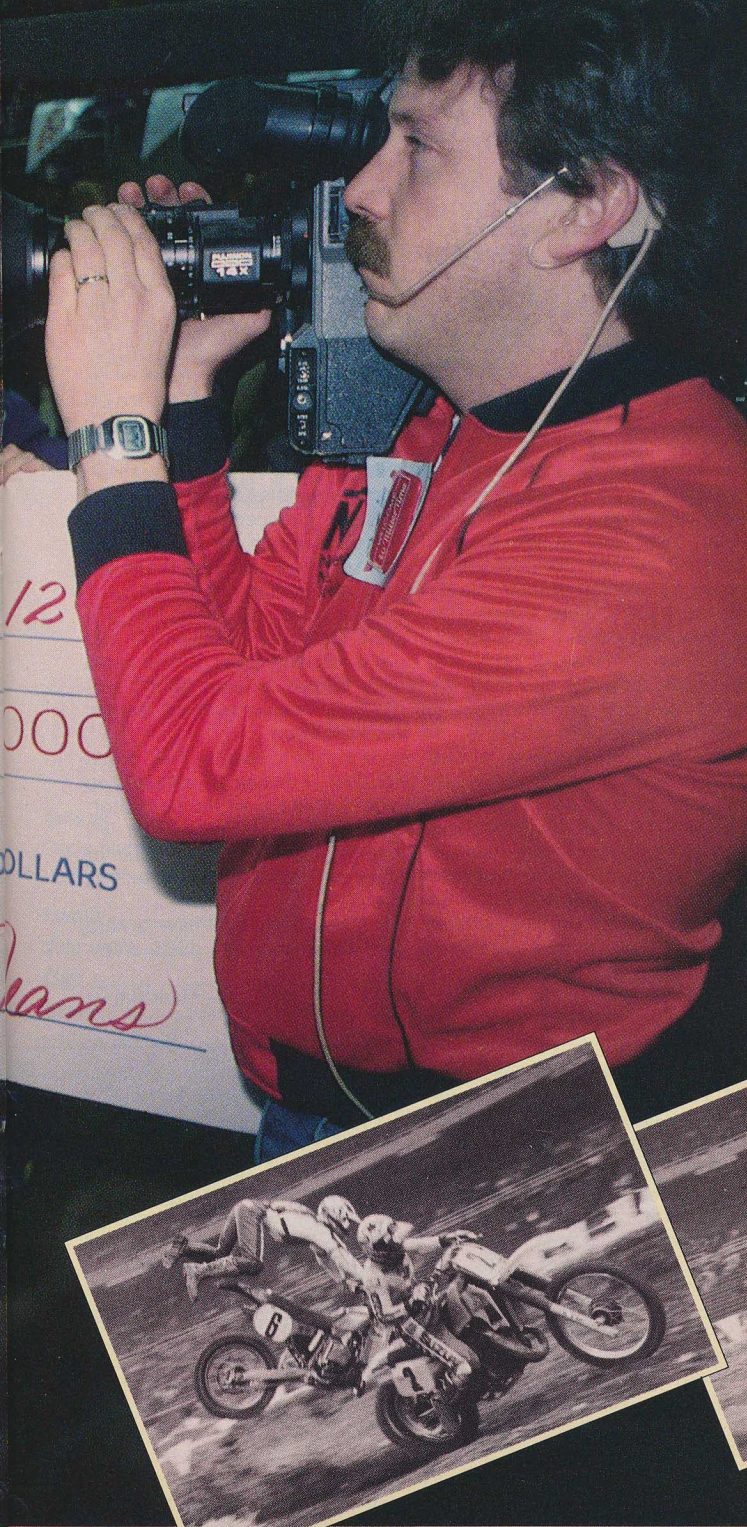


COMPETITION

DASH, CASH,

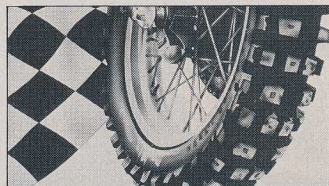


CRASH



Wrangler Supercross Series

The majority of us never see \$25,000 in one year, let alone in 20 minutes. And, as is true in most sports, the majority of dirt riders will never receive a penny for racing well on a motorcycle.

