

**F**or decades one of the most popular bench racing topics among motorcycle racers and enthusiasts alike has been the controversial question: Who's the world's best all-around motorcycle rider? We've all had our favorites, most of whom have been legends in their own particular fields, but which guy, when asked to ride in a variety of events, some he might never have experienced before, is able to adapt

the quickest, show the greatest ability, strength and endurance, as well as display the mechanical knowledge needed to keep his machine alive.

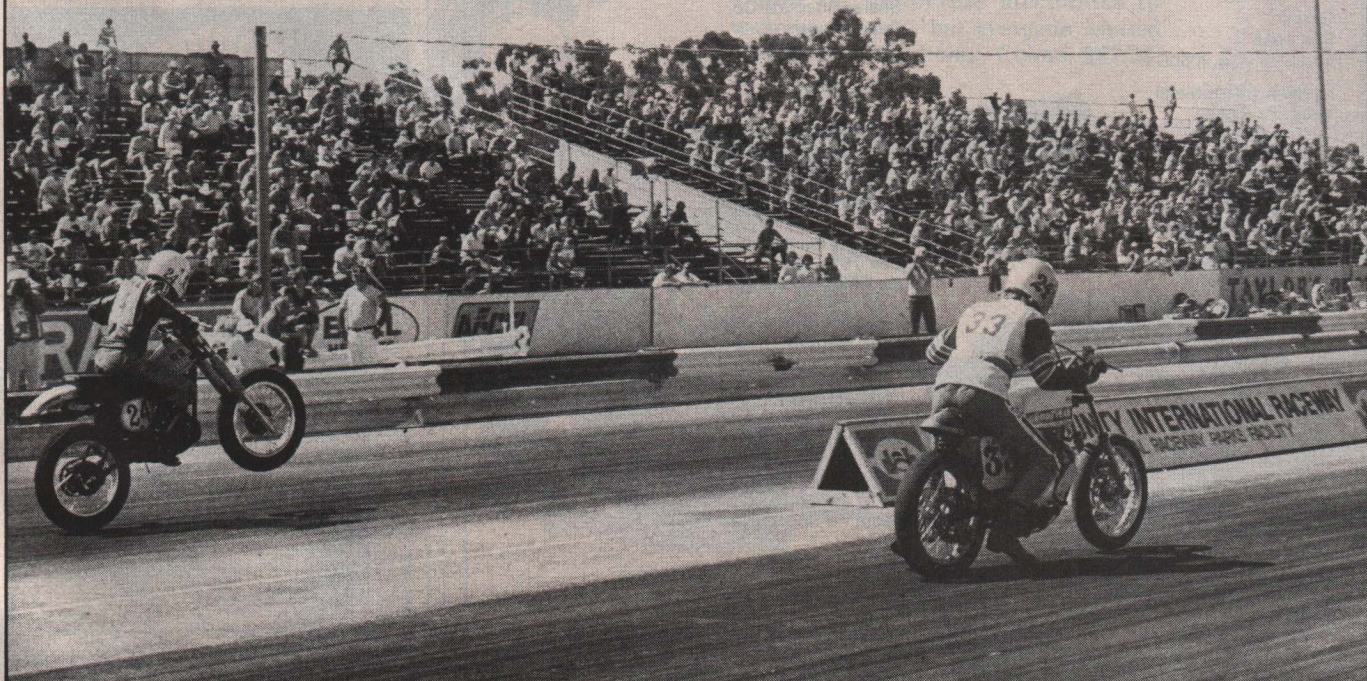
These curiosities are no doubt what motivated Vic Wilson, director of Saddleback Motorcycle Park in California, to create and produce the inaugural Monroe/S&W International Motorcycle Olympiad. He designed the event into a two-day program during which 30 riders would com-

pete in six grueling events using the same motorcycle; there'd be a drag race, road race, shorttrack, TT, cross-country/trials and motocross. As in motocross each event would be scored as one moto, with a first-place finish worth 40 points, second worth 37 points and so on; the rider who compiled the most points after all six events would be the winner, and walk away with the \$10,000 winner's share of a \$20,500 purse.

