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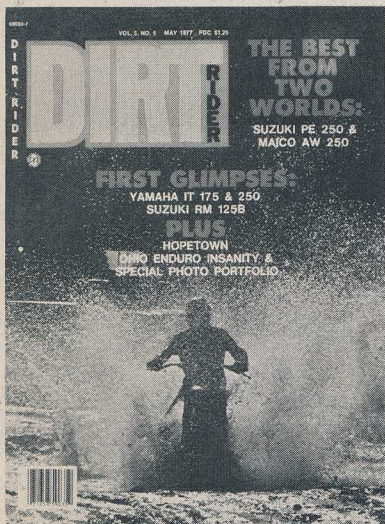
HOPETOWN
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IT MAY NOT BE . . .

HOPETOWN

. . . but it's still Hopetown.

By Rik Paul, thanks to research by Rick Sieman

Back in October, during the final weeks of preparation before their annual Hopetown event, a weekly meeting of the Dirt Diggers M.C. had just gotten underway, when a bit of news was dropped upon the levity of the gathering. Hopetown was being opposed.

This, in itself, was nothing new as the Dirt Diggers have had to undergo numerous problems in the past in order to hold their event. Indeed, outside opposition was more or less a constant thing, especially in recent years, with urbanization creeping ever outward, and more resident complaining arising because of noise.

But this year things had looked as if for once it would be carried out smoothly. This new news of opposition had come out of right field and from an unexpected source. It seemed, the

information went, that Jerry Shore, of the American Motocross Enterprises, a local racing association, had been hunting around for new tracks to open and had been particularly interested in a Ventura County track that had previously been closed down.

He had met with, what he considered bias opposition and delay tactics from the Ventura County Planning Commission, when he was forced to have an environmental impact study done on the track before it could be opened.

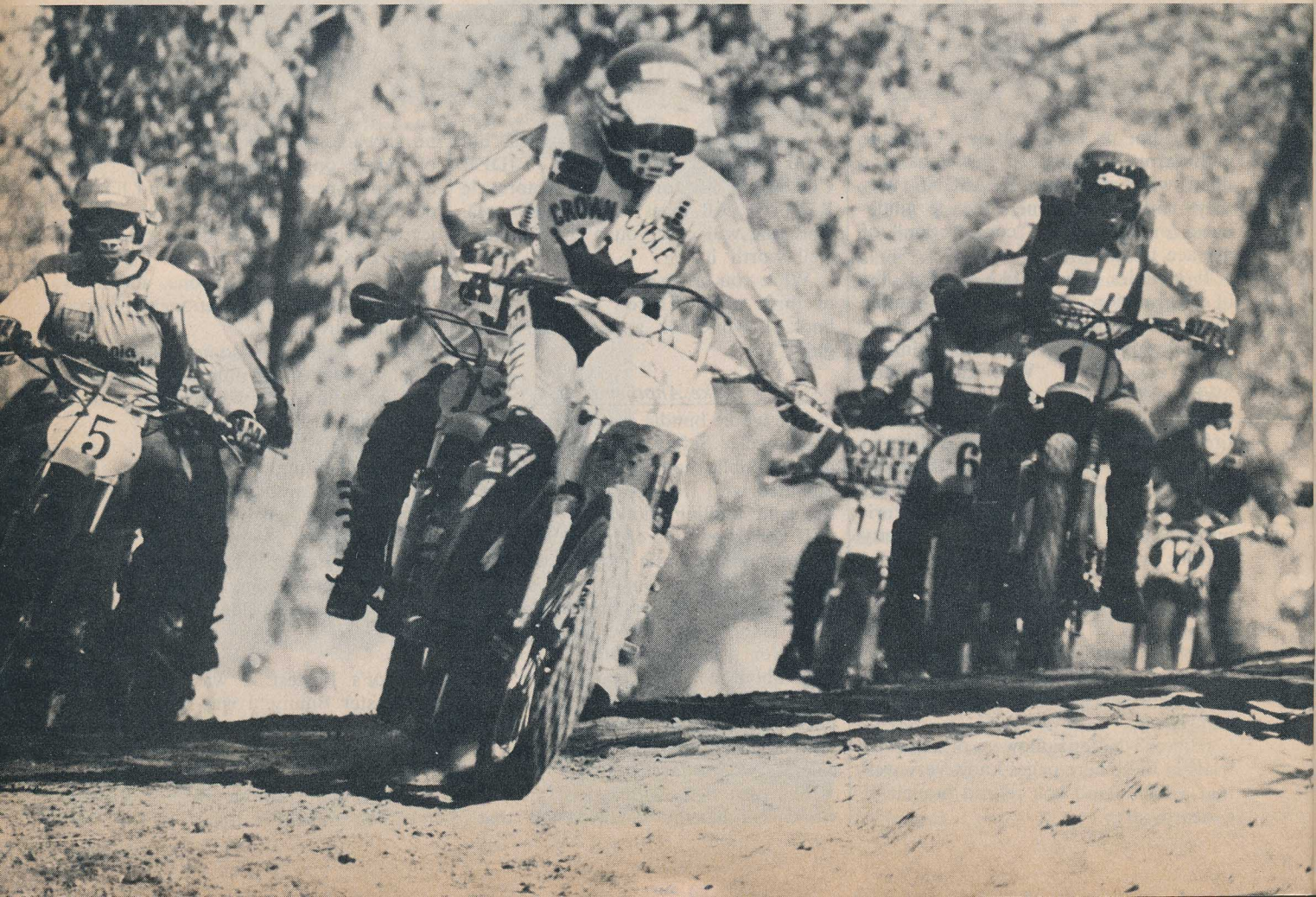
This he had complied with, but the feelings were that the Planning Commission was generally opposed to re-opening the track and continued to pick apart his privately done study.

