



APRIL, 1978

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ASPES 125MX
FLIER

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XT/TT500
Yams

INTERNATIONAL
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PREVIEW

3 BIKES TESTED

two wheels

VOLUME 18, No. 2, APRIL 1978

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Freelance contributions are welcomed by this magazine and submissions should be addressed to The Editor, TWO WHEELS, 142 Clarence Street, Sydney, 2000. Submissions must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope for their return. The editor accepts no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts, photographs or transparencies.

Annual subscription rate to addresses in Australia \$17.30. Other countries \$17.90.

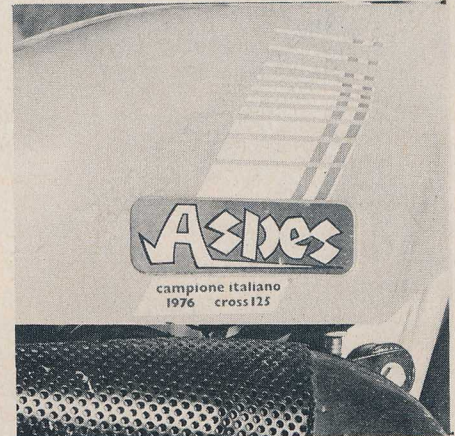
Back copies: 5th Floor, 154 Clarence St, Sydney, NSW.

ADVERTISING: General Advertising Sales Manager, Michael Wright, National Advertising Manager, Wendy Hora, Representatives, Frank Lee, Sharon Lightner, 142 Clarence St, Sydney, 2000. 29-3761, 29-5606. **MELBOURNE:** Manager, Chris Ferguson, Sales Controller, Ken Davies, Representative, Anne Wray, 6th Floor, Centraway Building, 259 Collins St, Melbourne, 3000. **ADELAIDE:** Harry Hastwell Media, 399 Glen Osmond Road, Glen Osmond, 5064. **BRISBANE:** Dick Coates, Leonie Connelly, 27 Atkinson St, Hamilton, 4007. **PERTH:** Cliff Thomas, ADREP Advertising Representatives, 62 Wickham St, East Perth, 6000. **LONDON:** Peter Holloway, Ludgate House, 107 Fleet St, London EC4A 2AL.

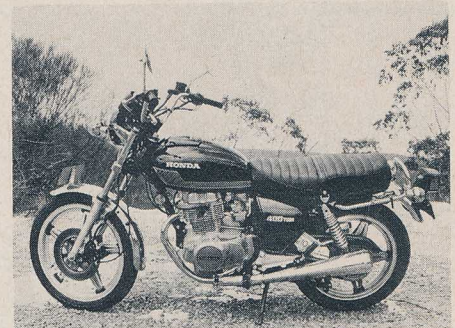
Printed by Comprint. Published by Murray Publishers Pty Ltd, 142 Clarence St, Sydney, 2000.

*Recommended Price.

DISTRIBUTORS: GORDON & GOTCH (A/SIA) LTD, MELBOURNE. MURRAY PUBLISHERS PTY LTD, SYDNEY.



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COVER: The Aspes 125 (test p10) through a crystal stream. Photo by BARRY ROSS.

'77 Australian MX titles

GUNTER HAD GALL...



Anthony Gunter put the final seal on the motocross year when he took both the 250 and Unlimited Australian champions in SA. And soon he'll be able to prove himself against the top internationals too.

MR MOTOCROSS for two years in a row and two of the top Australian titles as well. That's Anthony Gunter's record after spread-eagling his opposition at Adelaide's Acusa Park last October when he won the 250 and Unlimited Australian motocross titles.

He won both legs of the 250 class with little opposition, but was perhaps fortunate to take out the Unlimited title because he won only on a faster time than Kiwi international Ivan Miller, who shared the same number of points but won his leg at a slower time.

A flat tyre stopped Gunter from winning the first leg of the Unlimited class, but he battled on to a grim third placing with the rear tyre flapping all over the rim.

The course at Acusa Park was very rough and it took its toll on riders and machines with many of the nation's top

riders out of action through flat tyres in various races.

Gary Flood was one of the fancied runners who fell foul of the tough track surface, dropping his new Bultaco once and getting a flat on another.

Fellow Victorian Ron Dinsdale, riding on the pace, was sidelined twice by flat tyres, but Lester Rowley upstaged them all by breaking the frame on his CCM!

Hardest hit by the conditions was the sidecar team of Barry Buckley and passenger Chris Harris, who rode magnificently all day to win both legs of the Junior and Senior sidecar classes against fierce opposition, notably from David Wells in the larger capacity class.

