

NAT'L MX OPENER / WHAT'S WORKS FOR '77

DIRT BIKE

JULY 1977

34355

\$1.00
UK60p

175cc ENDUROS

YAMAHA

CAN-AM

PENTON

**WHICH
IS KING?**

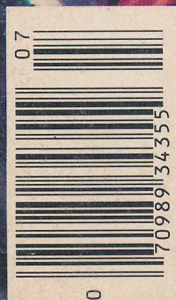
CAN-AM 250

MX3-

WONDER IN

ELLIS

LAND?



DIRT BIKE

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ON THE COVER:

Pomeroy is back! Wegner shot the Hangtown photo.

NEXT ISSUE ON SALE JULY 19

KICKOFF AT CAL CITY

A desert qualifier with mud

by Dave Schoonmaker

Photos by Theresa Hannon and me

Cresting the rise from Rosamond (home of America's space shuttle), the sleet finally deteriorated to snow. Bristly, anthropomorphic Joshua trees began to sport dandruff while the four DB truck cylinders hummed in rhythm with the "sloop, sloop" of the windshield wipers. Headlights poked quickly from the gloom and turned red as they disappeared in the rear-view mirror behind the Preston Petty headlight/number plate on my bike.

Desert qualifier? The famous dusty whoop-de-dos of the Cal City Two-Day were getting a new coat of paint. I was on my way to take some pictures and pit for a friend; elected to shine on the dust myself. Dust? No dust in the desert forecast that weekend.

At the Lakeshore Inn there were sniffling grins. Cold, wet and miserable, everyone seemed to sense how much better it was than what could have been. Bill Uhl and Carl Cranke had been there since Thursday morning but the weather kept their noses pressed to the insides of plate glass windows. Someone said there was a foot of snow on Government Peak. California desert qualifier riders were about to have a real interaction with ma nature at her most fickle.

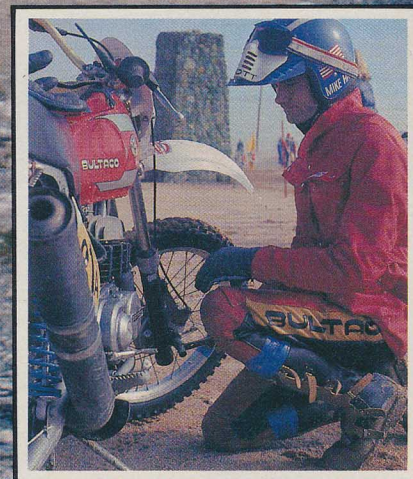
My buddy Gil had been around for hours anxious to impound and bustling with the excitement of his first two-day. We sniffed around a little and then headed into the sleet to impound his bike. Familiar faces not seen for nearly a year sometimes lose their names, but there is that recognition: a mudhole at Bad Rock, wherever. And some new faces. KTMs and Huskys and a sea of blueness — the ITs have arrived. Yamaha could have been kind enough to make them in more than one color. The tedium of it.

Myself, I bet on good weather for the weekend. There is a rule for qualifiers: however the weather is on Friday, it will be entirely different on Saturday. Saturday morning crawled out of a sack in a dense fog. By ten there would be blueness. Cold, wet motorcycles were frequently hesitant to go. Couldn't blame them really; who could say what manner of atrocities would lay in a wet desert?

But Saturday was not bound to be a qualifier day. Nervous over the snow in the high country, the Shamrocks ditched their high loop and reduced speeds by half on the lower desert loop. There were the difficulties just getting out to mark in the goop and a general



Al Baker/KTM



Mike Hannon/Bultaco





Malcolm Smith negotiates some of the infamous desert mud near Government Peak.

paranoia over the abilities of the desert clan to survive the nastiness. Unfortunately, I won my bet and Saturday proved to be the finest day of the year in the desert. Charles Bethards: "Mud? There's so much traction out there you can drag your handlebars."

After the initial 45-mile ride out to the central pit area 133 minutes of riders headed off over the ridge to what? Traction, what else? Saturday's story involved people being as much as 75 minutes early at checks and traffic in the narrow canyons of the special test. I gassed Gil up twice, fed him some oranges and dates which he really didn't need and watched the mass of riders at the control build to overflowing. Poor Shamrocks — how could they have known?

At the Lakeshore Inn Saturday night there wasn't much weariness, just apprehension. What would be the retribution for this day of leisure? Were the Shamrocks about to kick the you-know-what out of everyone? Saturday's times were finally posted into Sunday morning and Mike Hannon held a death grip on the lead. Mike claimed a mediocre test but stood a full ten seconds up on local resident Mike Keen. Cordis Brooks, normal spoiler of the event, had terrible traffic

in the test and stood only six seconds ahead of Eric Jensen and Bill Uhl in the 250. By then it was a moot point that the Army's Bob Messer actually beat Mike by two seconds. Bob's rather hyper Maico took a firm grip on its lower end ten miles before day's end.

