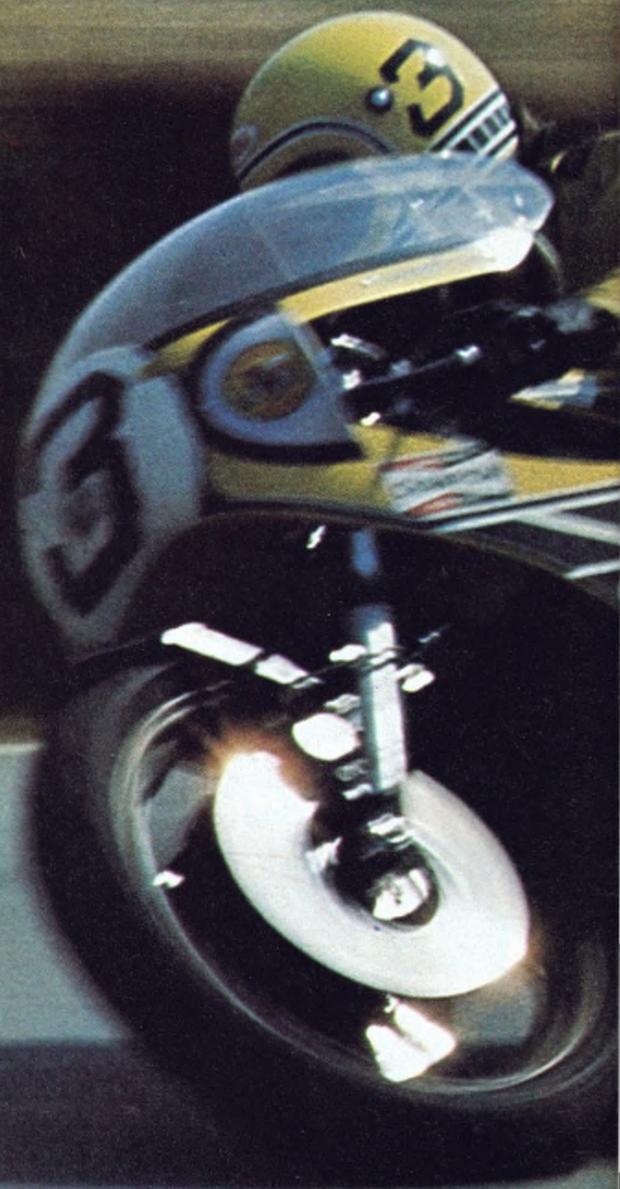


DAYTONA

There was only one American entry in the top five—it happened to be the winner, Team Mexican's Gene Romero, who admits: "It beats pickin' grapes!" And 75,000 sun-baked southern migrants screamed Olè



photography: Bob D'Olivo and Mike Perris



'75





Daytona—Yamaha Country outright . . . First 19 spots fall to the yellow armada of 135-hp, 750cc fours . . . Roberts runs the "impossible" 111-mph lap . . . Fourteen-time World Champion Ago Agostini pulls a fourth . . . Suzuki races up front, but not for long . . . Kawasaki's green tide rolls back out to sea again . . . Harley-Davidson burns while their '76 two-stroke builds . . .

TOP LEFT—Motocross action in the infield with Can-Am ace Jimmy Ellis. Record turnout of 35,000 on Saturday witnessed the best racing ever held inside the famous tri-oval. TOP RIGHT—Suzuki-mounted David Aldana scratches to keep in the top ten. A gas spill during a refueling stop gave him an extremely tender riding position. ROW TWO—The mass motocross start into the narrow left-hander is an exciting sight. Over 50 eager men and machines trying to fit into a 10-foot turn is worth the price of admission alone. ROW 3, LEFT—The Motorcyclist Magazine All-Star big winner Kenny Roberts justly deserved the readers' choice for Expert Dirt Track Rider, Expert Road Race Rider and Man of the Year. ROW 3, RIGHT—The first of many Suzuki chain tension adjustments that plagued the whole team. Lansivouri later fell, reported to be caused by excessive chain slack affecting his power delivery. ROW 4—Ah, the benefits of the Daytona sun. Scenes like this were repeated by the thousands as the biggest-ever throng of racers, riders and rowdies did their thing during the Daytona week of wide-open fun. BOTTOM—Bellingham, Washington's finest motorcycle road racer, Steve Baker, pushes steadily into second spot. His precise style and steel nerves belie his youth and relative lack of big-time experience. FAR LEFT—This year's sensation, Venezuelan Johnny Cecotto, barely made it to the line, trailed the smoke of the disappearing 72-rider field in front of him, finished third 200 heart-stopping miles later.

