

# Graham Noyce: Reaching for Number One

# DIRT RIDER

Nissan/Datsun  
500cc USGP of MX:  
Our best vs. theirs  
at Carlsbad

Exploring Michigan's  
Tomahawk Trail system

\$1.75  
Canada  
\$2.25



SEPTEMBER 1983

**KDX vs. IT  
ENDURO  
SHOOTOUT!**



**Roost booster:  
Honda's awesome  
CR480R!**



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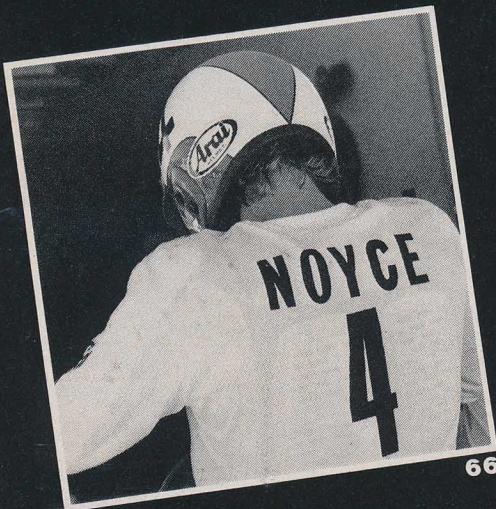
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# DIRT RIDER

SEPTEMBER 1983  
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Crossing this stream in the Tahoe National Forest was lots harder for Mark and George than the IT and KDX. Charles Morey forced them to for the photo.

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Interview

# GRAHAM NOYCE

"This is the 500cc World Championship we're racing in, and we're bloody well not playing games with each other."  
—Graham Noyce

BY BRAD ZIMMERMAN

It's an interviewer's dream: Sitting just a few feet away is the man who was the 500cc World Champion, a professional motocross rider who's constantly in the top-three hunt for the crown. It's Thursday, the night before the Nissan/Datsun 500cc U.S. Grand of Prix Motocross, and you've got him alone in a room. The handful of people in a spacious home, not 10 miles from the Carlsbad Raceway, have silently adjourned to the cramped kitchen. It's just the two of you.

You're relaxed, cool, feeling comfortable, and diving into your best routine—the old Barbara Walters/Dan Rather combo. You're interviewing one of the world's fastest, and he's squirming.

He's fidgeting with his tea. The cup passes from hand to hand, but he doesn't drink from it. He's constantly crossing and uncrossing his legs. He keeps adjusting the pillows. With over a dozen pillows to choose from, he can't find the one he wants. He isn't saying much. He is not happy. He is not comfortable.

Unfortunately, Graham Noyce isn't squirming around as a result of some brilliant and in-depth question you just expertly asked him. Actually, you haven't even turned on the tape recorder yet. If the truth be known, he's waiting for you because you're still stuffing your face with cake.

Noyce is actually having "a bad time of it," as he says with that impressive English accent, because he bailed off earlier in the day. Even though the 500cc USGP was days away, Graham Noyce already had one of his first souvenirs of the U.S., a pancake-size abrasion burn on his right hip, complemented by a beef jerky-sized strawberry running up his left arm. A momentary lapse in concentration on what many GP riders call "the dusty concrete courses of California" put Noyce on the ground during a tire/gearing/suspension test in anticipation of Sunday's race.

It's comforting to see that even one of the world's fastest still experiences the familiar old wheel wash from too much front brake. Rest assured future World Champions, even guys who finish consistently in the top three of the 500cc GP wars experience the displeasure of having bed sheets stick to healing wounds. (That was our first post-cake question.)

Graham Noyce is tall for a rider, if you go by America's "almost-jockey" standards. He has sandy-blond hair, and if you put him in a gun-racked Chevy pickup as the son of a mid-Nebraska farmer, he'd fit the part perfectly.

Yet when Graham Noyce opens his mouth, two things become very evident: He's very much an Englishman and he's very much a Grand Prix rider.

Graham takes his time when talking. You can see he's a little reserved. He thinks about what he's going to say before it starts coming out. And well he should. Last year members of the press jumped on him. Instead of just getting a bad review, Graham Noyce came home with a broken hand because of what a not-over-enthused Belgian fan read about him. Now he's cautious about what he says to the media.

When he talks, his tone of voice and speed of delivery don't change much, except in rare cases. He could tell you your pants were on fire in the same tone of voice he uses when asking for a napkin. Graham Noyce is in control of Graham Noyce—and he knows it. It's a confidence in himself that you rarely see possessed by anyone.

Subjects are very clear-cut with Noyce. When he wants to do something, he does it. After two successful seasons in the British National Championships, Graham wanted a sample of Grand Prix competition. In 1975 he drove to France with a stock 125cc Husky for the first round and finished fifth.

