



DUEL

TWO RIDERS, TWO KTM's,
ONE TITLE...



RUST

WWW.RUSTSPORTS.COM

ISSUE #9



3 EDITORIAL

The story of the hurricane

4 GALLERY

The new look that is EnduroGP

5 GALLERY

JB spent two weeks in Madagascar with Touratech, look out for the upcoming Madagascar Special Edition...

6 DUEL

Two riders, two KTMs, one title...
The story of the epic 2014 battle between Ivan Cervantes and Matt Phillips

18 TESTED

Josh Snowden gives a run-down of some of his favourite kit

20 TRUE BLUE

It's 40 years since the first Yamaha IT saw the light of day. JB recalls two of their most iconic models

COVER IMAGE
KTM





THE STORY OF THE HURRICANE

BY JON BENTMAN,
PHOTO: JB

THE VILLAGERS BROKE the news to us. It was then confirmed via sat-phone by our contact back in Antalaha, then again by the German weather service: a cyclone was heading our way. *"Our tents are not cyclone rated I'm sorry to say,"* said our leader, Touratech's Herbert Schwarz, dryly, *"we will need to find shelter."*

The lack of drama was distracting. It wasn't until someone explained a cyclone is alternative word for hurricane that the penny started to drop. And when they added that Cyclone Fantala, then mid Indian Ocean, was recording wind speeds of over 230km/h – well, that kind of created an immediate visual image. The last concrete or brick building we'd seen was three days back...

We'll come back to Cyclone Fantala, and the United People of Adventure tour in Madagascar, in our next issue. But for now we'll visit a race paddock that's come through its own cyclone. Now life gets busy and maybe we should have seen this one coming, but it's only on my return from Madagascar, only on reading the already archived race reports that the picture, you could say the devastation, has emerged. The Enduro World Championship (EWC) is no more. Yes, we all know it was renamed EnduroGP over the off-season, but it's the almost complete upheaval, reshuffle and shakeout in the paddock that has created a change of cataclysmic proportions.

The old guard has been as good as lost, in its entirety. Antoine Meo and Pela Renet both lost to rally over the off-season, Christophe Nambotin out in round one with a hand injury. Yes, Alex Salvini, Jonny Aubert and Ivan Cervantes are still in the paddock, but their loss of race-winning form (*okay, Aubert won one day but has faded since*) means they are generating zero headlines.

As significantly, the once impregnable Fortress Farioli (KTM) has been more than breached – flattened you might say. At the time of writing, from five



categories Farioli KTM have but two minor positions in the standings (*third in E1 and equal-third in E2*). But for KTM-supported Antoine Basset's current second place in E3 the orange team have nothing to crow about. Indeed there's been a multi-coloured rout: TM head E1, Sherco E2, Beta E3, Honda EJ and Yamaha EY.

For KTM this democratization isn't good news. This is the year of the launch of their all-new enduros (EXCs), which are bringing to the trails the cutting-edge tech that was bestowed upon the motocross (SX) range last year. It kind of helps to be stamping your authority on the world championship at a time like this. But these new machines, in the hands of their select bunch of pro racers, aren't doing that (*not yet, at least*). No, the rest of the European manufacturers, heck even the Japanese, seem to have their measure.

All of this makes for fascinating times and so we'll watch and report on developments in EnduroGP as the season progresses. And it seems we'll have to get used to some new names, not least the UK's Steve Holcombe who must be as shocked as anyone to have claimed an outright day win. The changes really have created a sense of shock, of mourning for the loss of the structure we knew so well, but it's also a time of new beginnings, that's for sure. And that is exciting.





IT'S EWC BUT NOT AS WE KNOW IT...

EWC isn't EWC anymore, it's EnduroGP. There's lots of other new aspects to EnduroGP this year, too. Not least a major change in the riding talents involved. The cast list is barely recognisable from a season or two ago. And who would have predicted an outright day win from the UK's meteorically-rising talent Steve Holcombe so soon? We are stepping into new territory. Talking of new territory, this image is from round one at Agadir, on Morocco's Atlantic coast. We had hoped such an exotic location would create more locationally-interesting images, like the Dakar Rally of old, but it appears not. Never mind. The rider is another UK talent, also rapidly on the ascension: it's Nathan Watson, one-time motocross hotshot. He scored his first podium in Portugal and now lies third in the E1 category overall. A very promising start! **Image: Future 7 Media/KTM**





SADDLE UP

There's nothing like the first turn of the wheel. Whether it's the start of a race or a ride. Touratech's United People of Adventure ride in Madagascar started in the remote town of Antalaha by the Indian Ocean on a very warm late summer's morning – giving no hint of the climatic turmoil that would harangue the riders (*drawn from every continent*) every inch of the way, that would make the ride, their lives, a very real physical and emotional test. Following a dirt path that was no more than a dotted line on the map, with no pre-ride, with no guarantee the trail would even be rideable, this was riding into the unknown. Real adventure, as promised.



Enduro

DUEL

FIRST MAN YOU'VE GOT TO BEAT...

