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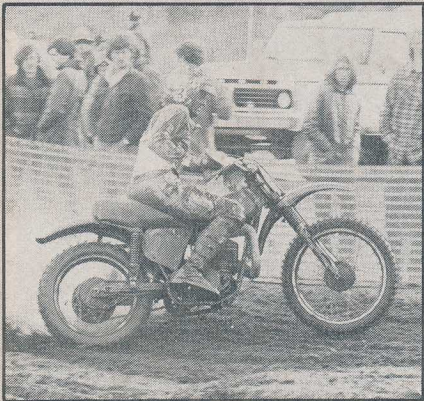
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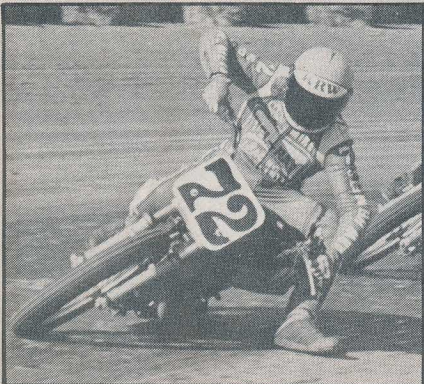
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Team Honda's Pierre Karsmakers in action at the Daytona International Speedway round of the AMA's Supercross Series last March. Photo by Steve Reyes.

Centerspread:
Another Steve Reyes photo, this time from the San Jose Mile. Privateer favorite Alex Jorgensen, on just about the last competitive Norton flattracker left in the United States holds a slim lead over Kenny Robers, on his trick Yamaha twin.



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THE FOUR-STROKE NATIONALS

By Tod Rafferty

There'll always be an England

Last year, in its inaugural meeting, this event somehow got labeled the U.S. National Four-Stroke Motocross Championship. This year, with an AMA sanction, it moved a step closer to living up to that title.

Last year the Carlsbad Raceway gathering attracted a nostalgic variety of riders and machines. There were, in addition to the swarm of Honda singles, a number of BSAs, Triumph twins, some Ducatis, Matchlesses, a Parilla. This year the machinery spectrum narrowed. The new Yamaha TT 500 held the majority, barely edging the 125-250-350-440 Honda contingent. There were a handful of BSA thumpers ranging from stock Victors to Cheney-framed B-50s, and one valiant Goldstar.

However, the variety of riding talent expanded considerably this year. On hand for the old-fashioned motocross were the Honda factory zip guns Marty Smith and Tommy Croft with pit support from Al Baker. Mike Bell was there with one of his dad's rapid Long Beach Hondas. Last year's winner Gunnar Lindstrom appeared with a tricked 600cc Yamaha TT. Pierre Karsmakers was entered on a Honda, but didn't show. For the traditionalists on hand, the prospects of a return to the push rod glories of yesteryear were slim indeed.

But . . . lurking in the pits, surrounded by furious activity and outbursts of British-accented cursing, was Martin Horne's van. Horne, the U.S. distributor for Clews Competition Machines (CCM), had driven the truck from his home in Illinois, carrying a load of reborn BSA-powered motocrossers.

For those of you who have never ridden or closely eyeballed a CCM, be assured that it is, no question, the most sophisticated four-stroke dirt machine in existence. The engine is a reworked BSA B-50 and it sits in a chrome-moly frame. The bike gets seven inches of suspension travel at both ends and has 10 inches of ground clearance. The whole thing weighs 230 lbs. and puts out more torque than God.

Representing CCM in the Pro classes were Marty Tripes and his brother Mike, the everlasting Rolf Tibblin, and young expert Jeff Foland. Another half-dozen Clewsers were entered in the Sportsmen and Old Timer's classes. The battle lines were plainly drawn: Japanese horsepower and handling versus British torque and handling. A genuine showdown.

