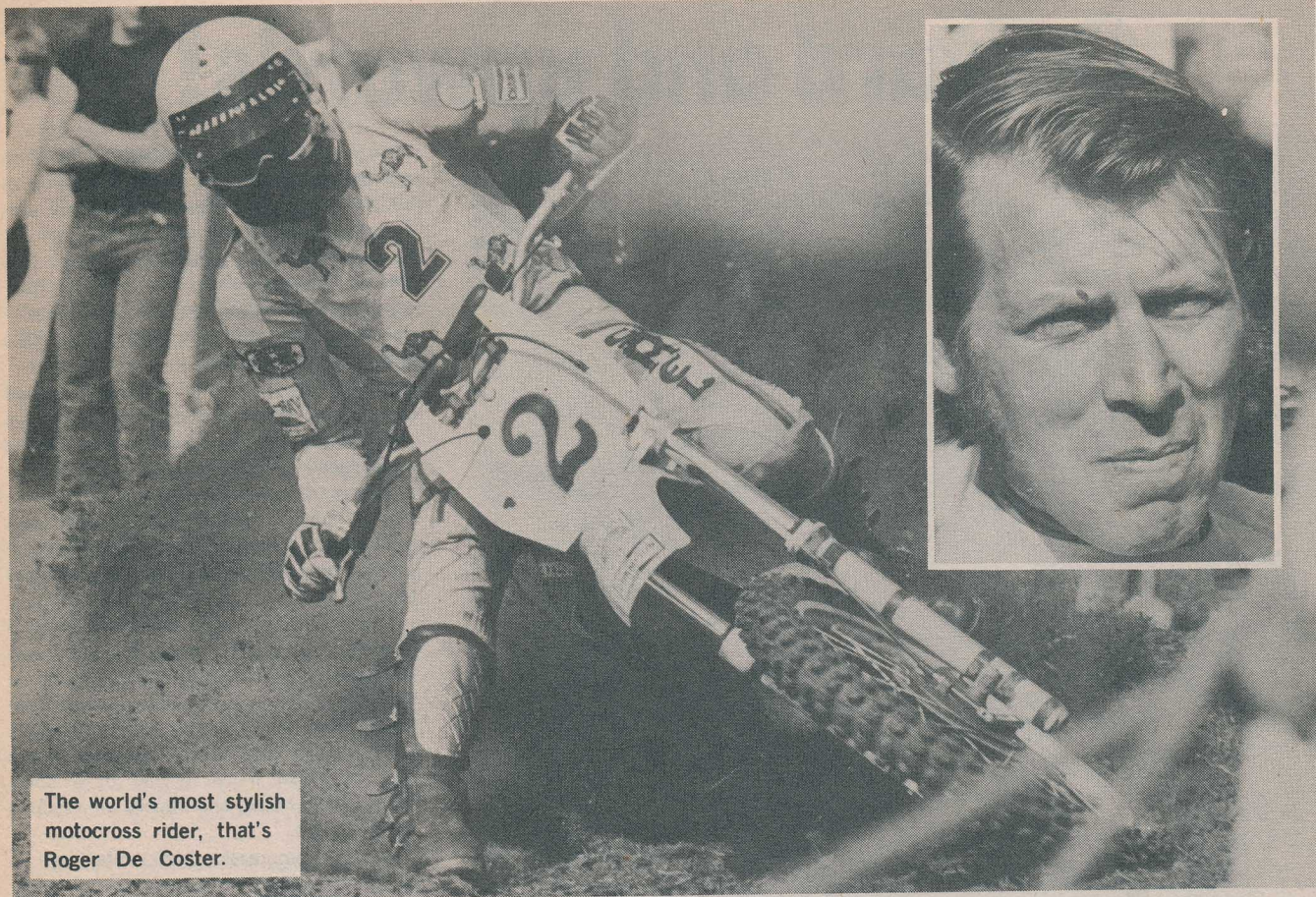




Roger De Coster, five times world champion and a motocross legend, captured in full flight at Farleigh Castle in 1978.



The world's most stylish motocross rider, that's Roger De Coster.

De Coster — the one and only

ROGER DE COSTER is "The Man," the most universally popular and respected motocrosser in the world. Inevitably, it was the Americans who coined the phrase which is now used throughout the world.

What is it that elevates Roger to this position of pre-eminence in the eyes of motocrossers everywhere? Is it just the five world titles, the 39 Grand Prix wins, the 16 winners medals in the world team contests, the seven Belgian titles, the four Trans-AMA championships?

The list of achievements goes on and on and undeniably contributes to the legend, but Roger De Coster is far more than just a winner. He is the most stylish rider in the world; he is one of the foremost advocates of true sportsmanship; he has a warm, friendly personality. All of these attributes combine to make him the one-and-only.

Success has never been far away for the 36-year-old Belgian. From his first rides late in 1961 in the 50cc class he has been a winner. Junior 50cc champion of Belgium in 1962, Senior 50cc champion in 1963, Junior 500cc champion in 1964, beaten on a tie-decider for the national 250cc title in 1965, national 500cc champion in 1966 — by the time Roger was promoted to the next class at the end of each season he was already competitive.

Each winter in the early years of his career Roger also rode in trials, eventually graduating to the top in the feet-up game, before quitting because of disenchantment with the tactics of opponents who were constantly trying to influence the decision of the observer.

After a variety of Belgian and Italian machinery Roger signed with the Czechoslovakian Jawa-CZ factory in the mid-sixties and an international career was beckoning him.

After disputing third place for most of 1966 in the 250 class of the world championships he missed the last few GPs and was relegated to seventh before transferring to the 500 class.

A large number of mechanical failures kept Roger in fifth place for the next three years, but he scored his first GP win in the Italian mud in 1968 when only five riders completed both legs of the GP, and a 250 - 500 double in the Belgian GPs of 1969.

The 500 victory at Namur was the first of seven victories in eight years at the famous Citadel track. Victory there was his only world championship success of 1970, as he was switched to the 250 class, and lack of support from CZ made it impossible for him to mount a serious challenge to the Suzuki team of fellow countrymen Joel Robert and Sylvain Geboers.

The clear indication given by that win at

Namur that Roger was more than capable of beating the 500 men led to a Suzuki contract for the class — and the rest is history.

From 1971 to 1976 only Heikki Mikkola stopped Roger making a clean sweep of the world titles.

Why the sudden change of fortunes? Was it just the bikes? Rather it was the confidence which the Japanese factory showed in Roger which suddenly saw him rise from the role of challenger to the man to beat.

Inevitably, America, suddenly awakening to the thrills of motocross, beckoned, and Roger's pre-eminence in events there, as elsewhere, led to "The Man" tag. Indeed, it was on one of his annual trips to North America that Roger met his wife Laurie.

After Mikkola again took away his title in 1977, Roger was determined to get the record-equalling sixth title in 1978, but a practice crash in which he almost lost his life seemed to have taken away his chances.

Indeed, the title again went to Mikkola, but within two months of his horrendous crash Roger finished second in the opening GP at Payerne in Switzerland. Six weeks later he won at Vasteras in Sweden.

Roger was relegated to third in the world title by mechanical problems and was again beset by niggling problems last year.

Fans throughout the world, however, were left in no doubt that Roger was still the fastest and most stylish rider in the world. No-one who went to Farleigh Castle in July 1979 will ever forget his first race ride through the field which raised more cheers than Graham Noyce's ride to second.