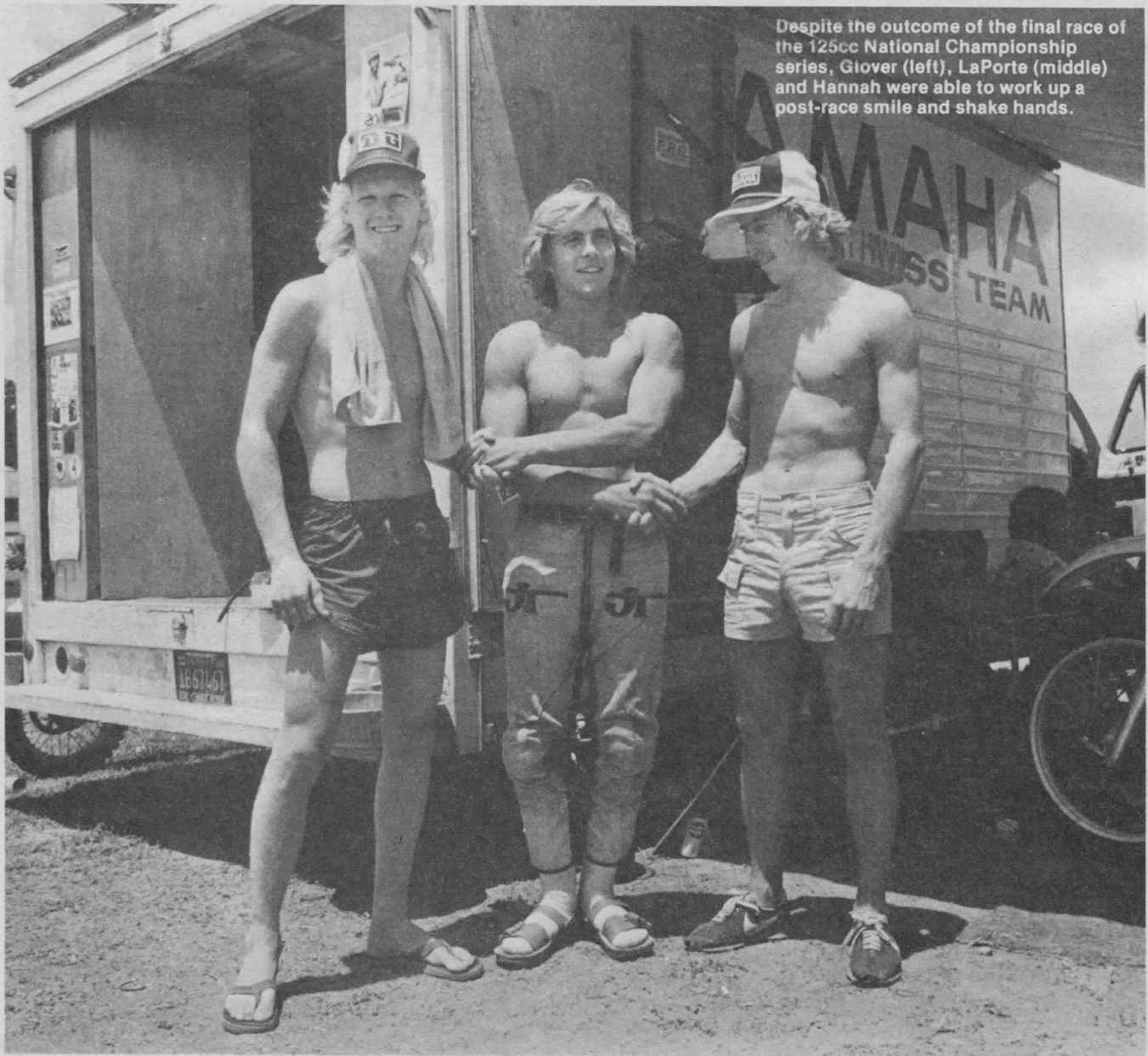


Wrapping up the '77 AMA 125cc National Championship Series

AN UNHAPPY ENDING?