As it turned out, the results were about evenly split. In terms of overall standings it could be considered a draw. The Open Pro class went to Honda, the 250 Pro to CCM; the 125 and 250 Sportsman winners rode Honda, the Open Sportsman a CCM. The 125 Pro class was a Honda sweep, CCMs were 1-2 in the Old Timer's division.

The contest in 250 Pro was all between Mike Tripes and Mike McGowen. Both were in top form and swapped the lead a number of times, but the CCM demonstrated more power and superior handling under hard braking as Tripes took the win. McGowen was second followed by Terry Bilton on another Honda.

(By motocross standards, the race program for the Four-Stroke Nationals was abbreviated. The Sportsman classes got only two 15-minute motos, and the Pros ran two 30-minute motos. AMA rules for professional National Championship events require two 40-minute or three 30-minute motos per class.)

Entries in the 125 Pro class were down compared to last year, but there were several quick Hondas on the line. Jim Lowe took first place honors, with John Fekc second and former *Pop Cycle* editor Brad Zimmerman in third.

By far the largest class of the day was the Open Sportsman division, owing largely to the numbers of Yamaha TT 500s in attendance. The new oriental thumpers ranged from stock, to semitruck, to highly modified. Some had expensive accessory frames, wheels, top drawer shocks, air forks, hot cams and all suchlike. Some of the Yammies had escalated into the CCM price range (over \$2000), but the revenge of the Britons was to continue as the overcast day went

on. Even the weather was British.

Keith Petrangelo logged another victory for CCM after a hot contest with Joe Licciardi. Deano Sampo put his BSA in second overall when Licciardi crashed in the second moto, moving himself back to third.

The Palfreyman/Gardner sidehack team topped a large field on their Norton-Wasp rig, showing again that skill is a real good substitute for horsepower. The Braton/Crandall Triumph team was second.

Bill McClinton and Jerry Foreman rode CCMs to first and second respectively in the Old Timers race.

The day's most exciting racing was of course in the Open Pro class. In the first moto Mike Bell showed his horsepower to the rest of the field, and put his Honda out in front in the first turn. Marty Smith and Tommy Croft, both racing four-strokes for the first time, disputed second and third with Gunnar Lindstrom and Jeff Foland.

Croft emerged from the pack and set off in pursuit of Mike Bell's flying Honda 440. Croft was riding on the ragged edge, steadily closing the distance between





Making his four-stroke racing debut at Carlsbad was Honda super-star Marty Smith. He must have liked it because just a few days later there was a trick frame with his name marked on it at C&J Frames in Santa Ana.



This is the guy who's making a serious and devoted effort to revive four-stroke racing machinery. He's Martin Horne, the United States distributor for the impressive CCM thumpers.



Long Beach Honda ace Mike Bell leads Team Honda motocross star Tommy Croft during the four-stroke Nationals at Carlsbad. Overall winner Bell has a jillion hours on four-stroke machinery, but Croft says that this was his first race on a 'thumper.'



Mike Bell leads the pack (Marty Smith is No. 12; No. 1 is Gunnar Lindstrom) through the Carlsbad Grand Prix course first turn.

himself and the front-runner. Smith outdistanced Lindstrom and settled into a steady pace in third position.

Marty Tripes moved up after a mediocre start, overtaking Rolf Tibblin (CCM) and Lindstrom (Yam). Due to an equipment mix-up in the CCM Racing Team (formed that day), Tripes was aboard a 250 CCM in the first moto. Despite the obvious power disadvantage, he managed to finish fourth behind Smith.

Up front, Croft was able to slip by Bell several times, only to see him regain the lead each time. Bell's Honda showed its

power surplus consistently on the long uphill. Croft was usually right on his fender at the bottom of the hill, and six bike-lengths back when they reached the top. Bell took the flag with just about that much lead, as Croft took second with his front suspension gone to mush.

