

**EXCLUSIVE: YAMAHA'S MONO-SHOCKING IT250**

# **DIRT BIKE**

IND

MAY 1977

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**125 MXers  
SHOT OUT:**

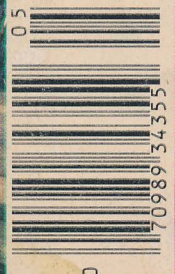
**YAMAHA  
vs. HONDA  
vs. SUZUKI**

**CRASHIN'  
IN FASHION:  
GIANT COLOR  
RIDING GEAR  
SECTION**

Retailers: See Page 85 for Special Display Allowance Plan

**HONDA'S MR175: TEST AND TIPS**

**DESERT BLASTIN' AND SHORT TRACKIN':  
PARKER DAM 400 AND HOUSTON'S ASTRODOME**



# DIRT BIKE

VOLUME SEVEN NUMBER FIVE MAY 1977

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ON THE COVER: Yamaha ISDT Gold Medalist John Fero baptizes the DIRT BIKE IT250. Woods got the wet lens.

NEXT ISSUE ON SALE MAY 19

# THE HOUSTON NATIONALS

*The Camel Pro Series  
opens hint at surprises in store*

Story by Dan Mahony

Photos by Mahony and Devne Stewart



National No. 1,  
Jay Springsteen,  
started off the  
season right with  
short-track victory.

(to the tune of "Unforgettable") "Unpredictable . . . that's what they are . . . The Houston Nationals . . . the best by far . . ." Well, as Arlo Guthrie once said, "I know it ain't the best song I ever wrote."

But that still accurately describes the annual National Championship season opener at the Houston Astrodome. Every year it has the largest rider turnout, some 280 professional Experts from all over the United States. With them they brought a variety of new (and some weird) equipment, four months of stir-crazy enthusiasm, and lots of surprises. Last year's TT National winner, Rick Hocking, sported a nifty new scar on his leg from winter surgery. Kenny Roberts, a three-time winner at the 'Dome, unveiled his own design monoshock-framed racers. Grand National Champion Jay Springsteen had the ugliest short-tracker around, with a plastic Elsinore gas tank, high-mounted Petty rear fender, mag wheel on the front/spoke wheel on the rear combination, and a through-the-frame exhaust. Gary Scott flashed his new Evel Knievel leathers around and rode a TT500 Yamaha with a Gary Scott Racing Frame. John Gennai rolled out the Triumph 750 twin which Dave Hansen won the Houston TT National with in 1974. Hansen opted to ride a new TT500 with a Roberts frame. '75 Short Track winner Darryl Hurst dusted off his three-year-old Ossa saying that he always knew that it would be good for something someday.

The new AMA rules for 1977 specify a 250cc limit for short-trackers. That item did just what it was planned to do, which was to get more brands into racing. The Penton (and KTM) factory made an appearance, as did Carabela, Ossa, Can-Am and Montesa. In the lineup for short-track qualifying also were Elsinores, Suzukis, Bultacos, Kawasakis and even a Moto Islo. Oh yeah, and Harley-Davidsons.

The first order of the weekend was practice and qualifying for the TT riders. Most everybody with two-strokes found out that they were too pipey for the Astrodome course. Those with 750 Harley V-Twins found them hard to steer. The course was just put down on the floor of the 'Dome a few days before the races, and had never felt the wrath of several 80-

horsepower motorcycles. After practice the track surface was pretty well chewed up, particularly in the landing area after the jump. An interesting observation here is that nearly all of the Yamaha 500s would land off the jump nice and smooth, whereas the bigger Harley and British twins (and the 750 Yamahas, too) would continually land out of shape and horn-dancing. But after time trials, the twins held the top four spots, and seven out of the top ten. At the head of the list was Gennai with a 26.532-second clocking, followed by Roberts, Hateley and Randy Scott. Rick Hocking was fifth fastest.