Pushed beyond endurance in the final leg of the Senior sidecar, the team stumbled across the line just half a length ahead of their pursuers, to collapse in a great heap and require

ambulance attendance to recover.

Chris Harris was very slow to recover and needed a lot of oxygen before he could regain his feet. It may have pointed out to many that the role of sidecar passenger is quite a heavy-duty job . . .

But the day belonged to Gunter, who was at his best and all but unapproachable in three of the four legs he contested. His ride to third place in the first leg of the Unlimited championship with a flat tyre showed the stuff of which champions are made. Ivan Miller had the pressure removed from him by Gunter's absence and won without being pushed very hard, though second-placed man Graeme Smythe — who switched to Yamaha from Kawasaki, and is now right up with the top riders in the country — was always a threat if Miller relaxed too much.

But the second leg of the Unlimited was chock-full of drama, with Gunter out of the traps like a bullet, knowing that a faster race time could mean the difference between winning and a minor placing.

And it was Graeme Smythe who



Above: Some wild action in the Junior class.

Top: Gunter (number one) leading Mark Pace.

Left: The sidecar races were some of the best seen at MX races last year.

Far left: Anthony Gunter, across the highest jump on the circuit.

placed the victory garland around the neck of the twice Mr Motocross; he displaced Ivan Miller for that hard-won second spot and left both riders on the same number of points. Both had won a leg, and both had finished third in one, but Gunter's very fast time gave him the title.

And Graeme Smythe, through some very consistent riding in both legs, secured the runner-up spot. He is a man very much on the way to the top and one we'll hear a great deal more from in the next few years.

His performance in taking both legs of the 500 title was no less brilliant for not having Miller or Gunter to contend with, for his principal opposition came from such notables as Dave Fullston, Mike Landman, Geoff Ballard and Jack Pengally.

Ivan Miller started in the first leg but was sidelined in the second lap before he had really got into stride. Smythe won from behind, coming through from a mid-field start and only managing to take the lead with two laps to go. That's doing it the hard way, a feat which Smythe managed again in the second leg of the 500 when he moved to the second spot in the fourth lap.

He slipped past Landman a lap later, but it was then apparent that Landman had a puncture, with the tyre only held in place by security bolts.

Landman battled gamely to the finish line, but was back in seventh place, his chances of getting into the action at the finish of the title rounds well and truly gone.

And there was probably no happier man on this continent than Graeme Smythe, who has his first major title under his belt and who must know that there are bigger and better things in store for him.

Mark Pace was unfortunate in the 125 class for he had to contend with local star Darryl Willoughby, who led all the way, after beating off a strong challenge from Pace early in the first leg. Pace stepped off the Honda in the third lap right outside the pit gate. Tony Hatton, who has been working on the two Hondas Pace campaigns in the 125 and 250 classes, was on the spot to help straighten out the machine for the second leg later in the day.

And what a race that was. Willoughby managed to shade Pace across the line at the finish, with no more than a length separating the pair after Pace had ridden through from fifth on the first lap. He rode well, battling his way into a challenging position with the leader well and truly in sight for the last three laps.

Stephen Gall was at the meeting, but had little joy, taking third place overall in the 250 title after riding to second place in the first leg and slipping back to fourth in the second leg.

Gunter and Gall, the inseparable duo who are to motocross racing what Willing and Hansford are to road racing, were at each other from the start of the

first leg of the 250 class but Gunter cleared away at the end of the second lap and won easily. Mark Pace thrashed the Honda Red Devil into a well-deserved third place and got runner-up spot ahead of Stephen Gall, which must have pleased him because he's long overdue for top honors.

Gunter made no mistakes in the second leg of the 250 class, moving away well at the start and leading to the wire. But one of the best rides of the day was recorded by Ron Dinsdale who bolted his new Montesa from fifth on the opening lap to third at the finish.

The Spanish two-stroke has been near a major win for some time and the performance indicated a good year for Dinsdale in 1978.

Mark Pace was second throughout and not challenged, but Gall rode like a demon to thrust the Yamaha into fourth place after a dismal start which saw him in 10th spot at the end of the first lap.

He had the eyes of the large crowd on him as he worked his way through the field just astern of Dinsdale, who was also hard at work making his way through the traffic. Gall's effort almost overshadowed the ease of Gunter's win, for Gall was tense and fighting hard while Gunter was typically relaxed and very, very smooth.

He seemed to be well in command in other events during the day, but he had to endure some drama of his own, particularly in that first leg of the Unlimited class.

