

# IS WARD THE NEW SUPERCROSS CHAMPION?

Only the AMA knows for sure

By Joe Colombero



Johnny O'Mara put together a 3-1 night for the overall victory. The O'Show rode effortlessly throughout the event and ignored all of the hoopla surrounding the title showdown.

Pasadena is not the type of town where you would expect to find a championship round of the Supercross series being held. Pasadena is a rich city, often considered a retirement community where white-

haired men escort blue-haired ladies to the beauty parlour, where they get their blue hair carefully tinted blue.

Pasadena sits in the foothills of Southern California, with golf courses and parks, and shopping malls and country clubs. It's quiet, serene, and very relaxed, until the thunder of several hundred two-stroke engines comes to life in the center of the sleepy village and the flag drops on the final round of the American Supercross series. The Rose Bowl is open again, but it's not a football game that is being played. No, motorcycle racers have come to town, and in four hours of racing, they will make the excitement of the Rose Parade seem like a round of miniature golf!

## THE PLAYERS

Yamaha's Broc Glover came to the Rose Bowl with a new 500cc National Championship, a broken wrist, and a tie for the points lead in the Supercross Championship with Kawasaki-mounted Jeff Ward. The pain from the broken wrist would be a factor in the race, and the Glover/Ward battle would seemingly be decided on the last lap of the last moto of the night.

Honda-mounted Ronnie Lechien showed up in Pasadena with a fresh 125cc National Championship crown, a mere two points behind Glover and Ward, and a gutload of enthusiasm.

Team Green's Jeff Ward had no new championship to boast of but was healthy, strong, and had years of experience to keep him cool when the pressure got hot.

All three came to the Rose Bowl with a chance to win the Supercross Championship. There would be no complicated mathematics; the man who beat the other two contenders would be the new champion. It would be simple. Or would it?

## PLAYING IT BY THE RULES?

The first three qualifiers ran smoothly; the racing was good and the crowd was pleased with the tight action. Then heat number four came to the line, featuring the three contenders for the crown. The bets were down, and the bulls were about to lock handlebars. Then it all fell apart.



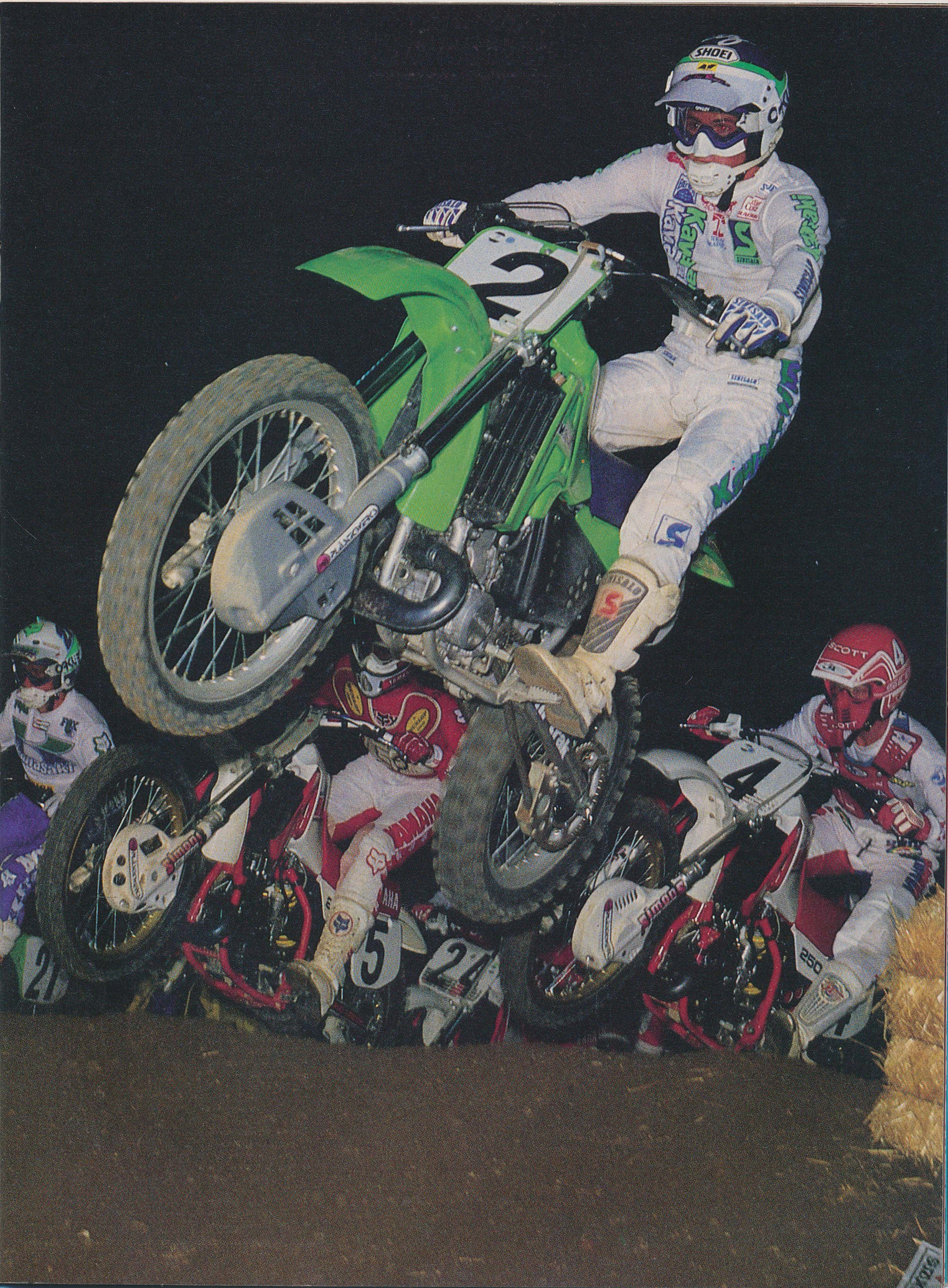
The 125cc action was berserk all night long. DIRT BIKE test rider Steve Schmitz (29) ran second in the Main event before being passed by Dean Matson, Eddie Hicks and Billy Frank.