Story & photos by Jim Gianatsis

Despite the outcome of the final race of the 125cc National Championship series, Glover (left), LaPorte (middle) and Hannah were able to work up a post-race smile and shake hands.

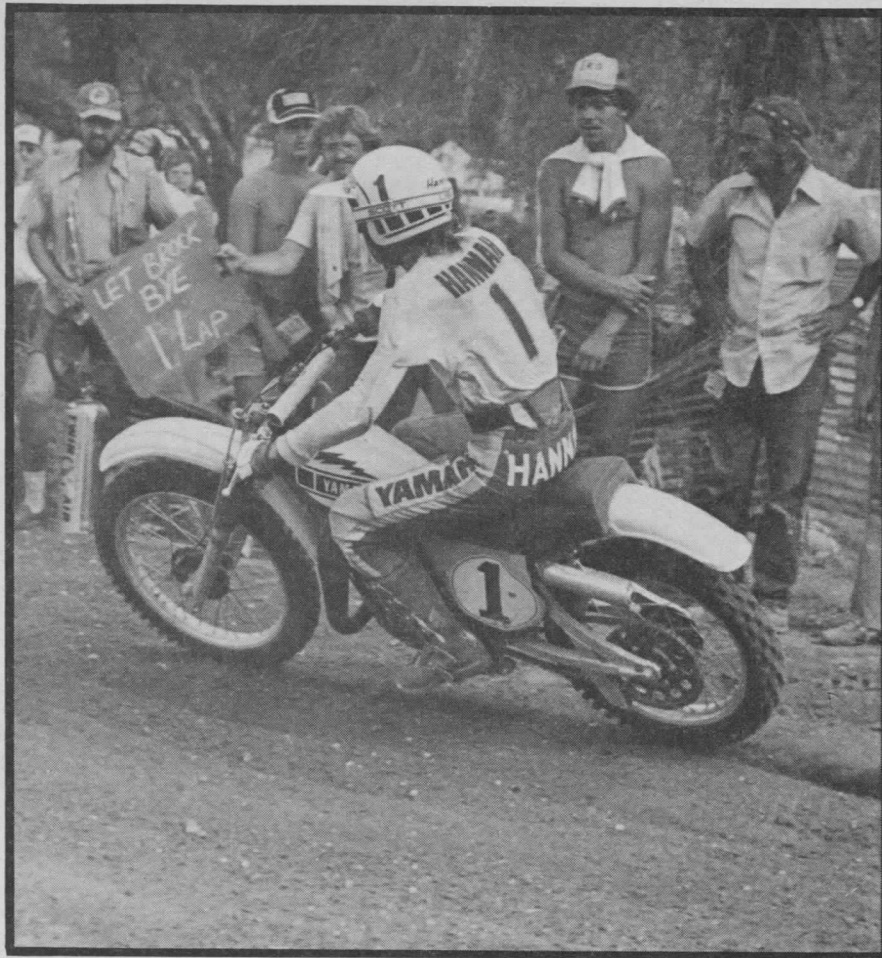


Broc Glover guided his factory Yamaha across the line, the checkered flag dropped, and Broc became the new 125cc National Champion at the final race of the Series in San Antonio, Texas. He had ridden well to take both of the day's moto wins, but neither the day's victory or that of the Championship were as clear-cut as Broc would have liked them. The reason was simple: the race win and the Championship had just been handed to Broc by teammate Bob Hannah.

