

Trialst Motocross News



1980

OFF-ROAD REVIEW

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By the staff, correspondents and photographers of T + MX

This book is dedicated to the organisers, observers, marshals, course-layers, stake-bashers, scrutineers, lap-scorers, odd-job bods and amiable landowners who endure much for love of the sport.



Trials and Motocross News — or T + MX to more than 100,000 faithful readers — was the first UK newspaper to identify the strength and needs of the off-road market.

This book is a logical follow-on. The team which gave you your first off-road newspaper now presents your first off-road review. We hope you have as much pleasure reading it as we did producing it.

Many people have contributed to this book — so many, in fact, that a full credit list would be well-nigh impossible. Many of our usual outside photographers and correspondents have been involved, together with the editorial and advertisement staff of T + MX — either directly, or by undertaking extra work while their colleagues got on with the book.

And although it is probably fairer to mention no-one, we will take a risk and single out four lads for special thanks.

T + MX motocross boffin Alex

Hodgkinson made a huge contribution, while foreman compositor Keith Simpson's assistance with production was invaluable. Freelance photographers Eric Kitchen (trials) and Jack Burnicle (motocross) confirmed their reputations as the best in the business.

Having said that, I would like collectively to thank every single person whose contribution appears in these pages.

It has been a huge task to produce this book, and we hope that your interest confirms that the effort was worthwhile.

BILL LAWLESS,
Editor, January, 1980.

Bill Lawless



Like many another competitor, I have watched the progress of Trials and Motocross News with interest during the last couple of years.

No-one had ever attempted to run an off-road newspaper before, presumably because they thought there wouldn't be enough people to read it.

But T + MX proved them wrong by quickly getting established and then going from strength to strength. This Off-Road Review is further evidence that our sport is big enough and virile enough to support its own voice — and who better to speak for us than T + MX?

I hope the annual enjoys as much success as the weekly.

MALCOLM RATHMELL
British Solo Trials Champion

Malcolm Rathmell



The classic picture of Graham Noyce's victory salute as he takes the flag at Farleigh Castle.

NOYCE RULES — OK?

GRAHAM NOYCE, the 22-year-old Honda star from Eastleigh in Hampshire, stood proudly triumphant on the winner's podium at Ettelbruck in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg on August 12 as 'God Save The Queen' rang around the picturesque track to herald his crowning as World 500cc Motocross Champion — the sport's premier title.

Ironically he had just had his worst day of the year, but that didn't matter. His consistent displays in the previous eleven rounds had assured Graham of the title seven days before, at the infamous Citadel track at Namur in Belgium.

As soon as the National Anthem was over, the newly-crowned champion showered all around him with champagne. He was the first Briton to win a motocross world title since Jeff Smith in 1965; Graham's dreams had all come true. It wasn't just the British victory which made this the most exciting title chase for years. Although Graham emerged from the pack to score a comfortable points victory, in the final analysis the fortunes of the top challengers changed from week to week.

Inevitably there was speculation as to the destiny of the world crown. First to emerge as favourite was Californian Brad Lackey with the revolutionary Uni-Trak Kawasaki, then reigning champion Heikki Mikkola, going for a hat-trick on his Yamaha. Mid-season and the Dutch dentist, Gerrit Wolsink, pushed himself and Suzuki to the fore with his usual impeccable performances in America.

With five times champion Roger De Coster smoking the lot on his day and fellow Belgian Andre Malherbe nearly making it a Honda 1-2 with an amazing burst of results at the end of the season, it was thrills all the way and Graham Noyce, despite leading the points chase for all but two early rounds, didn't emerge as favourite until he scored an emotional win at Farleigh Castle, home of the British round, in July.

Although the Grand Prix season started at Sittendorf, Austria, on April 22 there was plenty of significant action in the transfer market and pre-season events.

Lackey's relentless climb up the table each year had taken him to number two in 1978 when he was with Honda. Discontent with the failure of the factory to offer terms for 1979 and a three year contract reputedly worth a cool half million dollars saw Brad move to Kawasaki to ride a new bike which he hadn't even tested. The advertising read: "What made Brad Lackey give the Reds the blues? The Kawasaki Greens." By the end of the year it was suggested that the Kawasaki camp was green with envy and more than a little red-faced.

Lackey struggled in the early season meetings but more significantly world champion Heikki Mikkola broke his right leg five weeks before Austria, and Roger De Coster tore ligaments in his shoulder with three weeks to blast-off. Noyce was going well but Gerrit Wolsink was going better. The Dutchman won at St. Anthonis and followed up with the Hants Grand International as Noyce struck his traditional bad luck when his Honda shed its chain.

Everything was set in Austria with, amazingly, Mikkola and De Coster both on the



Majestic Noyce on his way to a British GP win at Farleigh Castle — and the world crown.

line. Mikkola struggled round for only seven midfield laps but De Coster, his Suzuki sporting experimental leading link forks, took tenth and fourth places.

Surprise victor in the first race by the width of a tyre from Noyce was Ivan Van den Broeck, but that was the end of Maico joy for the season as the Belgian and his German team-mates Herbert Schmitz and Fritz Kobele struggled against the faster Japanese machinery.