# THE WORLD'S FIRST MOTORCYCLE OLYMPIAD

By Rich Cox

**Thirty-Two Superstars From Different Fields Rode One Machine In Six Events—A Drag Race, Road Race, Shorttrack, TT, Cross-Country And Motocross. Motocross Rider Versus ISDT Specialist Versus Desert Aces. Motocross Bikes Battled Thumpers And Sleds. Guess Which Machines And Riders Dominated? Who Won Overall?**



*Drag racing styles were interesting. Jim Rice (near lane) kept both wheels on the ground and dragged his feet a lot, while Hannah carried the front wheel 1/8 mile and performed monkey gyrations on the gas cap.*

PHOTOGRAPHY: RICH COX

Naturally, getting a good representative cross section of superstar riders was critical to the program's success—and they were there. Where else could you see stars such as Mike Bast and Jim Fishback from the speedway world going head to head on the shorttrack course with TT specialists like Dave Aldana, John Hateley, Rick Hocking, Diane Cox and Jim Rice? Or desert aces like Al Baker, Cordis Brooks, Terry Clark and Larry Roeseler knocking handlebars over the cross-country course with such ISDT experts as Dick Burleson, Chris Carter, Billy Uhl, Carl Cranke, Mike Hannon, Jack and Tom Penton, and John Fero? And picture motocross rockets including Mike Bell, Jimmy Ellis, Bob Hannah, Kent Howerton, Gary Jones, Gary Semics, Marty Tripes, Gaylon Mosier and Jeff Jennings gassing it on a paved road-race course! It would be the only time you'd ever see guys like Malcolm Smith, Jeff Smith, Lars Larsson and trials ace Mike Griffiths attack a dragstrip Christmas tree!

To give the games some ISDT flavor, the riders had to follow time schedules and a strict set of rules. Only the riders were allowed to work on their machines—no outside assistance was allowed. They could change any parts on their machines except the suspension, frame and engine, but only during the allotted 10-minute maintenance period immediately following each event. Those working over the 10-minute period were penalized one point each additional minute. If a bike broke in practice or during the event—tough luck! It couldn't be repaired until the next 10-minute period; this put emphasis on a rider's mechanical ability as well as his riding ability. A marshal was

assigned to each rider; it was his job to get the rider to his event on time, keep tabs on his score and keep his nose clean—they were never more than 10 feet away from each other during pit sessions.

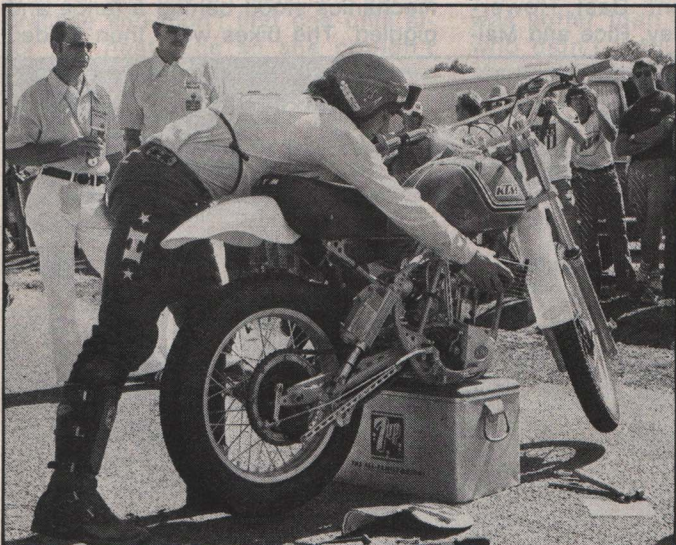
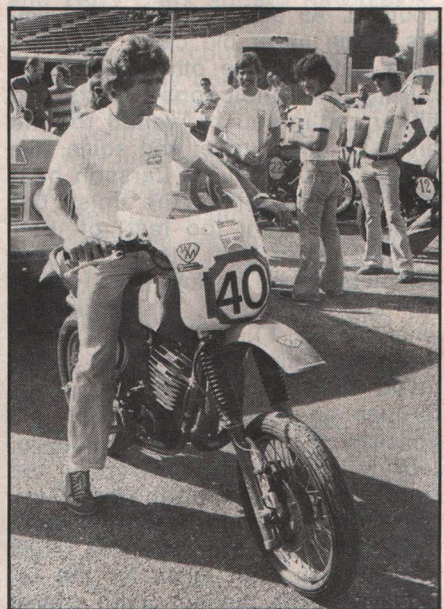
The first two events, a drag race and road race, were held at Orange County International Raceway and it was worth the admission price just to see the weirdly outfitted machinery. Most of the motocross riders were using the bikes they'd been riding all year, but fitted with either 18- or 19-inch front wheels, street or racing tires and higher gearing. Exotic Yamaha TT500s were popular; Hateley, Hocking, Aldana, Bast and Cox figured them to be the hot setup. Al