...yeah, your teammate. Back in 2014 Farioli KTM unwittingly paired two riders of equal strength in their EWC E3 squad. The battle that followed took both riders up to – and over – the edge...

Words: Georgia Wells
Images: KTM, Rick Wells & RUST archive





change, and over the past couple of seasons the scraps for supremacy have become intense. Arguably, the continuing addition of talent from motocross has pushed every rider to become not only faster but more versatile, and has levelled out the playing field. The junior ranks (*EJ*), bursting at the seams with talent, is often the scene of some serious rivalry, and in the youth class (*EY*) – the youngest class in the series, where riders are often the keenest – has enjoyed two thrilling one-on-one battles in as many years with Albin Elowson and Davide Soreca grappling with a gap of a handful of points, and Josep Garcia and Mikael Persson coming right down to the wire last year.

SERIOUS AND SUSTAINED rivalries in the Enduro World Championship (*re-branded EnduroGP for 2016!*) are uncommon for many reasons: because few riders stay in one class long enough to find one combatant who can challenge them year after year; because we've been lucky enough in the last 10 years or so to see some superhuman riders who are so good that almost no-one can touch them; because fierce rivalries are rare in a championship where respect and sportsmanship seem to be held in high regard by virtually everyone in the field.

But in recent years there has been a



LEADER



Over in E2, the infamous Salvini, Meo, Renet rivalry got so close that all three riders had badly injured themselves at times in the quest to beat the others.

Back in 2014 we got to witness a true one-on-one battle. The type where one rider pushes the other until the very end. The best battles are the complex ones; where you see the riders evolving with every passing race, and where you see the crowd shifting loyalties between the two riders as they bring yet another card to the table. The battle between Matthew Phillips and Ivan Cervantes did exactly that.

Australian Matt Phillips came into the Enduro World Championship in 2013 following an impressive couple of ride-outs in the 2011 and 2012 ISDEs. Signing with Husqvarna for the 2013 season – team owner Fabrizio Azzalin has been well served by Australasian talent over the years – it was clear the kid meant business. In fact, the young Tasmanian was to win a title (EJ) the first time of asking – something that very few have ever achieved. He was then poached by Fabio Farioli's prestigious factory KTM team to ride in the E3 category for 2014.

Catalan Ivan Cervantes, a four-time world champion with KTM, had spent a less starred 2011 to 2013, patriotically riding with

MATT PHILLIPS





his native GasGas, in an unsuccessful stint that saw him go from champion to top-10 finisher. But in 2014 he was saved by a new contract with KTM – also to race in the E3 class.

The EWC paddock might not have seen it coming, but from within the team the prospects for a close fight were obvious from the start. *“From pre-season (winter) testing onwards I could see that Matt would be a very strong contender,”* explained Cervantes recently. *“I said to Fabio that he would be very fast – even though he was young and a ‘rookie’.”*

Round one – Cervantes

All smiles at the first race, the two team-mates took to the startline with the hope simply to have a strong start to the season. But with the opening race being on Spanish soil, the support was very much in favour of Cervantes; the small Catalan town of Solsona is just two hours from Ivan’s home. As the final test came to a close, the two were separated by a whisker. Victory went to a thrilled Cervantes. The fans had been impressed by Phillips’ pace, but they weren’t going to show it! The majority swarmed around Ivan, with just a cursory glance for his exceptional young team-mate. Day 2 and order was restored – the hometown hero was on the top step once again and the



LEGEND

"If I had scored better that weekend I could have pushed until the end, but he got the title and he deserved it. I enjoyed the battle so much, I will always remember it."

crowd's adoration became even stronger as Ivan took his young son, Dan, up onto the podium with him. Phillips was standing on the third step (*like the dutiful understudy*), but few really noticed as the Spanish national anthem rang out.

Round two, and Phillips' raging talent could no longer be ignored. Those lucky enough to have seen him as a wild teenager with a bleach-blonde surfer hairstyle and a severe case of *'full gas-itis'* at the ISDE weren't surprised by his speed, but everyone was in awe of just how quickly he'd adjusted to EWC life. Matt grew up on Tasmania, in the town of Wynyard (*pop. 5000*). His dad, Glenn, introduced him and his sister Belle to engines from a young age; the two were already whizzing around the family farm on bikes and quads before their fifth birthday. But his talent was such that he quickly outgrew his island home. At just 19 he was forced to up sticks and move to Europe to pursue his dream and add some international titles to the pile of trophies that he earned on Aussie soil. The Husqvarna team welcomed him with open arms and Matt was lucky to have some very experienced teammates (*Juha Salminen and Alex Salvini, to name but two!*) but it was still a huge adjustment to make. He moved into an apartment near Bergamo, 10,000 miles from his family and friends.

Phillips threw himself into the situation admirably; learning the Italian lifestyle,

teaching himself some key words (*mostly obscenities!*), and making a huge effort to get to know his team and everyone in the paddock. By the time he won the EJ title, after less than a year living in Europe, everyone in the EWC circus had been won over by his good manners, and his outgoing and fun-loving personality.

By the time the second round of the 2014 season was over, with Phillips taking another 2nd and 3rd to Cervantes, it was evident that his adaptation to the EWC – this time in a ‘senior’ class – was complete.

