



Brad Lackey steers into a lurid power slide on the works Kawasaki at the Luxembourg Grand Prix in August, 1979.

BRAD'S QUEST — A WORLD TITLE FOR THE STATES

BRAD Lackey is America's number one motocrosser! Strangely enough there may be many in his homeland who wouldn't rate him as such because he races there so rarely and they have their domestic heroes like Bob Hannah.

Although Jim Pomeroy was the first American to achieve any significant success in the world championships only Lackey has maintained US prestige at this level and is rated by many of his rivals, such as Roger De Coster, as the man to take the first world crown to the Americas.

It is in fact his decision to come to Europe to take on the world's best, rather than stay in the more lucrative pastures of his homeland, which is likely to see him achieve his lifetime's ambition of a world title.

After his early experience on a Hodaka and 360 Montesa in his home state of California his first rides in competition came in the original Inter-Am series in 1968 when he was 16 on a shop-sponsored CZ. The following year saw him tackle the national circuit for the first time and he rode with a rubber peace dove taped to the handlebars of his CZ.

The AMA were unwilling to let him ride in the 1970 Trans-AMA because he still wasn't 18, their minimum age limit at the time, but reluctantly agreed to let Brad ride in the support class when he produced his FIM licence.

Brad won that day and was allowed to contest the international class for the rest of the series, twice finishing as best American. He was invited to Czechoslovakia the following summer and, living a spartan existence, contested six 250 GPs before returning for the Trans-AMA where he was beaten over the series by just one point for top American.

Three wins out of five on the CZ and another two wins after signing for Kawasaki gave Brad the national 500cc title in 1972 with a points score more than double that of the runner-up. This was to be Brad's last attempt at the national title; from 1973 he has ridden in Europe, his appetite whetted again by riding in the Motocross des Nations and a sixth place overall against the all-conquering Europeans in the Trans-AMA.

That first season was no financial success and despite finishing 13th in the 500 world title Brad needed all of his 1972 winnings to subsidise the effort. A disappointing Trans-AMA, where he was beset by mechanical problems, was only the forerunner to another blow — the cutback of race sponsorship by Kawasaki.

He was determined to ride in Europe though and planned a campaign as a privateer before Husqvarna offered a most welcome contract. Brad stayed with Husqvarna for three years, improving from tenth, to sixth, to fifth and scoring his first two GP moto wins.

There were problems with the Swedish factory however. They continually brought



Brad during his Honda days in 1978 on the Red Rocket. He finished the season in second place in the world rankings before a lucrative contract lured him to Kawasaki.

him new bikes to try out for the first time in the GPs and this strained the relationship so that the offer of a works Honda in 1977 was welcomed with open arms.

That heralded his elevation to the very top, certainly as far as British fans are concerned. True he had won the Hants Grand International in his final season with Husqvarna, but 1977 saw him win the Hants again and take his first overall GP win at Farleigh Castle. Brad only went up one place in the world to fourth, but those top four men were way ahead of the opposition week after week.

It was said at the time that his progression would take Brad to the world crown in another three years, but Brad would have none of it; he wasn't going to wait that long!

And he showed that he meant it last year by jumping to second in the title, the only man to

consistently challenge Heikki Mikkola. More problems were on their way, though.

Indecision by the Honda hierarchy over the contract which they could offer him for 1979 left him wondering over his future with the organisation and he signed a three year contract with Kawasaki to ride their radical Uni-Trak machinery.

After terrible results in pre-season meetings Brad set off like a bomb in the GPs, scoring a race win in four of the first five rounds, but his DNFs were to prove vital as Britain's Graham Noyce displayed amazing consistency to take the crown.

Those predictions were that Brad would win the title in 1980. If he can resolve his dispute with Kawasaki over the competitiveness and reliability of the machinery there is no reason why it shouldn't be.