While frustrated with his fruitless attempts, he became aware that the

Dirt Diggers' Hopetown was being run in the same locale and, in addition, the Dirt Diggers' own study had expired in early October. The information put forth at the Diggers' meeting claimed that using this expired study as a lever on the county, Shore threatened to sue Ventura County if Hopetown was allowed to run while he was still being denied his permit.

Shore, himself, claims only that he sent an inquiring letter to a member of the board asking why such blatant favoritism was being shown to the Diggers.

Either way, the same effect was brought about. The Planning Commission was thrown into a frenzy and immediately notified the Diggers that they would have to have another environmental impact study done before











they could allow Hopetown to run. The study was estimated to take a minimum of six weeks.

This news threw the Diggers into confusion. Bob Hope's people who owned the land Hopetown was run on, were under contract to clear all such permits. The news of the elapse of their own permit was still more news for the Diggers.

In addition they had already received thousands of dollars in entry fees and had spent a large sum of it in preparations up to that point.

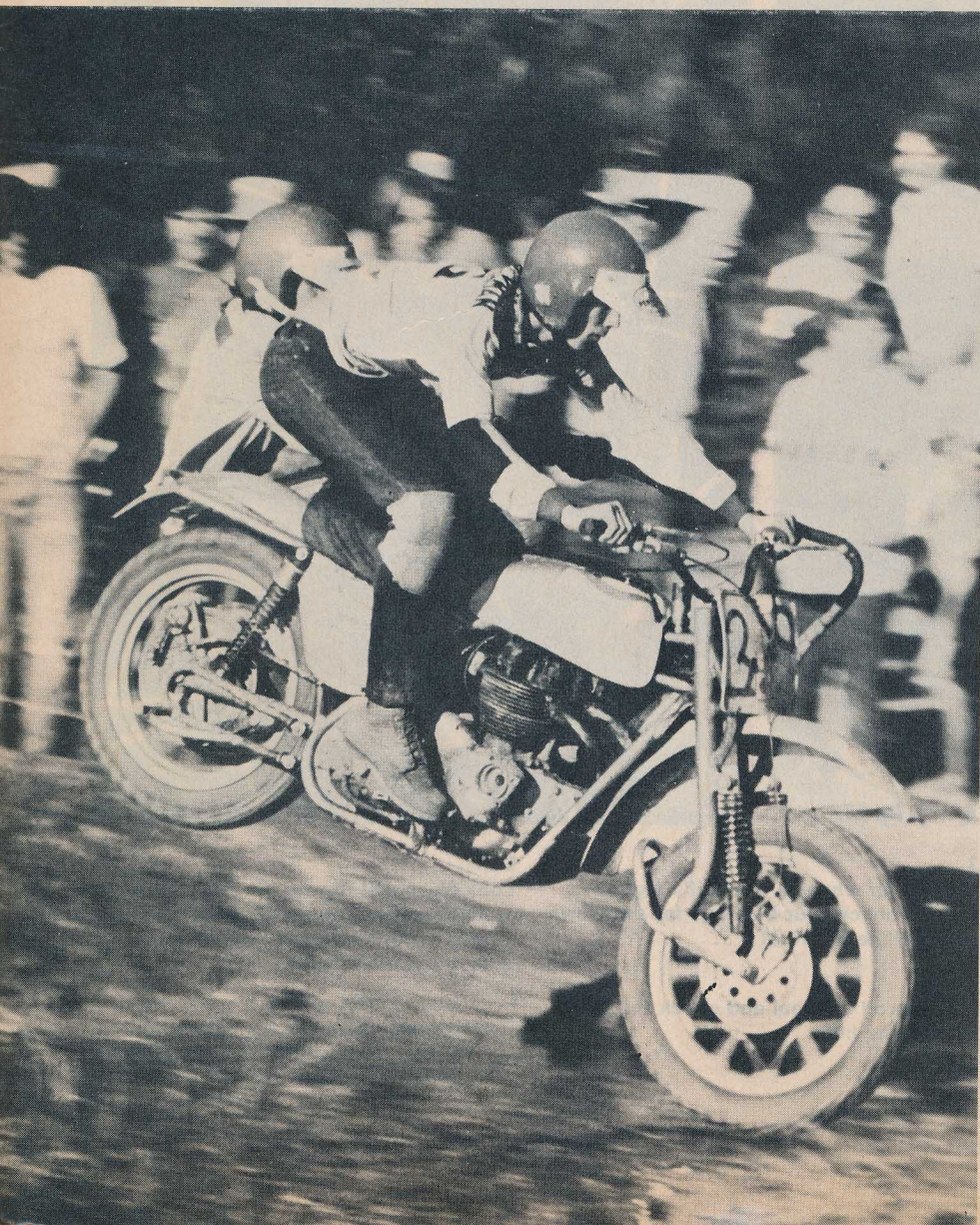
Out of several different directions in which they could have gone, the Diggers emerged with the hopes that sitting tight and going along with a new study would at least allow their event to be run on a postponement date in December rather than not at all.

Immediately Hope's people applied for a new permit. The Ventura County Planning Commission decided that they would consider updating the previous 1972 study on the Hopetown site, depending on the outcome of a hearing that was set for early December.