Moving on to the third round it was time for Phillips to show Cervantes that he was able to beat him, and he did just that on Day 2. Up until that point, Ivan had achieved five victories on the bounce and it certainly came as a bit of a shock that his young upstart of a teammate was able to overhaul him. But the experienced Spaniard remained gracious and he congratulated Phillips as any professional would.

A Scandi slaying

The relentlessly difficult Scandinavian rounds in the mid-season saw an epic shift in dynamics between the pair. Cervantes had been hiding something – he was riding in severe pain following a niggling knee





injury. His Day 1 win in Greece had been something of a miracle, and by the time the paddock headed to Heinola in Finland the Spaniard had hit breaking point. What Cervantes achieved over that sandy, technical, and challenging race weekend was outstanding. He gritted his teeth and got through pain that only someone with extreme determination and guts could do. He was going to stop at nothing to win that title.

Ivan Cervantes Montero, born 1982 in the coastal Catalan town of Cambrils, has had passion by the bucket load for everything bike related since he was a small child. His dad, who he describes as his biggest supporter and lifeline, was always on hand to encourage Cervantes to push for his dreams. After five motocross titles in Spain, Cervantes decided that enduro was what he really loved, and he wasted no time in adapting his style and heading for the top of the EWC.

In 2005, when Phillips was just 12 years old, Cervantes was already winning world enduro titles. He took 14 wins during his first year in E1 and became the first Spaniard to ever win the class. He backed it up a year later with another E1 title, before moving onto the E3 class where he adapted immediately and took his third crown. The following season, he was beaten, after a long battle, by Mika Ahola. But he was back to the top

again in 2009.

Then came the hardest part of his career – a ‘dream’ move to Catalan firm GasGas. Only the dream quickly turned nightmare after the bike failed to provide Cervantes with the feel he desired. He longed for the E2 crown, but could only muster third after a victory-less year. Like everyone in the EWC paddock, Cervantes was broadsided at the beginning of 2012, *“it was the toughest moment of my racing life; the day I was told Mika Ahola had died”*.

In 2013, back with KTM, he took his time to adapt back to ‘orange ways’ but in 2014 he was certain it was game time. And so he was pushing himself to superhuman limits in the middle of the 2014 season. He walked all the tests for the Swedish GP – at least three hours of walking, for a minimum of three days – on crutches. His knee pain was now so severe that he looked worn out and haggard, no longer his usual buoyant self. After a nightmare Day 1, scoring just 4 points, he had to pull out of the race on Day 2 – in agony, but emotionally devastated too.

“My season changed completely at that point,” recalls Cervantes. *“I had been able to win the first five races and it was looking good. Then I got my injury and I think Matt saw he could take advantage and go for the*

MATT PHILLIPS

“I’d been keen to beat him all season, beating your older team-mate when he’s a multi-champion is a pretty big deal. But there’s no-way that I wanted to beat him like that, when he’s suffering and we were not able to have a fair fight.”



OFFER



title. That's not bad sportsmanship, as a racer that's what you must do."

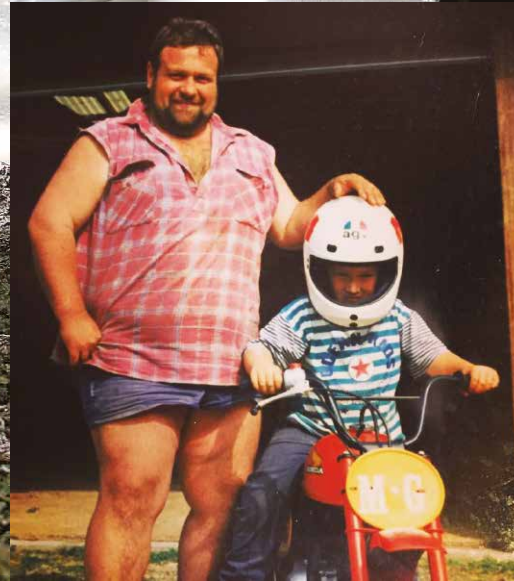
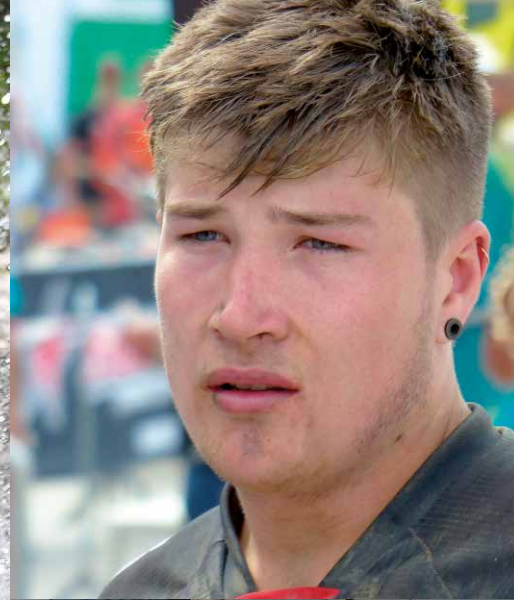
Over on the other side of the KTM pit, Phillips was showing his true colours. It became clearer than ever, during the youngster's second season in EWC, that he is a very complex character. Far from the brainless lunatic that some chalked him down to be upon witnessing his on-the-limit riding style, Phillips was proving to everyone just how intelligent and professional he is.

