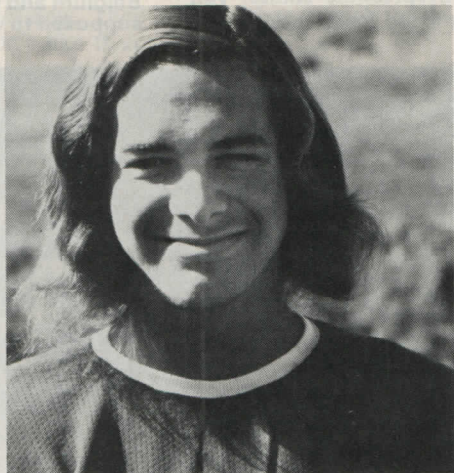


By Brad Zimmerman

INTERVIEW: 125 Champ Marty Smith



"I Never Thought That I Would Make Intermediate."

If you were a senior in Point Loma High School in the San Diego area of California, one of your classmates would be Marty Smith. You might wonder why he isn't always in class on Friday and Monday. If you found out that he was doing battle with the top motocross racers in the country, you might be very surprised. Marty is basically a quiet, sports-minded person, going through the usual changes and experiences that a high school senior enjoys. The only difference is that he's the current 125 National Motocross Champion, taking home over \$30,000 in salary, winnings, and contingency money last year. This season he could quite possibly double or triple that figure. So when Marty's chair is empty in English class while you're taking that surprise quiz, don't feel bad. He just had to go to work.

PC: When did you first start riding and racing bikes?

MS: When I was about six and a half I started riding. When I got a little older I would go out to the desert on my Honda 50 and blast around. Eventually I got into the racing end of things. My first real race was at Carlsbad at a local CMC event, and I got a fifth overall. I only rode once a month at Carlsbad, and finally I got to ride twice a month at both Carlsbad and Saddleback. It took me about a year and a half to move up in classes. I started racing when I was 15 and I made expert before I was sixteen and a half.

PC: How long did you ride before anyone approached you with any type of support?

MS: I made expert on my Yamaha, then I bought a Penton, and then a Monark. When I had the Monark I got some help from Competition Cycles. I rode expert for about six months before I got on the Honda team.

PC: Did Honda call you or did you approach them?

MS: They contacted me first. One day I was sitting at home and at about 9 o'clock, Dennis Blanton called and said who he was and what they were doing. He said he was impressed with my riding and wanted to know if I would like to come up and have an interview. When I got there, they told me what they want, what they want to achieve, and what they can give me, and then they asked if I was interested. I said yes almost before he finished the sentence.

PC: Did anyone else approach you for a factory ride at the same time?

MS: No, but since then I've had a few offers from other companies. I'm still with Honda since signing with them on December 31, 1973.

PC: When you first signed with Honda did you expect to go out and get the Number One plate your first year?

MS: No way. I didn't think I would get very far at all. I was really scared about the whole thing. The thought of riding on

a big team like that scared me more than anything. Now it's great. I've gotten used to everything and it's really getting to be fun. We're the newest team in motocross because Honda just started this up recently. We were talking to one of the top men from Honda in Japan, and he was happy because the motocross team was finally getting everything squared away and starting to work on the races and the racers.

PC: You're now into your senior year of high school. Do the people in school treat you very differently because of your racing?

MS: No, at first nobody really knew anything about it. The first time anyone knew was in my English class. My teacher gets some motorcycle magazines and she brings them in there and everyone reads them. That's how a lot of people found out. At first everyone thought it was a big joke. They were saying, "Oh, if he can do it, I probably can too. I'm just going to go out and make \$800 a week racing bikes." But after a little while they started to realize that it isn't that easy after all.

PC: Do you have to leave school early on Friday to fly to the races?

MS: I usually don't go to school on Friday if there's a race, but sometimes I get out as early as Thursday and come back on Tuesday. The attendance office knows my schedule and they understand what is going on so I don't have too much trouble there.