Gene Romero peeled off the top half of his yellow and black leathers, knotted the sleeves at his waist, slumped into a canvas chair and aimed his bare chest at the warm Florida sun. It was Tuesday afternoon, five days before the 34th annual Daytona 200 and he was ready . . . all set for motorcycle racing's richest and most important event.

"There's nothing left for me to do but wait," Romero said. "I've got over 600 miles in practice. I'm not gonna get any faster and the machine isn't gonna get any faster. When I go out for practice now I'm just experimenting with different corners and working on my concentration. If you don't concentrate on this track it'll put you to sleep. Racing at Daytona is easy if you concentrate. Slip for a second and you're in trouble.

"I can't ever remember feeling any better for a race," Romero added. "I'm ready physically and mentally. It's all set in my mind. No 'jack rabbit' start. Keep the leaders in sight through the first fuel stop. Stay steady. If everything is working right after half-way, then I'll start moving up. 200 miles is a long way. If I stay sharp and have a little luck it could be a good day for me."

Sunday, March 9, 1975, was the best day ever for Gene Romero.

While Romero was waiting for his "day," Daytona Beach was boiling with activities surrounding the American Motorcycle Association's 34th annual renewal of the classic. Traditionally it's the single most important week in the two-wheeled sport.

Motorcycle aficionados, racers and lookers in every size and shape and from every corner of the globe, poured into the Florida resort. European interest, teased by 36 foreign entries, was greater than ever with a dozen foreign charter jets lined up at the regional airport adjacent the famous Daytona International Speedway.

Wednesday's activities were filled with an endless wave of Sportsman road races at the Speedway and the opening night of short track battles at nearby Memorial Stadium. Thursday, while 500-plus mud-covered wood riders wallowed through the mud-dust in the Alligator Enduro not far away, the Expert "heavies" locked up in a sizzling qualifying session over Daytona's 3.84-mile road/track circuit.

Prerace favorite Kenny Roberts, the AMA's national title-holder and reigning Camel Pro Series champ, carried Yamaha's factory colors to a record-breaking 111.089 mph (2:04.44) polewinning speed. Teuvo (Tepi) Lansivouri of Isalmi, Finland, Suzuki's leading entry, was second fastest at 109.775. Johnny Cecot-



Victory circle: Romero goes into instant shock as the queen throws cold bubbly on his boiling brain.



David "Bones" Aldana defies superstition as he annihilates the big-bore production class on a \$5000 Yoshimura-Kawasaki Zee over Endicot and DuHamel.



A bolt of Latin Lightning zaps Ago in the final laps as Cecotto outscratches the multi-World Champion on his way to the ride of his life.



18-year-old Johnny Cecotto, the Venezuelan unknown who reeled by all but two of the world's fastest.

DAYTONA '75



Remaining cool and collected, Gene Romero says adios to Agostini and sets sail on remainder of field.

Norm "K&N Racing" McDonald quick-fills his son's privateer TZ700 Yamaha. It takes \$500 fueling rigs like this to stay in the hunt.

to, a 19-year-old firebrand from Caracas, Venezuela, in his second Daytona appearance (he finished an unspectacular 35th in 1974), turned the heads on pit road with a hot 109.090 qualifying lap, the third best and just a tick faster than Romero's 108.713. Young Steve Baker's 108.304 filled out the front row and, as expected, gave ample warning that Yamaha meant business with four of the top five spots.

Giacomo Agostini (Bergamo, Italy),

14-time world champion, defending Daytona 200 title-holder and unchallenged heartthrob of a multitude of young European ladies, managed no better than ninth best (107.395) but still shared the favorite's role with teammate Roberts. Agostini's complete domination of the 1974 event (his first-ever race in this country) had been stunning and a Roberts-Agostini rematch, triggered primarily by Roberts' intense pride and his burning memory

of the pair's first meeting, was brewing. There was no secret that Roberts had counted the days, waiting with frustrating patience, to get another Daytona shot at "Ago."

Yamaha's lesser lights beamed brightly Friday with victories in Junior and Novice road race finals. Romero milled almost unnoticed through the garages, relaxed and waiting.

When the "rematch" countdown moved into Saturday, Roberts served immediate notice to his competition by leading every inch of the 100-mile Expert-Junior Lightweight final to score another Yamaha victory.