But victory in the circumstances rang hollow with Phillips: *"I'd been keen to beat him all season, beating your older team-mate when he's a multi-champion is a pretty big deal. But there's no-way that I wanted to beat him like that, when he's suffering and we were not able to have a fair fight."*

The summer break gave Cervantes an opportunity to rehabilitate his knee, and as the manic Italian Grand Prix began the competition again looked all-square. Phillips was on 'home turf' and Cervantes was ready to continue the fight. Being the penultimate round, this was time to make an impact, to stamp authority and stake claim on the crown. Day 1 saw Phillips hailed a hero by his legion of new Italian fans. But on Day 2, the weather in Lumezzane turned apocalyptic.

In the ensuing deluge Phillips hit a





concrete breezeblock with his boot and a rusty steel rod embedded itself deep within his foot. He had continued riding until the next pitstop, where his mechanic, Cenz, had taken one look at Phillip's ashen face and red boot (*which had previously been white*) and called the ambulance.

Cervantes, aware of his teammate's misfortune, failed to take advantage. The fight, previously so intense, seemed to have been knocked out of him. He too found empathy for a stricken teammate. *"I feel so sorry for Matt, this shouldn't have happened to him, he has been riding excellently."*

Phillips was far from finished, though. Speaking from his hospital bed he was still every-inch the battling Aussie: *"I still want to win. We've both had our bad luck now. I want to be better for France, and I want to get that title for my team."*

The final conflict

For the final round there was a sense of 'even stevens' between the two – both had suffered. Both had pushed themselves to their limits. The advantage hadn't been handed to either of them.

Crucially Phillips had the fire where Cervantes seemed to have lost his fight. The Spaniard tried his best, but the Australian wasn't to be denied. In fairness Cervantes' knee injury proved to be so severe that he would go on to miss almost the entire 2015 season, but stoically no



IVAN CERVANTES



excuses were offered. He congratulated Phillips in the most genuine manner possible. Phillips was no longer a young upstart, but as a fully-fledged title-holder with the mentality of a champion.

"When I had my own opportunity to fight back in Italy, when Matthew was injured, my results were poor," conceded Cervantes. "If I had scored better that weekend I could have pushed until the end, but he got the title and he deserved it. I enjoyed the battle so much, I will always remember it."

For his part, Phillips also found the words of understanding and empathy for the part his teammate (and rival) played in making his championship title.

"I learned a lot from Ivan. He was a real gentleman and always kept racing to the track – we'd have a handshake before and after the race. I know many kind of viewed it as his 'last chance' and he put a lot of pressure on himself and always tried hard. Our relationship could have turned sour but it didn't and we had an awesome year battling together"

Last word to their team manager, Fabio Farioli: *"It was a great experience watching the battle. My two riders were both very competitive and there was a fighting spirit between them – but nothing like in MotoGP! It's hard when both riders are at the top level, and Ivan was quite unlucky not to win the title. But both riders had exactly the same bikes, prepared in the same way, and*



Enduro

the same materials – it was a very fair fight. I will remember this battle forever and I like to think of it!"

The two riders, through humility and professionalism, achieved that rarest of things; the ability to remain respectful despite a season which saw them emotionally and physically scarred. A season that sparked a new beginning for Phillips, and which gave Cervantes back the spark which he'd lost during the hardest years of his racing life.



MATT PHILLIPS





FORMA DOMINATOR TX BOOT

Supplied by www.apico.co.uk

WHILE FORMA MIGHT be a little overshadowed by the likes of Alpinestars, Gaerne and TCX, they certainly are not to be overlooked. These trusty – and slightly dirty – Forma Dominator TXs have massively exceeded my expectations for sensibly priced enduro-motocross boots. I've clocked up roughly 80 hours in them so far and while being incredibly comfortable, they are also showing how durable they are. Almost going back to the old school where form follows function, the build quality is how every boot should be. Proper metal buckles, proper metal toe caps and proper metal hinges. Usually after half a season's racing the soles of my boots would look like someone had attacked them with an angle grinder, but these Formas are looking very well. Granted there's a little bit of wear, but nothing unusual. Not only are they built tough, they look cool as hell too (*when they are clean that is*).

ACERBIS DESERTIKA WAIST PACK

Supplied by www.acerbis.com

THIS WAIST PACK has been out with me every time I have trail ridden for the last seven years. The thermoformed pockets are a brilliant idea and keep everything nicely in place, as well as being super comfortable (*as far as waist packs go*). The side pockets are secured only by velcro, but I've never had an issue with them opening unwantedly. The rear pocket is great and you can fit nearly every tool you'd need for out on the trail to get you out of trouble (*within reason obviously*). Personally I have the KTM kit in there along with a few extra spanners and screwdrivers. I can nicely fit a bolt kit in one side pocket and a 125ml two-stroke oil carrier in the other. The neoprene exterior is a brilliant idea, one that other bum bag manufacturers need to acknowledge. It makes the pack semi waterproof and a little more resilient to mud sticking. Are waist packs just waist packs, nothing to excited about? Maybe, but to me, this Acerbis Desertika has the edge.

