



Below—Kawasaki's Bob Carpenter, arch rival of the Vance Suzuki, used his riding skill and a ton of luck to take top Pro Stock honors. After qualifying in fifth, he ran a slower 9.67 to beat Sid Pogue (9.65) in the final round.



Top—Marion Owens had the strongest non-Japanese Top Fuel entry, a 3769cc injected double Harley, which qualified third. In the final, against the bike on our cover, Owens smoked the tire and watched Jim Bernard motor away. Middle—Kenny Annesley, who posted low qualifying time of 7.73 at 185.95 mph aboard his injected Kawasaki double, warms the rear meat prior to gobbling Elmer Trett's twin H-D in the first round of Top Fuel eliminations. Right—Riding his bizarre Honda V-8 "Sorcerer," Russ Collins teamed with the Teson/Bernard blown Honda single to stage an impressive 900-horsepower burnout. Collins DNFed with a busted rear crank on the first pass.



THE BOWLING GREEN BASH

**Some Were There To Watch The Drag Strip.
Others Were There To Watch The People Strip.**

By Rich Cox

If a "boobie" prize could be awarded to the drag meet with the most prolific display of spectator profanity and the most anticlimactic ending of the year, Bowling Green '78 would be the disgruntled, if not ashamed, winner. As the long weekend of eliminations slowly wound down to that final intense round on Sunday afternoon, Mother Nature had finally had a bellyful of the nonsense which had occurred throughout the weekend. The Kentucky sky blackened and the wind began to howl, and in an instant the sky spit down a deluge of rain so intense that two inches of water settled on the track in 20 minutes; there was no doubt about it—race day was over. With that, several beer-swollen, long-haired spectators completely disrobed, jumped-out of the stands and took to the scattered puddles squirming on their stomachs like spasmodic, love-crazed guppies; they were soon joined by others.

For promoters, spectators and racers alike, it seemed an indignant and unjust ending to an event that in the past had been regarded as the East's second largest motorcycle attraction and the "Daytona" of drag racing, but one that typified the weekend. Whatever possibly could have gone wrong, did go wrong—right from the beginning. It was NMRA's (National Motorcycle Racing Association) first event under the sanctioning of the NHRA and they simply got greedy. Unlike the low-keyed come-along of past promoters who allowed spectators to camp in the luscious campgrounds surrounding the track for 10 cents a night and then buy a sepa-

rate ticket into the racetrack, the NMRA widely advertised the race as a "hassle-free three-day bike bust" (with live rock bands and all) where one low price (\$15 a head) would give you a free run of the entire place for the whole weekend. Well, as any good, plump, grit-eating Southern Smokey will tell ya, that's like inviting flies to a barbecue—they'll come from miles around for a little action. And they did. Like a swarm of hungry locusts, roughly 30,000 motorcyclists roared into Bowling Green's peaceful little two-lane town, causing confusion and traffic jams the likes of which they've never seen; at times it took 45 minutes to travel two miles.

Unfortunately about half (the "free-spirited" half riding Milwaukee iron) were weekend-warriors who conducted themselves in their normal manner: uncontrollably and destructively. They wheeled their lunkers over the yellow line against oncoming traffic; they rode on the sidewalks; they managed to burn-down a barn and torch a dozen haystacks; they dropped beer cans like packs of constipated seagulls; they kept the Bowling Green ambulance busy transporting "fallen comrades" suffering from drug overdoses or motorcycle accidents; they waved signs saying "Don't give me sh-t . . . show me your t-t," they raised their "colors" more often than a Hollywood hooker on Saturday night. If your girlfriend was remotely good-looking she was best-off locked in a trunk. If you weren't astride a Harley, you had no business being there. The hottest selling T-shirt was a coal-black mod-

el that read, "If you don't ride a Harley . . . you ain't sh-t." And, if you were one of the official racers, a racing fan or local resident, it was both alarming and disappointing to witness how "rotten apples" spoil the entire basket; most of the trouble-makers never even entered the race-track, but hung around the perimeter, staggering and stumbling from heavy doses of spirits—many eventually falling to the ground like tranquilized zombies.