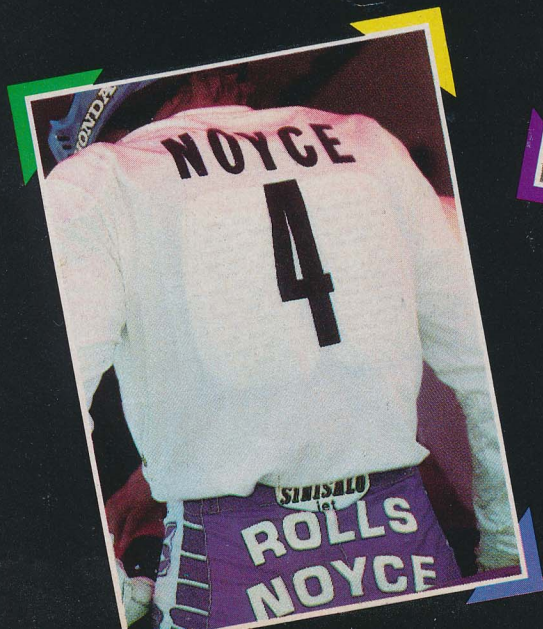
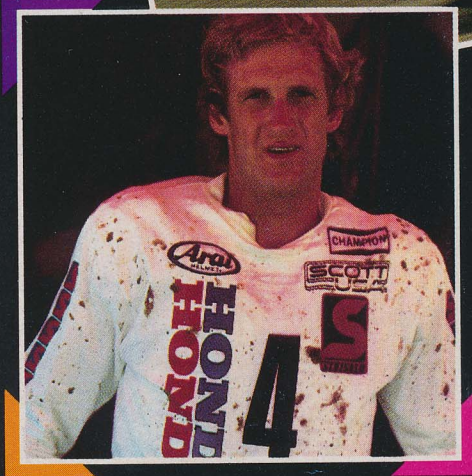
That raised a lot of interest. Especially with the boys over at Maico who had this contract in the desk drawer that said Graham Noyce was riding for them, not Husky. Well, in Graham's mind he was . . . and he wasn't. Maico had a contract, but Maico also told Graham they only wanted British Championship rides, and although they originally agreed, the GP circuit was no longer one of Graham's goals. So he grabbed the Husky and rode 125cc GPs for them while riding British Championships for Maico. It seemed simple enough to Graham.

But not to Maico. A court injunction came down and Graham had to get off the Husky. But on the other hand, he won. He got on a 125cc Maico and continued the GP circuit. Along came the 500cc GP in England and Graham wanted to ride, just to try it. At the end of that day both he and Maico were impressed enough with his performance to drop the 125s altogether and concentrate on the rest of that season's 500cc circuit.

Back in 1976, Maico was a driving force on the GP circuit. "They were unfortunate to not have gotten a world championship," says Graham. "It seemed that all the good riders were doing their apprenticeship on Maicos and then the Japanese would come along, swipe them up, and away they would go.

"The bikes worked so good that year. I rode a fairly stock Maico in the GPs that season. It had different Koni shocks on the back with reservoirs and magnesium wheel hubs. That was it. I finished fourth in the World Championship and won a few GPs on it. It was a great motorcycle and it was very competitive.

"In the middle of that season I talked briefly with Honda, but I didn't want to pursue it because my Maico was working so well. I didn't want to take any chances of messing up next year's performance. I stuck with Maico and signed for the fol-



lowing year, 1977, to do the 500cc GP circuit."

That was the year Mikkola came along with the Yamaha. It was the turning point for the Japanese as far as GP competition; they found the combination of a good rider and a very competitive bike. "I thought that after coming off my fourth-place finish in the 500cc class things would get better with Maico, but they never did," said Graham. "The bike stayed exactly the same as it had been the year before, and the Japanese were coming on pretty strong. Yamaha and Honda were very serious. Suddenly our bikes were too slow. In the middle of '77 Honda approached me again. This time I said, 'Yeah, I'll go.'"

Graham Noyce began his six-year relationship with Honda with the 1978 500cc GP season. He packed up his riding gear, a new mechanic, and a new bike, but, in the midst of all that packing, a few mechanical gremlins slipped into the tool box when nobody was looking.

Graham's first season with Honda was riddled with mechanical freak occurrences. They didn't pack just one or two gremlins—they had a whole clan follow them throughout the entire GP circuit.

The term "if it works, don't fix it" didn't apply to Noyce's machine. If it worked at one moment, it probably would break later. "I was so annoyed. I could have finished third that year. I was riding really good and trained hard, but the bike was breaking almost every week. The chain snapped, base gaskets blew, just all sorts of problems due to bad mechanicals. It didn't do me any good, either. I lost confidence halfway through the season and went down real bad."

Noyce came back in 1979, though, and came back stronger than ever before. He won the 500cc World Championship that year, the first time for both himself and the Honda effort.

"Winning the 500cc championship came as a big shock to Honda," says Graham. "Matter of fact, if the truth be known, I surprised myself. I had such a bad year in '78 with my bike breaking, and when it was running well, I had to contend with both Brad Lackey and Heikki Mikkola.

"The year I won my championship, Brad was the one to beat. Then Wolsink came up and Mikkola started coming on really strong. In the last five events it narrowed down to just me and Wolsink, but I got it."

With pictures of himself in all the English pubs, and the respect of the European and English fans, Graham planned to repeat his championship in 1980. He began his season with the prestigious Number One plate on his bike, riding better than he had during his winning season. He was training even harder, riding stronger, and radiating confidence.