He was away first in the Unlimited and looked to have the leg won, but Miller closed at the end of the second lap after Gunter had drawn away. Miller led for a short time but Gunter was away at the head of the field for his short-lived lead, only to fall foul to the track surface and puncture a tyre at the end of the second lap.

Miller and Gunter diced for two full laps before the New Zealand ace worked his way past, to be followed by a surprised Graeme Smythe. Gunter clung grimly to a machine which was by no means totally under control and just managed to hold the place as he was shortly to be challenged by Landman and Gall, who were busily dicing with each other and a small group of desperates who were enjoying the cut-and-thrust of some very close and urgent action.

The second leg of the Unlimited was like a butchers' picnic, with some of the riders who didn't qualify being allowed to face the starter. Mark Pace was one, and he fronted with the 250 Honda which though hardly in contention against the 370 to 400cm³ bikes, still gave a good account of itself.

Trevor Flood had a miserable day; he seized the engine of the new 400 Yamaha twice, once in the 500 and later in the final round of the Unlimited class.

That last leg of the Unlimited saw several favorites come to grief; Lester Rowley had the four-stroke almost fall in halves when the frame went off with a loud bang. It's a bit unusual to have such a thing happen . . . he was pretty surprised.

The meeting featured a couple of rounds of the so-called "Restricted Licence" championship, with the two legs contested by Junior riders, who, as usual, displayed no fear and quite a deal of skill as they thrashed themselves and each other around the rough Acusa Park circuit. Overall honors went to Yamaha-mounted Peter Gazzard from a win in the first leg and a third placing in the second.

If the sidecars in NSW are a sorry spectacle at MX meetings, they're very

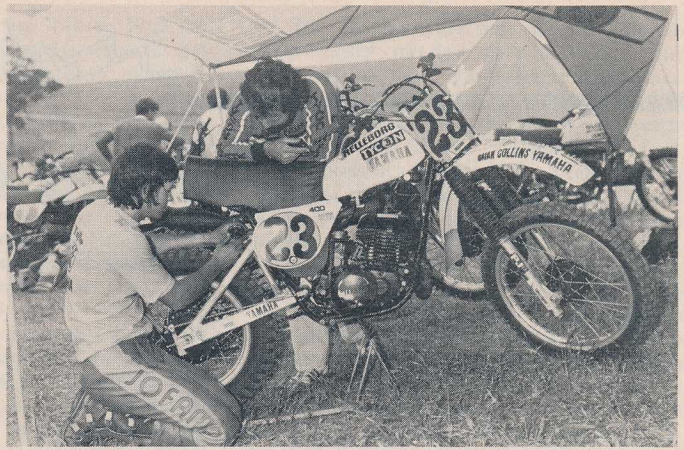
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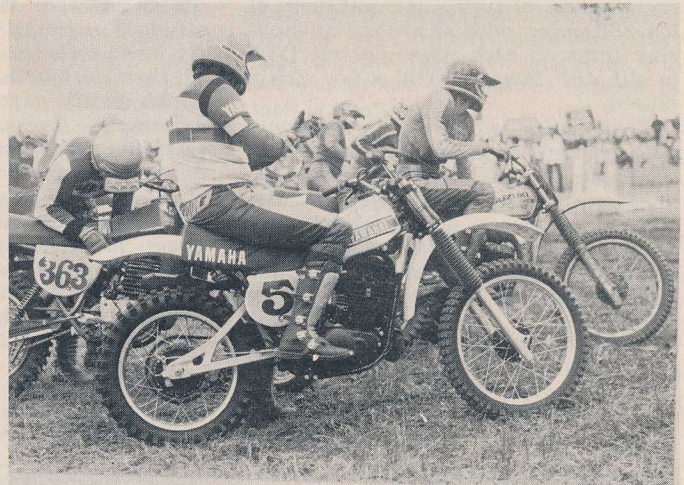
Left to right, Mark Pace, Anthony Gunter and Stephen Gall, after the 250 championships.



Mark Pace on the 125cm³ Honda tuned and prepared by Tony Hatton.



Gall checking the pressure in the Yamaha's cantilevered unit.



Trevor Flood's new Yamaha seized twice. Note his nylon pants.



Victorian Ron Dinsdale on the only competitive Montesa in Australia.



The Junior riders turning it on. The ACU's decision to allow restricted licences to riders under the age of 17 is a boon for the sport — and the juniors.

GUNTER HAD GALL...