Sunday morning shrugged its shoulders once and jumped out of bed. Bikes started easily in the morning sun and a large part of the original entry headed out to do battle with a desert that was turning hard fast. I slipped out to the gas control before Gil arrived on minute 128 and my suspicions were confirmed: hard desert and fast speeds. Today there was to be a qualifier.

Al Eames had borrowed an IT175 from Bill Stewart, so I bypassed my pitting responsibilities to head out with Al on the high loop for a looksee. Miles of marvelous, relatively virginal trail greeted us and we parked atop a fairly steep hill to watch it happen. The "haves" wheeled up for my camera and the "have nots" grunted and pushed. I was amazed as Al seemed to know everyone, noted weaknesses and strengths and provided an ongoing conversation about the nuances of endurance trial competition. But since we were in search of a special test, it was back to the bikes and back to the



M. Hannon demonstrates near the top of "Have-Have Not" hill.



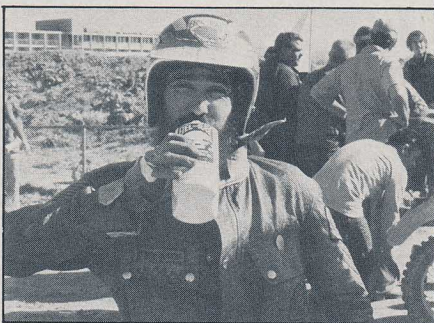
Bultacomates from left to right: Charles Bethards, Cordis Brooks and Mike Hannon.

lowland bumps and whoops.

Speeds picked up as the day wore on and marginal riders began to fall late at controls. As the full two hours passed me by in the second special test, the numbers were jumbled, with blue helmets predominating the high numbers. From my perch I watched SCORE racing #1 Al Baker elevate the entire section of bumps and rocks where I sat. Bill Uhl's Rotax-powered Uhl 250 screeched and hopped on by, letting its 30-plus horsepower flail alternately at ground and sky. I swear that Mike Hannon's body never



Al Baker heads skyward during Sunday's final special test.



Bet none of you ever knew that Bill Uhl was a health nut.



Did Barry Higgins really have fun in the desert?

changed position through a series of "S" bends — he just flipped the Bultaco back and forth between his legs. Barry Higgins was smooth for his first desert outing. But Gil was late so I headed for the gas pit to investigate.

At the gas control Gil was back on time, but had run a minute through his grace at one control. His riding partner, Malcolm Smith, had necessarily picked up speed and Gil's pace controller had disappeared over the horizon. Gold was looking tenuous. Meanwhile, Carl Cranke was playing little games with the referee, who unfortunately didn't know the rules as well as Carl, and Malcolm was fixing a flat.

Homeward bound now, we hurried back to the Inn to ready some beverages for our incoming hero. Speeds from gas control in were pure race and riders were coming with few spare minutes. Blue helmets were of course in good form, and finally Gil's KTM performed its last perfect deed of the day, carrying him one minute into grace. Excited to be at the end but tired: "Man, when I get my hands on the guy who makes these shocks. They beat the helmet out of me. You know, I think Malcolm might like a pair though, they worked better than his."

Throughout the evening there was the dinner and the waiting and shock talk. "Man, my back hurts so bad. Did

you see so and so's Macaronis? Only one left, the other got away completely." Or, "Hey Gil my shocks are too hard but they bottom, but you know they've got pretty good action." Somehow I don't think he wanted to hear it.

Waiting and more waiting. Bill Geier, Al Eames, Gil, Mike Hannon and I awaited one thing or another. Bill wondered if his protest of the flag position at a control would be honored or if he would be docked seven early minutes. Al wondered who won so he could call the shop with the good news. Gil wondered about his Gold or Silver. Mike wondered about the overall. I wondered when I'd get to go to sleep. At midnight we gave up and Al lodged himself into the DB truck's spacious accommodation for the drive back to the beeg city. Past the crest at Rosamond the snow was gone but the space shuttle maintained status. Two more events at Cal City and it'll make a fine substitute for the moon.

Oh, and by the way, I read in *Cycle News* that these people won:

RESULTS

OVERALL: Cordis Brooks (Bul) 1370.75
125: Joe Klokkevold (KTM) 1655.30
175: Rick Munyon (Hon) 1488.60
250: Cordis Brooks (Bul)
350: Mike Hannon (Bul) 1387.35
500: Al Baker (KTM) 1383.70
CLUB TEAM: Pacific Performance (Jim Jenkins, Fred Cameron, Russ Powell)
MFG. TEAM: Bultaco (Cordis Brooks, Mike Hannon, Ben Bower)



Also bet you never knew that Carl Cranke puts his front wheel down sometimes.