If you could ignore the shenanigans outside, the racing inside Beach Bend's beautiful drag strip (it has covered stands for 9,600 spectators and plush green grass lining the length of the asphalt) was typically Bowling Green style—fast and furious with all the big names in attendance. In effect the racing boiled down to what it usually does: a massive identity struggle. Were the seemingly outdated Harleys, Triumphs and Nortons going to valiantly hold-off the Japanese attempts to monopolize the drag racing world? As the top qualifiers lined up for Sunday's final rounds it appeared to some 15,000 spectators that these past giants had succumbed to the relentless pursuit of the Kamakazi pilots.

Using 2400cc from his injected, twin-engine nitro-burning Kawasaki, Kenny Annesley set the pace in Top Fuel with a qualifying e.t. of 7.73 @ 185 mph. The Teson/Bernard blown 970cc Honda single trailed closely with a 7.84 @ 184 mph, and sitting in the third position posting an 8.06 @ 170 mph was Marion Owens' 230 cubic inch injected double-engine Harley, the only non-Japanese Top



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Fuel qualifier that looked even remotely capable of dispatching the Kawasaki or Honda. Russ Collins' famed V-8 "Sorcerer" made a brief appearance, but few saw it because the rear engine broke during its first qualifying run on Friday afternoon.

John Dixon had the best come-from-behind performance with his new blown Yamaha XS Eleven fueler (it was the bike's first meet). Although he qualified poorly in tenth position at 9.32 @ 142 mph, he later stormed into Sunday's eight bike Top Fuel program as an alternate. He diligently worked his way to second round eliminations where he met an immovable object: Jim Bernard's blown Honda, which sent the Yamaha to the showers with a 7.85 @ 184 mph against the Yammie's 8.26 @ 167 mph—still an incredible showing for its initial shakedown.

With roughly 50 percent of the crowd partial to Harley-Davidson iron, Ray Price's 120 cubic inch injected fuel-burning Harley altered put them in ecstasy when he grabbed top qualifying position (8.43 @ 166 mph) in the Super Eliminator class (a

class composed of double-engined gas bikes or single-engined dragsters, altered and sit-up bikes that are either blown on alcohol or injected on fuel). Price whipped Sam Wills' 1170cc injected Kawasaki single and the blown Kawasaki single of Ken Blackburn. For putting on a show, though, Price's Harley is No. 1; It's one of few bikes that sits back on the wheelie-bars and carries the front wheel motionless through the entire quarter-mile. The crowd went crazy.

But even those exhibitions of speed couldn't keep the restless crowd continually amused and satisfied. They often relied on their own twisted ingenuity for added kicks during lulls in the program. Getting frenzied girls to air their lily-white chests so "all could see" was a favorite passtime. But the most memorable was the gallant pursuit of a "streaker" by a local track official. To the delight of many, the shameless fool, carrying his shorts and shoes in one hand, gamely pranced around the drag strip, thwarting all attempts at capture by his 200-pound pursuer. He finally jumped back into the crowd, leaving the official thoroughly exhausted and frustrated, but with a slight grin on his face, knowing he'd been part of the show.

For the serious performance

enthusiasts—the guys who rode their Kawasakis, Suzukis or Hondas to the track—the Pro Comp and Pro Stock classes were "where it was at," because both are dominated by production-type Japanese four-cylinder engines to which the "street-racer" can easily relate. The difference between Pro Stock and Pro Comp is slight but obvious: the Pro Stockers look stock, while the Pro Comp bikes use stretched-out lay-down frames. Both are powered by the same highly re-worked, but stock-looking powerplants.

It was a Mike Brusso benefit in the Pro Comp division as he qualified his 1198cc Kosman/Denco Kawasaki at the head of the pack (9.02 @ 149 mph), obviously having the motor to power-by all the competition; he had 10 mph on Arno St. Denis' 900cc Triumph which qualified a distant second with a 9.21 e.t. @ 140 mph. For Mike it was just a matter of "let me get to the next guy" before he finally laid waste to Larry Hayes' 964cc Honda in the final elimination round.