He was doing a lot of traveling. One of the ways to cash in on a championship is to make a lot of appearances the year af-

ter you win. These appearances bring a World Champion "more than a few pounds" in what is termed as "show-up money." It's very simple: you show up, you ride, they pay you. It can add a substantial amount to a World Champ's bank balance.

A week before the Grand Prix season was due to start Noyce raced on Friday in England, drove eight hours to a big British Championship on Sunday, then turned right around for an overnight drive to Holland for a Monday race. He pushed too hard, and he paid for it.

"In the back of the circuit there was a long, fast straight with a jump. I guess I just wasn't concentrating and I just went too far out, landed in some deep holes, did an endo, and ripped my shoulder straight out of the joint. That cost me the first two GPs of the season. I tried to ride the second one, two weeks after the shoulder separation, but it was impossible. It hurt too bad."

Graham sat it out for another two weeks, then rode the third GP of the season and finished third overall. He followed that with a win in the Finnish GP. Even a broken toe from a British Championship race that stopped the running part of his training schedule didn't stop Noyce from competing. Remarkable.

It was the Italian Grand Prix that stopped Graham. After finishing fourth in the first moto, he was involved in a crash during the opening lap of the second heat. He came down off a big jump into a pile of bikes and broke his leg, signaling the end of his bid to retain the World Championship title.

"It wasn't so bad at first. I broke the leg in the lower half and they operated, put-

ting in a couple sets of pins and screws. After three months I was riding really strong, doing very well. But then I got an infection in the break.

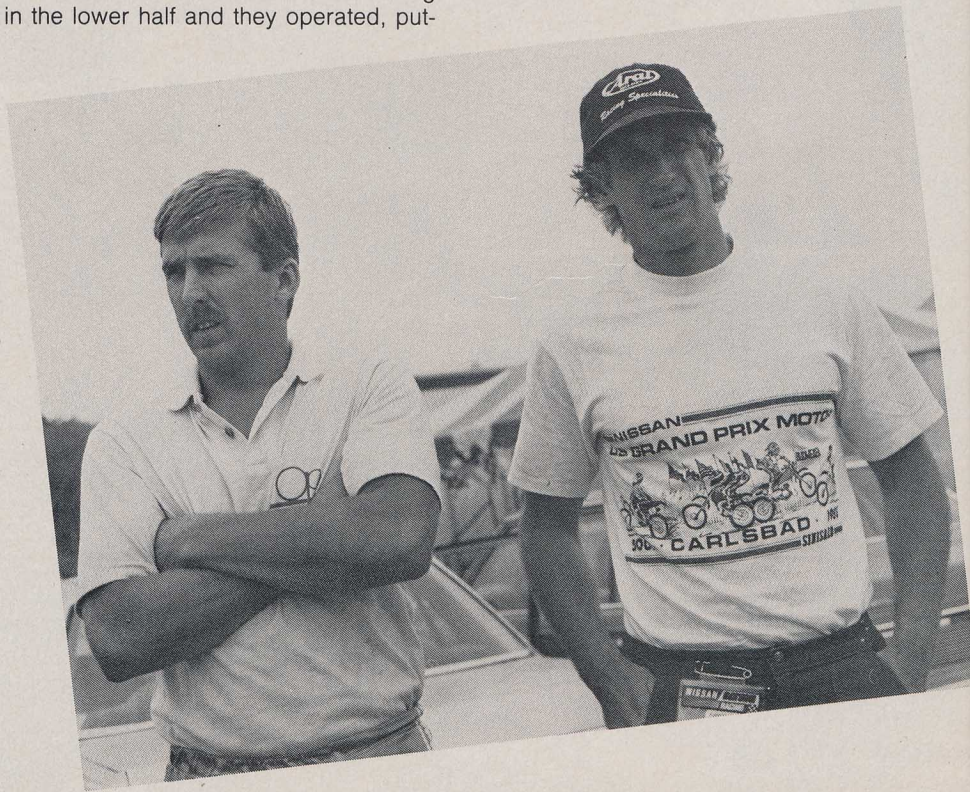
"That set me back three months with penicillin shots. I was a zombie then—I was finished. The medicine took so much out of me, and I lost weight. There was no way to rebuild my body in time. I had to build up strength, stamina, fitness, riding ability—everything almost from scratch.

"I started training for '81 right at Christmas. I was riding the bike three times a week, running every day, working out with a guy in Belgium on weights with a real heavy program twice a week. I was trying like hell to get in shape.

"The season went really well. That whole season I did 56 races. I had to do the races to get myself fit. They were all big races: Internationals, Championships, the GPs. We were doing three races a week in England for television. I was really coming on good. I got the bike fit, and I got mentally fit. That was a really good year. I took Andre Malherbe into the last round.

"Looking back I think that maybe if I hadn't done that many races and hadn't been tired of racing at that point in the season, I would have won instead of getting second overall. Malherbe won the championship by seven points. A moto win is worth 15.

"I think I lost the championship that year at Namur, two rounds from the end. In the first moto I beat Malherbe and pulled out a five-point lead. In the second race I was second. Then I stalled, he passed me, and I was up again and run-



Team Yamaha's Hakan Carlqvist and Noyce wait for the action to begin at Carlsbad

ning in fourth. I got in a bit of a panic. Instead of settling for fourth for eight points, I was trying to get momentum again.