*Malcolm Smith, donning his perpetual "racer" smile, dazzled them on the pavement with help of a Fontana front brake, Dunlop street tires.*

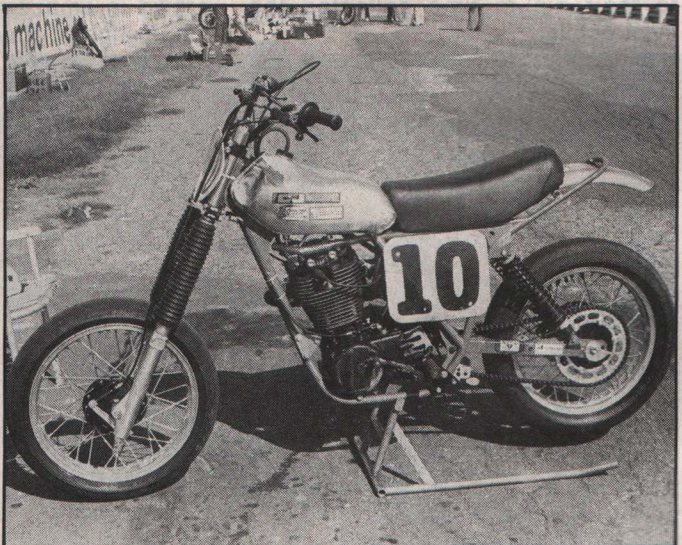
Baker was aboard a 440 Honda single, the only Honda in the field, and Jim Rice who came out of retirement especially for the Olympiad, attempted to ride a 315-pound BSA 650 twin in all six events.

Drag race practice revealed some pretty fast machinery; Hocking's TT was turning a 12.65 e.t. @ 101 mph; Hateley's TT was doing 12.95s; and Carl Cranke's 400 KTM was in the twelves—that is, before it seized on the second pass. It was amusing to watch the riders, some of whom thought a Christmas tree was a green bush that appeared sometime in December, try to figure out the staging lights and then watch the

*Mosier got some chuckles when he showed up with a Camber fairing and Yamaha front disc mounted to his Maico. Loose rear spokes ruined his road race debut.*



*Between the drag race and road race Carl Cranke amazed onlookers by doing a complete top-end job in less than 16 minutes—it took only three minutes to the point he's at now. Check out the weird rear shocks—right out of "Star Wars"!*



*Aldana's TT500 was dressed to "kill" for the road race, but ended up destroying itself first. If it had stayed together, Aldana no doubt would have considerably influenced the point standings.*

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ambers go to green; they also found out that lightweight high-powered scooters with sticky tires like to wheelie in every gear.

Aldana's TT sprung an oil leak on the start line and was penalized points for returning to the pits and using pliers and bailing wire to fix it; outside of the 10-minute fix-it period riders were only allowed use of their hands (no tools) to make repairs.

A fast bike didn't mean anything, because they were running e.t. bracket racing instead of flat-out dragging; that meant horsepower wasn't important, it would be cool coordination and consistency that counted. As expected from first-timers, some never did catch on: They were watching the other guy's light during the handicapped starts and either redlighted or waited for the green to turn purple; and some, like Terry Clark and Lars Larsson beat their competition to the finish but broke out (went too fast) of their bracket. Mike Bast made it to the semi-final round against Kent Howerton and redlighted. In disgust he wheelied his TT through four gears down the entire dragstrip—the crowd loved it! To everyone's surprise, through an elimination process, old consistency himself, Dick Burleson, took top honors—he's always in the right place at the right time. Gary Semics took second, Howerton third, Bast fourth and everyone else raced against their own times for the remaining points; those running closest to their dial-in time collected the most points.