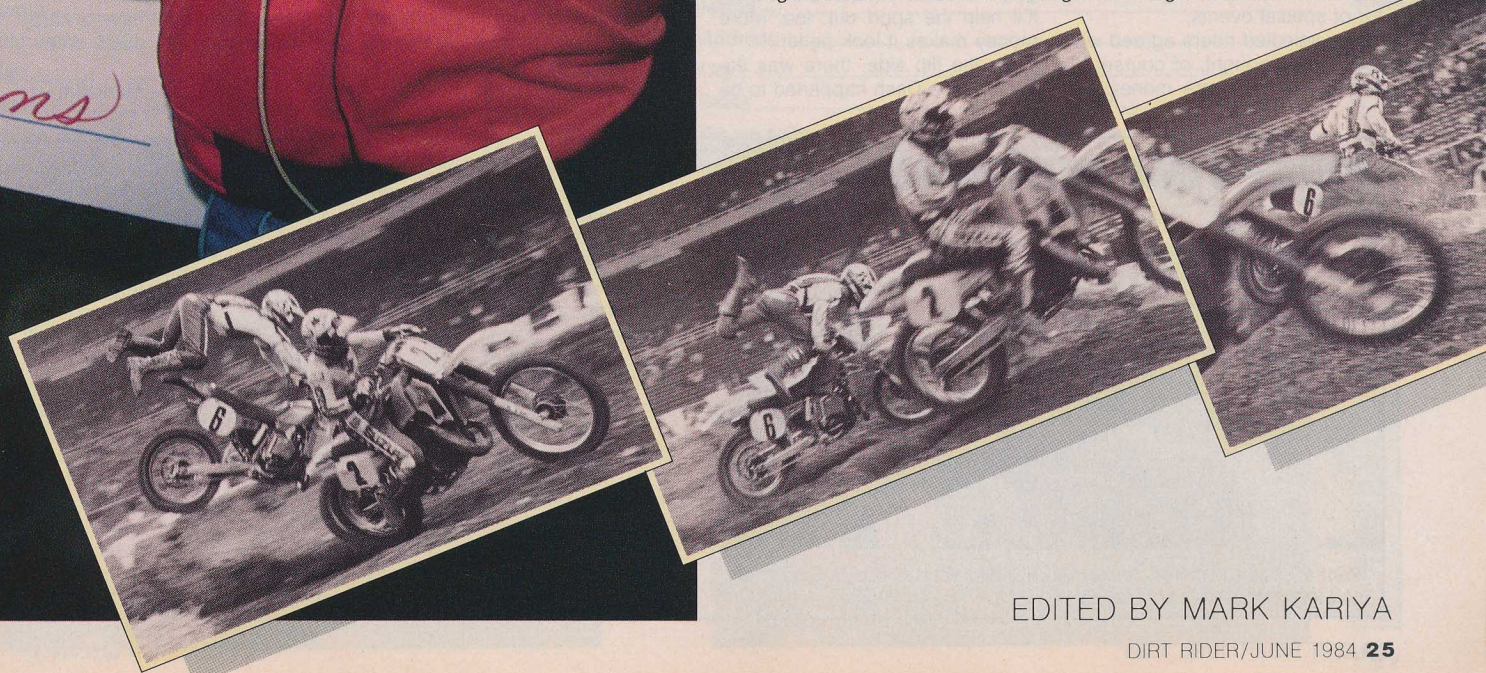


So, a race that offers \$25,000 to the winner would seem impossible to pass up, right? Especially when it's an invitational event, limited to a select few.

As with most issues, however, there is both a good and a bad side. Undeniable was the fact that the total purse of \$75,000 would generate more interest than usual within the general media, thus increasing awareness of the sport, making it "legitimate"—like bowling.

"With a \$75,000 purse on the line, and \$25,000 to the winner, the mainstream media will see that Supercross

To the winner goes the attendant glory and adulation, as one can surmise from the gathering around Johnny O'Mara (left) after he earned \$25,000 by winning the Wrangler Dash. Two weeks later, he won the Miller High Life Superbowl of MX South in Atlanta. In the situation below, most riders would have elected to bail clear. Not Bob Hannah, though he didn't feel like contesting the Wrangler Dash after this one.



EDITED BY MARK KARIYA



Young Ron Lechein led the Wrangler Dash a short time and finished second with a fading gearbox.



Mark Barnett didn't show well in Seattle; he ran second in Atlanta.

has moved into a whole new era," said David Allen, Wrangler's director of special events.

