

LARRY ROESELER — KING OF BAJA

Acknowledged as the fastest American off-road racer is Team Yamaha's Larry Roeseler, a young man with a wealth of racing experience.

Now 24, Roeseler began riding at the age of 5, straddling a minibike powered by a Briggs & Stratton lawnmower engine. Larry's father, Earl, was an enthusiastic racer who had even competed with Larry's grandfather in sidecar ice racing in the state of Minnesota.

Two years after Larry started riding, he began competing in observed trials events and that was where he earned his first trophy, still riding the Briggs & Stratton.

After racing some other types of events, Larry and his father turned to enduros in the Southern California desert. "We competed as a father and son team so that he could keep an eye on me," recalled Larry. In 1969 they finished the grueling two-day, 500-mile Greenhorn Enduro. They finished the '70 'Horn as well, and 13-year-old Larry's score was par with such American enduro legends as John Penton.

In the early '70s, Roeseler started competing in the notoriously tough 100cc Trailbike class of AMA District 37, where his seasonal finishing position went from 189 to 20 to 4 by 1972. He finished second the following year, then won the Trailbike championship the next two years in a row.

Roeseler switched to the 250 class in D-37 in 1975 and responded to the new challenge by winning the number one plate.

Although Larry had ridden in major off-road races before, including several with his father, 1975 was the start of something bigger. He teamed with Bruce Ogilvie to win the Baja 500, and then placed second in the Baja 1000 riding with Howard Utsey. Roeseler's career neared high gear the following year as Larry posted wins in the Parker 400, Las Vegas 400, Baja 500 and Baja 1000—at the ripe old age of 19.

Nineteen seventy-seven saw repeat wins in the Parker, Las Vegas and Baja 500 events. Larry was leading the Baja 1000 when a Volkswagen van, going the wrong way on the course, struck his bike and forced him off the course and out of the race.

That was the last time Roeseler DIDN'T win the Baja 1000 which he's won the last three years. In 1979 the course ran a tough 985 miles from one tip of the Baja peninsula to the other, and Roeseler and partner Jack Johnson covered the distance in less than 20 hours to win the race by over an hour!

Roeseler hasn't limited himself to the deserts of the Southwest. In 1978 he qualified for and rode the prestigious International Six Day Trials, often referred to as the Olympics of motorcycling, and won a Gold Medal on Swedish soil. When the event was held the following year in West Germany, Roeseler returned for another Gold Medal and turned in the best score of any American rider. Perhaps the most dramatic moment of the event for American spectators occurred during the final motocross heat of the final day, when Larry caught two European superstars of the sport, passed them and won going away. Most of the 10,000 spectators lining the circuit, including the 100 or so U.S. spectators, simply went crazy with enthusiasm at Roeseler's speed.

Roeseler's most recent ISDT appearance was the 1980 event in France where he took an IT465 prototype to another Gold Medal, sixth in the 500 class, and again topped all American scorers.



Larry Roeseler in a different environment. Winning a Gold Medal at the 1980 ISDT in Brioude, France.