"There was a long uphill where I was jumping this double jump. Nobody else was doing it, so it was a place to make up valuable time. This one time I got it wrong. I don't know what I did wrong. It happened so fast. It was raining at the time and the course was real wet. I think that maybe the rear end kicked out from hitting a tree root just before I took off. That would have been just enough to slow me down one or two miles an hour. That's all it takes to miss sometimes.

"I ended into all the spectators and hit my knee real bad. There was nothing I could do. That was eight points down the drain right there. That's where I lost it. We went into Luxemburg, I was 10 points behind. That's a lot in one race. I couldn't make it up."

Last year is a year every American motocross fan can remember. Brad Lackey won the 500cc World Championship title. Noyce's view of Lackey's victory: "I think Brad was riding really strong. That's the strongest I've ever seen him. I think he did everything right. He'd had a bad year the year before and never really wore himself out, so he was real fresh all season. I guess in his mind he always believed he could do it, which is the best thing you can do. You have to convince yourself you can win before it's going to

happen. Obviously he came off a bad year, knew he could still win, and proved it right."

Last year was a season Graham Noyce would prefer to forget. For a man who figures that "even third is a waste of time; second is as low a finish as is acceptable," his fourth overall for the season wasn't very impressive to him. "It was a real funny season. It started off good, I was training real hard. The problem in '82 was that I had such a good season the year before. I was still living off that season and wasn't hungry enough. I was just expecting to do well without working at it. I was just riding, things turned, and it wasn't to be."

He probably could justify the poor season last year. He pulled Lackey's lead down from 17 points to three, and was riding in Luxemburg, leading the moto. There was a very steep hill and a sharp right-hand turn, complete with the standard Europeans hanging over the standard haybale. That was followed by a section through a gully where the trees hung over the course. Just as Graham was accelerating in third gear through the gully, an irate spectator swung a battery pack at Noyce, hit his hand, and broke it. Noyce was out again. Why did somebody thump Graham Noyce with a 10-pound battery-pack in the first place?

Noyce thinks for a moment. "The only thing I can figure out is that in Namur, the

week before, everybody thought that I wasn't riding fairly. Here's what happened: In the first race Brad and Andre Vromans were fighting it out on the track. I passed the two of them, figuring I could squirt off into the lead, clear off, and get out of their way. I didn't want to be mixed up with them—I wouldn't want somebody in my way. So first I passed Vromans, then Brad.

"But I didn't get away quick enough and a few minutes later Vromans came back and passed me. Then Brad was suddenly on my tail and I let him by so he could continue his battle with Vromans. A lot of people, especially the press, felt that I was helping Brad by letting him go by. All I was doing was getting out of their way.

"Some people forget that this is the 500cc World Championship we're racing in, and we're bloody well not playing games with each other. We're gentlemen, but we're racing, and we don't have time for any sort of group tactics or hand holding. If two guys are obviously faster and they're battling it out, you get out of the way. I think that letting Brad by was a fair thing to do at the time. I would have expected the same if the situation were reversed."

This year's GP season is going well for Noyce, despite a rather unique situation. In most previous 500cc Grand Prix, two riders have more or less paired off and decided themselves who will be champion. In past years, the duels for the championship have been between Lackey and Vromans, Malherbe and Noyce, Lackey and Malherbe, Wolsink and Noyce. This year there are three riders: Andre Malherbe, Noyce's Honda teammate, Hakan Carlqvist (known as "Carla") on the Yamaha, and Noyce. The Carlsbad round, number seven in the 12-race series, sees Noyce down in third position, thanks to a pair of poor starts in the previous race, the Italian GP.

It's a 500cc GP oddity that three riders are still in contention for the crown this late in the season. According to Graham, "This is something a little bit special. Everybody has had their money's worth. It's been tight. It's also very complicated. We're each out there, used to having to watch for only one other guy. So, when normally you could take it easy because the one guy you're up against got a bad start, this year you can have one of the two guys get a bad start and you've still got to contend with the other guy. And it doesn't look like that's going to change."

This year's situation is a result of many factors. Carla's Yamaha is working very well. Malherbe's Honda works as well as Graham's Honda. There is no "ranking" system in the Honda system. Both riders receive equal machinery—very equal. Even little plastic bags, each with a single two-cent washer inside, are marked either "Malherbe" or "Noyce." One guy gets a washer, the other guy gets a washer. Both Malherbe and Noyce had a bad

## BILL ALDRIDGE

"I don't tell him to go out there and run. I run with him."

Bill Aldridge is a man familiar with big time racing. He rode the 500cc circuit last year for Suzuki until destroyed ligaments in his knee stopped his quest for a crown. Now, instead of getting himself to the 500cc Number One plate, his main goal is to see that Graham Noyce gets it.

Aldridge travels with Graham. He keeps an eye on him, cracks the whip when need be, and oversees Graham before and during the racing season.

"Basically, at this part in the season, I'm helping Graham stick to his routine and training schedule. At his position in life, it's very easy to put something off until tomorrow. But he has to win the World Championship, and that takes a lot of drive, not something everyone can maintain all the time. I prod him along when he doesn't particularly want to do something."