PC: Does missing that much school hurt your grades?

MS: No, I usually get pretty good grades. Last year I got three As, two Bs and a C.

PC: Do any of the other guys in school come up to you and ask for riding tips or help with their bikes?

MS: Oh, a whole bunch. Not so much about riding as on how to make their bikes fast. They ask me what certain tracks are like sometimes, but it's usually "How can I make my bike really quick?"

PC: What do you tell them?

MS: I tell them to take their bike to Emler at Flying Machine Factory. Most of the guys that I talk to have Hondas, Yamahas, and Suzukis.

PC: When you were first in high school did you go out for sports?

MS: Yes, I played baseball, basketball, football and track. Then when I started riding, I got more into the bikes and got farther away from the other sports. I can't do both well at the same time.

PC: Do your folks go to the races often?

MS: They go to just about all of them. If my dad can get off work, he'll be at the races that weekend. They even went East a couple of times last summer for the big races. My parents have done a lot for my racing. If it wasn't for them I never

would have made it. Before my ride with Honda, my dad would bring me out to the races a lot. He helped me buy parts for my bikes and did most of the work on them.

PC: When you first started riding for Honda, what did they have you do to get ready for the big races?

MS: First we rode a lot of local stuff to get used to the bikes and the power, and then we went on to the 125 Nationals. After that I rode the Trans-AMA on a 250.

PC: What do you do during the week to keep in shape?

MS: Honda doesn't require us to do much except on the weekends during racing season. During the week Tommy Croft and I go out riding and practicing for about four days. I also do one of those hand squeezer exercises and work a little on the barbells.

PC: Does Honda give you your works bike to practice on during the week?

MS: No, I only get my works machine on Sunday. Pierre gets his during the week, but he's Pierre. They don't have enough parts for the bikes, so they don't want us to ride them too often. We only have one works bike apiece now. During the week we practice on completely box-stock Elsinores. The shocks aren't moved up and the engine hasn't been worked on. We sometimes use fixed-up Elsinores in local

CMC stuff. Emler did one bike for me and Honda did the other, but the one Honda did isn't working right yet.

PC: You rode both the 125 and the 250 class last year. Which machine do you prefer?

MS: I kind of like the 250. I'm going to ride the 250 in the Superbowl of Motocross this year against the Europeans and I'm really looking forward to that. I've been practicing four times a week—it should pay off somewhere. I guess I'm a power freak. I like the 125, but the 250 has a lot more power. The 400 is probably the best. Dennis Blanton, our team manager, asked me if I would like to ride the 400 at the Carlsbad GP this year. I'd like to but I don't think I would last for 45 minutes on it. I'll also see if I'm any good against the Europeans at the Superbowl and from there I'll figure if I could do any good at the GP. But I'd sure like to ride the bike. That would be a real thrill.

PC: Did you have any problem switching from the 125 to the 250?

MS: Yeah, I got off that thing all the time. The first time I went out, I looped the 250 at Unadilla. The second time on the bike I did it again at Ohio. I just wasn't used to the power and I went over backwards both times. I got off really good at Carnegie Cycle Park. It was during practice and the course was already dusty. I hit a hole that was under power. I just couldn't see it. I really went over the bars that time. I think the strangest crash I ever had on the 250 was at Saddleback in the 250 Support class. We were just finishing the first lap and I got off. I think that the guy who graded the course moved the fence over, graded the course, then moved the fence back right over the line that I usually took. Jeff Foland and I both use it. I was right behind Foland on the first lap and he started to go over the jump. I guess he saw that our line was right where the fence was because he hit the brakes right at the top of the jump. He went off the jump with his brakes on and I went off right behind him at full speed. We both went off and I landed right on top of him. I was so sore that I couldn't sit for quite a while.

PC: You have gone from a beginning rider to a factory racer in quite a short time. Did you think you would get this far?

