

● THE WORLD OF INTERNATIONAL TRIALS racing captivates Dick Burleson and Frank Gallo. They chase the same elusive goals, but each looks at their shared world from a different point of view. Burleson—at the wise old age of 30—speaks with the experience of eight ISDTs and five National Enduro Championships behind him. Gallo—at the optimistic age of 21—speaks with the aggressiveness of a successful three-time Six Days rider.

Both Burleson and Gallo came home from the 1978 Trials, held September 4–9th in Sweden, with Gold Medals. Gallo was fifth in the 500cc class. This made him “first American overall,” but this rating is unofficial; only Team finishes are officially awarded. Burleson was 10th in the 250cc class. Thirty-five other Americans made the journey to Sweden. A total of 27 earned Gold Medals, four Silver, one Bronze, and five did not finish. The American Trophy Team captured fifth in the world, and the Silver Vase Team—which lost a rider, Greg Davis, the first day—finished 15th. Czechoslovakia won the World Trophy, and Italy won the Vase.

For most people, those vital statistics reveal nearly everything worth knowing about the day-to-day happenings of the

ISDT. But the entire Six Days world of Burleson and Gallo and the other 35 Americans is terribly interesting; the ISDT is the ultimate off-road endurance event. So *Cycle* chose to interview two of our premier Six Days riders to check on the Americans’ progress as competitors, to ask each of them about some of the highlights of the 1978 ISDT and, finally, to find out what it would take to field a winning Trophy Team. Each was interviewed individually, and Gallo was joined by Jack Lehto, KTM’s Team Manager and a former ISDT rider. All their remarks have been structured here to follow a consistent story line.

ISDT racing has one major point in common with motocross: each was a European game when Americans discovered it. Riders from the United States began competing in Europe in the early 1960s. When the United States hosted its inaugural ISDT in 1973, America’s Husqvarna-mounted Silver Vase Team of Malcolm Smith, Dick Burleson, Ron Bohn and Ed Schmidt became the first and so far only of our teams to win this prestigious category.

But victory in the *most* prestigious

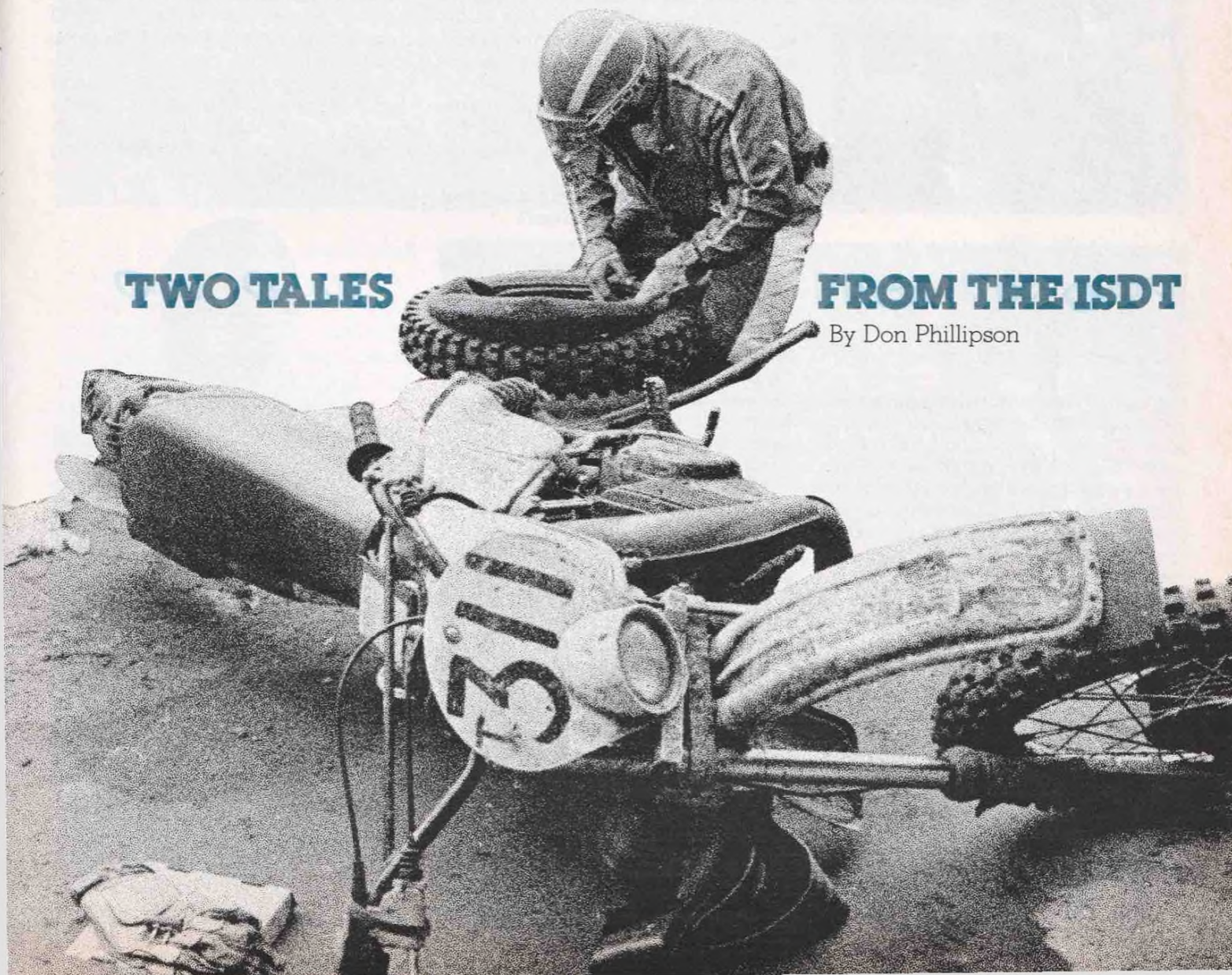
class—the Six-man World Trophy Team—has eluded the American teams so far. To understand how proficient the main competition—Czechoslovakia, Italy, West Germany and the German Federal Republic—is, one need only look at results of the last 27 ISDTs. Czechoslovakia has won the Trophy Team 13 times, West Germany four times and the German Federal Republic eight times. Additionally, Czechoslovakians have captured the Vase Team 13 times and Italians five times. Americans are going against some people who don’t exactly rely on luck.