(Continued from page 53)

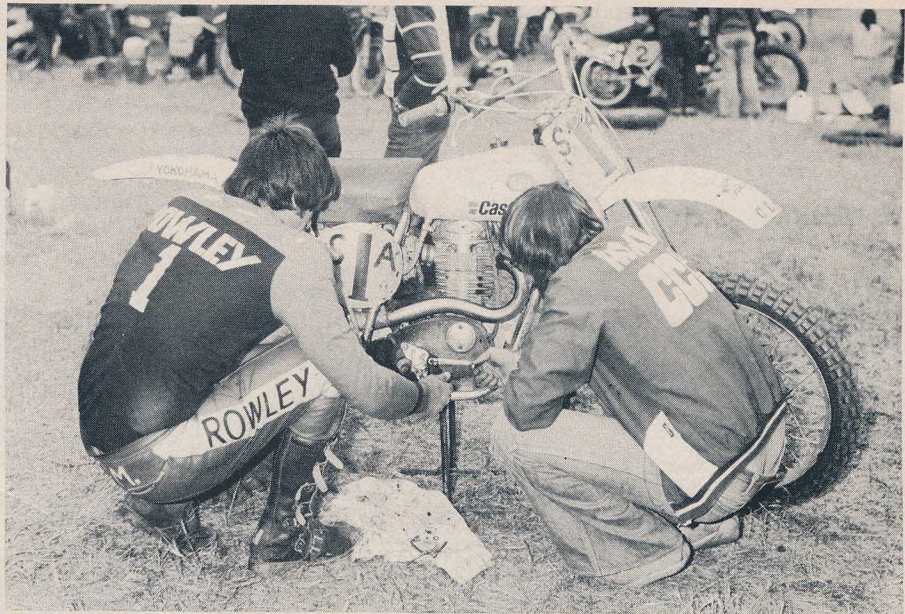
much a sight to behold in South Australia!

The Barry Buckley/Chris Harris combo proved unbeatable on the 650 Yamaha ohc twin in the Junior class and won both legs, and repeated the performance in both legs of the Senior with their 850 Norton twin.

They were under very heavy pressure from the similarly-mounted David Wells in the Senior and some of the hardest, closest racing on the day came with the action fast and furious from start to finish.

There's no doubt the MX outfits can put on a very good display, but it may be some time before we can expect to see such brilliant performances on circuits such as Amaroo Park in NSW, if only because there are not yet enough outfits to make the exercise worthwhile, other than for comic relief.

But the Australian titles saw some of the most exciting dirt riding seen this side of speedway outfits. It also displayed the undoubted talent of young Anthony Gunter to its best, for the nation's number one motocross star has now proved beyond doubt that he is



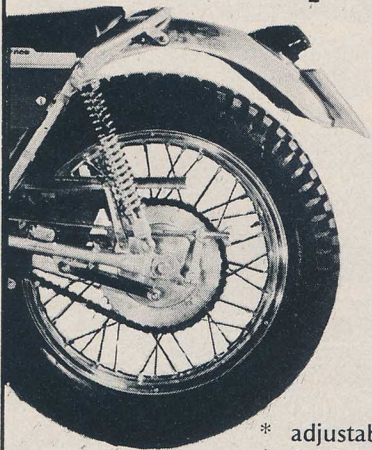
Lester Rowley with the 500cm³ CCM four-stroke which broke its frame on the rough track.

on a plateau of his own.

Rather than journey overseas to test his mettle against some of the world's finest, Suzuki-Cornell has plans to provide the aid needed to import top motocross riders to Australia, with a two-fold purpose in mind.

It will allow Gunter — and of course other stars like Stephen Gall, Mark Landman, Ron Dinsdale, the Flood brothers and at least a dozen more — to ride against overseas champions and it will certainly increase the strong foothold the sport has in Australia. *

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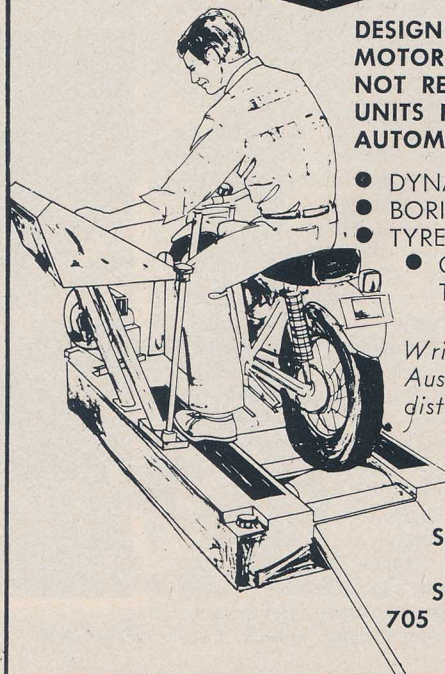
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