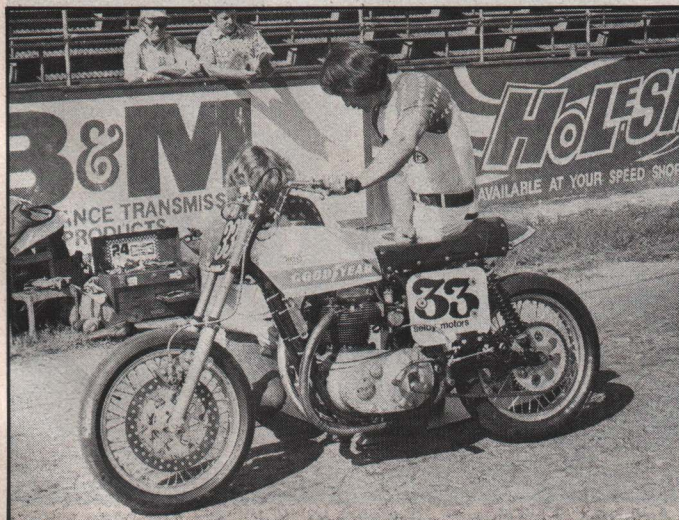
The road race was next and it was immediately apparent in practice that it would be hard on machinery. Ellis' Can-Am (a locally-prepared MX3—not a "works" bike) blew the lower end out, Hannah seized his production model Yamaha but still rode the race, and Lars Larsson was out with ignition trouble. Meanwhile Carl Cranke had amazingly rebuilt his KTM's complete top-end during the 10-minute maintenance period (in 16 minutes flat) and was out road racing—the fans were astonished. And if you think Kenny Roberts is something to see on pavement, you should see what *these* guys do with motocross bikes—they're absolutely insane! Pitching them sideways into corners at 100 mph and then sliding them, with the front wheel in the air coming out of the corners—it was berserk. It was even scarier that most of the guys riding motocross bikes couldn't stop them. Those little front brakes, which were designed to stop from 50 mph, instead of 100 mph, naturally went south in about a lap. The advantage definitely went to guys like Rice and Hocking who had disc brakes front and rear, or to those who had installed better brakes on their motocrossers; Malcolm Smith had a four-shoe Fontana brake on his Husky, and Mosier's Maico was sporting a Yamaha front disc. Aldana continued to be cursed when the intake manifold on his TT broke in practice forcing him out; that was one event he had expected to win.

The road race started in typical LeMans fashion with the riders sprinting to their bikes. Burleson was first away, while Cox was dead last; she had difficulty starting her TT all weekend. Burleson led for two laps while the whole spectacle dazed the crowd in amazement. Bast, Howerton, Fishback, Hateley, Rice and Mal-

colm were hot on his tail. Bast's hopes went down the drain on lap two when his TT500 suffered a broken armature on the magneto, forcing him out for the weekend. Hateley, whose TT was suffering incredible wheelhop at the end of the front straight, didn't seem to mind as he shot to the front on lap five. While he enjoyed a comfortable lead, things were happening hot-and-heavy back in the pack. Mosier's rear wheel spokes came loose, sending him into scary tank-slappers; Hannon lost the brakes on his Yamaha, crashing twice into a chain link fence; and Jack Penton, like many others, had selected the wrong tires and was sliding around like somebody had spilled a bag of marbles on the track. Hateley had Dunlop K81s, Gary Semics put Continentals on his factory Kawasaki and Hannon was running Michelins on his 400 Yamaha—these three choices seemed to work the best of the bunch.

Halfway through the 30-minute race Malcolm really started pressing Hateley and Little John found himself being passed by the "old man" with less than five minutes to go. Hateley tried to pass back, overcooked into a corner and went down. Malcolm took the win to the delight of many, followed by Rice with a clean consistent ride, Howerton on his factory Husky and then Hocking. Hateley remounted to save 10th position.

Immediately following the road race the riders were given one hour to change wheels and tires for the next day's dirt events. The Shorttrack was first up and some went to oval-track racing tires, while others chose knobbies. It was amusing to watch some of the factory MX riders work on their bikes while their full-time mechanics stood behind a fence and giggled. The bikes were then loaded