Josh Snowden



Back Issues



RUST
WWW.RUSTSPORTS.COM



www.youtube.com/watch?v=54IIOSnMIE



www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVYqp3bITnc



www.youtube.com/watch?v=6XEKlabHLid



www.youtube.com/watch?v=QrQoVPeki_E



www.youtube.com/watch?v=gvyUxbyMuMU



www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQBn2qbfopY



www.youtube.com/watch?v=HX4-14sloHE



www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8ePyI2E4M



www.youtube.com/watch?v=yrlJw_FU910



www.youtube.com/watch?v=8I54XQOYoPo



www.youtube.com/watch?v=opPAurYxQzY



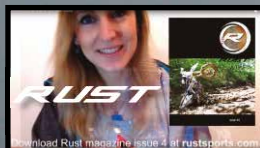
www.youtube.com/watch?v=9oHMTpB0RNw



www.youtube.com/watch?v=mlpIT6Z-ACQ



www.youtube.com/watch?v=nIK07I63tuA



www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_cp4hGeECA



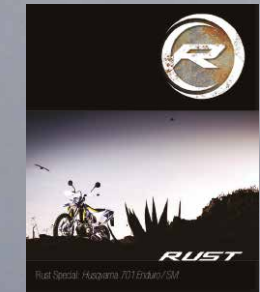
ISSUE #1



AFRICA TWIN SPECIAL



ISSUE #2



HUSQVARNA 701 SPECIAL



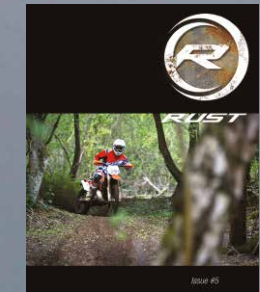
YAMAHA WR450F SPECIAL



ISSUE #3



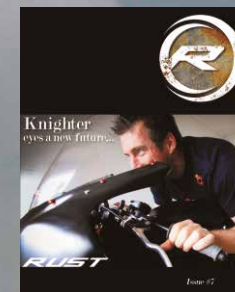
ISSUE #4



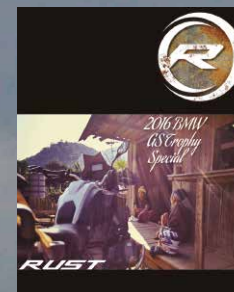
ISSUE #5



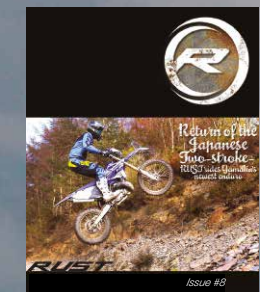
ISSUE #6



ISSUE #7



GS TROPHY SPECIAL



ISSUE #8

Subscribe for free at www.rustsports.com
and we'll e-mail you when a new issue comes out...

Visit www.rustsports.com for the latest video content,
social media feeds and issues...
To view any of these videos just click on the link below the
thumbnail to go direct to the Rust Sports youtube channel...

All material appearing in RUST is copyright to Rust Sports Ltd and may not be reproduced
in part or full (including electronically) without the express permission of the publishers.



A full-page photograph of a rider on a blue Yamaha IT490 enduro motorcycle performing a wheelie on a dirt trail. The rider is wearing a blue and white racing suit, a white helmet with 'SCOTT' branding, and red and white patterned pants. The motorcycle is blue with yellow accents on the front fork and rear fender. The background is a lush green forest.

Heritage

True Blue

Words: Jon Bentman
Pics: Stuart Collins (IT490),
JB (IT400D)

This year, 2016, marks the 40th anniversary of Yamaha's first dedicated enduro bike, the IT400C. Cause for celebration we thought. An excuse too, to jump on one of their most (in)famous of models – the mighty IT490...

HERE AT RUST we want to see a Yamaha win an enduro world title this year – for sentimental reasons. Given 40 years of patronage to this wonderful sport that we love, we think there'd be no better way to celebrate than to see the blue team snare another world crown – so, no pressure there for Jamie McCanney and the other blue riders!



True
Blue



IT490K



The lineage between the IT400 and the 490 is easy to spot...

IT400D

It was back in 1976 that Yamaha came into enduro for the first time in a serious way. Technically speaking they were already involved for such had been the success, and capability, of their DT-1 trail bike of 1968, that from that date on many off-road enthusiasts had already been adapting Yamaha's trail machines to serious competitive use.