Every year our teams are getting better. They’re learning how to finish on Gold. But, as Dick Burleson says, “As far as I know, we’ve never finished a Trophy Team with six Gold medals. You’ve got to finish to win. We haven’t even reached that point.” A major factor contributing to finishing, and a subject of much controversy, is “support,” which is a euphemism for cheating. According to the rules, a rider cannot replace the marked parts of his machine and cannot receive outside assistance in making trail-side repairs. In reality, riders often receive spare parts which they did not have in their possession, and rumors sometimes circulate

TWO TALES

FROM THE ISDT

By Don Phillipson



TWO TALES FROM THE ISDT

about even more flagrant infractions such as the replacement of entire motorcycles. Both Burleson and Gallo emphasize that they personally feel as though the spirit and intention of the Six Days demands a rider do his own work. But both also acknowledge that America uses full-scale support teams.

Cycle: What exactly is "support"?

Gallo: "The Czechs, for example, place men outside of certain sections. They (the riders) go into the woods from a road on a loop and then come back out on the road



Frank Gallo: "When I rode the National motocross circuit, I found out they're just a group of people doing a different type of racing.

section. The support men watch the riders go into the woods and then go down the road section about half an hour or so and wait for their riders. You see, they would know that their riders are in the section. They wouldn't necessarily need to follow them. They would know roughly when the riders are due out of there. If one wasn't out at such and such a time, and they knew roughly where he was at, then they'd go after him. That's basically what we had this year too."

Jack Lehto: "It's best to have someone at the end of a section; if your rider breaks down, you hope that someone coming out of the section will inform you. Usually you won't be able to get to him in time to do any good, but it's good just to get by his side and offer moral support. Ordinarily, you don't help the rider because he can do repairs faster than anybody anyway.

"You have to be very clever. Take the case of Jack Penton this year. We had four people on the course to look for

riders. I was at the Special Test course, and three other people were on the course to see if everything was going along smoothly. Jack Penton happened to go by Dave Duarte with no problems. Then he ran the Special Test and got a flat tire right at the end, after he had gone by all of us. So where is the optimum place to put a guy? That is what we have to learn. Also, we learned where to mount the tubes. The vibration and chafing of the rear fender—where we had the tubes mounted—wore small holes through the tubes and the bags that the tubes were in.