The selected riders agreed with that line of thought, of course. "It seems like the more money you

get in a sport, the more interest it'll get," voiced Mark Barnett. "I think it'll help the sport out, too. More money makes it look better."

On the flip side, there was the fact that the Dash happened to be

held right after what many felt was the most hectic race weekend of the season. "I think this Dash is a really neat thing, and I think everything's great about it except for one thing: they picked the busiest weekend," Broc Glover noted.

"First of all, it's a doubleheader. Second, it's a night race backed by a day race. So it's probably the most tiring, complicated weekend we have."

Indeed, Seattle traditionally is a very tough weekend. It comes at the beginning of the season when things aren't quite dialed and mechanics don't get much rest between Saturday night's final and Sunday morning's first practice. Putting the Dash after Sunday afternoon's final meant readying the bike for yet another final, with little time in which to do it. "There's actually not that much time in between to do anything," confided Jim Felt, Johnny O'Mara's tuner. "We didn't have a good final (on Sunday when O'Mara finished eighth), so we tried a few different things, like suspension settings, tires...."

In addition to Barnett, Glover and O'Mara, the field consisted of Kent Howerton, Ron Lechien, Canadian champ Ross Pederson and Jeff Ward. David Bailey and Bob Hannah chose not to compete in order to avoid further aggravating their recent injuries which could haunt them later in the season. Asked if he was disappointed at not being able to compete, Bailey replied, "Of course! I think (the race is) really neat. I think it's bitchin', as a matter of fact, that Wrangler's done something like this. I had every intention of riding until my foot felt like it (did)."

The purse payback went like this: \$25,000 to the winner, \$12,000 for second place, then \$8000, \$7000, \$6000, \$5000 and \$4000. "If you don't ride (the two finals) and just win the Wrangler Dash, you'd make as much as (you would) winning the (entire) series," Barnett joked beforehand. "The only way you're not gonna ride is if you get hurt."



Through Atlanta, the Wrangler series left David Bailey looking for brighter tomorrows.

With 25 grand on the line, though, not one of the seven racers was thinking about getting hurt. The Dash was shaping up to be a no-holds-barred, knock-down, drag-out...well, choose your own clichés.

Many people believed the Dash would produce better racing were it cut in half to 10 laps. Ward would have settled for five or six; he gated cleanly and held the point until a missed shift in a set of doubles dumped him unceremoniously to the stadium floor. He would eventually finish fifth.

Lechien took over for a short while before O'Mara banzaied past. The two Honda teammates stretched it out for the duration, cutting lap after lap. A terminal-sounding noise from Lechien's machine provided the only question mark late in the race, but the RC survived. Behind them the pack seemed to consist of survivors of battle, all having had tangled with one another—or the track—at some point. Glover came from behind to earn \$8000, followed by Howerton, Ward, Barnett and Pederson.

"It's hard to believe that I made this kind of money for winning one race," O'Mara exclaimed afterward. "Now I know what it will take to win, and I think I'm due for a few more before this season is over."

It's also likely he'll have a hard time passing up the 1985 Wrangler Dash.

—Mark Kariya

FIRST-TIME WINNERS



Want to make your mechanic happy? Win your first U.S. Supercross. Isn't that right, Mike McAndrews?

Rick Johnson and Jeff Ward have been winning races for many years now, but a major U.S. Supercross win was one plume that had eluded them both...that is, until Seattle's doubleheader. Both voiced pre-race optimism, of course. "There are five or six guys who can win at any given race and I just hope it's my turn," declared Ward. "I've taken so many seconds... I really am due."

The factory Kawasaki rider couldn't have picked a better night to come through, as he sizzled all evening. He won his heat and semi, then, in a portent of things to come, another

Ward—Larry Ward (no relation)—took his KX to the win in a Mini Expert exhibition race.

Honda teamsters Bob Hannah and Johnny O'Mara each led the first portions of Saturday night's main, but there was no stopping Ward. When O'Mara jumped off in a rough section, Ward eagerly snapped up the lead and held it to the finish over the O' Show and Hannah. Ward's mechanic, Mike McAndrews, and Kawasaki's PR people, who were videotaping Ward and his teammates for promos, rejoiced ecstatically.

The Kawasaki teamster and long-time racing veteran was probably just as relieved as he