Broc Glover went after the Supercross Championship despite the painful handicap of a broken wrist. He lost the title by two points when Jeff Ward held him off and beat him in the final moto of the season.

◀ JoJo Keller turned in an inspiring ride in the first moto, finishing fourth in front of many of the top factory riders. Keller finished eighth in the second moto for a sixth overall.







# ROSE BOWL

Ronnie Lechien was the first of the hopefuls to encounter an obstacle on the championship path. On the first lap, Lechien plowed into Terry Fowler's Honda after Fowler had crashed on a set of whoops. Lechien was able to pick up his bike and charge to a fourth-place finish, but that wasn't good enough to make the Main event, and Ronnie was forced to ride a Semi in order to qualify for his shot at the title.

Broc Glover pulled a holeshot in the same heat and was the only contender to earn a direct transfer to the Main. Glover won the qualifier and didn't hear about Lechien's or Ward's fate until he had rolled back to the pits.

Jeff Ward crashed after a poor start in the heat, but that was just the beginning of his problems. When he picked up his machine, it was facing backwards on the track in the middle of a set of triple jumps. Ward was understandably in a hurry to get back in the race, so he kickstarted his bike while rolling it down the face of the jump—backward on the course!

The AMA rule book is painfully nebulous concerning riding backward on the track. It states that anyone riding in the wrong direction will be disqualified from the event *and/or* fined for committing such an offense. (Broc Glover was disqualified from the second moto of the USGP at Carlsbad for such an infraction.) Ward, however, was fined \$500 and docked one lap, forcing him to ride in the Semi against Lechien in order to qualify for the Main. But it didn't end there.

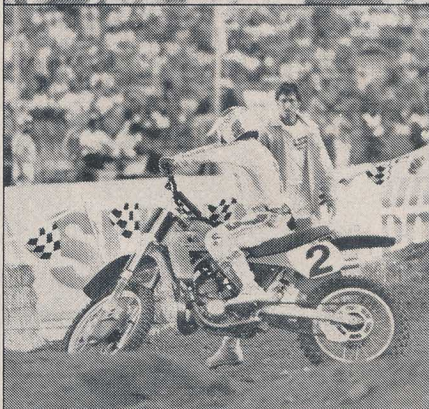
## THE TRIAL

Ward won the Semi, followed closely by Lechien, who did some heroic riding after yet another crash in order to get to the Main event. All three of the points leaders had finally qualified for the two final motos that would decide the next Supercross Champion, but rumors were circulating through the pits in hushed whispers. If these rumors were true, then absolutely everybody except Kawasaki was protesting the judges' decision concerning "wrong way" Ward's infraction! The dissenters were asking for Ward's complete disqualification from the Main event!