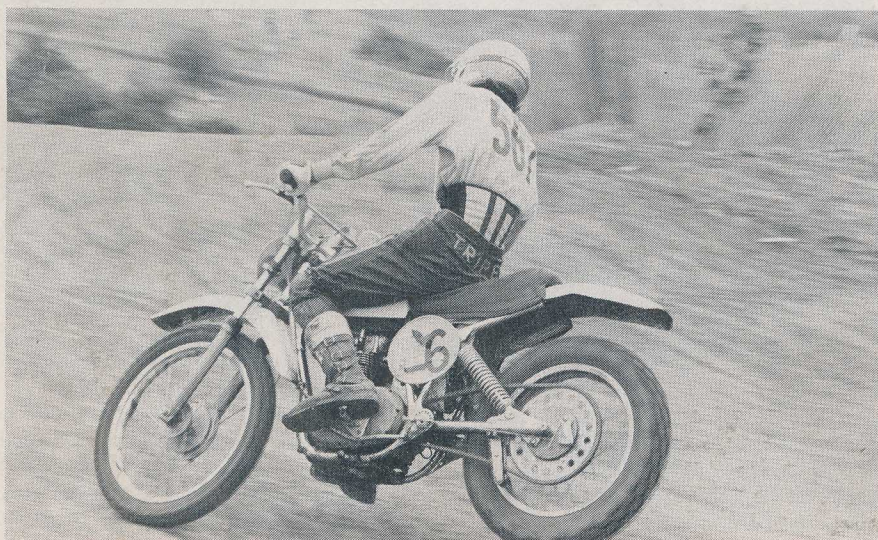
Rolf Tibblin rode a steadily smooth race and overtook Lindstrom to finish the first moto in fifth place.

At first the second and final Open Pro moto looked like a replay as Mike Bell again grabbed the early lead. But all was to be different this round as Marty Smith decided to get serious, and Marty Tripes

was riding a CCM with several more cubic centimeters. Like almost 400 more. Right, a 650cc single.

It was glorious. (As you may have guessed by now, this report was written by an old timer—well, middle-aged timer—with a genuine fondness for British singles.)

Smith was the first to get around Bell and into the lead, as Marty began to learn just how fast these Honda valvers could be ridden. But Tripes was soon past Bell also, and it was quickly apparent that this would be a two-man race.



On the works CCM, Marty Tripes was really hot. He would have undoubtedly done better in the overall results if he hadn't had a mix-up in the pits and rode a 250cc machine in the first moto. Tripes, on the CCM, was markedly smoother and faster through the rough sections of the Carlsbad course.



Youthful four-stroke National winner Mike Bell looks pensive before the start of the second moto. Bell rode a potent 440cc Honda from his dad's Long Beach Honda shop.

prix, a unique form of California motorcycle race that can best be described as a long, long motocross. The course used was a much-modified version of the Dunes' Shadow Glen track. The AME's promise to come up with a new, unique circuit sort of back-fired, for when the promoters arrived to inspect the layout, the "three-mile course" was only a little under two miles.

The course itself was very tight and twisty, making it a difficult and challenging chore for riders to pass. A couple of water crossings became deep, ruddy mud-holes late in the day, kept the spectators thoroughly entertained, and the riders thoroughly dirty.

On Sunday, the program switched to the Indian Dunes International motocross course. The track was expanded for the occasion, with two long loops out through a deep sandy stream bed. Unfortunately, the track degenerated into a mass of ruts and pot-holes.

500cc Expert rider Jim O'Neal was the hero of the weekend, taking the big-bore overall win for the weekend. O'Neal won the grand prix on Saturday and was second (behind Larry Shoemaker) in Sunday's motocross. O'Neal rode a tired, old Suzuki RM370 that he'd borrowed from one of the motorcycle magazines.

O'Neal took the 250cc Expert class win as well in Saturday's grand prix. That combined with a second place finish on Sunday, to give him the overall win for the weekend in two classes. In the 250 class, ex-pro rider O'Neal rode a Cole Brothers-sponsored Maico.