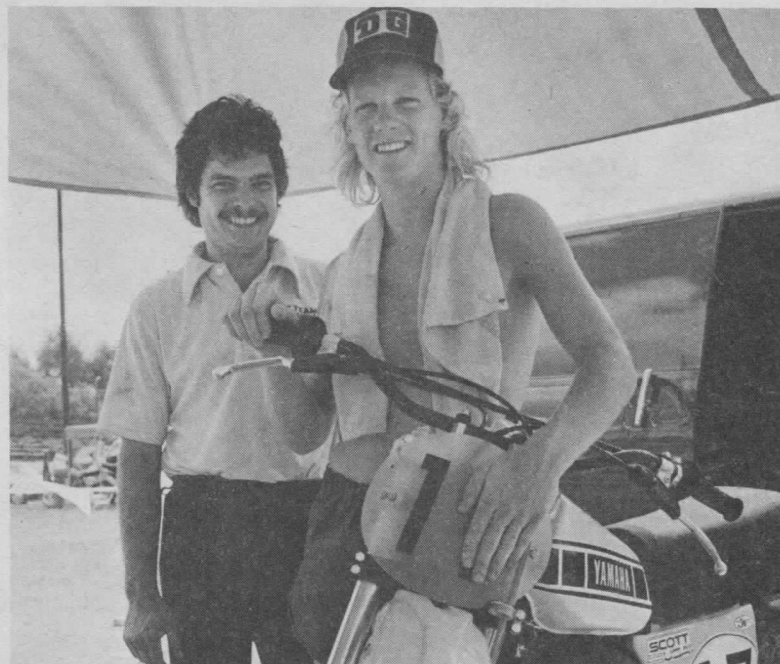
To understand what had transpired for Broc to win the National Championship, we need to go back to Hangtown, California, some five months earlier, for the opening round of the six-race Series. It was at Hangtown that reigning 125cc National Champion Bob Hannah was expected to be picking up all the marbles again for Yamaha on his way to a second consecutive Championship. The reasoning was simply that Bob was the fastest motocrosser in America, especially in the 125cc class.

Team Yamaha came to Hangtown with two new and yet untested OW 27 works bikes for Bob and Broc. The bikes were fairly similar to what Bob had used to win the Championship in 1976, but the controversial watercooling system with engine-driven waterpump was removed. The watercooled OW had proven too heavy to handle well on rough tracks, and the waterpump used up more horsepower than watercooling might save. Bob's riding skill and not the bike's seeming technical advantage had won Yamaha the Championship last year. The only major change to the new works bikes, other than removal of the watercooling system, was the designing of a gas reservoir located inside the frame's front downtube and attached to the rear monoshock unit.

Neither the Yamaha riders nor mechanics had a chance to work with the new OW 27 bikes before Hangtown, and problems had to be expected. Bob was in second position early in both motos and was just about to take control of the lead in moto one when a broken exhaust silencer caused his bike to lose power and drop back to 17th place. Then a broken chain guide put Bob out of the second moto completely. Broc suffered mechanical problems as well in the first moto to finish way down in the pack, but he put on a good ride in the second moto for second spot. The day's overall victory almost went to Pat Richter on the Moto-X Fox watercooled Suzuki who led most of the entire last moto, but a broken water fitting near the end of the race caused the bike to lose power, dropping Pat back to third spot and second overall for the day. Later in the series Pat would also switch to a non-watercooled bike because of the ease of a lighter bike on the rougher Eastern tracks.



The photo that tells the whole story: Hannah's tuner, Keith McCarty, holds up a "move over" sign with just three laps to go. Hannah followed orders, against his own wishes, thereby handing the National Championship to Broc Glover.