As is the custom at Houston, confusion, controversy and crashes led off the first heat race of the evening. First off, Steve Elo ended off the jump on the warm-up lap. While he was trying to wake up, Hocking and Gennai motored back to the pits. Gennai was back in a flash, but the Hock took a few minutes longer. Meanwhile, the

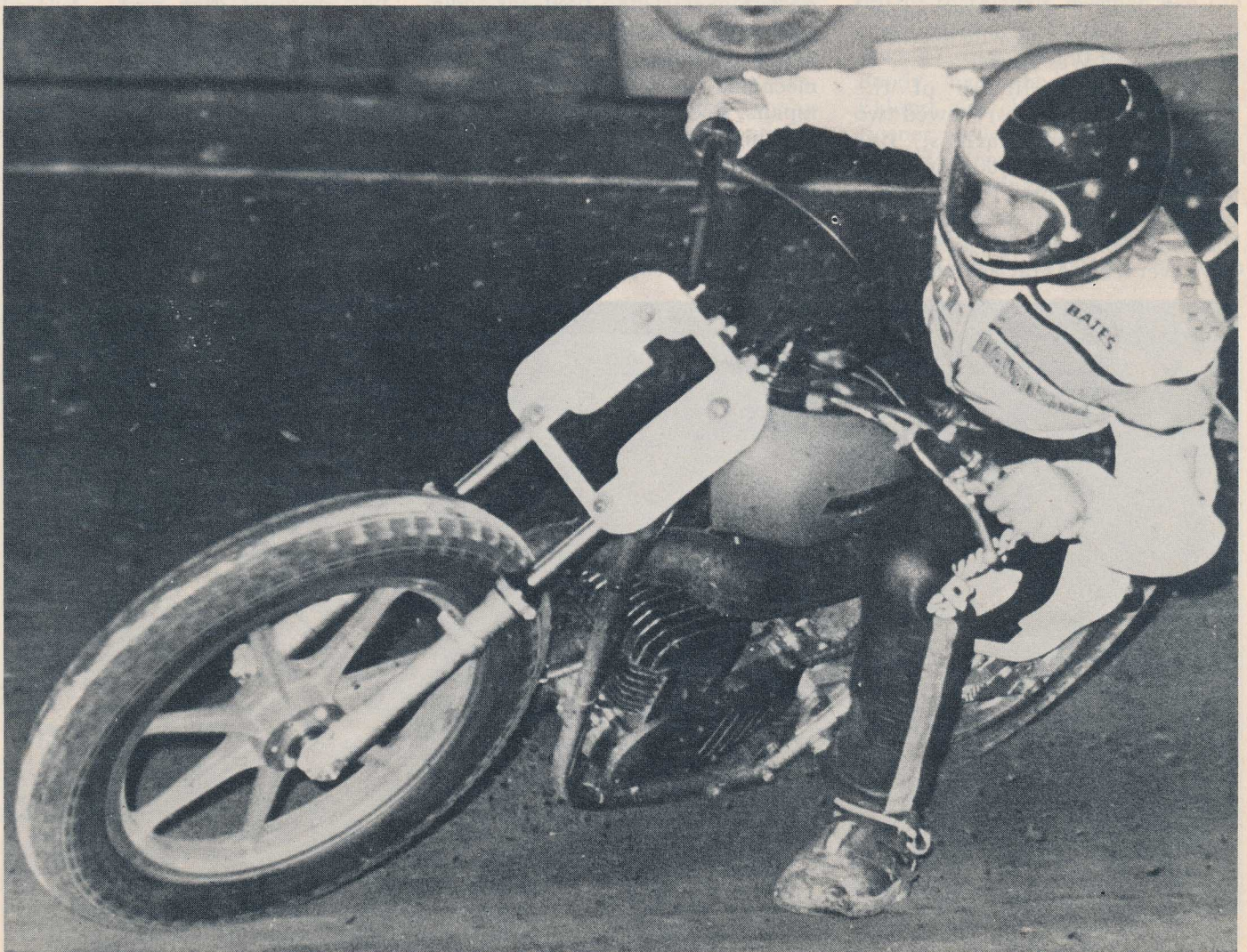
officials called upon first alternate Terry Poovey to replace Hocking. They tried to flag the race off while Hocking was arguing with the officials, but Poovey's engine gave up on the starting line. The second alternate, Wes Powell, was called in, and we got a start. The referee also got a one-finger salute from Hocking. Gary Scott and John Gennai went back and forth for the distance of ten laps, with the win going to Gennai. Alex Jorgenson BSA'd his way to third and last transfer to the final.