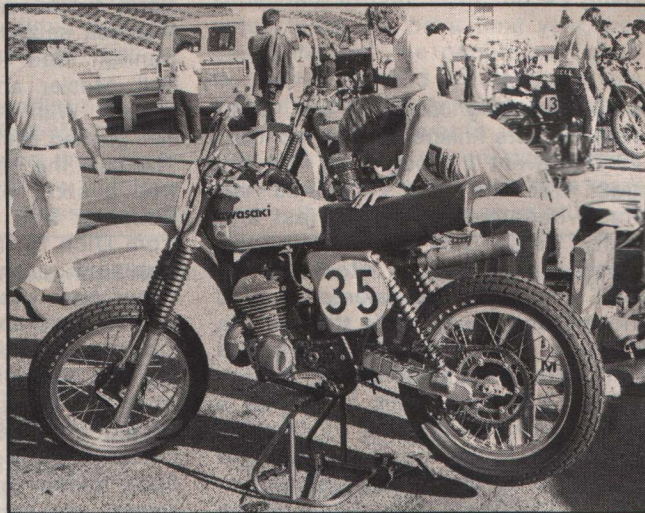
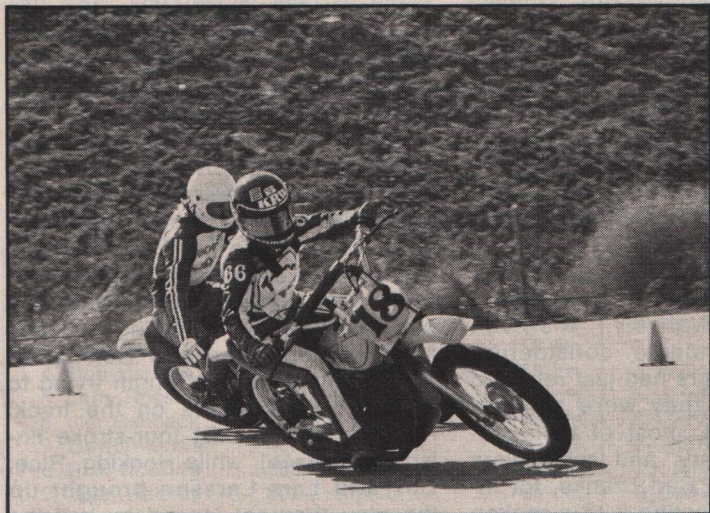
Jim Rice's 650 BSA Twin had the distinction of being the heaviest and sporting the least amount of travel. Jim (kneeling) did well in the road race and shorttrack, but understandably suffered in the motocross.



Hannah (24) and Cranke (19) get lapped as Malcolm Smith (37) and Hateley (26) scrap for the lead.

Better save this—it's the only time you'll ever see Diane Cox puttin' it to Bob Hannah. She finished 14th in the road race—Hannah lost brakes, finished 18th.

The one-hour maintenance period ending the first day gave Semics time to convert his 380 pre-production-type Kawasaki from a road racer to a dirt tracker.



into a semi for the night and trucked to Saddleback Park for Sunday's off-road events.

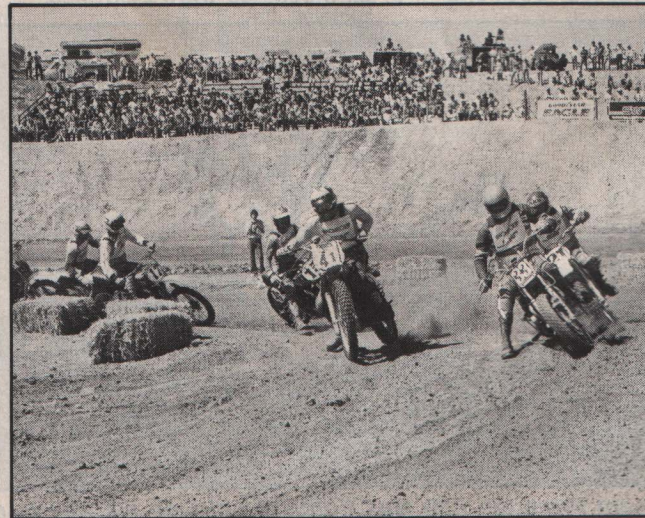
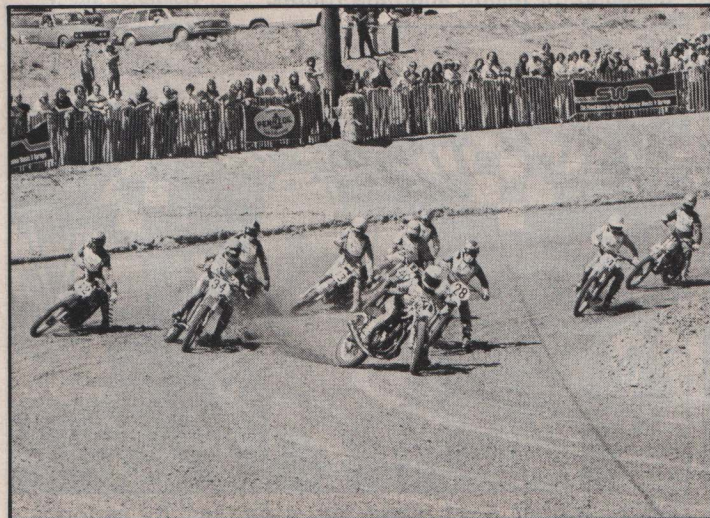
The shorttrack and TT were held in a common bowl, the TT running inside on the infield. The oval experts, like Hateley, Cox, Rice, Aldana and Hocking were the favorites in the shorttrack, and they pretty much dominated except Aldana. Bad luck struck again when his TT seized in practice, eliminating him for good this time. The motocross riders were fast but couldn't keep their drives sustained in the corners; they were busy looking for berms. The ISDT guys were a little timid, moving to the back where those four-stroke freight trains like Rice's and Hocking's couldn't flatten them; turning left all the time isn't natural to them. Those wanting to see Diane Cox put it to the motocrossers never got the chance. She lost a master link during practice and didn't find one until after her heat race so she couldn't