"All right, he made it one minute late to the checkpoint anyway, but it happened to be one of the control points where we didn't have anybody. So he couldn't get any help there, and he had to ride another section with a flat. Finally Kevin LaVoie gave him a tube, and that was no good; John Fero gave him a tube and *that* was no good. That was how many times he changed a tire to put a tube in.

"Sometimes the situation comes up that a part is broken or damaged. You can have parts from nearly the whole motorcycle, but as luck would have it, the broken part is usually the one you don't have. In that case, maybe the rider will go ahead, and you'll make arrangements to help him out at another point. This is what we call support. It's not cheating. Sure, it's bending the rules, but how many people drive 55 miles per hour?"

Cycle: For example, the support crew would have an inner tube that the rider needed, and they would hand it to him?

Lehto: "Right."

Cycle: If they were caught doing that, would the rider be disqualified?

Lehto: "Yes."

Cycle: Is it rare that the winners will do this?

Lehto: "Very rare. You don't find a Czechoslovakian rider riding a different motorcycle. They're too well disciplined in the preparation of their motorcycles and the way they ride; they don't need this. And there's no time. If you change a bike it takes time, and you're on the borderline of going out of Gold anyway.

"Still, the Czechs were out there to help their riders. It was pretty evident when you would see them going all day long. There was this one stretch of road that went from one section to another. It was like a separate Six Days. There were so many support riders we'd damn near have head-on collisions. Everyone's speculating about what the other's doing. This happens every year. It becomes somewhat of a game—everyone's suspect."

This year, Burleson (a member of the Vase Team) and Gallo (a member of the Trophy Team) both had Gold Medal rides going the entire week. Both would have improved their class standing in the final day's Special Test. Ordinarily, the sixth day's trail ride is shortened to allow a longer, 30-minute Special Test. It rained

so hard the last day in Sweden that a mud bog formed and some riders could not even finish the Special Test. Moreover, the scorers lost track of the riders' positions because of muddy number plates. The results of the final Special Test, usually a crucial factor in the ISDT, were thrown out.

Cycle: Tell us about the Sixth Day.

Burleson: "It's the first time they've ever had to throw out the final Special Test, and that's the 53rd Six Days. They had a really fast and straight start area with a bleacher set up for the scorers. We went down the straightaway wide open in a big ball of mud, and that was where they were supposed to score us. They didn't have the sense to put up a little chicane. The problem came when they were physically unable to read our numbers.

"Then the course deteriorated so badly that one mudhole became close to impassable. It was really a low point. As a matter of fact, there was a lot of discussion at the jury meeting about whether or not to validate the Six Days. They were so screwed up, and they didn't even score the Test. They blew it . . . So they had two choices: Either throw out the Six Days altogether or throw out the Special Test."

Gallo: "Paul Rottler, the West German guy who was in fourth place in the 500 class, got stuck in the mudhole. Since he couldn't get out, he tried to stop everybody else to get a protest going. He stood right in the middle of the track . . . right in the way. Finally, the West German team manager came over and started talking

(Continued on page 110)



Dick Burleson: "How do we put together a winning Trophy Team? That's the question that comes up every year after we don't win."



On the sixth day, rain begat mud and the mud eventually became a bike-swallowing bog. But the scorers lost track of the numbers and had to invalidate the Special Test. Burleson (below left) and Gallo earned Gold Medals anyway.



TWO TALES FROM THE ISDT

some high-powered German, and Rottler immediately began pulling on his bike to get it out of the mud."

Cycle: Did you have any major problems with the bike?

Gallo: "I discovered how invaluable duct tape is. Without it I would have been out of the trials when I broke my gas tank. It was a strange situation; I didn't even know I did it. I was in a muddy uphill section and there were a couple of guys stuck on it. I went up the embankment, but it was sloppy mud and I couldn't really see the ground. I hit a root and the bike flipped over real quick. I threw my foot down and I thought I had caught most of the bike that way. I knew I'd bumped a tree too but I didn't give it any thought. I was only about a minute from a check, and when I came in there was gas streaming from my tank. Teddy Schwartz immediately jumped up in the air: 'Your gas tank's leaking!' I threw my bike down on its side. I had duct tape in my pouch; I just wiped it clean and taped it up. I went almost one full lap before it started leaking again; then I had to tape it. I'll tell you though, that was a good size hole."