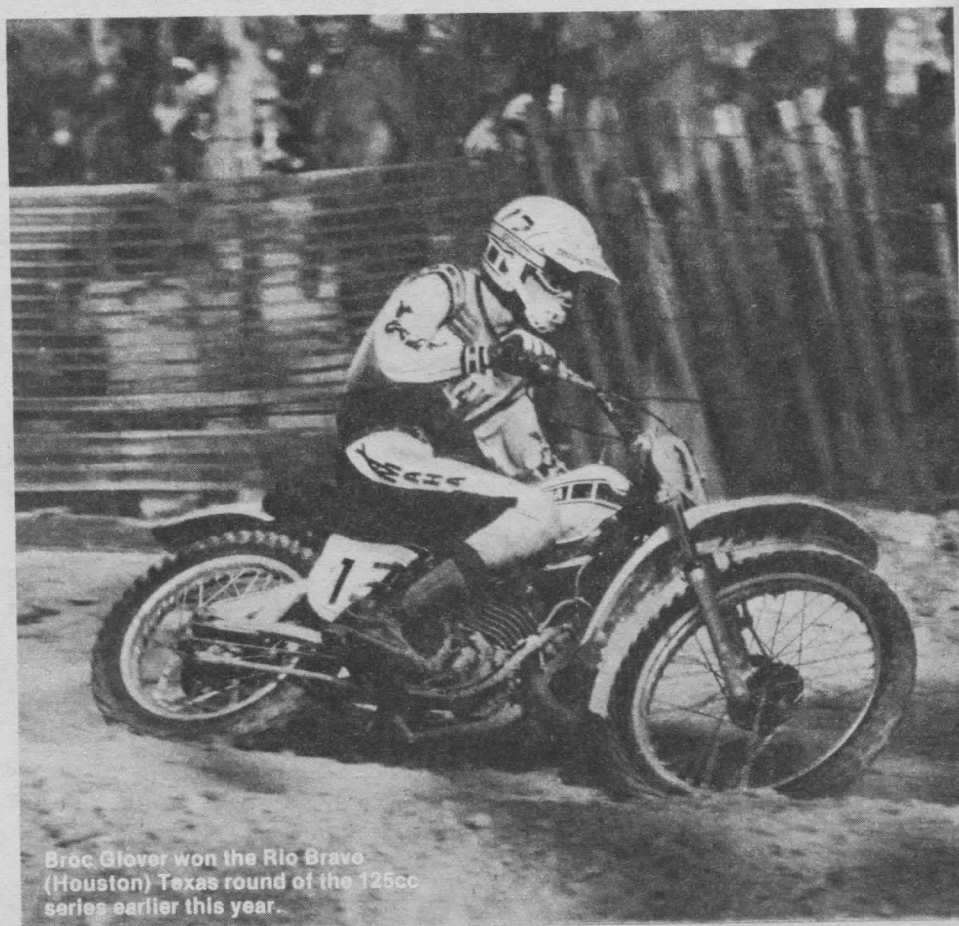
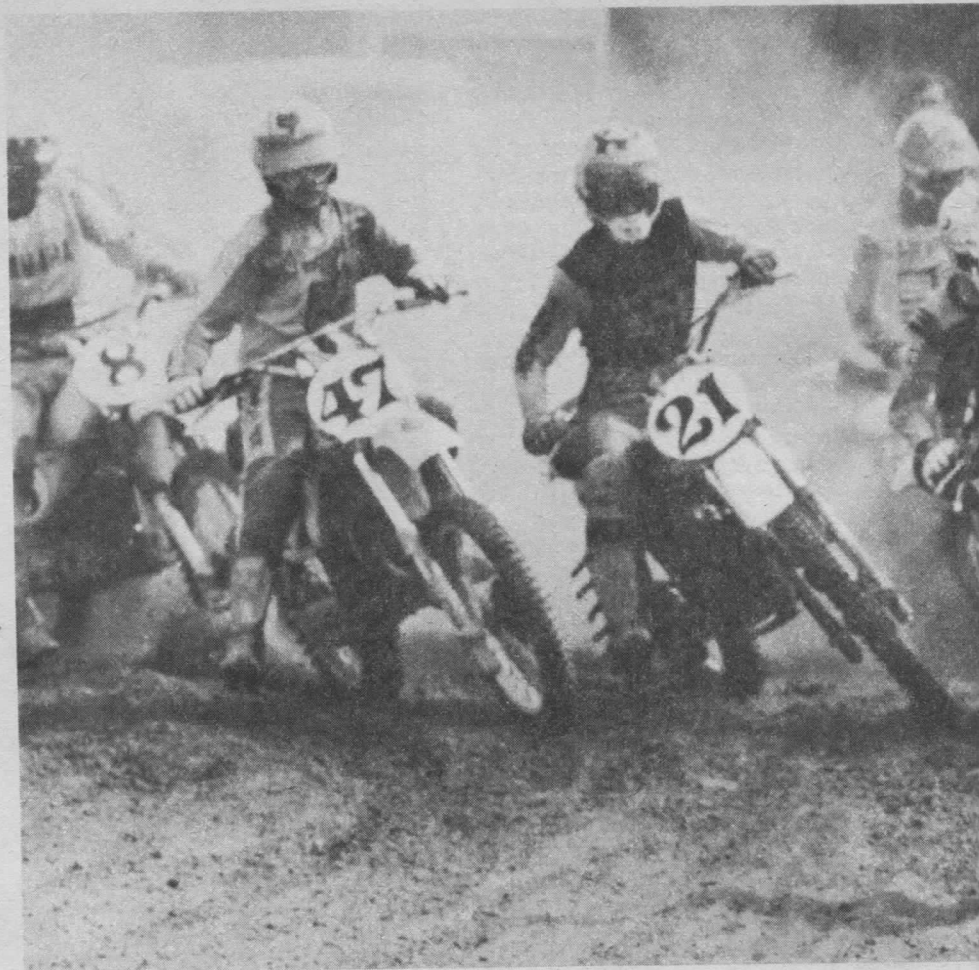
The fact remains, Broc Glover is the new 125cc National Champion. Here, he and tuner Jim Felt show their pleasure at the title.