Bill is quick to point out that he doesn't fit the image of a trackside, whistle-equipped coach in a designer jogging suit that will never see a strain. "When I say I make sure Graham runs, I don't tell him to go out there and run. I run with him. When we started out this season, we blended what we both had learned about training and built ourselves a schedule to follow. I train with him, making sure he's pushing all the time.

"Graham has a Multi-gym in his house in England. We do a lot of training down there.

We don't work with heavy weights, just medium weights, and instead of a certain amount of repetitions, we do the weights for a prescribed time period instead. All of this is in addition to a nutritional program that a doctor laid out for us earlier in the year."

Besides working on Graham's body before a race, Bill is also an integral member of Graham's GP crew. "I try to help him with his riding, because I can see if he's having a hard time with something. We talk a lot about his riding on the course, and I watch the other riders as well to see what is going on. After a riding session, Graham and I can talk together, decide what he's doing wrong, and possibly how to fix it.

Since he's third in the point standings of the World Championship, Graham Noyce is counting on everyone to help him get the crown. When he spoke to Bill the day after the Carlsbad Grand Prix, he gave us a rundown of his Monday-morning debriefing and planning with Graham: "We've just got to aim for winning—just go for it. No point in thinking about consistency now. From here, it's every moto. We planned to have a minimum of 20 points a round so we could win the World Championship. We're slightly behind that now because of the poor starts in the last couple of events. Fortunately it's not Graham's riding or the bike. It's just a spot of bad luck at the starts. It will change."

year last year—now they're both fresh. Carla was good last year, but didn't have a good bike. Now he does.

Another contributing factor to the tight battle is that all three riders have grown up on the GP circuit together, all having started their careers at about the same time. They know each other's riding ability, talents, quirks, and faults. According to Noyce, the three riders quit playing games "like mind games or trying to follow each other's lines in practice" a couple of years ago. They all know each other too well to bother with such nonsense. We asked Noyce to analyze both of his GP competitors.

"I think Carla has slowed down a bit and has finally gotten it together. He used to go too fast and crash. Now that he's got the bike working, he's staying on and going very fast. In Italy, he rode real well with two clean starts. He's having that bit of luck at the moment that everybody gets. I don't expect it to last too much longer.

"On the track Carla is pretty predictable. If he takes a start, for the first 15 minutes he'll go like hell. If you're stuck with a bad start, it's going to be a real chore every time.

"When Carla gets a good start and you're right with him, you have to stay right on him, especially when you're behind him. Sometimes he'll get this squirt of speed—it lasts for about 15 or 20 seconds. He'll go real fast, then turn around to see if you're still there. If you didn't catch his little burst and he gets a few feet ahead of you, he figures, 'Okay, I'm faster,' convinces himself of that, and then he's gone. You'll never catch him.

"If you can keep with his burst, so when he turns around you're still there, then you've got him. He's pissed. He starts thinking about why he didn't pull away from you, about what he's doing wrong, and he uses his concentration to think about that instead of just going fast. That slows him down, and that's how you can get him.

"Andre is different. Malherbe is pretty unpredictable because you can't really tell even halfway through a race how he's feeling. He can get going, get motivated, and really take off. He's real weird. He starts slow in a race like I do, then he'll start speeding up in the middle, maybe shut off again, then go again toward the last few minutes. You can never predict what sets off Andre because he isn't consistent. You're always wondering what he's going to do. Sometimes he'll hold a steady pace for six laps, go like hell for four laps, back down again, then take off until the finish. You have to stay on your toes with Andre."

But as Graham Noyce has proven many times in the past, both riders are beatable. He's beaten them. Among this year's displays of speed was an event where Carla took off with a 22-second lead, yet Noyce worked his way through the pack to pass him three laps from the



## PAM NOYCE

"It's a real serious job, and everyone involved takes it very seriously."

They had known each other for years, partially because of Gaylon Mosier. Graham Noyce roomed with Gaylon and Gary Semics in the U.S., back in their bachelor days. Pam was later married to Gaylon until he was killed in a traffic accident over two years ago.

Graham and Pam met again at Brad Lackey's World Championship victory party and the two were married in England during April of 1982. This is Pam's second year with Graham and her second season on the GP circuit. We asked about the latter first:

"The Grand Prix circuit is a little bit more professional than what we're used to over here in the United States. The riders are there to do a job and there's no partying going on, even after the race. It's a real serious job, and everyone involved takes it very seriously. The riders get along really well on the GP circuit, more than the Americans. There are no mind games going on. I've noticed that these guys have a lot of respect for each other and don't play any games. On Saturday before a race, and on Sunday during the race, they are not friends—they're racers. The other guy, friend or not, is someone you have to beat first. That attitude is completely turned off after the race and the riders are friends again, better friends than I think the American riders are with each other. The GP riders seem to care a lot about each other—off the track."

Pam has observed Graham's moods and knows well what it's like to coexist with a professional athlete before an event. "Graham starts putting on his 'race-face' on Friday morning. If he does well at the race, it ends Sunday night. If he doesn't do well, the mood can last through Monday. He gets pretty grumpy. You can't really do anything right. Everything bothers him, and everything has to be centered around him.