qualify for the semi or the main. Later she discovered all she had to do was push her bike to the starting line in her heat race and she could have transferred. The heat races were won by Hocking, Fishback and Hateley; Jennings and Hannah won the two semis and Semics won the consolation race when Burleson and Clark collided on the second lap. The main was a three-way battle between Rice, Hocking and Hateley. After following Rice for five laps Hocking finally elbowed the big BSA out of the way to take the win; it was incredibly close racing and we've never seen Hocking or a crowd so pumped over a race. We later found out that Rice's rear brake wasn't working at all, a problem that slowed him the rest of the day; in fact, he chose to sit out the cross-country event. Between the shorttrack and TT most riders changed to knobby tires as the track was softer than anticipated. Those who didn't, including Gary Semics

and Terry Clark aboard Kawasakis, really hurt their chances.

The short TT course saw the motocrossers totally dominate. It was just too tight for the heavier four-strokes to be competitive and there were no fast half-mile sweepers to give the Class C specialists an advantage. Mike Bell, Bob Hannah and Jeff Jennings won the first three heat races; Marty Tripes and John Hateley won the two semis; and Rick Hocking took the consolation race after he failed to transfer to the main due to a fall during his heat race, that broke his kick starter.

Meanwhile the rules were tested once again. Hannah's rear tire had developed a slow leak and he wasn't allowed to add air because it required a mechanical device; he raced the main anyway, with a flat tire, finishing last—it turns out this was the factor that kept him out of the overall winner's circle. Mike Bell ran away and hid in the main followed by Jen-



Shorttrack was the event most enjoyed by riders and spectators. First heat has Hocking (27) showing the new boys, Howerton (28), Roeseler (34) and Fero (42) the art of pitchin' it. Bell (13) tries to square the corner.

Third heat action in the TT event has Rice (33) and Fishback going wide in the cushion and getting aced by 17-year-old Jennings (41) who eventually won it. Rice fell down and Burleson (behind Jennings) finished third.

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nings and Gary Jones; in fact, eight motocrossers finished in the top 12.

"The event I thought I'd like the most—because it was too fast and dusty," said Dick Burleson of the cross-country event. Most of the ISDT guys agreed it catered more to the motocrossers, even though the 2.2-mile course had two "special test" sections that penalized the riders for trials-type dabs. One was a steep uphill, the other a rock-strewn gully, but it was basically fast fire roads that let the motocrossers completely dominate this event. Many didn't even complete the 30-minute race; Jack Penton seized during practice; Al Baker's Honda lost the transmission on the second lap; Tom

Penton broke his handlebars and was badly shaken when he ended on the fast downhill (says it was his worst crash ever); and Mike Griffiths' Montesa seized at the midway point. Hannah led the entire race, while Bell, Mosier and Semics fought for second. With five minutes to go, Mosier passed Bell to take over second. The best the off-road riders could do was a sixth place finish by Larry Roeseler and an 11th place finish from Dick Burleson. Chris Carter's comment generally sums up the ISDT riders poor showings: "I just rode a little too conservatively." It's even more understandable considering that the ISDT riders had just returned from Six Days, they were still jet-lagged and tired, most of their machines were weary, and some were badly beaten up. Carl Cranke, for instance, was competing with a broken foot and cracked shoulder and Billy Uhl had tendonitis.

As expected the motocrossers also dominated the motocross event, tak-

ing the first eight positions; Roeseler was the highest placing non-motocrosser. Hannah let Bell lead for several laps, then poured on the gas and that was the last anyone saw of him. Bell and Tripes had a personal duel going on, which was joined by Mosier, while Jennings tried in vain to hold off desert-ace Roeseler. Meanwhile Semics, who started from dead last when his teammate Terry Clark pushed him through the snow fence during the start, worked his way back to sixth place behind Howerton. The four-strokes really took a beating and gave a beating as Hateley, Hocking, Rice and Cox spent their last ounces of strength trying to keep those dinosaurs on the track. Hateley had the best four-stroke finish (11th place), while Hocking, Rice, Cox and Lars Larsson brought up the rear; they got lapped by half the rest of the field.