Emerging as the overall winner at Hangtown was factory rider Danny LaPorte on the Suzuki RA 125cc works bike fitted with a modified RM production engine. Danny's wins in both motos came at the expense of Hannah, Glover and Richter, who all had bike problems. Hangtown would be the only race and motos of the Series which Danny would win. At the remaining five events he would use his smooth, consistent riding and the ultra-reliability of his Pat Alexander-tuned Suzuki to finish somewhere in the Top Five each week to maintain his opening points lead in the Series. Danny knew his limits, because when he tried to race Hannah or Glover for the overall win, he would often find himself extending beyond his limits and crashing.

Going into the final race at San Antonio, Danny held the Series lead with 200 points, but Hannah and Glover had been making up the deficit each week so that Broc held 190 points and Bob 183. In the four races between Hangtown and San Antonio, Bob won three and Broc the other. The race which Broc won was held at Rio Bravo Raceway in Houston, and his win there probably came at Bob's expense. Because of bike problems Bob never got to run practice, leaving him unfamiliar with the course. On the opening lap of the first moto, Bob crashed when he took the wrong berm in a turn and by the time he got running again, he was half a lap behind. Bob eventually finished the day in fourth overall behind Broc, Moto-X Fox's Steve Wise, and Danny. It was clear, though, that Bob would win when he wasn't having bike problems.

It was interesting to note, going into the final race at San Antonio, that given the AMA's point system (25, 22, 20, 18, 16, etc. per moto finish), and the order in which Bob, Broc and Danny should finish if nothing went wrong (1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively), Danny would win the Championship by just a few points over Bob and Broc. For both Bob and Broc to beat Danny, Danny couldn't finish higher than fifth overall. In order to help Bob and Broc's chances for pulling off the Championship, Yamaha team manager Ken Clark entered the entire Yamaha motocross team at San Antonio, which included Pierre Karsmakers, Rick Burgett and Mike Bell to try and keep Danny from scoring his needed high finish. Danny's only help would come from Suzuki Japanese Champ Koji Masuda, since other Suzuki teammates Jeff Jennings and Bill Grossi had been "retired" from the National circuit. As things would turn out, neither side would get any use out of their blockers.

Moto-X Fox riders Wise and Richter pulled the holeshot for the opening moto at San Antonio, but were quickly penalized a lap for jumping the make-



Broc Glover won the Rio Bravo (Houston) Texas round of the 125cc series earlier this year.