Team managers and riders were strangely quiet when questioned about the protests. The rumors were still flying when the Main event came to the line. Lechien was quiet and looking very serious. Glover looked grim. Ward was there, despite the rumors, but he wasn't smiling, either. Over \$100,000 was at stake, and a full year's worth of hard work and team effort. The weight of this fact was starting to stoop the contenders' shoulders. This was no longer a game; they wanted to race and get it over with.

## ROLLER BOWL

The first moto of the Main event thundered toward the first-turn bottleneck with the same restraint as the Light Brigade charging the cannons. They were berserk! David Bailey edged out the snarling pack for the holeshot, with Ron Lechien in second, tapping the limits of his Honda's accelera-



*The crime that started the controversy: After a heat race crash that left his bike lying backwards across the top of some triple jumps, Jeff Ward picked up his machine and rode down the face of the jump while kicking his engine back to life.*

tion. Lechien wanted the championship badly. He crashed over the first set of doubles and effectively ended his chances of beating Glover and Ward. It was Ron's third crash of the evening—no one can accuse him of not trying.

The battle up front was between Bailey, Goat Breker and Johnny O'Mara, but all eyes were glued to the war between Glover and Ward. It looked as though Glover had fifth place to himself, with Ward stuck in seventh place behind Yamaha rider Rick Johnson. With two laps to go, Ward got by Johnson and went after Glover. Broc is too fast and far too seasoned to let another rider pressure him into a mistake. He held off Ward and finished fifth, with Jeff crossing the finish jump only an instant later to take sixth.

## IT'S FINALLY OVER! OR IS IT?

It all came down to the last moto of the night... the last moto of the year... the last battle of the war. The riders screamed toward the bottleneck with the deafening roar of 40,000 pairs of lungs shouting in excitement because 80,000 eyes saw Ward nearly grab the holeshot. Johnny O'Mara barely edged out Jeff for the lead, Rick Johnson was in third, and Broc Glover was in fourth!

The crowd never sat once during the entire final moto. Johnson crashed in a section of whoops, and Glover motored by and immediately went after Ward. Several times it looked as though Broc would pass Ward, but his broken wrist slowed him through the stutter bumps on every lap, and Jeff was riding flawlessly.

Johnny O'Mara won the second moto and the Rose Bowl. Jeff Ward beat Broc Glover in the second moto and won the Supercross Championship—maybe!

Rumors, though often exaggerated, have a nasty habit of being based on truth. Multiple protests were filed against Jeff Ward for his heat race post-crash U-turn. Broc Glover, Ron Lechien, Team Yamaha and Team Honda head the long list of dissenters. Many of the protests were made right after the heat race incident and were quickly disallowed by the AMA. The resultant appeal process could take as much as 30 days to resolve.

So, who is the 1985 Supercross Champion? Only the AMA knows for sure. □

### RESULTS: ROSE BOWL SUPERCROSS

1. Johnny O'Mara (Hon)	3-1
2. David Bailey (Hon)	1-5
3. Goat Breker (Kaw)	2-4
4. Jeff Ward (Kaw)	6-2
5. Broc Glover (Yam)	5-3
6. Jojo Keller (Hon)	4-8
7. Ron Lechien (Hon)	9-7
8. Rick Ryan (Kaw)	11-6
9. Jim Holley (Yam)	8-10
10. George Holland (Suz)	12-11

### RESULTS: 1985 SUPERCROSS FINAL POINTS STANDINGS

1. Jeff Ward (Kaw)	229
2. Broc Glover (Yam)	227
3. Ron Lechien (Hon)	223
4. Rick Johnson (Yam)	211
5. Johnny O'Mara (Hon)	207
6. Mark Barnett (Kaw)	163
7. David Bailey (Hon)	159
8. Keith Bowen (Yam)	156
9. Scott Burnworth (Suz)	149
10. Goat Breker (Kaw)	131