MS: I never even thought I'd start racing expert. After my first race at Carlsbad, I looked at the experts go around the course and I thought, "Look at those crazy guys. They're all nuts!" I never even thought that I would make intermediate.

PC: Do you think you have as good a chance at getting the Number One plate in the 125 class this year as last year?

MOTORCYCLE REPAIR ENCYCLOPEDIA

COVERS 200 MODELS



ONLY
\$9.00

23 Manufacturers Troubleshooting Specifications

Partial List Of Models Included:

AJS Stormer; BMW R50/5, R60/5, R75/5; BSA 650cc Twins; BSA 750cc Triples; Bultaco; CZ 125-400cc; Harley-Davidson Lightweights; Harley-Davidson V-Twins; Hodaka; Honda Singles; Honda Twins; Honda Fours; Husqvarna; Kawasaki Singles; Kawasaki Twins; Kawasaki Triples; Kawasaki Z1; Maico; Montesa; Moto Guzzi; Norton Commando; Ossa; Penton; Suzuki Singles; Suzuki Twins; Suzuki Triples; Triumph Singles; Triumph 500 & 650cc Twins; Triumph 750cc Triples; Yamaha Singles; Yamaha Twins; Yamaha 650cc Twins.

ORDER TODAY FROM
ARGUS BOOKS,
P.O. Box 49659
Los Angeles, CA 90049

I'm enclosing \$_____. Please send _____ copies of Motorcycle Repair Encyclopedia. Add 50 cents for shipping. Calif. residents add six percent sales tax.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

MARTY SMITH

MS: I think so. Basically everyone out there has the same type of machinery. They're all quick and most of them handle their bikes pretty good. The only difference is consistency and I think I've got an edge there.

PC: Is there any one rider in particular that you are always having to beat?

MS: Just about everyone on the line is tough to beat.

PC: Are you all psyched up when you pull up next to a rider on the line who you've read about in school and idolized?

MS: No, I don't think about it. I know that would freak me out if I thought about it. Most of the races are far away from home, so I usually pretend that I'm on vacation up until I start getting ready for the first moto. Then I start thinking about what I have to do. If I make like it's a vacation, I don't get very nervous, and I can sleep at night.

PC: Do you set a definite pace in a 45-minute moto?

MS: Yes, but it is kind of difficult. I try to go extra hard at first. It takes me a few laps to really get going. Then when I get going I try to pull away from anyone who is around me. When I get out in front, I try to keep a pace going that will keep me there with a lot of ground between myself and the second place rider. If I don't get a good start, then I set a pace so that I'm not riding over my head but I'm still going fast. I pick up a lot of ground when the other guys get tired.

PC: Is there a secret formula that you use to go as fast as you do?

MS: No, I wish there were. Then I wouldn't have to work so hard. I just practice all the time and go as hard as I can for as long as I can.

PC: Can you pinpoint the difference from a fast expert and a professional like yourself?

MS: I think that the experience is the biggest thing. The guys that are AMA pros are knowledgeable and have that experience. A lot of local experts can go fast, but they don't know all the little tricks and the right things to do in certain situations. To guys like Tim Hart, I'm at a disadvantage in the experience end of racing. He's been around for a while and he knows what's happening.

PC: What do you have planned for the future?

MS: I think I'll just keep racing until I can't do it anymore. I'd like to make it my job for good, but that's really hard to do. When I retire it will depend on how much money I have saved up and whether I have to work or not. I'd like to be a fireman after I'm finished with racing. But I hope that isn't for a long time. I'm enjoying myself too much now.



NOW!!

we've got more
than our great
FUEL TANK

SEALANT

We go from *A* to *Z*
From our *a la mode*
belts of gleaming
chrome with optional
Maltese Cross buckle



To our.....**zymotic**
colossal new catalog
for only \$2.00

PRO-TECH

Cycle Products

924 W. Williamson Ave.
Fullerton, Ca. 92632

(714) 525-4796

POPULAR CYCLING/71