

# Roberts starts out with TT win

By TONY GALLUCCI  
Staff Sports Writer  
HOUSTON—It's dangerous trying to leave the Astrodome along with 40,000 other people after witnessing some of the best motorcycle racing in the nation. All the pent up energy of every soul this side of the Mississippi who ever dreamed of racing or have seen their peak is unleashed on the freeway. It's worse if you happen to be going the same direction.

The traffic never changes, year to year, but every season has something new to offer at the races. This year offered twice that.

Kenny Roberts was already a legend at the dome. Only a colorblind postman on a 3-horse Vespa could not notice all the Team Yamaha yellow scattered among the seats of the dome.

It was the Friday night steeplechase that proved Roberts was for real. That he really was the stuff champion riders are made of. That he really did deserve the No. 1 plates he was wearing for the second year. That he might be only the third rider in AMA history to win the national title three years in a row.

Roberts had to make an extra effort to qualify for the TT final. But once the Californian got off the line in the Yamaha Gold Cup Dash, there was no question who "Numero Uno" was.

The yellow buzzsaw thus became the only person ever to win in the prestigious Astrodome events three times. Nobody else has even won twice. He also became the only person ever to win both the short track

and steeplechase in the dome. Logical.

Roberts gained his acclaim as a short track racer, becoming a professional just four years ago. He finished fourth in the AMA that year as a rookie. Quite a feat. But to top that, at 21, the youngest ever, he set a national points record to become the national champ. He has been on the throne ever since.

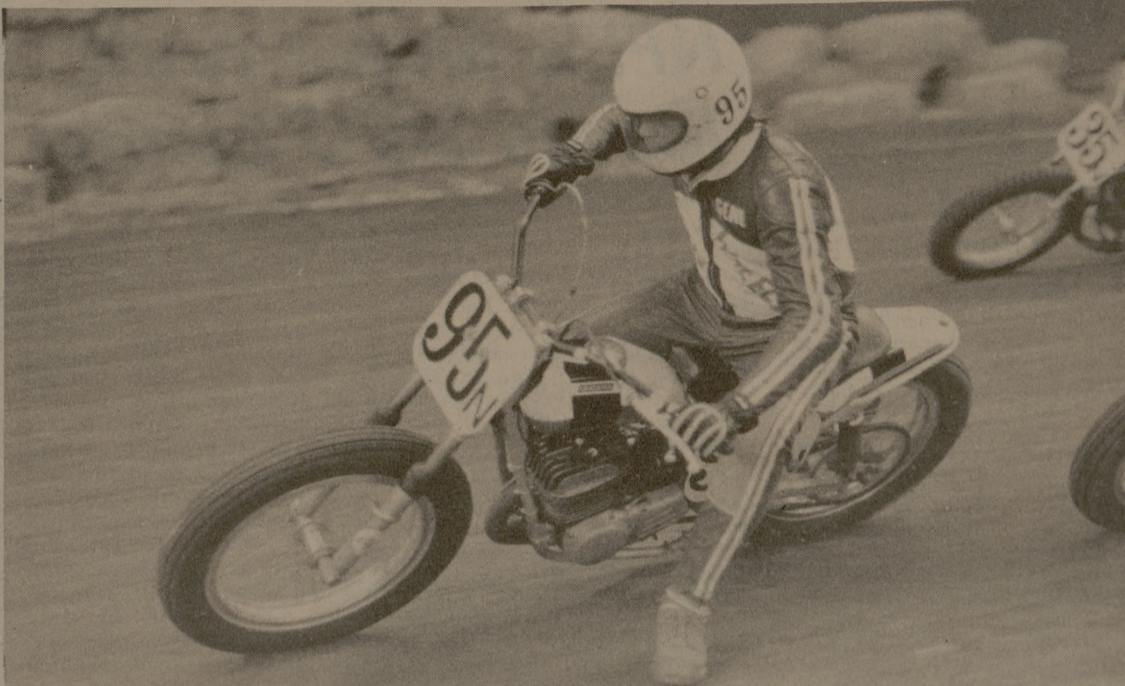
Oddly enough, the next night produced surprise No. 2. Namely, Roberts after two chances failed to qualify for the final in his specialty, the short track event. That led to local hero Darryl Hurst's big showing.

Hurst, became the first Texan ever to win a dome event, and he won going away. In fact he spent most of his time looking back to see if he had time for a coffee break. His win also sent most of the traffic headed for Spring Branch, the area where he lives and runs his Yamaha shop.

Perennial second place finisher Gary Scott, did it again, finishing second to Roberts in the TT. Dave Hansen, last year's TT winner over Roberts and second last year in the short track event to Mike Gerald, finished second in the short track again this year behind Hurst.

"We try harder" must be their slogan.

As for manufacturers? This year was a little more varied than last year's near Honda sweep and the year before's near Yamaha sweep. TT-wise it was Yamaha, Harley, Norton. While the short track went



Gene Cameron takes turn two in the Junior Invitational Short Track Race.

Photo by Tony Gallucci

Yamaha, Honda, Yamaha.

Universal City's Larry Beall took the Junior Invitational Short Track Event on a Yamaha followed by Houston's Jimmy Mayo aboard a Bultaco.

In Sunday's speedway racing event, The Europeans ran away with the team title after being given a close race early by the Americans. Final team score was Europe 64, U.S. 44. After the eighth race of the 20-race event, the Americans were within two points. But Europe, led by Ivan Maugers, had little trouble after that point.

The Astrodome golden racing weekend, now in its eighth year, has

grown to immense proportions from its once small beginning. It started with the first Texas race on the national circuit in 1968 when Gary Nixon won the Short Track event in the dome. The next year the steeplechase event was added, and last year international speedway racing came to the dome. And as evidence of the greatly increased popularity of motorsports in Texas, last year the dome offered the first Texas version of national championship motocross. This year, also a first, Texas Stadium will offer both motocross and short track on a national level.