Heat race number two found some anxious left hands, and over half of the field was put on the penalty row for trying to jump the green light. The bad guys included Roberts, Springsteen, Brad Hurst, Bruce Hanlon, Gary Tonda, Steve Droste, Dave Hansen and Frank Word. Without much competition within 50 feet, Texan Jim Rawls had the first turn all to himself and then managed to hold off charges from Kenny Roberts for half of the race

before letting the Yamaha teamster past. Rawls held onto second position to the finish, beating out Hanlon, with Springsteen in fourth and going to the semis.

John Hateley powered to the front aboard his trusty Triumph in the third heat race and was never bested. At the end of the ten laps, Hateley had a comfortable lead and the quickest heat of the evening. New Harley-Davidson team member Ted Boody fought it out with Randy Skiver for second place for most of the distance, with the nod going to Michigan's Boody.

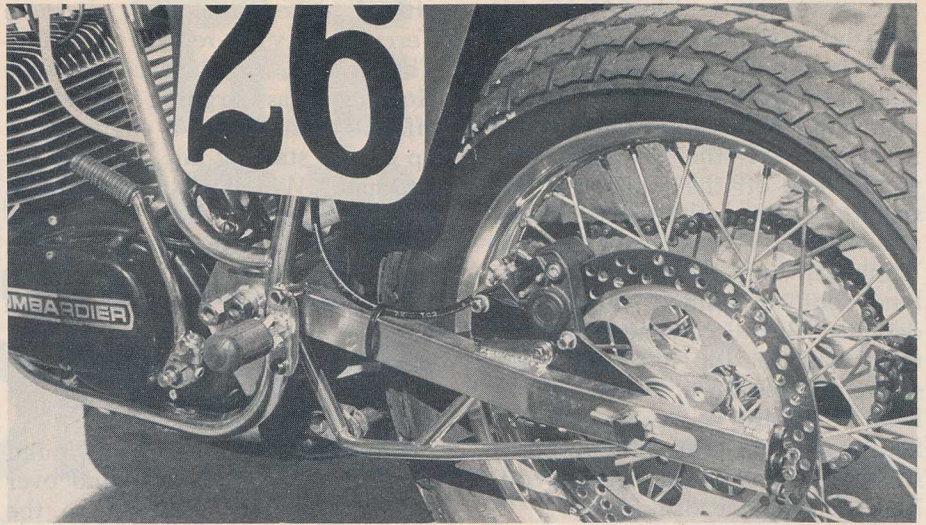
Surprises. I did mention those, didn't I? Well, in the fourth and final preliminary, an expected runaway win for Steve Eklund turned into a third place finish, some distance behind Bill Oliver (second) and Mickey Fay (first). Fay is a first-year Expert out of TT country (Pacific Northwest), and he simply went out and earned his National Number by assuring himself a place in the point-paying



National Final. On a BSA yet. A used one. Very used. Randy Scott lost his chance for some National points along with his chain, while Hank Scott had a surprise of his own. For just a split second, Hank had time to realize that his throttle was stuck and he was heading for the jump. Next thing he knew he was 15 feet in the air without a motorcycle. The whole thing didn't do wonders for Hank's new paint job or new leathers.

The two semis proved the undoing for the two most promising rookies on the National circuit. Randy Goss lost the first semi to Jay Springsteen when the former's TT500 threw a chain and let the latter go on to the win. Chuck Joyner put his Triumph into the final by being there when Scott Pearson's brakes let go in the second ten-lap semi. Pearson held on for third, riding a super race with no rear brake. The Trophy Final, the race for the "almosties," again threw rear brake trouble at rookie Pearson, and he again faded from an early lead. Ted Davidson picked up the lead and the win over Guy McClure and Wes Powell.

The 14-rider lineup of the National Final (25 laps) showed two BSA 750s, two Harleys, five Triumphs, three TT500s and two Yamaha 750 twins. Now, here I gotta say that the next 25 laps were the most confusing 25 laps that I have ever seen. As far as I could tell