In the 125cc Expert class, Suzuki-mounted Alan Olson took the overall win with class wins on both days. The GP was an easy wire-to-wire win. Pop Cycle's own Editorial Director, George Elliott, had a firm hold on second

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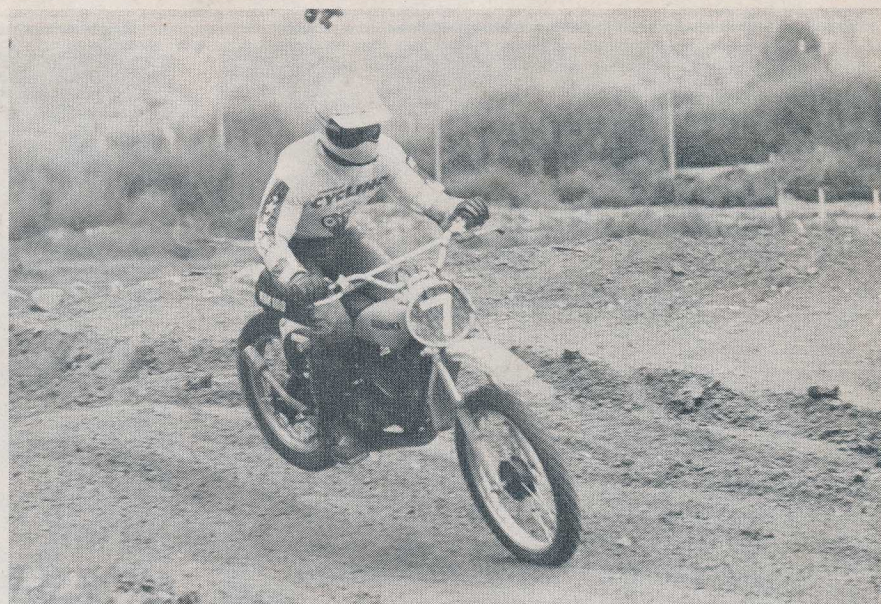
OVERALL WINNERS

125cc BEGINNER: 1. Cecil Martinez (Yamaha)
 125cc NOVICE: 1. Walt Bird (Honda)
 125cc EXPERT: 1. Alan Olson (Suzuki)
 250cc BEGINNER: 1. Robert Higson (Yamaha)
 250cc NOVICE: 1. James Henry (Bultaco)
 250cc AMATEUR: 1. Mike Rehorn (Husqvarna)
 250cc EXPERT: 1. Jim O'Neal (Maico)
 500cc BEGINNER: 1. Robert Lee (Suzuki)
 500cc NOVICE: 1. Gerry Steiner (Maico)
 500cc AMATEUR: 1. Dick Yeats (Maico)
 500cc EXPERT: 1. Jim O'Neal (Suzuki)
 FOUR-STROKE: 1. Don Young (Yamaha 500)



Even though he won the 500cc Expert motocross on Sunday, Larry Shoemaker lost the overall prize to arch-rival Jim O'Neal.

Pop Cycle's own George Elliott rode a test RM-100 Suzuki to third in the 125cc class.



There's nothing old-timer-ish about the machinery starting this race at the Veteran Nationals. 'Veteran' is the key word, not old-timers.



SIX DAYS

Trophy team, all with higher numbers, got the signal from their manager that the heat is off, but of course, continued to post good times then, and in the afternoon over the same test.

The German Team, learning that the "spoiler" wasn't working for them, tightened up their act in an effort to compensate. Normally the Czechs could expect to hold position or even gain a bit but, unexpectedly, England's Mick Bowers went wild in the 350 class, and absolutely terrorized the special tests, taking top time, setting "par" and pushing Cespiva, Posik and Cisar back with indexes of 7.9, 14.7 and 14.3. The West Germans' tightening act held their team total to only 37.9, while the Czechs put on 100, catapulting the Zundapp squad into the lead!