Wolsink was third and he and Noyce repeated their positions in the second moto as Lackey came through from his second midfield start for the race win.

Graham Noyce had won his first GP, the

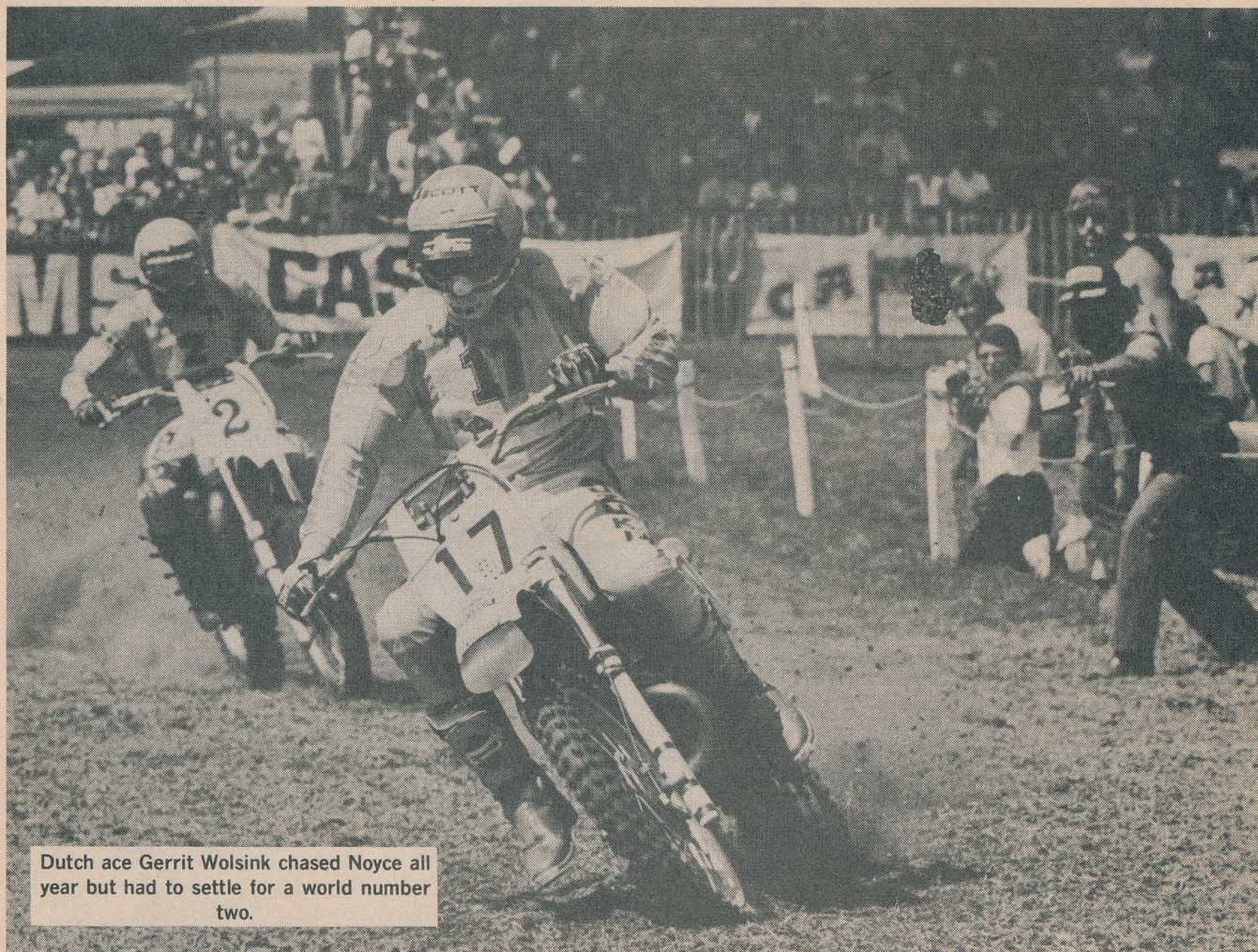
first Briton to win a 500cc round for ten years, to head the world championship for the first time. Wolsink had two scintillating starts, a feat he repeated all season, while Lackey had two terrible starts, which he was to attribute to a lack of Green power later in the season.

Lackey won the French GP at Pommiers the following week to move to the head of the table despite more poor starts.

Noyce scored his third successive runner-up spot in another photo-finish, this time with home star Jean Jacques Bruno, before a puncture pushed him back to seventh in the second race.

Wolsink experimented with reservoirs on his front forks but had a poor day, while

GRANDS PRIX — 500cc



Dutch ace Gerrit Wolsink chased Noyce all year but had to settle for a world number two.



Andre Malherbe, Noyce's Honda team-mate, took third place after a storming finish.

Mikkola came back with a bang to score 18 points after only five laps practice.

There was a fortnight's gap before round three at Huskvarna, the town with a K which is the home of the bike with a Q, in Sweden. Wolsink topped the scorers after two frantic battle with Mikkola, but they were both headed first time out by Lackey and Noyce.