"It's just part of Graham. It's self-imposed pressure, harder to create for yourself than to have someone else put the pressure on you. Graham puts on an incredible amount of pressure, all created from within himself. His attitude is that he has to do well this year, or else. Of course, he's said the same thing every year.

"He generates all that pressure because he's found he rides better when he's under pressure. I don't know what it's like to be under that much pressure, but, from what I've seen, it's pretty intense."

Some of the pressure has been eased. At first, the Noyces traveled with Pam's two children. But both Pam and Graham agreed that bringing two kids on the GP circuit was more than either could handle. "It's an indication of how serious everyone is getting. It's not just us. There are no children this year at the GP events. Vromans' kids aren't there, Hudson's children are also staying at home. Nobody is bringing the kids.

"When we do go home, though, Graham gets along great with the kids. It's taken about a year for them to get close to him, but in the last three months they've gotten real close. They seem more reluctant to see him go sometimes than when I leave."

While the kids stay home, Pam and Graham hit the GP circuit. On race day Pam has one major chore: "I try to keep things normal. We travel in a motor home, so I do just about everything you do at home. It doesn't make sense for a rider like Graham to be worrying about when he'll find time to make a sandwich, or for him to have to hassle cleaning and preparing new goggles for a race. I handle things like that. While the race is going on, I run the watches for his times and do his lap scoring. I'm enjoying it. It keeps me busy and it keeps me happy."



Graham pilots a liquid-cooled, disc-braked, ATAC-equipped RC500 works Honda at the GPs.

finish to take the win.

"I always take time to get into the race. I take about 10 minutes, three or four laps, to get myself going up to speed. After that, I can be unpredictable. I generally like to stick behind a guy, sit behind him until even the last lap, and then do my passing. So I'm up and down, and you really can't tell what I'm going to do. There doesn't seem to be one major flaw that I have in my riding that the other guys can capitalize on.

"I can change things around so much. I've had them come up to me and I've hung around and gone off again, or they've gone by and I've waited until the end and got them back again. I'm about as unpredictable as Malherbe, so I don't think they can work a strategy on me either. Carla I can work out a plan with. Malherbe—no way."

In addition to dealing with the two other front-runners, Graham Noyce finds himself often surrounded by riders who are from the host country, riders out to make a name for themselves in a one-time shot, even at the expense of getting in the way of riders battling for a World Championship. There are a lot of "local" riders in every GP. For instance, this year's USGP had 24 riders, 14 of which were Americans. The 10 other GP riders had to wade their way through the field at each event.

"There's nothing we can do about it. From our point of view, there are only three guys up front—Andre, Carlqvist, and myself. I'm just looking for those two guys. Nobody else matters. We don't care if Bell or Magoo has a 40-second lead. It's the problem of points. That's all

we're after. The other riders out there aren't after points, and they can afford to throw away a moto by crashing for the lead. The three of us can't have a throw-away race. Every moto is important."

Noyce has finished second overall at the Carlsbad event twice now—both times to an American. We asked his opinion of American riders and how their sudden dominance of races like the Motocross and Trophee des Nations has affected the motocross world.

"The Americans look so aggressive and so spectacular compared to a GP rider. It's obviously because of the stadium races. They've got to do so much trick stuff in the stadiums to win. They're learning things that were never needed before and going faster because of it. They can project that new riding style on the outside circuit, and it looks great. But often it doesn't really help because they're using up so much energy. In a stadium, they're in for 20 minutes and it's over. They've got heats and semis, but they're all short. In a GP, you've got two one-hour practice sessions on Saturday, practice and time trials on Sunday, and then, finally, two 45-minute races. In the end, when there's 10 minutes to go and you're trying to catch a guy, we can squirt it on a bit more. We may not look as flashy compared to the Americans, but the speed is there.

"The attitude on the Grand Prix circuit about the American riders? Well obviously we're impressed, and we'd probably prefer if you all stayed here at home and left us alone. You're producing some very good riders. Results speak for them-

selves. The U.S. riders have come over, won the Trophee and Motocross des Nations for the last two years—Brad won the 500s, Danny LaPorte won the 250s. There's no question of what we think about them. Who likes getting beat at their own game?

"Americans are damn quick around corners, which is the hardest thing to do. In stadiums there are a lot of corners, because they're such a small course. To win, you learn how to corner very well. The Americans get in and out of a corner quicker, and they really make up time.

"When we first started racing with the stadium riders in the 500cc class, it was amazing. Here would come this American rider on a 500, way too deep into a corner. Then he'd pitch the thing, come sliding in feet up, swing the back end around, hit the clutch, and then—gone. No wasting time about it at all!

"We'd never seen anybody do something like that before. We used to ride different before the Americans came. We probably thought you could do a two-wheel drift, feet-up slide with a 500cc motocrosser on hard-packed ground, but as long as nobody did it, then nobody had to, right? Then the Americans came along and they were all doing things like that. So we had to start doing it just to stay up.

"Another place your riders do well is on the larger jumps. When Marty Moates jumped the double jump last year at the Swedish 500cc GP, it had never been done before. But as soon as he did it, we were all doing it. It turned out to be no problem, but we'd never thought of doing it before. Moates, because of his stadium exposure, never thought of doing it any other way. He just jumped it. We all just looked at each other, shrugged our shoulders, and started jumping it too. It was something that we never thought of, or had to do, before the Americans came into the picture.