After that, it was near-academic, with no magic rabbit ears in sight for Krivka to grasp, thanks to the easy riding of the last two days. The final test, although increased in its importance by extending the distance over which timing was done, still held no top-hat potential, and being a motocross rather than the more traditional roadrace, chances of seized engines, crashes which might sideline a team rider, or other result-changing calamity seemed beyond hope. Thus it went to the wire.

In that final test there was some drama for Americans. A dead-engine start meant that a fast getaway was vital. Many of our best found that first-kick stabs produced nothing, and as a result the position of fighting through traffic set them well back. One such was Tom Penton, who had been running neck-and-neck with brother Jack for Best American until the last day. Tom bitterly denounced the event where everything was so easy that the entire trial focused on whether your bike would start on the first kick in one final test. He lost his lead not only to Jack (who also failed a fast start) but to Burleson, who took the U.S. Overall.

Dane Leimbach also had problems, cut off at the pass in the last test by a slow Czech (is there such a thing?), he lost time getting going again and dropped several places.

In the very last heat, it was joyous to see a group of Americans leap away from the line ahead of the pack. It was our Yamaha boys, who could start in gear, and they were well in front. Only a mid-race fluke, wherein John Fero, following close to Stan Rubottom in a corner, trapped his front wheel between Stan's rear tire and fender, spilled them both, and took agonizing, if somewhat comical, moments to disengage the machines.

Next year the host country will be Czechoslovakia. A banquet feast should be expected.

NETS

for the entire race, but dropped to third when he threw a chain on his Suzuki RM, with the finish line in sight. While George was hastily making repairs, Steve Oglesby flashed past to finish in the runner-up spot behind Olson.

The 250cc class (on Saturday) saw Jim O'Neal (Maico) overtake early leader Ron Gibson (Kawasaki) and never look back after that. 125cc winner Alan Olson brought up third place.

Twenty-nine bikes lined up for the start of the Open class, which turned out the best racing of the day. O'Neal took the holeshot, but Larry Shoemaker, riding a 400 Yamaha monoshocker, was right behind. The two diced it out for about four laps before Shoemaker shot past on the straight and opened up a sizeable lead. He looked like a 'shoe-in' until an engine seizure ended the day for him. O'Neal regained the lead and chalked up his second win of the day. Suzuki rider W.C. Thornton finished second over our own George Elliott, who came up from having carburetion problems with his Husqvarna to finish third.

On Sunday, both rider and crowd turnout was much better. The course was laid out as an extended version of the International motocross course, leading the riders far out on two loops through deep sand. The track quickly turned into a mass of deep ruts and holes.

Saturday's hero Jim O'Neal took the checkered flag in the first 250 moto. This win, plus a fourth in the second moto, brought Jim the class for the day and for the entire weekend.

Thus, the stage was set for the most important and biggest race of the weekend, the Open Class. Larry Shoemaker got his Yamaha together after Saturday's seizure and put up an effort that won him both motos, over (who else?) Jim O'Neal.

The two rivals exchanged the lead several times, and there was a fair amount of body (and machine) contact. Shoemaker came out of the final corner in front by a hair, and took the checkered flag.

But the overall trophy went to O'Neal, with his Saturday win and the second placing in Sunday's motocross. Were there such an award, O'Neal would have taken home the Overall High Point Rider of the Weekend Award.

The second annual Veterans Nationals would have to be called an unqualified success. There were no coronaries or lapses of attention due to senility. There was a lot of good, close motorcycle racing.

If you're over 35 and still have competitive urges (to race bikes that is), you should start training and practicing now for next year's Indian Dunes "Geritol Classic."



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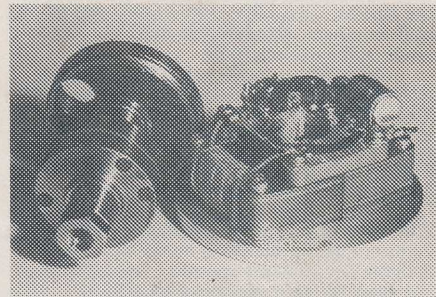
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