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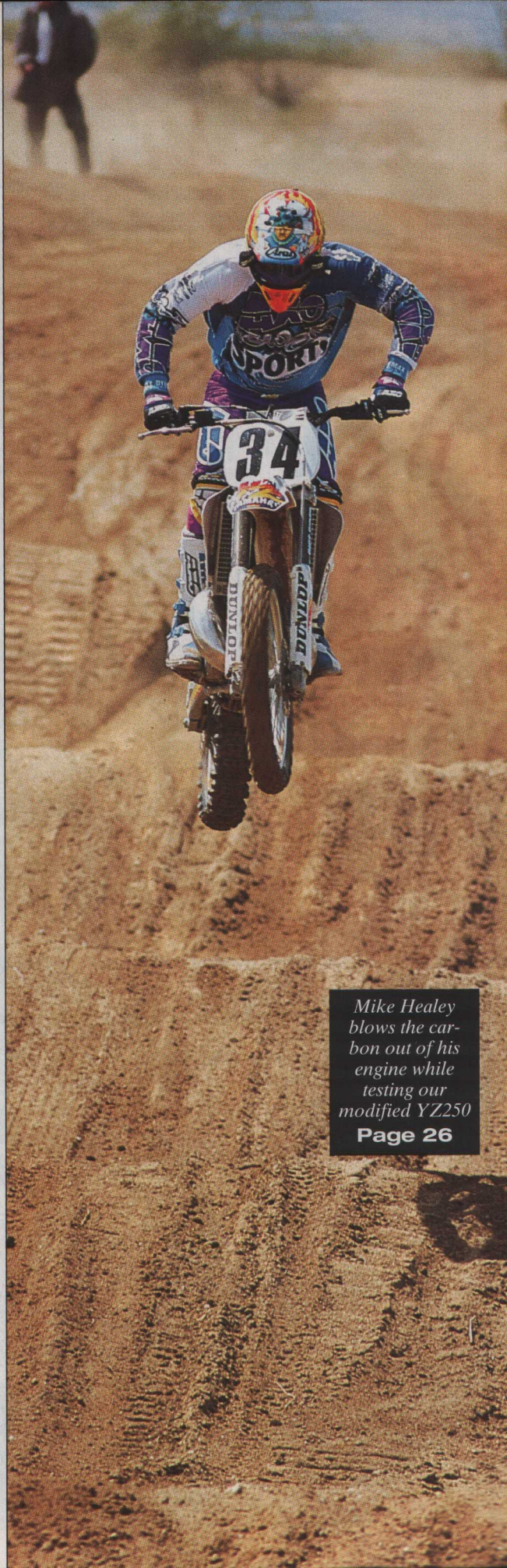
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ON THE COVER: *Our spies gave us these exclusive first looks at what could be 1995 moto hardware from Honda, Kawasaki and Suzuki.*



Mike Healey blows the carbon out of his engine while testing our modified YZ250
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ANOTHER RACE, ANOTHER RECORD: Team Honda's Jeremy McGrath nearly didn't qualify for the final in Pontiac after crashing out of contention in his heat race and getting a rock caught in his brake pedal in his semi. That rare combination of circumstances opened the door for yet another record. At Pontiac, McGrath became the first rider in history to win a main event after having to ride the Last Chance Qualifier.

PHOTO: JIM TALKINGTON

The current AMA/Camel Supercross Series has been nothing short of spectacular. Fans all over the country have witnessed some of the closest contests ever. Heroes like Mike LaRocco, Mike Kiedrowski, Jeff Emig, Jeff Stanton and Mike Craig battle to beat one another week after week. It's been great entertainment to watch these guys point fingers, swap paint and crash all over the place as they try to outdo one another and claim the right to be able to say, "Look at me, I'm number two!"

The winner of those vicious fights will have to shout that from the shadows because Team Honda/1-800-COLLECT's Jeremy McGrath will be saying "I'm number one" in the near future. The defending series champ

out. The odds were in favor of LaRocco or Stanton emerging because two of the four stops in this set were more or less the hometown races of each (LaRocco at Indianapolis and Stanton at Pontiac). The other two races—Charlotte and Minneapolis—were fair game for everyone.