Hannan, the defending National Champ, gets one fine holeshot in the second moto at San Antonio. He said that since he couldn't win the Championship, he just wanted to show that he was the fastest rider. He was in the process of proving that point, until that pit signal to move over came out.



Pat Richter rode the Moto-X Fox thermosiphon water-cooled Suzuki at the first two races in the series, then switched to an air-cooled engine. Moto-X Fox fielded the strongest non-factory team in the series. Richter very nearly won Hangtown, ended up seventh overall in the series. He was plagued with a knee injury throughout much of the series. Teammate Steve Wise (No. 12) was fifth overall.

shift starting gate. Within two laps Broc Glover had passed them both and was disappearing with the lead. Bob had gotten off around fifth spot and Danny a little further back in 10th. It took them both a little while to sort through the dust and other riders, but by the eighth lap Bob was in second place and trying to reel in Broc who had a good 20-second lead by then. Danny moved into third about the same time, but it was obvious he couldn't match the pace of either Broc or Bob. He tried midway through the race but the result was a crash into the trackside trees, which cost him half a minute in restarting. Bob continued his charge and closed to within three seconds of Broc before fatigue and the Texas heat forced him to back down his pace. The moto ended with Broc taking the win ahead of Bob and Danny. Koji Masuda took fourth spot while the remainder of the Yamaha team suffered from crashes.

By not finishing first in the opening moto Bob would have a very difficult time in pulling off the Championship, while Broc's first place, of course, made his job easier. Bob was determined to prove he was the best rider and did so by clutching out the start of the final race and blasting away with the lead. Within a few laps the other positions shuffled into the expected order of Broc second, Danny third, with each rider spaced some 15-20 seconds apart from the other. It would have remained that way right down to the finish, only . . .

In the mechanic's signaling area, Yamaha's Kenny Clark was adding up the points for the Championship. If Bob took the moto win, giving him the win overall, Danny would still have enough points to take the Championship for himself and Suzuki. However, if Broc won the moto, he would take the day's overall win and tie Danny in points for the Championship. The title would then go to Broc and Yamaha because Broc had more total moto wins than Danny. Orders were issued and Bob's mechanic Keith McCarty hung out the signboard which read, "LET BROC BYE." Bob saw the message and began to obey it immediately, slowing down some five seconds a lap until Broc passed Bob on the last lap and went on ahead to win the moto.

There wasn't much excitement or joy in victory circle after the race. Because the track's public address system was out of order, the spectators had no idea what had just taken place or who had won the National Championship. In addition, there was no official trophy presentation, leaving Broc and his mechanic Jim Felt standing there trying to avoid looking at Danny, who just had the Championship taken away from him.

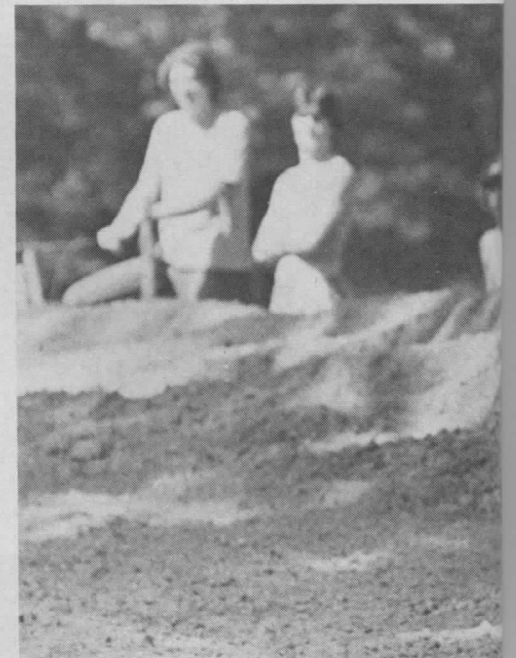
Bob Hannah had thrown his bike down and disappeared into the seclusion of the Yamaha van. He was deeply hurt and angry. By pulling over to let Broc

win, Bob had cost his best friend Danny the Championship. In addition, Bob wanted to win the day's race for himself, especially if he couldn't repeat his 125cc National title, because his four wins and one fourth place in the five races of the Series he did finish, would have proven to everyone he still was the best 125cc rider in America.