The hot-shoe motocrossers took over Saturday afternoon in the Yamaha Super-Series and the results, as usual, over the Gary Bailey-designed course, were spectacular. Steve Stackable (Maico) turned back a crowd-pleasing (35,000) Tony DiStefano (Suzuki) to clinch the open class in the Series. Jimmy Ellis (Can-Am) locked up the 250cc title by stopping high-flying Marty Tripes (Bultaco).

The waiting finally ended shortly after noon Sunday when the 73-man Daytona 200 field roared into life on the starting grid. Over 70,000 spectators watched as young Cecotto, waving his hands in disbelief and straining to hear an interpreter, was moved to the rear of the starting field when his machine failed to fire at the one-minute mark.

Lansivouri screamed into the lead at the start with Roberts and Agostini following. Romero, Steve Baker and privateer Steve McLaughlin toyed with third place. Roberts waited until the third lap to start moving...and he was moving! He roared around Lansivouri (Suzuki's chief hope after Englishman

Steve "Pepsodent" Stackable has every reason to grin. He's currently blowing all the MX scene heavies into the weeds. First it was the Yamaha Superseries and now it's Daytona.



Barry Sheene had been injured in a practice crash and Gary Nixon had failed to get medical approval to race due to an injury) on the fourth lap and two laps later he was already passing back markers.

Romero slipped away from McLaughlin and Baker and moved around "Ago" on the 12th lap. When McLaughlin passed the Italian ace on the next lap the possibilities of a Roberts-Agostini rematch looked dim. Cecotto, posting an unbelievable performance, had moved all the way from the last starting position and nestled into sixth place behind Baker.

Roberts after steadily stretching his lead, suddenly pitted on the 16th lap and dismantled. He was out. The clutch hub had disintegrated on his TZ750. Lansivouri regained the lead briefly but McLaughlin took over after the initial rash of fuel stops.

At halfway (26 laps) Romero was in second place behind McLaughlin. Baker, Agostini, Cecotto, "Key" Kawasaki, Dave Aldana (aboard a Suzuki in a sea of Yamahas) and Ron Pierce followed. One lap later McLaughlin lost it coming out of the infield.

Romero's game plan had worked to perfection.

When it was over Romero had finished 18 seconds ahead of Baker and was \$17,000 richer. Cecotto, 18 more seconds back, had slipped around a startled Agostini to finish third in one of the most spectacular Daytona rides in history. Australian Warren Willing trailed "Ago," and McLaughlin, who had remounted after his fall, wound up in sixth place.

The waiting had ended for Gene Romero.



ABOVE—The long battle over, rookie sensation Steve Baker reflects on his outstanding second-place finish. Luckily his TZ750 Monoshock overcame prerace cooling problems. ABOVE RIGHT—"Tepi" Lansivouri holding the lead with sheer kneepower in the early laps.

DAYTONA 1975 RESULTS

200-Mile Expert Road Race			
Position	Name	Country	Machine
1	Gene Romero	USA	Yamaha
2	Steve Baker	USA/Canada	Yamaha
3	John Cecotto	Venezuela	Yamaha
4	Giacomo Agostini	Italy	Yamaha
5	Warren Willing	Australia	Yamaha
6	Steve McLaughlin	USA	Yamaha
7	Hiroyuki Kawasaki	Japan	Yamaha
8	Ron Pierce	USA	Yamaha
9	Don Castro	USA	Yamaha
10	Harry Cone	USA	Yamaha
100-Mile Junior Road Race			
1	Gary Blackman	Zionsville, Pa.	Yamaha
2	Dale Singleton	Dalton, Georgia	Yamaha
3	Scott Erickson	Libby, Montana	Yamaha
4	Skip Aksland	Manteca, California	Yamaha
5	Murray Hoffman	El Cajon, California	Yamaha

MANUFACTURER'S SCORE

200-Mile Expert Road Race—73 Starters		
Make	Started	Finished
Yamaha	56	26
Suzuki	9	4
Kawasaki	5	0
BMW	1	0
Harley Davidson	1	0



The mighty water-cooled Suzuki Triple that Lansivouri put on the front row of Yamaha Country. Long-travel suspension caused serious chain tension problems for team.



Jimmy Ellis uncorks his potent Can-Am 250 GP for the overall win. A freak practice fall put Can-Am's number one Gary Jones out with a broken leg.



Bultaco's Marty "Baby Huey" Tripes couldn't hold off Howerton or Eierstadt for fourth.



Last year's number two, Tony Di Stefano, switched to Team Suzuki and won two open class motos; fall kept him from win.