When it was all over and the points were tallied, factory Husqvarna rider Kent Howerton took the top honors



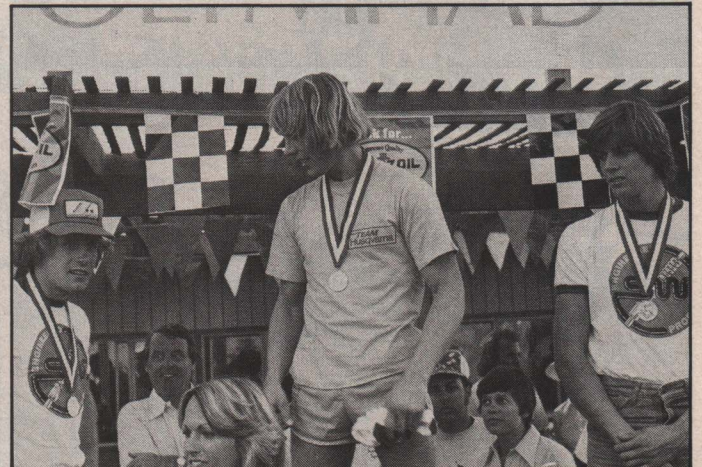
After following Gary Jones for three laps in the TT main, Mike Bell hit the afterburner over the jump and just rocketed away from everybody. Motocrossers took the first four positions—first six machines were 2-strokes.



Roeseler climbs the long, steep uphill, one of two "special test" sections in the cross-country event. Riders were penalized points for putting their feet down, dog paddling, or taking alternate routes.



Kent Howerton (28) laps Cordis Brooks on his way to a fifth-place finish in the motocross. Consistency is what wins olympiads—Kent was in the top ten in all six events.



Overall winner Kent Howerton is flanked by second-place finisher Gary Semics (left) and third-place finisher Mike Bell. In addition to prestige it was worth a bundle of money: Kent got \$10,000; Gary got \$3,450; and Mike walked away with \$1,500.

with 182 points; Gary Semics on a Kawasaki was second with 162 and Mike Bell aboard a Yamaha was third with 152. The results lead to some interesting conclusions. The fact that six out of the top ten finishers were motocrossers would indicate that motocrossers are adaptable to a variety of events, that they're reasonably fast in all of them, and that they're generally in the best shape. The fact that the first seven finishers were riding

two-strokes proves that they're really more efficient and reliable than most people think. And the fact that consistency usually pays was evident once again. Howerton didn't win one single event, but he placed high in all of them.

Is Howerton the world's best all-around motorcycle rider? Well, there are many who will argue that, especially since there were a few notables missing—like Kenny Roberts, Gary

Scott and a host of Europeans. Hopefully next year's Olympiad will fall on a date that will allow these superstars to compete—and we guarantee there will be a next year, because from all the people we talked to, both riders and spectators, it was one of the most enjoyable, exciting and interesting events of the year. And look out next year! When these guys finally figure out what tires work where, they'll really be smokin'! **M**

#### RESULTS OVERALL

1. Kent Howerton	390	Husqvarna	182 pts.
2. Gary Semics	380	Kawasaki	162 pts.
3. Mike Bell	400	Yamaha	158 pts.
4. Bob Hannah	400	Yamaha	153 pts.
5. Larry Roeseler	390	Husqvarna	149 pts.
6. Jim Fishback	400	Yamaha	144 pts.
7. Gaylon Mosier	400	Maico	143 pts.
8. Rick Hocking	500	Yamaha	139 pts.
9. John Hateley	500	Yamaha	135 pts.
10. Marty Tripes	380	Harley Davidson	132 pts.
11. Jeff Jennings	250	Suzuki	125 pts.
12. Dick Burleson	390	Husqvarna	123 pts.
13. Malcolm Smith	390	Husqvarna	119 pts.
14. Gary Jones	360	Ammex	115 pts.
15. Jim Rice	650	BSA	112 pts.
16. Terry Clark	380	Kawasaki	96 pts.
17. Mike Hannon	400	Yamaha	89 pts.
18. John Fero	400	Yamaha	84 pts.
19. Al Baker	440	Baker Special	75 pts.
20. Chris Carter	400	Yamaha	72 pts.
21. Cordis Brooks	370	Bultaco	67 pts.
22. Billy Uhl	400	Maico	61 pts.
23. Jack Penton	250	Penton	56 pts.
24. Lars Larsson	400	Maico	53 pts.
25. Mike Griffiths	370	Montesa	51 pts.
26. Jeff Smith	250	Can-Am	50 pts.
27. Carl Cranke	400	KTM	41 pts.
28. Tom Penton	250	Penton	38 pts.
29. Diane Cox	500	Yamaha	36 pts.
30. Mike Bast	500	Yamaha	35 pts.
31. David Aldana	500	Yamaha	17 pts.
32. Jimmy Ellis	250	Can-Am	4 pts.