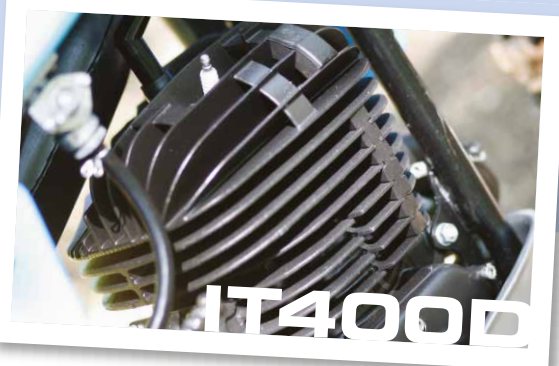
But Yamaha's first real enduro came in 1976, with the IT400C. The IT (*said to stand for International Trial, after the ISDT – which didn't become the ISDE until 1981*) was clearly aimed at the American market. It was based remarkably tightly on their successful YZ400 motocrosser,



IT400D



featuring the same frame, motor, carb, pipe and shock. Given that the YZ had been a revelation in American motocross (*something of a powerhouse*), this meant the IT had instant credibility. The IT differed by way of the addition of a TY (*trials bike*) lighting kit, a much bigger 12-litre (*plastic*) fuel tank, longer off-road specific forks and a narrower rear tyre. Oh, and a bash plate, mini-odometer, spark arrestor and other enduro necessities.



True
Blue



IT490K



The IT wasn't exactly a revelation, though. It was high-g geared, which didn't suit woods work so well, but with a torquey and so-powerful motor it could cut a cool 80mph streak across a desert. Which pleased most riders in the Western States. And it was considered quite heavy at 113kg (*conversely considered a competitive weight for an open classer today: a 2016 KTM 450EXC weighs 112kg – now there's 35 years of progress for you!*) and with the front end raked out at a mellow 31.5° (*said 450EXC has a steering angle of 26.5°*) again it wasn't what you would call a woods weapon, exactly. The European enduros, like the Husky WR360 and Maico 400GS, were easily superior. But the Yamaha had two very typically Japanese qualities of the era: low cost and ease of

Heritage



True
Blue



use. Dirt Bike magazine in America called it the *'ultimate Joe Average big-bore trail bike'*.

The Japanese offering was, nonetheless, very nearly good enough. It was very attractive, looked to have all the right bits (*Yamaha were always quick to adopt the enduro-specific mods, like QD head-light, snail-cam chain adjusters and pullers on the axles*), and it came at the right price – about a third less than the price of the European exotica. But there again, the IT never quite aced the European thoroughbreds in direct competition. Features that made ITs attractive to amateur riders – easy power,



This particular 1983 IT saw action at the Weston Beach Race in 2000. The nightmares still persist...



True Blue

True Blue



IT490K



soft suspension and easy maintenance – meant they lacked the no-compromise race set-up needed to win at the highest level. That didn't stop Yamaha working hard to improve. Back in the 1970s Yamaha still maintained a Competition Support Department in the US and these guys would feverishly work on annual improvements, whereas today most Japanese enduros are lucky to see a refresh once every decade. We should add Yamaha won the sales war, though – Japan Inc could always be relied upon to build the numbers to meet demand.

Over the following years the IT improved and a full range developed, so that by their peak in 1983 you could choose from a 125, 175, 250 and a mighty 490 (*bike of legend*). The peak was, alas, followed by a cliff – within two years the range was cut down to just one, the IT200, and that too was deleted by the end of 1986. There followed a hiatus before Yamaha returned again, first with two-stroke WRs then the start of the modern WR-Fs at the very end of century.

THE IT490

Anyway, back to 1983 where this IT490K comes in. It represents the high water mark of the IT range. The most powerful IT with the best suspension – featuring linkage monocross rear suspension, a serious upgrade on the cantilever of the year before.

Being closely related to the YZ490 motocrosser it was awarded the reputation

True Blue



Back in 2000 TBM decided to see if they could buy a bike for under £500 and race it at the Weston Beach Race. It wasn't a roaring success. Aussie Clive Garnham's knees have never been the same since...

of being quite the beast, but actually, being retuned for enduro, the peak horsepower was around 35hp, a number far exceeded by today's 450s. Of course in 1983 there wasn't the kind of digital engine management modern bikes benefit from, so yes, it was still quite lairy, but the YZ was the real monster. In fact, our recent test of the 2016 WR250 two-stroke put us in mind of the IT490, for in both cases Yamaha lowered the compression ratio and lowered the exhaust port to reduce the power and create the more torquey mid-range kind of power needed for enduro.

The IT490 was only marginally lighter than the IT400C, measured back in the day at

about 112kg, but of course the 43mm forks and monocross shock were much bigger units. The whole bike was much bigger, taller in fact, with 12-inches of travel front and rear. The bike was slightly let down by its suspension for the forks lacked any external adjusters while the shock, although of the newest linkage type, had only preload and rebound damping adjustment. Many riders found it under-sprung as well and would substitute the stiffer YZ490 spring. Over time many substituted the entire YZ490 suspension package, front and rear, for serious competition use.

As was very often the case back in the 1980s, the exhaust system was fairly restrictive, and so – as with our test bike here – it was common to substitute an entire aftermarket system, such as the DG system seen here.