Danny was feeling hurt and disappointed as well, because if consistency in finishing every race is what winning a National Championship is all about, then he and Suzuki had certainly proven they had the top rider/bike combination. Danny had no hard feelings for Bob and Broc and what they had done to him, but the outcome of the Championship had been manipulated just like a fixed horse race. But in the same situation Suzuki would have required the same of Danny that Yamaha had asked of Bob and Broc.

And Broc wasn't feeling too great either. He was finding it hard to justify the National Championship crown which had just been handed to him by Hannah. Broc Glover had won it, but Bob Hannah deserved it and Danny LaPorte had earned it. As for the Manufacturer's Trophy, did Suzuki deserve it for having a more reliable and well prepared bike in their RA 125, or was Yamaha's OW 27 a more technically advanced and better performing winner?

The question of which rider and which manufacturer won the 1977 AMA 125cc National Championship can only be answered by the individuals involved and what they feel is right. But because there are no clear-cut winners, perhaps there are also no clear-cut losers. 🏍️



FINAL POINT STANDINGS

1977 AMA 125cc National Motocross Championship

1. Broc Glover	240	Yam
2. Danny LaPorte	240	Suz
3. Bob Hannah	227	Yam
4. Warren Reid	169	Hon
5. Steve Wise	158	Hon
6. Mark Barnett	133	Suz
7. Pat Richter	128	Suz
8. Gary Ogden	120	Suz
9. Chuck Sun	92	Hus
10. Jim Weinert	88	Kaw
11. Mike Guerra	73	Hus
12. Arlo England	70	Hus
13. Bill Joyce	68	Suz
14. Billy Grossi	54	Suz
15. John Savitski	48	Suz
16. Danny Turner	45	Hon
17. Peter Wanket	43	Yam
18. Jeff Jennings	42	Suz
19. Tony Wanket	40	Yam
20. Mike Jones	39	Suz

Honda's only factory rider in the 125cc series was 17-year-old Warren Reid, who ended up fourth in the final series standings.



Comparing the riding styles of Bob Hannah and Broc Glover, you can easily determine which rider is the quickest. Hannah (No. 1) leans deeply into the berm for maximum cornering speed. His left foot pre-loads the shifter while his left hand slaps the clutch for ultra-quick shift. Glover (No. 17), misses the berm completely, losing cornering speed and doesn't turn as quickly. He also is using two fingers on the clutch for a slower (but more controlled) shift.



THE SERIES LEADERS

Plymouth, California, 4-10-77

Broc Glover	DNF/2	moto finishes
Danny LaPorte	1/1	" "
Bob Hannah	DNF/17	" "

Keithsburg, Illinois, 6-12-77

Glover	8/2	moto finishes
LaPorte	2/4	" "
Hannah	1/1	" "

Midland, Michigan, 6-19-77

Glover	5/1	moto finishes
LaPorte	4/3	" "
Hannah	1/2	" "

Houston, Texas, 6-26-77

Glover	1/1	moto finishes
LaPorte	4/4	" "
Hannah	5/5	" "

St. Joseph, Missouri, 7-3-77

Glover	3/2	moto finishes
LaPorte	4/4	" "
Hannah	1/1	" "

San Antonio, Texas, 8-14-77

Glover	1/1	moto finishes
LaPorte	3/3	" "
Hannah	2/2	" "

Series winner Broc Glover had five wins, three seconds, a third, a fifth, an eighth, and a DNF. Danny LaPorte had two wins, a second, two thirds and six fourths. Bob Hannah ended the series with five wins, three seconds, two fifths, a DNF and a 17th place finish.



Kawasaki's Jim Weinert did extremely well in the few races he entered on the ultra-trick works Kawasaki KX125. Weinert injured himself practicing and had to drop out of the series. Here, he holds off Pat Richter and Warren Reid at Rio Bravo.