Burleson and Gallo both note that the American riders are better trail riders than Special Test riders. This is one of the reasons that a tough ISDT favors the Americans. Sweden's trails were, according to all, relatively easy.

Cycle: Were there any tough trail sections?

Burleson: "The one tough section we had was on the third day, a stretch that was rocky with some heavy mud, that some guys lost some time in. On the fourth day you came down that, but they had put up long wooden planks right through it. Just like a highway; I couldn't believe it. So they threw out the only part that was challenging; they put a bridge over it."

Cycle: What were your feelings about the entire Six Days, the overall mood?

Burleson: "The real essence of the event is how long it is, and how it goes on and it goes on and it goes on. You ride and . . . whew. You get up the next morning and you ride and . . . whew. You get up the next morning and you ride and . . . whew. You do that for six days in a row."

"One of the things that I've found in the last number of years is that—well, when I first started to ride the Six Days, and the second time and maybe even the third, when I got there, I was quite nervous. But in the last number of years, as soon as I get on the bike, it feels like another day of a continuous Six Days. It's like the last year's ISDT and I'm just starting another day. I just get on the bike—*brrrrt* down the trail—get done, put new tires on it, impound it, and the next day I get on the bike—*brrrrt* down the trail—put new tires on it, impound it. It's continuous; it's grown together. It's a weird feeling. I don't know what that's from. It's kinda weird."

Burleson and Gallo have much in common: they consider the Six Days the highlight of the year, more important than any other event. Both train and compete out of a dedication to the event; doing well is a personal goal. But there is a major difference between the two. Everything Gallo does is directed at improving his abilities in ISDT competition. He raced the 500cc National Motocross series in 1978 so that he could be faster in the ISDT Special Tests. Burleson, on the other hand, is also committed to being National Enduro Champion. Several years ago, he raced some professional motocross and still practices it regularly. Nevertheless, Dick Burleson considers himself an ISDT and enduro man; being the best enduro rider in the country prepares him for being the best Trials rider only if the Six Days is particularly tough. That is an important "if"; usually the Special Tests determine the Trials winner.

Cycle: Would it simply take better support and more motocross experience to give America a winning team?

Lehto: "That would be 80 per cent of it. But you get to a point where more support just doesn't do it. You need *qualified* support. It's hard to find good support—people who have been to Six Days and

"This is what we call support. It's not cheating. Sure, it's bending the rules, but how many people drive 55 miles per hour."

know the intricacies of the event. We can't afford to pay them to go over to Six Days. They have to want to go over. I think a lot of the attraction of the event is its mystique. Jim Fishback said it: he'd ridden all kinds of other events, and he wanted to try Six Days. He'd been an Expert in motocross, desert and speedway, but there's a certain appeal about the ISDT. For the most part, if you take the 35 or 40 men who go over, about 15 of them are serious about winning. The rest of them are just there because of its charisma."

Gallo: "We do it for a sense of personal achievement, because we want to. Going to Six Days this year, everyone on the Trophy Team paid \$150 to help with the motel rooms and all. A lot of people think we're getting paid to do it; actually, we help pay our way to ride. The Czechs are in the army; they train and the army hands them a pay check at the end of the month."

Cycle: They're full-time, year-round riders then?

Gallo: "Yeah. That's all they do."

Cycle: Would you rather concentrate on getting better for the Six Days than riding enduros?

Gallo: "My idea of enjoying racing is *racing*. It's getting on a starting line and riding maybe a two-hour Hare Scrambles or a motocross. I like to do as many things

as I can. It keeps me from getting bored with doing just one thing."

Cycle: What are your plans for the Nationals?

Gallo: "I don't think I'll be able to ride the Nationals next year because of the scoring procedure. I was 20th in the Open class this year, but I didn't have regional grading points. That's why I'm not riding the Trans-AMA—I'm not qualified to. This year, the Nationals were set up so that you just came and signed up. Next year they're going to go to the rating setup. Whether or not I ride the Nationals next year will be based on how well I do in the Florida series."