RIDING THE IT490

So what was an IT490 like to ride? Well, given that we recently stumbled upon a complete nut and bolt restoration of an IT, by one Lee Workman an avid bikes builder and restorer here in the UK, we've had the opportunity to find out. *(Lee: "I intended to make a supermoto out of it, but once I got to know the bike I didn't have the heart to mess it up – so instead I have the meanest*



True
Blue



Thanks to Lee Workman
(pictured here with JB)
for the loan of his
immaculate IT490
and to Chris Bunce
for the IT400D.

baddest trail bike in the area!")

For a start the IT490 is stupendously – skyscraper – tall, the specifications suggest a 942mm seat height but it seems so much higher than modern bikes, perhaps it's the width of the saddle that makes a difference for the seat on the IT is like a big old foam mattress, not the narrowed, sculpted polished mahogany plank of modern racers. So I'm stood with my left foot on the paddock stand while my right foot feels to be poised in the clouds, resting on the kickstart – I am of course adopting the position of kick-starting man (*a visage fast fading into the history books*).

I push down and it's a swing of what feels like a good four-feet from top to bottom, but there's no sense of compression at any point – and in fact for the last dozen kicks there's been zero response from the engine. This kick doesn't promise any different, but suddenly the motor doesn't just catch, it explodes. The noise is instant and fantastic, it fills the air completely, three of us (*me, Lee and Stuart the snapper*) are stood barely two-feet from each other, but even shouted words are swallowed whole by the sheer ruckus of the IT. Words are superfluous in any case, instead we three share mile-wide smiles of insanity.

The noise is one thing – much of which comes from the engine itself, water-cooling obviously really silences a cylinder – the vibrations are another. I'm nosing my way

IT490K



gingerly – but of course massively noisily – down the alleyway from Lee’s garden and already I can barely feel my fingers given the intensity of vibration, of every frequency. I swear there are sparks of atmospheric discharge coming from the IT, for this thing is a giant blue ball of energy.

I started the ride on suburban roads and of course the IT is boisterous with it. It’s not happy on quarter throttle, it kind of pops, pings, bangs and crashes (*never mind ‘hunts’*) on a part throttle, then clears wonderfully once WFO. Big throttle openings create yet another wall of sound, not tearing-calico, more a Jack Nicholson-esqe spine-tingling scream of the manic, twisted type. Naturally, full-throttle induces the softly-sprung rear to squat by a good nine-inches, while the front correspondingly paws two-foot into the air...

The brakes are ridiculous, decorative you might say. The front adjusts the height of the fork, but little else, while the rear simply locks. Dragging my boots along the tarmac would have a greater effect, only I’m so high I can’t reach. Yet back in the day the twin-leading shoe front brake was considered one of the best. As Lee mentions, it could be his needs more fettling, albeit he’d been working from every scrap of advice he could get. Perhaps modern discs and twin-piston



True
Blue

True Blue



IT490K

calipers just make old drums feel so much worse than before we had a comparison?

When we get to swap tarmac for dirt the IT finds its true habitat. And here it is glorious. Hand on heart, the IT experience is every bit as engaging as a ride on the latest Yamaha WR enduros (*now four-stroke*). In fact the IT is in many ways better. The long-soft suspension feels to deal with ruts better than modern set-ups and the big seat is much more comfortable. I dare say this set-up might not work on a cut-up modern enduro course, but on less-aggressive, less whooped-out trails I'm able to ride the IT on near full-throttle in some comfort. That word 'comfort' again? Like a padded cell.

By the way, Lee had fitted a set of modern handlebar clamps to his IT, where the standard clamps are raked backwards, which meant it was easier for me to adopt a near-modern standing riding position. With the bars more rear-set you'd be more naturally sitting with your weight rearward, and so this thing must have wheeled all the time then – hence the reputation?

The power is as sumptuous as the seat. Peak power is at 6000rpm, so it all happens quite early, after the stutter from the carb as it struggles with small throttle openings, there's a great oomph as the bottom-to-mid really takes a hold. It's big power but doesn't feel unmanageable. But being so big it gains speed so quickly you're more inclined to short shift than to rev-it out – yeah, you need

the desert to explore the top end. Which is incidentally where this example originated from, Californian desert to be more precise – and judging by the headlight there might have even been the odd bit of Baja racing in its competitive past.

The IT490 turned out to be a great ride. It's as civil as a competition bike of its era and capacity could be and I can understand the affection clubmen riders of the period could feel for their ITs. It's got fight, but it's not totally mad and this exact bike, yeah I'd take it to a modern enduro, perhaps not a highly technical multi-lapper, but for an event like the Welsh Two Day – 150 miles single lap across hilly rolling terrain, with a bit of forestry – I think it would be a great ride. Only maybe with a front disc brake fitted, can I ask for that?

HERE'S TO THE NEXT 40

Hats off to Yamaha. They have over the years looked after us, 'us' being the happy amateurs. Looking back over the four decades, remembering the DTs, the ITs, the WRs and WR-Fs (*not forgetting the XTs and TTs*) they've created some seminal enduro models. We're seeing so many of those being resurrected for vinduro play days now, and that's really cool to see. So yes, here's to the next 40!