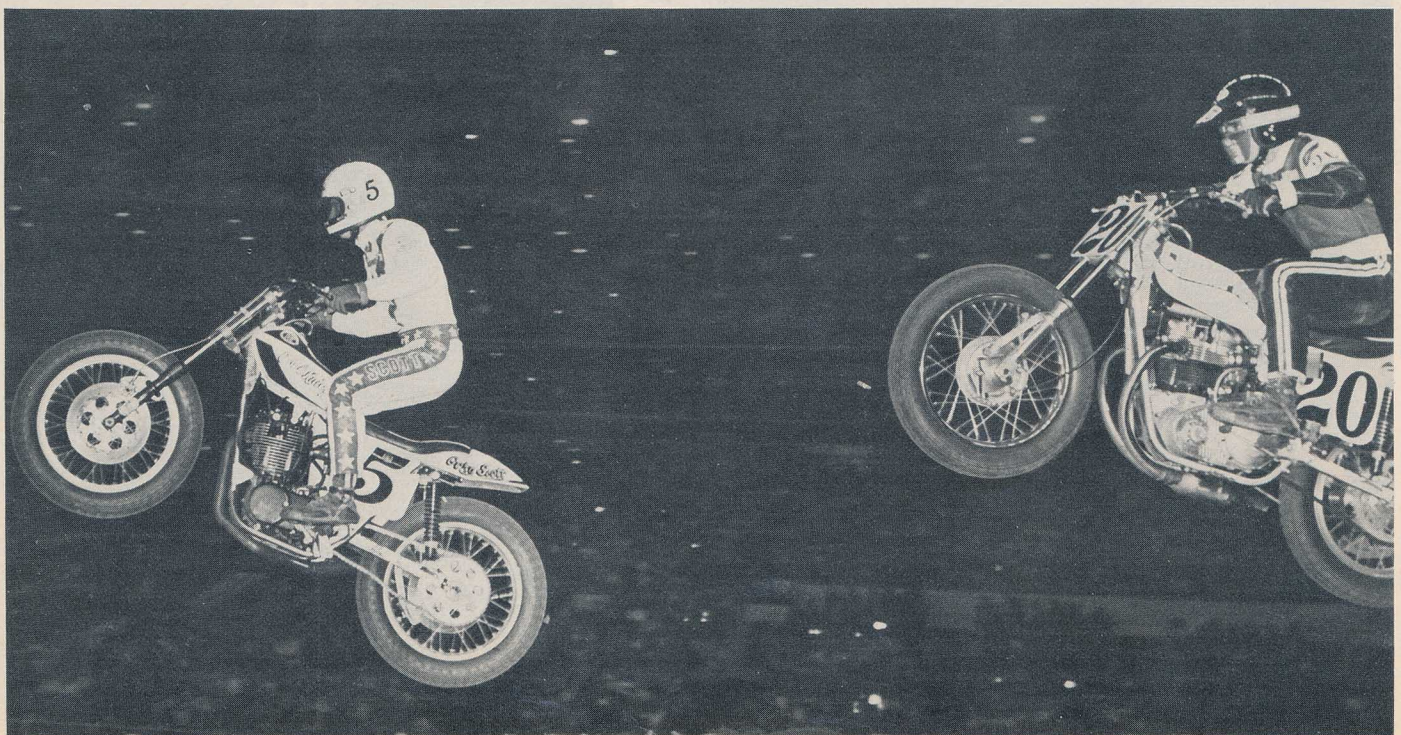


Houston always brings out new and interesting machinery, witness Ken MacDonald's monoshock.

(I'm only one man), the following things happened in the Main Event: Rookie Mickey Fay jumped into the lead, followed by Scott, Boody, Roberts, Hateley and Gennai. Somehow Bruce Hanlon got up in there, and challenged Fay for the lead. Gary Scott's chain fell off while he was in contention for the lead (I told you that the track was rough). While Scott and his mechanic were making on-track repairs, Boody crashed. Roberts ran into him and crashed. Skiver rode over him and crashed into Springsteen. Springer kept it on two wheels (how?) while Skiver went thud. Hanlon took the lead, as Fay got tired and slipped back to finish

eightth. Hanlon went into neutral after the jump and fell trying not to crash. You had to see that to understand it. Then Randy Skiver did the same, only he *did* crash. Into the hay bales on the outside of turn three. That's also the inside of turn five, and for the next couple of laps the rest of the riders had to thread their way through six or eight bales. That's the trouble with putting a half-mile-long track in a building. Anyway, about that time, Springsteen fell off and remounted in last place. Last, except for Scott, who spent two laps with his chain.