Cycle: In every other type of racing, there is a lot of inter-brand rivalry. Is there as much in Six Days, or is it mainly Americans first?

Gallo: "It's Americans first. Over there, it's just like a Two Day (Qualifier). You go there and prepare your bike; everybody walks around on Fridays to see what's new at each camp. Everybody's willing to pass on knowledge. It's always been that way. It's not a cutthroat deal; it's not like the half-mile or the mile, where a guy will trim a tire and hide it when somebody else walks by. Everybody enjoys the people they're with—that's what keeps people racing. Even at the Nationals, when I rode with those guys, I got to know them and found out they're just a group of people doing a different type of racing. There's a few that are snobby but most of the guys are out there working hard like you are. They're just out motocrossing."

Though motocrossers' and Six Days riders' attitudes toward racing may be similar, the reality of the entire scene is different. Pro motocrossers make money. Lots of money. And this fact leads to a paradox: it seems as if—given the necessity of being ungodly fast in the Special Tests—America needs Pro-level motocross racers on the Six Days team in order to be truly competitive. But realistically there's an unavoidable question. Why would someone race Six Days for personal fulfillment when he can race motocross for cash profit?

With an abundance of motocross talent and a pure desire to race Six Days, Gallo has only one answer, and it's probably the only legitimate answer—he wants to do it.

He ought to be cloned.

We approached Burleson with our brash observations and asked what he thought it would take to win.

Cycle: What's the real difference between the Czechoslovakians and the Americans? Experience?

Burleson: "Yeah, that's one of the things. Those guys have all ridden a number of Six Days. But there's more than that. There's a lot of things involved. They have a lot of experience, but anybody can get that over a period of time. Their bikes are good but not vastly superior. Their bikes are stone reliable, it seems. Less

(Continued on page 112)



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TALES FROM ISDT. *Continued from page 108*
than great in the handling department. Heavy. Not a lot of travel. They're a bit behind the times.

"They've had to hurry in the last few years to try and catch up. The Italians are showing them that; they have later suspension equipment and are actually beating them in the Special Tests. But they (the Italians) are not experienced enough nor disciplined enough or whatever, to make it go for six days. Those guys do a lot more motocross.

"Half, at least, of the American riders are really enduro riders. So that in an event like the '73 Six Days in the States, which was a lot of trails, hard trails, we did a lot better. We have more trail experience, and we're kind of tuned in to going the distance without having problems or making problems for ourselves."

Cycle: Would you consider riding motocross here to get better for the Special Tests? Do you think it's necessary?

Burleson: "I think it's good. Yeah, I think it's good. I'd like to do some more myself, but I'm kind of committed to the enduro thing, which takes about every weekend of the whole year. So I have more of a time problem than anything else.

"So what you're getting at is how do we put together a winning Trophy team, a

"If we could have Bob Hannah in the Special Tests over there at the Six Days, why... we'd smoke 'em cold.

possibly winning team. That's the question that comes up every year after we don't win. What can we do? Well, we're not really competitive in the Special Tests. We're medium competitive, but not really really competitive. And that stems from a number of reasons. One of the prime reasons is that we don't run the kind of Special Tests that they do in Europe. Our Two Day Qualifier tests aren't really representative of the Six Days. The ISDT tests aren't laid out like ours. There's a lot more grass track; they're off-camber. The Qualifiers, they're... ah, they're too easy, they make it too easy for these guys.

"One of the things I want to do if I can get free is go to Europe and ride the European Reliability Championship Series. That would give me much better training for the Six Days. There's a lot more really competitive riders at the Championship series than there is in the States. It's just like when the European motocross riders came over here; our riders had to get better. Well, our level of riding is down here, and only once a year do we get a chance to see where we really are. After the Qualifier series and before the Six Days, everybody has a false sense of how good they are. Like if somebody rode the series, and he won a class, and he smoked everybody, he thinks, 'I'm gonna go over there and smoke those

guys back.' That's not what it's really like. It would be good to go over there early and see where we're at. We hope to go over and be competitive and we're really not."

Cycle: If we could mix and match riders and brands, could America put together a winning team right now?