In the meantime, the Diggers made one attempt to get together with Shore at a meeting of their own, but at the last minute, communication went awry and the meeting never took place. That meeting could have been the turning point of the affair.

As it was the delay of the running of Hopetown, and especially the scheduled hearing, was more ammunition for the local homeowners that lived in the area of the site, and were complaining increasingly louder of the noise created by local kids running on the track.





The December meeting finally came and the Diggers were being assured, by their contact with the commission, that things would go their way and not to worry. This lulled the Diggers into a false security.

Indeed at the meeting, the homeowners were present and stating their case forcefully, but the Diggers were receiving the support of the Sheriff's Department, the Fire Department, and, of course, Hope's People.

The Diggers, sitting back confidently, thus were shocked when the Commission voted them down 5-0.

As an outcome, for all practical purposes, all off road riding has been essentially eliminated for the time being from Ventura County, and the Diggers, disillusioned, were forced to make a quick switch to Indian Dunes in order to save themselves from canceling the event altogether, which would have been disaster.

Given the limited time to prepare, the Dunes Hopetown event came off very smoothly, with at least the spirit being retained, if not the site. It is certainly a tribute to the Diggers that it came off not only as well as it did, but at all.

As for the future, the Diggers still hope to get back into their previous Simi Valley location for next year, but there are feelings that due to the aforementioned problem of urbanization, the traditional Hopetown event was doomed anyway. Some say that even if it had gone off this year, it would have been the last. If so, another classic bites the dust. At least in location. Hopefully not in spirit. ●