The Indianapolis round turned up the heat on LaRocco. The quiet but aggressive Kawasaki star gets hoisted into the spotlight by the promoters every time the tour visits the Hoosier Dome. Unfortunately, LaRocco has never been able to satisfy hometown cheers with a main event win. This time would be no different. He again failed to secure a good start while Jeremy was the highest-starting non-Yamaha in the field—the equivalent of a

holeshot this year for anyone not on a Yamaha. Within 10 laps, McGrath was in the lead and on his way to his 16th win in less than two years of 250cc supercross racing.

"I'm upset," said LaRocco after penalizing himself to midpack on the first lap. "I got a bad start, as usual, and I just started passing people." His recovery landed him in third place behind McGrath and Team Yamaha's Jeff Emig, who still found second place to be a mixed blessing.

"You can't be upset with second place, but you can't be satisfied either," Emig said after his Indy ride. "I feel like I can win every time I go to the line, but it just hasn't worked out that way. I know I've got to be due to win one of these soon." With a 125cc

SHADOWLANDS

Jeremy McGrath steals the supercross spotlight—again.

BY DAVEY COOMBS

has been simply devastating in his title defense, just as he was in '92 when he defended his AMA 125cc Western Region Supercross Championship. After the first 11 races of the 15-race series, McGrath has finished first eight times. However, the series has been a nail-biter for everyone else, as six different riders have occupied the runner-up position at the end of the main event. If not for the overwhelming dominance of McGrath, this would have been an all-time competitive series.

HOMEBOYS

The four rounds following the series' halfway point at Daytona marked the last opportunities that the field would have to reel in the points leader. After Daytona, McGrath led by 38 points after finishing fourth. That was a big gap to overcome but not altogether impossible. This pivotal Eastern race might offer someone the opportunity to begin a late-season attack before time ran

If not for the guy way out front on the Honda, the Kawasaki duo of Mike Kiedrowski (3) and Mike LaRocco (7) would be having an epic championship bout. As loyal members of the supercross fraternity known as "Brothers of the Bad Start," their come-from-behind efforts have become a weekly highlight.



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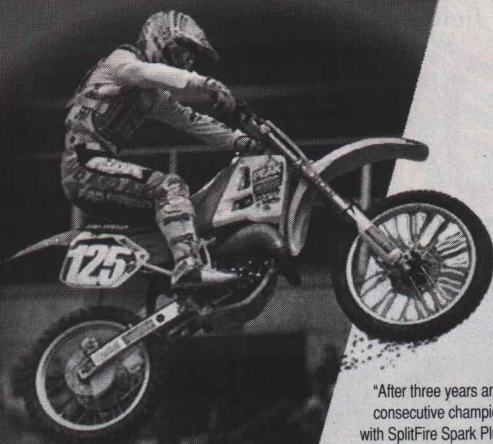
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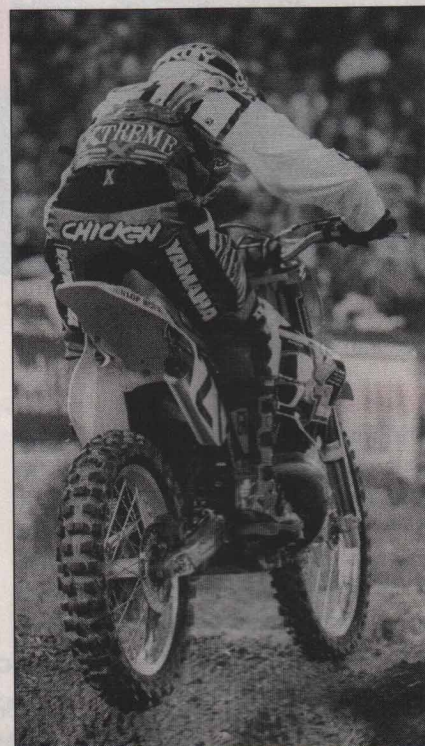
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National championship, about a dozen National wins and two successful MX des Nations appearances, the 24-year-old Emig has replaced Guy Cooper as the fastest man on the planet never to win a 250cc supercross in the U.S.

