75

64th ISDE FACTS & FIGURES

- Defending ISDE Champion Stefane Peterhansel took the overall victory aboard a 360cc-kitted YZ250WR. Frenchmen Alain Boissonade (TM), Laraunt Charbonnel (Hus) and Laurent Pidoux (Hus) topped the 80cc, 350cc four-stroke and Open four-stroke classes, respectively, but their Trophy Team amassed serious penalty points for bike swapping on Day Two. They finished 20th.
- Peterhansel won despite crashing in the Day Two Cross-Country test and having his bike mysteriously lose almost nine pounds at the end of Day Four. The bike met the FIM weight limit on Day Five and officials declared their scale faulty, explaining the discrepancy.
- Belgium was also a prerace favorite, with MX specialists Marc Velkoneers, Alaine Lejeune and Marnicq Bervoets, but 80cc rider Bernard Magain broke on Day Two. They finished 19th.
- Italy took the World Trophy home de-

spite losing their top ISDE rider, Tulio Pellegri-nelli, before the event started. Marco Rossi (Kaw) was second 80, Stefano Passeri (Hus) finished second 125, Angelo Signorelli was fourth 125, Paolo Fellegaro (Kram-It) was top 250 and Franco Gualdi took third 350 four-stroke. Their sixth team member was Luca Trussardi.

- Sweden took over second when France's Alain Olivier was disqualified for swapping bikes on Day Two. Consistency kept them in the runner-up position throughout the six days. Sweden's Junior Trophy team was sixth.
- Finland took the Junior Trophy by a scant 32 points over host country West Germany. It was Finland's first Junior-team ISDE victory.
- America's Junior Trophy Team finished Day One in last after Todd Harris had to change a clutch on the trail. Harris, Randy Hawkins, last year's top American Fred Hoess and Aaron Hough *banzai*-ed through the remaining days for seventh overall in Junior competition.
- America's World Trophy team bettered its placing over last year by three positions.

Gold medalists Larry Roeseler, Dave Bertram, Kurt Hough, Jeff Fredette, Jeff Russell and Terry Cunningham finished sixth. Cunningham rode half of the event with a broken foot!

- Top American was former 250 World Champ Danny LaPorte, who finished 11th 500. LaPorte was very quick in special tests but dropped from tenth in the final moto after suffering a flat front tire.
- Our highest placing in class was second in the 350 four-stroke class. Way to go, Jimmy Lewis! Next came Roeseler, who finished third in the 80s.
- Robby Neeley was the only American to win a moto. Neeley came from third to win his final 500cc moto for a bronze medal.
- All 46 Americans (one did not start) finished the ISDE. Twenty-three took gold medals, 20 took silver and three finished with bronze.
- Competitors felt the event was too easy. The German environmentalists managed to block the use of new trails. Adrenaline was at a minimum and boredom was maximum. Of the 473 starters, only 33 retired. •