#### YAMAHA ROAD RACE RESULTS

1. Malcolm Smith
2. Jim Rice
3. Kent Howerton
4. Rick Hocking
5. Jim Fishback
6. Gary Semics
7. Marty Tripes
8. Larry Roeseler
9. Terry Clark
10. John Hateley
11. Dick Burleson
12. John Fero
13. Tom Penton
14. Diane Cox
15. Carl Cranke
16. Cordis Brooks
17. Jeff Jennings
18. Bob Hannah
19. Mike Griffiths
20. Al Baker
21. Mike Bell
22. Jeff Smith
23. Chris Carter
24. Jack Penton
25. Mike Hannon
26. Gaylon Mosier
27. Bill Uhl
28. Gary Jones
29. Mike Bast
30. Jim Ellis
31. Lars Larsson
32. Dave Aldana

#### KAWASAKI DRAG RACE RESULTS

1. Dick Burleson
2. Gary Semics
3. Kent Howerton
4. Mike Bast
5. Chris Carter
6. Rick Hocking
7. Malcolm Smith
8. Al Baker
9. Jack Penton
10. Lars Larsson
11. Dave Aldana
12. Mike Griffiths
13. Larry Roeseler
14. John Fero
15. Bob Hannah
16. Gaylon Mosier
17. Bill Uhl
18. John Hateley
19. Jim Rice
20. Jeff Smith
21. Jim Fishback
22. Mike Bell
23. Gary Jones
24. Terry Clark
25. Mike Hannon
26. Marty Tripes
27. Jeff Jennings
28. Jim Ellis
29. Cordis Brooks
30. Tom Penton
31. Diane Cox
32. Carl Cranke

#### PENTON CROSS-COUNTRY TRIALS RESULTS

1. Bob Hannah
2. Gaylon Mosier
3. Mike Bell
4. Gary Semics
5. Larry Roeseler
6. Kent Howerton
7. Jeff Jennings
8. Marty Tripes
9. Terry Clark
10. Gary Jones
11. Dick Burleson
12. Jim Fishback
13. John Hateley
14. Malcolm Smith
15. John Fero
16. Billy Uhl
17. Mike Hannon
18. Cordis Brooks
19. Chris Carter
20. Carl Cranke
21. Jeff Smith
22. Rick Hocking
23. Diane Cox
24. Mike Griffiths
25. Tom Penton
26. Al Baker
27. Jim Rice
28. Lars Larsson

#### YAMAHA MOTOCROSS RESULTS

1. Bob Hannah
2. Mike Bell
3. Marty Tripes
4. Gaylon Mosier
5. Kent Howerton
6. Gary Semics
7. Gary Jones
8. Terry Clark
9. Larry Roeseler
10. Jeff Jennings
11. John Hateley
12. Jim Fishback
13. Dick Burleson
14. Cordis Brooks
15. Mike Hannon
16. John Fero
17. Billy Uhl
18. Malcolm Smith
19. Jeff Smith
20. Chris Carter
21. Carl Cranke
22. Rick Hocking
23. Jim Rice
24. Diane Cox
25. Lars Larsson

#### GOODYEAR SHORTTRACK—MAIN EVENT

1. Rick Hocking
2. Jim Rice
3. John Hateley
4. Jim Fishback
5. Jeff Jennings
6. Larry Roeseler
7. Mike Bell
8. Bob Hannah
9. Mike Hannon
10. Kent Howerton
11. Gaylon Mosier
12. Al Baker

#### YAMAHA TT—MAIN EVENT

1. Mike Bell
2. Jeff Jennings
3. Gary Jones
4. Gaylon Mosier
5. Jim Fishback
6. Kent Howerton
7. John Hateley
8. Marty Tripes
9. Mike Hannon
10. Larry Roeseler
11. Gary Semics
12. Bob Hannah