Pro Stock honors were up for grabs—an unusual occurrence when the Vance/Hines 1176cc Suzuki comes to town. Even though the lone Suzuki qualified fastest (setting a new NHRA record of 9.33 @ 142 mph), a freak ignition failure and flat



Ray Price's funny-looking fuel-burning H-D altered set low qualifying time in the Super Eliminator Class, but unfortunately got shot down going into the finals.



In the highly Japanese dominated Pro Comp Division, Arno St. Denis' 900cc Triumph opened eyes when he qualified it in No. 2 position behind Mike Brusso's Kaw.



Ken Blackburn's blown alcohol-burning 1194cc Kawasaki overcame Ray Price's injected H-D on its way to claiming top honors in the Super Eliminator Class.



Mike Brusso put down all contenders in the Pro Comp Division with this Kosman/Denco 1198cc Kaw. Weighing just 320 pounds, it simply horsepowered by everyone.

Posting an impressive 8.26 e. t. @ 167 mph at its very first meet, John Dixon's new blown Yamaha 1100 will be one to watch in the future. It sported chain drive, a Magnuson blower, MTC pistons, JD rods and a stock head.



tire DNFed Vance right at the line during second-round eliminations against Bob Carpenter, whose Kawasaki qualified in fifth position with a 9.55 @ 136 mph. That left Carpenter to scrap with Sid Pogue's quick 1075cc Kawasaki in the final. (Sid had second fastest qualifying time of 9.41 @ 140 mph). It was a classic duel: Sid had the horsepower and Bob was hoping he'd make a mistake . . . and he did. Bob ran a slower 9.67 against Sid's 9.65 in the final and still managed to take the win at the lights. Both were using small displacement engines (under 1100cc) which hasn't been common practice in Pro Stock.

To the dismay of every Harley owner at Bowling Green, the third round of Super Eliminator saw the demise of Ray Price's altered Harley. Even though he ran a quicker time than Ken Blackburn's blown Kawasaki (8.52 against 8.60), he was shown the powder room at the timing lights. That pitted Blackburn's Kawasaki against Bo O'Brochta's 1155cc Kawasaki in the final. We never saw it

because they ran Monday morning after the rain, but it was a crowd pleaser; Blackburn won it turning a 8.51 against O'Brochta's 8.50, so it had to be exciting to see.

Top Fuel had all the build-up, suspense and anticlimax of a late night horror movie. Looking almost unbeatable aboard his twin-engined Kawasaki, Kenny Annesley's luck ran out at the lights during second round eliminations when the injectors on his rear engine refused to function. This allowed Marion Owens' Harley direct passage into the final against the Teson/Bernard blown Honda single which had already made mincemeat of Joe Thronson's Harley-Davidson. But few ever saw this final showdown—that's when Mother Nature decided to call a halt to the weekend's festivities.

If you had returned for the re-take Monday morning, you'd have witnessed the real Bowling Green. You could have traveled quietly and peacefully on the scenic little two-lane road leading to Beach Bend, you could have enjoyed the beautiful

green rolling hills along the road. Once inside you could have safely wagered a month's pay on the Teson/Bernard Honda, the likely Top Fuel winner. It was more a battle of patience than horsepower. The track was cold and damp and obviously lacking the traction it had the day before. Marion Owens took the hole-shot aboard his Moroso-backed twin-engined Harley, but tried to stretch the lead and the Harley's rear tire went up in smoke. Bernard held his cool: "I could hear the motor revving and knew the tire wasn't hooked up, so I just eased-up and rolled her on slowly," he said later. Jim won minutes after more rain doused the track with an 8.90 against Marion's 9.26; they weren't exactly fast times, but then again, conditions at 170-mph in the rain aren't the best for record clockwork.

Nevertheless, 170-mph on a wet track was still probably safer than being a spectator in the herd of low-life scumbags who ruined a fine event—maybe forever—for a lot of people. Damn them.

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Sid Pogue, aboard his 1075cc Kaw, guns-down Bob Mauriello's H-D during Pro Stock first round eliminations. Bob Carpenter defeated Sid in the final.

Pro Stock ace, Terry Vance, set low qualifying time astride his lone 1176cc Suzuki, but an ignition failure during second round kept him from advancing.