SPECIFICATION

1983 Yamaha IT490K

ENGINE Type: air-cooled, reed-valve, single cylinder two-stroke

Capacity: 487cc

Bore x stroke: 87 x 82mm

Compression ratio: 6.7:1

Ignition: CDI

Carburation: VM38SS Mikuni round slide carburettor

TRANSMISSION

Primary/final drive: Helical cut gear/chain

Clutch: Wet, multiplate

Gearbox: 5-speed

CHASSIS

Frame: Steel, single down tube, full cradle

Front suspension: 43mm leading axle telescopic fork, 300mm travel

Rear suspension: 'Monocross' box section aluminium swingarm, adjustable for preload and rebound damping, 300mm travel

Front brake: Cable actuated double leading shoe drum

Rear brake: Rod actuated single leading shoe drum

Wheels: Wire spoked, alloy rim

Front tyre: 3.00 x 21

Rear tyre: 4.50-18

DIMENSIONS

Dry weight: 114kg

Wheelbase: 1485mm

Seat height: 942mm

Fuel capacity: 13.6 litres

PERFORMANCE

Top speed: 100mph with the right gearing

Power: NA (34.65bhp at 6000rpm tested)

Torque: NA (30.64lb.ft at 5500rpm tested)

Price new: \$2249 (US market)

Back Issues



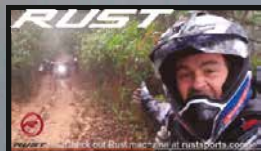
RUST
WWW.RUSTSPORTS.COM



www.youtube.com/watch?v=54iIOSnMIE



www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVYqp3bITnc



www.youtube.com/watch?v=6XEKlabHLid



www.youtube.com/watch?v=QrQoVPeki_E



www.youtube.com/watch?v=gvyUxbyMuMU



www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQBn2qbfopY



www.youtube.com/watch?v=HX4-14sloHE



www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8ePyI2E4M



www.youtube.com/watch?v=yrlJw_FU910



www.youtube.com/watch?v=8I54XQOYoPo



www.youtube.com/watch?v=opPAurYxQzY



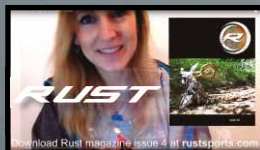
www.youtube.com/watch?v=9oHMTpB0RNw



www.youtube.com/watch?v=mlpIT6Z-ACQ



www.youtube.com/watch?v=nIK07I63tuA



www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_cp4hGeECA



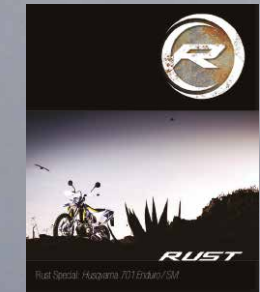
ISSUE #1



AFRICA TWIN SPECIAL



ISSUE #2



HUSQVARNA 701 SPECIAL



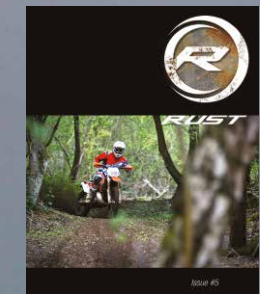
YAMAHA WR450F SPECIAL



ISSUE #3



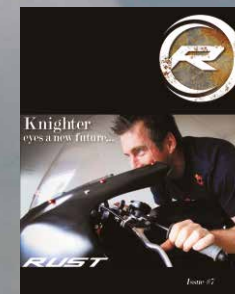
ISSUE #4



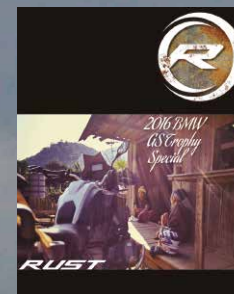
ISSUE #5



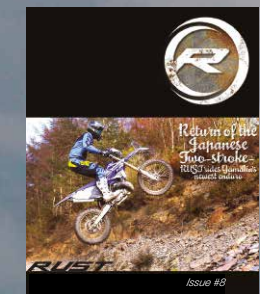
ISSUE #6



ISSUE #7



GS TROPHY SPECIAL



ISSUE #8

Subscribe for free at www.rustsports.com
and we'll e-mail you when a new issue comes out...

Visit www.rustsports.com for the latest video content,
social media feeds and issues...
To view any of these videos just click on the link below the
thumbnail to go direct to the Rust Sports youtube channel...

All material appearing in RUST is copyright to Rust Sports Ltd and may not be reproduced
in part or full (including electronically) without the express permission of the publishers.



Contact

RUST is brought to you by:



RUST

RUSTS SPORTS LTD

www.rustsports.com

Warwick House

The Grange

St Peter Port

Guernsey

GY1 2PX

Editor: Jonathan Bentman
editor@rustsports.com

Designer: Andy Riley

Contributors: Josh Snowden (UK),
Chris Evans (France), David Knight (IoM),
Gary Freeman (UK)

Commercial Manager: James Linane
james.linane@rustsports.com

Managing Director: Warren Malschinger

Copyright: Rust Sports Ltd. All rights reserved.

Reproduction of any part of RUST is prohibited without the
express permission of Rust Sports Ltd.



Photo credit: JB