As for LaRocco's teammate Kiedrowski, the winner of the Daytona round, his start was even worse than LaRocco's. His rush to the front stopped at fifth, right behind Yamaha's Mike Craig, the Tampa winner.

TRADING PLACES

The fact that LaRocco and Kiedrowski started in the top five at Charlotte and McGrath started in the bottom five meant that fans were at least assured of seeing something different. After all, those Kawasakis get good starts about as often as Halley's Comet comes around. But McGrath's teammate Doug Henry was there to carry the red Honda flag, and for 16 laps he did a fine job of upholding team pride on the narrow Charlotte track. However, after following that other Honda all year long, LaRocco seemed to decide that enough was enough. He parked



Jeff Matiasevich's first season as a privateer has been a real eye-opener to both the rider and his fans. With a renewed dedication to success, "Chicken" has been a steady top-10 finisher on an NCY/Noleen-backed Yamaha. Not bad for a guy who went from a team truck to a stripped-down Hertz rental van!



UP FOR GRABS: Team Suzuki's Ezra Lusk lost ground in the 125cc Eastern Region points chase after suffering his third loss of the season in Pontiac. Sources indicate that Yamaha's talent scouts are after the Georgian, and that win or lose he will ride white in 1995.

PHOTO: JIM TALKINGTON

Henry with four laps to go.

"I didn't mean to knock anyone down, but I did knock Henry down and I'm sorry for that," said LaRocco, who went on to win his first supercross since last year's Orlando opener. "That's what you have to do on a track like this. There were only a few places to pass out there." Teammate Kiedrowski would agree. With Henry out of the way, the two Mikes engaged in a close dual that went all the way to the finish line, advantage LaRocco.

"It was a close race," said Kiedrowski, who has one previous win in the '94 season. "The track was tight, and Mike pushed me around; I pushed him back. Since we're teammates, we

weren't going to take each other out. He took Henry out, and he could've taken me down, but that's what's going to happen if they keep building narrow tracks like this."

McGrath might agree. After falling off in the early going, the champ could

only muster seventh-place points after getting stuffed in the first corner. "Come on, I didn't lose that many points," the unfazed McGrath answered. "I just had a bad start and really couldn't make up any time out there. I'm just happy to have scored as



PHOTO: JIM TALKINGTON



Jeremy McGrath has a knack for taking the spotlight away from the local heroes whenever possible. At Indianapolis he was the man, not Hoosier-born Mike LaRocco; at Pontiac he prevented Michigan's favored son Jeff Stanton from finally winning his homecoming race. Maybe if Damon Bradshaw had ridden in Charlotte things might have turned out differently—for Jeremy.

Jeremy McGrath (1) may be the man out front at the end of the night, but you can bet that a Yamaha is going to be out front at the beginning. Between Jeff Emig (6) and a bevy of other fast-starting YZ pilots, Yamaha has more holeshots than McGrath has wins.

many points as I did."

A footnote to the Charlotte race: Hometown boy Damon Bradshaw made a cameo appearance; he's kept a low profile since pulling the plug on his racing career last September. He came to the stadium and appeared to enjoy himself as he watched the races. Later on, when the team trucks were loading up and pulling out of the darkened parking lot and most of the fans had gone home, Bradshaw remained in the pits signing autographs, bench racing with his old friends and smiling like he used to.

THE LONGEST DAY

Pontiac always rolls out the red carpet for their own homegrown hero, Jeff Stanton. Year after year, the three-time series champ is the last rider featured in the rider introductions and the first to feel the pressure of victory—too much pressure. In his eight years as a professional supercrosser, Stanton has never won Pontiac. Fans and race organizers hoped that '94 would finally be the year for Stanton; they even put a microphone in his helmet for an audio tour of the track prior to the start of the heat races. But if Stanton

with Emig left Stanton without a chance of getting over the local jinx.

However, Stanton's unfortunate dismissal from contention was hardly noticed as an epic three-way battle for runner-up honors between LaRocco, Henry and Larry Ward went all the way to the last corner. LaRocco and Henry spent the last two laps setting up one another for the last pass, LaRocco having traveled into contention from yet another horrible start.