All of a sudden, Hateley was in the lead. No, it's Gennai. No, Hateley. The two went back and



forth like that for the next few laps until Hateley got a bit too sideways in the infield and lost about a second. Gennai's front number plate fell off. Then, a lap later, Gennai fell off! Of all the silly things to do! He was back up and gone in an instant, but it only took Hateley half an instant to grab the lead. While Gennai was trying to regain his composure (it must be pretty embarrassing to throw it away in front of 30,000 people), Alex Jorgenson zipped past into second. Lo and behold, the final three laps of the race held only smooth laps by the leaders, and John Hateley collected his second Astrodome National win.

Well, hell. We all had to get up early the next morning and start it all over again. The tenth annual Astrodome Short Track National. Practice; and Springsteen looks good. So do Hocking, Jorgenson, Hateley and Roberts. Qualifying, and it's Hank Scott on top, one of only three riders in the 14-second bracket, along with Springer and Jorgy. The ASTRO-Scoreboard flashed a time for Gary Scott that was nearly a full second faster than anyone else. Then they changed the "14" to a "15" and everyone's mouths closed. The 60 top qualifiers (the rest go home) were separated by only .658-second. Hank Scott took the first heat race over Dave Hansen, Hocking in third, Springer snuck past Terry Poovey in the final turn to win the second heat race, the fastest of the six to be run. Ohio's Steve Morehead won the third prelim over Randy Cleek.

The fourth heat was when the action started. To begin with, Ken Hapke and Gary Scott tangled in turn one and both went down. Restart. Rookie Randy Goss leaped from the back row toward the lead, which was being contended by Mike Kidd and Larry Cooper. Hapke again nailed Scott, and shoved him back to last. Then Hapke nailed Rob Beary. Then Hapke nailed Mike Gerald. That was a mistake. It is another custom at Houston that several thousand Louisiana fans sit in one section and yell for their only Louisiana hero, Mike Gerald. When Hapke knocked Gerald back to last place, the fans got so riled up that the AMA officials decided to black-flag, and disqualify Hapke rather than risk a

riot. By the way, Goss won, Kidd seconded.

Randy Goss was the first short-track rider in the ten-year history of 'Dome racing to win a heat from the back row. His fellow Michigan rider Corky Keener was the second. Keener took the fifth heat race over Texan Jimmy Mayo. The final ten-lapper fell to the SX250 Harley of Ten Boody. The 18-year-old H-D factory rider held off repeated attacks by Kenny Roberts.

The two semis, for the two last spots in the National final, went wire-to-wire with Steve Eklund in the first one and Scott Pearson in the second one. Semi One was stopped on lap two when Preston Windom got sideways in front of Alex Jorgenson, who went up and over and down in a heap with Windom. While all this was going on on the back straight, Ted Davidson somehow managed to almost hit the starter by falling into the infield on the front straight. Scott Pearson finally solved his brake problems of the previous night (he used only a compression release on his short-tracker), and picked up a National spot in the second semi. California's Skip Aksland picked up a win in the Trophy Final. Skipper had to do business with Larry Cooper, Darryl Hurst and Rick Hocking, but, after two near-misses here last year, Aksland was having none of second place. Gary Scott failed to make the

starting line in that one with a crank end-seal failure.

For all you statistics-minded folks out there in magazine land, the short-track final consisted of five Yamahas, four Harleys, three Bultacos, one Penton (wrenched on by Carl Cranke) and one Can-Am. Away we go, with Steve Morehead in the lead, for a lap. Then Springsteen took over and just rode away with it. He only bobbed one time, coming out of turn two too sideways and looking back, but all he saw was Boody and Kidd doing battle, a long way back. Morehead, who had changed gearing before the start of the National, was coming to the realization that the track wasn't going to groove up like he thought, as he slipped back into oblivion. On his way backwards, he had a chance to say "hi" to Roberts, who was on the move up from 12th place after a lousy start and who had his hands full of unwieldy monoshock. Just when Roberts thought that he had it well in hand, Eklund slipped past him and took off for the leaders. Seemed like the thing to do, so Roberts followed, towing Corky Keener. By the finish, Boody had daylight on Kidd, Eklund was clear of Roberts, and Keener wished that there had been a couple more laps to catch Kenny.

I asked Springsteen how come his mo'sickle was so ugly. He said, "Cuz we just put it together. It was my motocrosser all last winter." ❁