There are always other fascinat-

ing attractions, too. Although this year the races began to take on a rather circus air, no thanks to the speedway announcer and his cutesy jokes.

Besides time trials and races, there is the huge manufacturer and trade show, the world's youngest daredevils proving that sonny-boy can drive at the age of three, the Bandidos and a parade of minibikes, trikes, choppers, Harleys and a few bits of soldered iron who made the long trailride to watch the races.

And if you decide to go next year, take a helmet, a semi and wear your seat belt on the freeway or wait 'til next weekend before you leave.

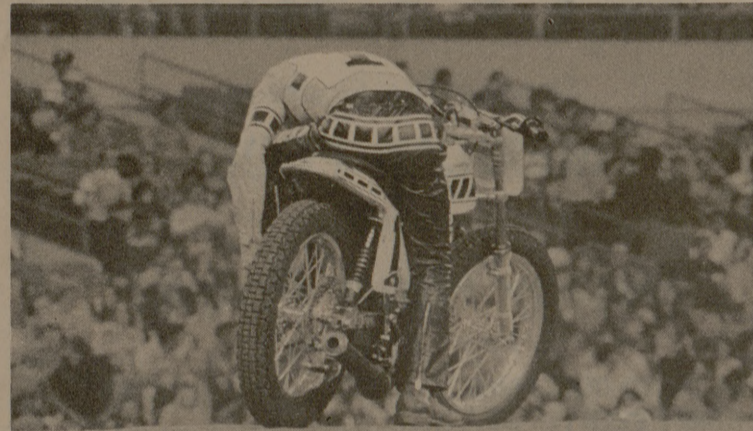


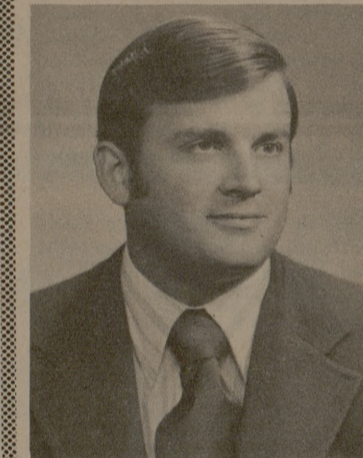
Photo by Tony Gallucci

National champion Kenny Roberts ties his shoes before record crowd of 40,012 at the Astrodome Gold Cup Nationals.

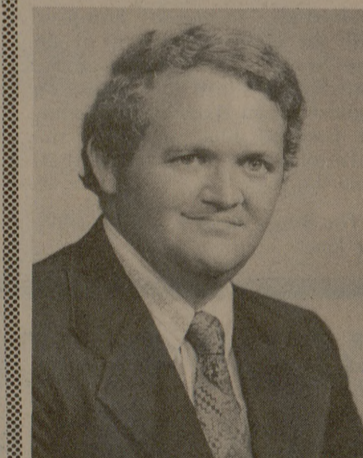
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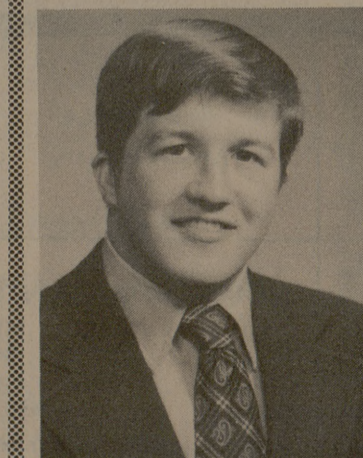
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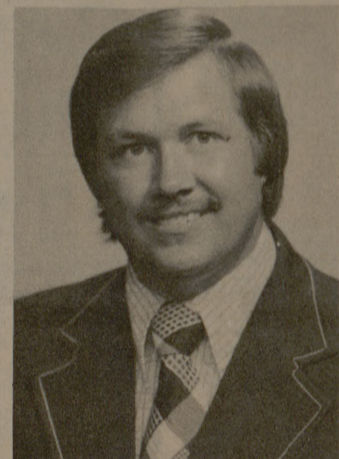
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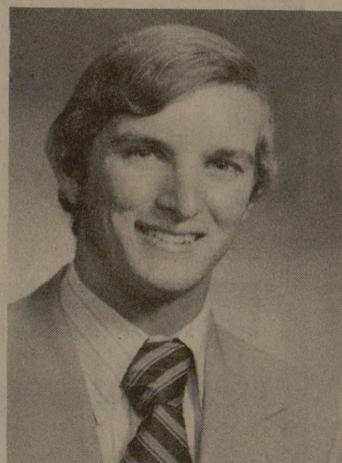
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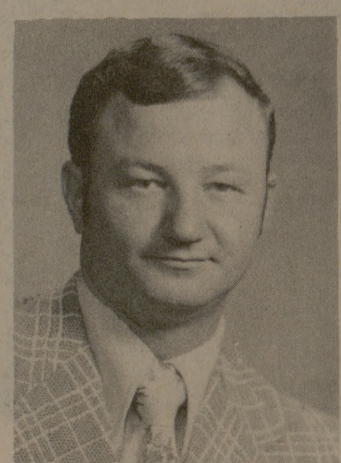
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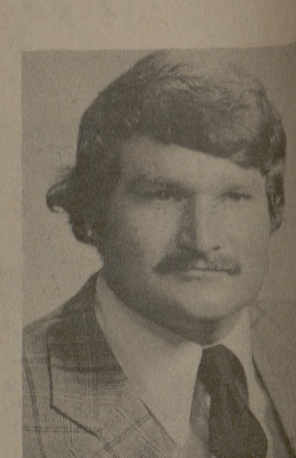
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