Henry may have been fighting for his first-ever podium finish, but the revitalized Honda rider, finally over his recent stomach ailments, was not about to settle for third. Besides, LaRocco was the guy who took him out while he was leading in Charlotte. So, with a vengeful flick of the wrist, Henry gunned the Honda under the clutch arm of LaRocco and took them both down only 30 feet from the finish line. Ward was following so closely that he almost went down in that heap of factory bikes. Instead, he paddled his way through the carnage and up to the second-highest step on the podium.



Consistency has always been Jeff Emig's (6) downfall in supercross. One week he's on the podium, the next week he's in the hay bales. After finishing in the top four at both Indy and Charlotte, the Yamaha rider crashed out of contention at Pontiac (above) and Minneapolis.

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"I just never quit trying to beat those guys tonight," Ward said of his good fortune. "I couldn't ask for much more than second place. It's all mental; I'm feeling great this year, and my bike is working awesome." Ward's second-place finish allowed him to join factory pilots Emig and Craig as Yamaha riders with runner-

up finishes in this four-race segment of the series. Throughout the season the guys on the white bikes (privaters included) have been racking up holeshots after holeshots, but their wins stand at a total of one.

IT'S A SHAME ABOUT RAY

Since scoring his breakthrough win in

Tampa in February, Michael Ray Craig's rising star seemed to miss a shift and go into false neutral. His infamous Doc Marten-induced knee injury in a Florida hotel was followed by no points at Daytona, a fourth at Indy, another no-pointer in Charlotte and sixth at Pontiac. Craig's roller-coaster season has had more ups and downs than the Clintons' popularity index.

Craig was second in the point standings going into the Daytona round of the series and dropped all the way down to seventh after another goose egg in Charlotte. But just two weeks later at Minneapolis, Craig held the lead for three-quarters of the main event before being passed by you-know-who. His return to the podium came as no surprise to some people but as a complete shock to others. Some blame Craig's happy-go-lucky attitude for his irregular results; others

The on-again, off-again 250cc rookie season of Doug Henry (shown here clipping Cliff Palmer's KTM) was more on than ever at Charlotte and Pontiac. Henry led most of the night at Charlotte before falling, and then he finished a career-high fourth at Pontiac.

PHOTO: JIM TALKINGTON



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say that winning once added too much pressure to the factory team rookie.

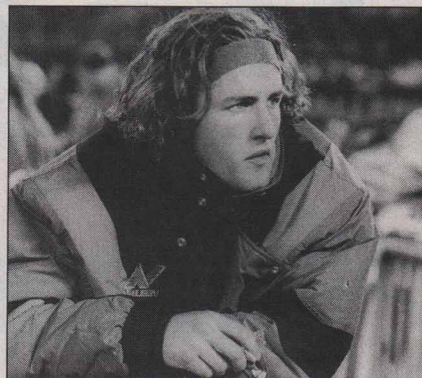
Minneapolis was definitely an up night for Craig. After following Matiasovich into the first turn (another Yamaha holeshot), he led the next 15 laps of the race, at one point by as much as eight seconds. But as the methodical McGrath started closing in, Craig hit the panic button and made a few time-consuming mistakes, giving McGrath the opening he needed to scoot away with career win number 18.

"I was going fast. I saw Jeremy, and I did the usual: I bobbled," Craig explained. "I guess it wasn't my night to win." At least it wasn't his turn to go scoreless again.

The rest of the first-ever stop for the AMA/Camel Supercross Series in Minnesota in front of nearly 50,000 new fans was business as usual. The Yamaha holeshot, the obligatory bad starts by Team Kawasaki, McGrath nac-nacs and, of course, wins.

WHO WILL STOP THE REIGN?