The ex-teammates were both way down at the start of race two and Lackey was extremely unhappy when the front down tube of the Green Meanie broke just below the headstock with one lap to go. It was just like old times as De Coster pressed Mikkola to the line in the second moto and they were at it again a fortnight later at Faenza in Italy.

Mikkola took two wins and moved to second in the title but the Belgian, riding with conventional forks after cracking the leading link forks in practice, went out in a first bend pile-up in the second encounter.

Meanwhile Noyce's consistency (two thirds this week) took him back into a lead he was never to relinquish. Wolsink had another off-day and Lackey, fourth in the first race after striking a post, went out with damping problems after a crash in the second moto.

The trip to Carlsbad and Mosport in North America always seems to be the signal for the re-emergence of Wolsink. This year was no different.

Wins in both countries took him back to second in the title chase behind Noyce. In Canada however Noyce showed he could win races to add to his consistency.

The stifling 103 degrees of California saw Bob Wright, who had scored his best-ever GP



Brad Lackey, Kawasaki's American star, had an erratic season, winning six races but finally having to settle for fourth place in the world league.



Ex-world champion Heikki Mikkola, the flying Finn, had two back-to-back wins, but despite this finished fifth after injury problems.

result in the previous round, taken to hospital along with several others while De Coster elected not to start the second moto because of the dangers of dehydration. Lackey and Mikkola scored a second race 1-2 after going to the line fresh. They had pulled out after one lap of the first race when poorly placed.

The ex-champions' chances virtually disappeared in Canada. Mikkola crashed, injuring his ribs, and De Coster went out with electrical problems.

Returning to Europe, the German round at Beuern saw a great win for French youngster Bruno, despite sustaining a foot injury in the first race which troubled him for the rest of the season.

Noyce and Wolsink were again consistent but Mikkola was unable to start because of his rib injury, and Lackey found the Kawasaki unsuitable for the ultra-fast track. He finished a lacklustre ninth in the second moto after his bike seized whilst sixth in the first race.

De Coster rode incredibly quickly after poor starts and at Farleigh the following week, his first race ride through the field after gassing up on the first lap was greeted with tumultuous applause, especially when he passed Wolsink Noyce's nearest championship challenger, on the final lap to finish third.

Up front Noyce had shadowed Lackey for the entire race but the future champion was never headed in the second race as he led a Honda 1-2, reversing the positions with Malherbe from the week before. Lackey struggled from a poor start as did Wolsink.

Graham went to Farleigh 11 points ahead;

A big British crowd went to Namur hoping to see Graham crowned as World Champion ...

he came away with a lead of 27. July 1 at Farleigh Castle had proved decisive. The partisan crowd knew it and rose to their hero as he completed the final lap.

Lackey, troubled by the Uni-Trak, and Wolsink, both went out of the first race at Payerne in Switzerland while Graham followed home double winner Heikki Mikkola to further extend his championship lead.

Even after a trip through the ropes, Graham beat the Dutch dentist in the second race and only disaster could seemingly stop his march towards the title.

De Coster had again showed well, leading the first race until eliminated by a broken chain, but he was pointless a fortnight later at Markelo in Holland after injuring his thumb in practice. Mikkola too was unable to stay with the duo who were disputing the title and Noyce showed that his championship lead was well earned by beating Wolsink before his own fans in the first race and only giving best to the Dutchman in the second moto

when forced to slow with broken spokes in his front wheel.

A massive contingent of British fans travelled to Namur for the penultimate round hoping to see Graham crowned as world champion. They were not disappointed.

Wolsink crashed out of the race and the championship on the very first lap of racing and Graham took no chances, settling for a safe fourth behind Belgians Roger De Coster, Andre Malherbe and 125 world champion Harry Everts.

Graham was world champion, but the Belgians found consolation in the performance of their own riders on the day. De Coster again cleared off into the distance in the second race but disaster struck in the closing laps and a puncture dropped him to fifth after he had led by 40 seconds.

Even with the national hero hitting trouble, there was a home winner — Noyce's teammate Andre Malherbe. The champion himself picked up a puncture and failed to finish for the first time all year. It didn't matter, though. He had done the job he went to do and had clinched the title.

Lackey was again lacklustre, but he came back with a bang the following week at Ettelbruck in Luxembourg to score 27 points, the same as Malherbe. Neither managed to catch Wolsink for second in the table though as the Dutchman fought valiantly to take third place in the second moto despite taking a nasty knock in the first race.

The champion? Fourth in the first race and a crash in the second but, as in race two the previous week, he could relax after winning the title. Who could blame him?



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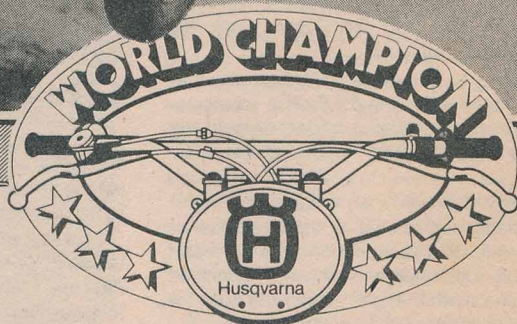


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