



Remembering Lone Star Motocross

When Howerton, Stackable And Wise Ruled Texas

By Ron Pocher

Despite its national-caliber appeal, motocross is a regional phenomenon. Homegrown stars can grow bigger than life on the local stage.

Those who grew up in Texas when Kent Howerton, Steve Stackable and Steve Wise were coming of age know what I'm talking about.

In those days, the AMA Grand National Dirt Track Series always began in Houston, in January, with the Astrodome TT and short-track doubleheader. At that time, my dad's shop was supporting Howerton. The biggest motorcycle show in Texas always occurred that same weekend in the Dome's Exhibit Hall. On the Sunday following the '74 races, we rolled both a new 400cc and the all-new 250cc Mag right out of the Husqvarna display booth, out of the exhibit hall and into my dad's truck. Thus began Howerton's

support ride with the Swedish brand and just before the final round in New Orleans, he received a true factory bike and posted his first national victory.

Not just one, but two flat tires may have cost Howerton both the 250cc and 500cc crowns in '75. Kent did win the 500cc championship for Husqvarna in '76. The "Rhinestone Cowboy" went on to claim 250cc National Championships in '80 and '81 riding for Suzuki.

Stackable came even closer to winning that '75 500cc crown when he was one of six riders (including Howerton) who went into the final round, the now-famous "Battle of New Orleans," with a mathematical chance of winning the championship.

"Short Stack" was the fastest rider on the track that day and had charged all the way to second in the first moto when his front wheel suddenly decided that it

didn't need all those spokes.

Stackable handily won the second moto, but when the points were tallied, it was determined that if he had just fallen to fifth in moto one, the title would have been his.

Stackable did win the '75 500cc AMA Supercross Championship, but that would be his only title in a career that saw many series podium finishes.

Wise, who joins Howerton in the Motorcycle Hall of Fame, has stood on the podium at AMA Motocross, Supercross, road racing and dirt track Nationals. He reached the top step in those first three disciplines and looked to have the '82 Astrodome TT all but won when a late race mechanical issue dropped him to third.

The best race I ever saw, in person, took place in the Astrodome. The year's really not important but my guess would be 1975. Some may call me a bit partial and others may denounce it as "just a heat race," but Howerton and Stackable were slugging it out. I don't know how many times they swapped for the lead and, to be honest, I can't even recall who won. All I really know is it was two Lone Star State champs putting it all on the line for the win. For a Texan motocross fan, it was perfect.