As McGrath enters the realm of the all-time greats, race fans are scrambling to find hope in their old heroes or maybe someone new to start cheering for. Kawasaki's Keidrowski and LaRocco obviously need better starts. Yamaha's Emig and Craig need some kind of consistency, Honda's Steve Lamson and Henry need another notch of speed, and Stanton may need to find the fountain of youth. As for the younger crew, Suzuki's 125cc duo of Damon Huffman and Ezra Lusk ap-



Will he or won't he? Team Noleen/Sizzler's Larry Ward has put in some high finishes as a privateer this year, including second at Pontiac. That kind of performance has certainly earned him notice from the factory teams. However, he already had and lost a factory deal. Only time will tell if Ward has earned himself a second chance.

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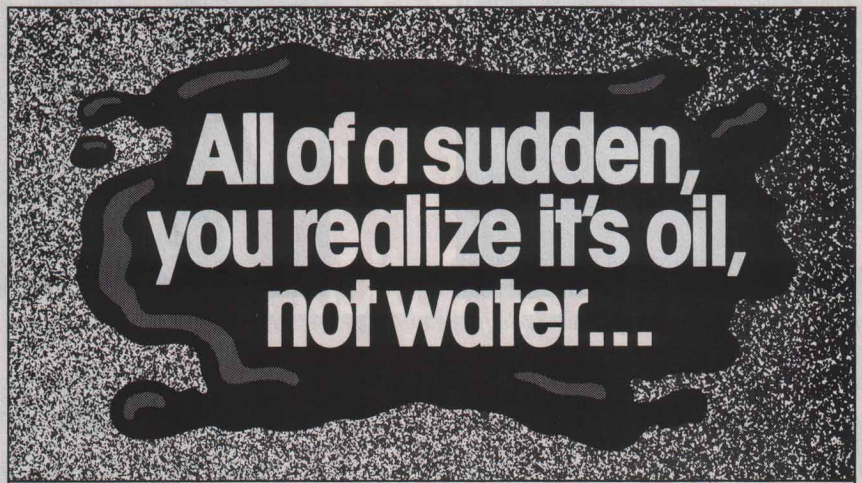
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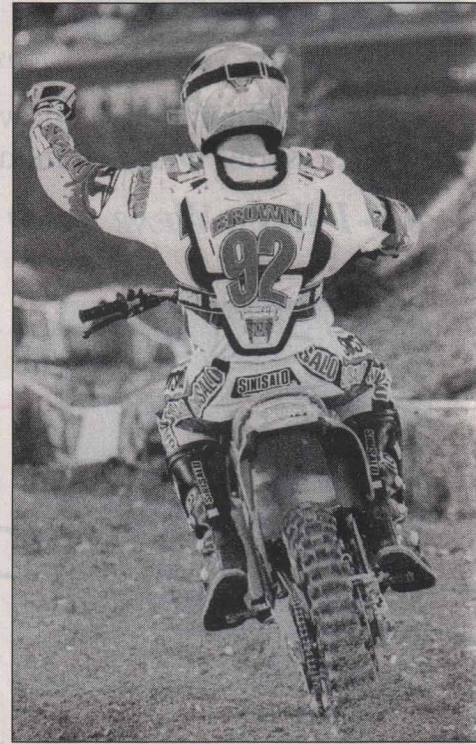
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pear to be the most likely future contenders, though both are at least two years away.

McGrath's dominance started as the sport was entering a transitional period. The enigmatic Jean-Michel Bayle quit to go road racing, the burned-out Damon Bradshaw quit to go ranching, and Jeff Ward just plain quit. Ward may have been at the end of a long career, but Bradshaw and the French guy were relatively young—each had years of McGrath-level speed left in him. Unfortunately for supercross fans, Bayle is making huge strides in his road racing career, and Damon seems content to stay down on the farm. With that in mind, it doesn't appear that Showtime will be canceled anytime soon.

"Another championship is definitely in the back of my mind, but I don't really think about it too much," said McGrath after his Minneapolis victory, which pushed his advantage to 53 points with just four races to go. "I'm not the kind of person to put it on cruise control and just pace myself into a title. I want to win each race, and I want to win with style. I want to win them all." He almost has. **M!**



After four years of trying, Mike Brown's breakthrough 125cc win at Pontiac had to be sweet. The Tennessee privateer is finally realizing the potential he showed in 1992 when Team Peak/SplitFire hired him as an Eastern Region SX mercenary.