Burleson: "America doesn't have six riders who could beat the Czechs. Not right now. We have motocrossers who are fast enough, but don't have the experience, and our Six Days riders aren't fast enough. Frankie's probably our fastest rider... he's probably good enough."

Cycle: A few different things would help, then: Going to Europe to ride the Reliability Championship Series and getting our Special Tests more like the Six Days tests. Creating a fully professional ISDT team would help—which in a way would give Americans with the best shot at the ISDT exactly what a pro motocrosser now has: a regular paycheck. But is it likely that factories will—or do they now—employ riders strictly as Six Days men?

Burleson: "Well, Frankie is, basically. John Fero is. I am, in a sense. Of course, I have a dual role, with the National Enduros. Of course, I'm not salaried to ride just Six Days, obviously. But that's one of the things that I do. Jackie Penton is, more or less. Drew Smith and Mike Rosso—they work for Suzuki in some capacity but also race. It's just that we're professional ISDT riders on a limited scale."

Cycle: Do you think maybe you're trying to spread yourself too thin, do too many things?

Burleson: "I may be. You may be right."

Cycle: What's the key to producing winning riders?

Burleson: "Ideally... if a guy wants to be really good, he has to ride, he has to train. Also, we're definitely going to have to come more from motocross. As long as they're going to continue to structure the events the way they have. To make a good Six Days rider you need to take someone who has really good motocross skills and teach him discipline... teach him how to ride the trail. We're coming from the other direction. We're taking enduro riders and trying to make them go fast. We've been doing that for a number of years and we haven't really... we're not really making vast gains in our overall placing.

"So take a wild extreme: if we could have Bob Hannah in the Special Tests over there at the Six Days, why... we'd smoke 'em cold. There are other American motocross riders who are good, good enough to possibly win a Special Test or be right in there. But how is anyone going to get those guys to want to do that when they can make so much money riding motocross? What would they get? They'd get a little gold medal. The Six Days is really for personal fulfillment."

(Continued on page 115)

Cycle: To make the ISDT attractive enough to someone who could be competitive in motocross, it would probably take some factory backing. Do you think that will ever come from Husky or KTM?

Burleson: "Ummm... probably not."

Cycle: Do you think it might be more likely to come from Suzuki or Yamaha?

Burleson: "I would say so, yeah. Because you're not talking about one rider, you're talking about a team, and then you're talking about a lot of money. A big company can use that money to enhance their overall image. When I ride an enduro bike, my efforts are directed at selling enduro bikes. Take Harley-Davidson for example: they don't make any money selling their XR750. That effort, which they spend a lot of money on, is directed at improving or enhancing their whole image. That's how I think the Japanese could justify it... performance and reliability and all that stuff."

Cycle: If a factory wanted to do it then, they could do it? Do you think it's just a matter of perception; they don't perceive it as important enough, so they aren't willing to put out the effort?

Burleson: "Oh, they're working on it. I think it's coming."

Cycle: From?

Burleson: "From the Japanese."

"America doesn't have six riders who could beat the Czechs."

There are, then, certain inescapable conclusions regarding America's future involvement in the ISDT. A winning Trophy Team is going to have to include riders with first-rate motocross ability. Speaking realistically, we'd say the only incentive to lure pro-level motocrossers to the Six Days is factory employment. Until some factory is willing to spend a considerable amount of money for a team, America's efforts will continue to be composed of top-rank enduro and cross-country riders who will continue to stand out only in years of particularly tough Trials. Finally, America's team would have an honest chance of winning a Trials if the Special Tests were de-emphasized, as many people wish they were. The likelihood of this happening, however, is slim.

Dick Burleson is without a doubt the best enduro rider in this country, and—considering his consistency—he may well be the best ISDT rider in the United States. However, given the ISDT's emphasis on Special Tests, Frank Gallo and other riders who are willing to concentrate on motocross are America's hope. Right now, America is applying Yankee rules to a European game. The Europeans will continue to dominate that game as long as some of their governments act as maxi-sponsors and as long as their top-level motocrossers choose to ride the ISDT. Or until some factory thinks of a way to lure Americans with motocross ability to the Six Days.



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Suz GT380/550/750 74-77	3 into 3	\$182.75
Yam 250/350/400, all	twin	\$135.10

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