"The U.S. is so competitive that it's producing riders very quickly. There are so many riders now that when they don't come right out and win, they're gone and replaced by somebody else. They come and go real quick. They're almost like rock stars. Here for a while, then suddenly gone.

"The only way we can get around the edge that Americans have is to start stadium races in Europe. They've got a real big one in Paris this year. There's one in Italy, and Wolsink has his in Amsterdam in September. They're picking out the biggest stadiums in each country to try and get it projected. I think in another two years we could have a series of 10. That could start us out the way you guys started out.

"It's similar to the situation back home in England at one time. I went to live and race in Belgium and got the pace of the Belgian riders. DeCoster was there at the time, all the big international races are staged there. Mikkola comes down, Carla



and Brad were there all the time. You're riding against the top guys in the world every week, so your standard is bound to go up. Every time I came back I'd beat the guys at home—no problem. I think that I set a pace and standard, a speed for them to go, and they had to catch up to that. They're at that speed now.

"Up until a couple of years ago the British Championship was pretty easy for me. But now there's Thorpe, Hudson, Whatley, Watson, Nichol—six or seven real good guys. They're riding the GPs, too. So they are benefiting from what we learn, just like we're benefiting from what the Americans are showing us."

In Graham's estimation, not all of the tricks that the Americans have up their jersey sleeves can be applied to Grand Prix racing—especially the 500cc class, considered by most motocross fans to be the biggest and only World Championship that counts. When you get to that level of riding, feet-up slides and double jumps still aren't going to make you a winner every time.

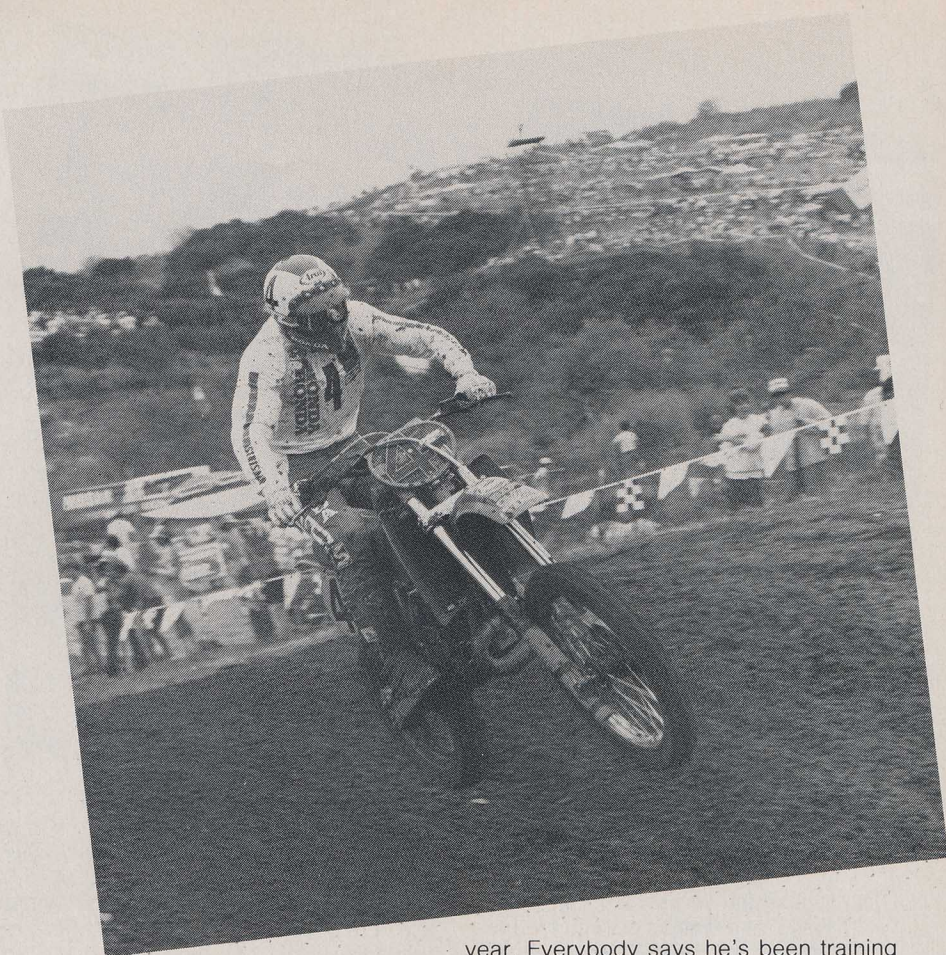
"Some of the tricks we can try, but the good riders in the 500cc class are so close that it's difficult to pull anything over on each other. For instance, in Italy, because of the combination of his bike working well and Carla riding really well, he took the day's points. He won on that day because he was the best, but just the best on that particular day. Other days I'm the best, and some days Andre is the best. It's been that way all year for the three of us. The guy who rode his best on that day deserves to win. But it's so tight, one mistake, and you're totally out.

"In Italy, I got a good start and had the first turn more or less to myself. Then Van Velthoven came up on the inside, took my handlebar out of my hands with his front wheel, took me to the outside . . . instant 15th place. I had no chance. I was just two seconds into the race, leading, and suddenly found myself in the back. That's 15 points down the drain. It just wasn't my day. I had a bad day on starts and it cost me dearly.

"Then you have those days when even before you get to the track you know you've won. There are those times when you really do feel that little extra when you're on the way to the circuit. You're really excited. You know how it went last year and you're going to put that right. You know if you get a bad start there are plenty of places you can pass. There's nothing that really worries you. It's that little extra where you know you can do really well, regardless of what happens. It's something you can feel on the way there. Everybody has those days."

Everyone hopes to have one of those days during a Grand Prix. Brad Lackey, who hasn't competed in any of the events this year, despite winning the title last year, is going to compete in selected events, including the Carlsbad round.

"Brad is a really good character, and I've known him for a long, long time. It's



taken a bit of spice off the cake with him missing because the Number One guy isn't there defending his title. I know he would like to be out there. I don't think it's taken any of the quality away from the World Championship with him missing. I think this year is the tightest it's been with three guys having a go. But still, when the World Champ isn't there, it's always a bit of a disappointment."

There have been numerous versions of why Brad Lackey didn't compete on the GP circuit this year. Graham Noyce, like many other people, has his opinion: "I think he isn't there because over the years he must have upset a few people on the Japanese side. If you want to win a World Championship, you have to ride a Japanese bike. He has done the rounds at Honda, Kawasaki, and Suzuki. Yamaha was pretty full already."

At various times throughout the year Brad Lackey has mentioned the probability of his return to the GP war next year. Apparently all he needs is a good motorcycle and a reasonable amount of money to mount a full GP effort. If he can find this often elusive combination, he plans to hit the circuit in 1984.

Graham Noyce wishes Lackey luck in his efforts, but also offers a warning. "For Brad to come back next year would be real hard after one year off, not being exposed to it. He had a real good year, he won the World Championship, and it's a great shame he didn't come back this

year. Everybody says he's been training and riding and all that stuff. But when you haven't been in really tough competition for, say, four months, you just don't have the rhythm, you don't have the speed, you don't know what the standard is out there.

"The GP riders pick up speed every year. We just have to go quicker and quicker all the time. The bikes get easier to ride, the suspension gets better, and we go faster. We get better traction, and we're certainly all trying harder. It just goes from there."

As the bikes go faster and the speeds increase, the amount of money paid to these riders increases also. Graham Noyce's sixth single-year contract with Honda is not structured anything at all like a standard American contract. He gets one big chunk of money from Honda, paid quarterly throughout the year, and takes out his expenses from that chunk. (Can you imagine an expense account in four different currencies?)

He makes the decision to drive or fly to an event. Although the contract includes bonuses for three categories—moto wins, day overall wins, and the World Championship—the GP riders go for fairly fat base salaries. A rider in the position that Graham Noyce enjoys makes approximately \$250,000 on a base salary, and can bump that well past \$400,000 in a season with bonuses and contingencies that go along with a World Championship title.

Besides figuring the budget for his rac-

ing efforts, Graham also has to work out a family budget. He met Pam Mosier, wife of the late Gaylon Mosier, toward the end of 1981, and the two were married in April of 1982.

"That was a bit of a distraction at first, but we all adjusted. Getting married was new for me, as was the addition of Pam's two children. We've talked about it; when you're married with two kids, it's got to take some toll. Last year we took the kids to all the races. We didn't know if it would be a good idea or not—it was an experimental year for all of us.

"Turns out it wasn't a good idea to have the kids at the races, so we don't take them to GPs anymore. Pam couldn't watch them and watch me at the same time, and it was just too much for both of us to handle. I had to think about something else besides the race, and it made a big difference.

"We learned a lot from last year. We sat down and talked about it. We knew what we had to do. We decided to put the racing first during that part of the season; the other part of the season is a family affair. The racing comes first because that's what brings in the money. We have to look out for that. Anytime we're not racing is family time.

"Pam goes to all the races with me. Things have turned out a lot better this year. She's quite a help to me at the races, both for moral support and for doing things in the pits that are important for me. She's a good confidence booster. She is 100 percent for me, and it's good to have someone like that."

Now that his family life has settled down and he's able to concentrate on racing, Graham Noyce is looking forward to the rest of the season with confidence. Of the six remaining courses in the circuit, he's very comfortable and familiar with four of them. The other two are new to everyone, so no one competing will have an advantage.

"I plan on winning the title again. But there are two other guys out there with the same thing in mind. I happen to feel that I've got the advantage over them, and they undoubtedly feel the same way themselves. We just have to wait and see what happens. Usually, around the end of this month, you pretty well know what's going to happen the remainder of the season. The races left this season favor me and my riding. I plan to use that as an advantage as much as I can to win the title again.

"This year, with the three of us racing, it's going to be a situation of wait-and-see. We've all pretty much assumed that it's going to go down to the very last race this year.

"I'm supposed to be one of the people who knows what's going to happen, where we're headed. But other than my own plans, which include winning the title again, I don't know what's going to happen. It's so tight out there I wouldn't want to guess."

DR

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