



1984 Women's National Motocross Championship

December 16, 1984

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AMERICA'S WEEKLY MOTORCYCLE NEWSPAPER



PHOTOS BY TOM VAN BEVEREN

A first and a second in the 250cc and 125cc Pro classes were enough for Yamaha rider Lisa Akin to emerge as the Women's National Champion.



Mercedes Gonzales (161), Sue Fish (184) and Akin (hidden behind Gonzales) battle in the 125cc Pro class. Fish's bike blew its transmission.

Women's National Motocross

Akin claims Women's Nationals

By Anne Crawford
ADELANTO, CA, DEC. 16

Women riders turned out in force to battle for the \$1,000 purse in the Women's Motocross Nationals at Sunrise Cycle Park. Sixty riders from throughout the U.S. braved icy

winds and a sprinkling of snow to compete in the ninth-annual running of the women-only event, which was sponsored by Coors Light.

It was a closely fought race all the way to the championship, with Michigan rider Lisa Akin narrowly edging out California's Mercedes Gonzales to take the overall Pro title.

The championship was decided from overall points in four motos; two motos were raced on 125cc bikes, and two were raced on 250cc bikes.

According to Race Promoter Denise de Vines, the two-class competition is very popular with the women riders. "For a win in the Grand National Championship you have to race both classes to get the combined overall points," said de Vines. "It makes for an interesting day and it makes the racing more challenging. It's something the guys don't do either, because its so much riding in one day."

In the first 250cc moto, the race for the championship shaped up to be a three rider duel, when past women's champion Sue Fish stormed into the early lead. But Yamaha-supported Fish, who was making a racing comeback after injuries in 1980, was out of the race by the fourth lap with a blown transmission leaving the way clear for Akin and Gonzales.

"That's it for the 250 class — and for the title too," said Fish after the first moto. "I took some time out since I got hurt in 1980 and just started racing again this year," she said. "I wanted to ride the nationals to see if I

could get the title again, but I guess it didn't work out that way. Still, I'm only getting started again, and there's always the 125 class."

The first 250cc moto set the stage for the day's racing, with Gonzales and Akin in close competition throughout the 20-minute moto. On the fast one-and-a-half-mile track, in conditions reminiscent of past Mammoth motocross events, the two were seldom more than 100 feet apart.

Akin, riding a factory-sponsored Yamaha, edged past Kawasaki-mounted Gonzales in lap six to take the checkered flag in the first moto.

"In the first one she was good and I got tired," said Gonzales. "When I had the lead I was trying to pace myself, but Lisa went by me. I tried to get her back, but the moto ran out before I had time."

Fish was back in the hunt in the first 125cc moto, and once again it started out as a three bike race. Gonzales took an early lead and gained some distance on Fish and Aiken, who were locked in a close battle for second place. Fish missed a gear change in lap five, allowing Akin to through on the inside of the corner and close the gap on Gonzales. Gonzales and Akin settled into another two-bike skirmish. Aiken took the lead in lap eight, and again took the flag less than two bikelengths ahead of Gonzales, with Fish hanging in for third.

With Fish out of the running in the second 250 moto, the field was clear for Akin and Gonzales to open up a healthy lead on the competition. Once



Gonzales was a big threat to Akin: She took her Kawasaki to a first overall in the 125cc Pro class and finished second overall in the 250s.

again Gonzales took the holeshot but was overtaken by Akin on the back straight in the fourth lap.

The race for third place was tough and go too, with Amy Brooks on a Yamaha narrowly beating out Karen Leitinger on a Honda to capture a third overall in the championship.

"The racing was great," said Akin. "We were so close I couldn't believe it. I like to race against women riders that I can learn from, and you don't get a lot of chances to do that. I usually race against guys, and whenever I race with just women I tend to run away from the rest and that's no fun. But today's racing was great and I know it helped both of us learn a lot."

The last Pro race of the day in the 125cc class saw Gonzales take her fourth holeshot of the day, but this time she held the lead. Akin gained in traffic, but Gonzales broke away again and again to re-open the lead.

"I wanted that last moto so bad," she said. "It was pure desire that made me win. I was so nervous in that race — and so tired. Halfway through I thought I was going to die and not finish, but I wanted to win so badly that I held on. I just couldn't go home with nothing at all. And once I saw the white flag, I knew I could do it."

Between Pro motos, excitement was provided by head to head competition in the Sportswomen divisions.

Helena Leitner proved herself a winner by streaking home to win the 250cc Intermediate class on a borrowed YZ250.

"I usually race against the guys, but I like being out there with the women a lot more," said Leitner. "You can't really measure yourself

against the guys. Racing other women makes it a lot more fun and a lot more interesting. The guys would probably say they wouldn't want to ride in a girls' class. Its the same thing for us only nobody thinks about that."

Thirteen-year-old Washington State entry, Tara Harrison took the win in the 125cc Intermediate class, while well-known local rider Dana Bell took the honors in the 250cc Novice class.

The award for the closest race of the day went to the four riders in the Vet Sportswoman class, who set off in a split start behind the Vet Pro riders. These four women ran neck 'n' neck throughout both their motos, often racing three abreast on the track in search of the title. Susan Brennan edged through for the first place trophy, with Barbara Perry only inches behind.

de Vines said the women could look forward to another nationals competition next year. "We got off to a late start in organizing the nationals this year and that, along with the weather, kept the entries down a bit. But we're seeing a lot of new interest and that's very encouraging," said de Vines. We got a lot of support this year from Coors and California Cooler in the sponsorship, and also from the local people. The desert people are really into accepting motorcycles which you don't get anywhere else."

With prizes ranging from a ski package donated by Scott USA to makeup and facials from Mary Kay Cosmetics, the Women's Nationals has also drawn a lot of interest from outside the motorcycle community.

"We're a professional sport and people are starting to recognize that," said de Vines. "But with the coverage we're getting, women's motocross is also moving out of sports and into the entertainment area as well."

Results

- 125 PRO: 1. Mercedes Gonzales; 2. Lisa Akin; 3. Amy Brooks; 4. Stephanie Jones; 5. Debbie Matthews.
- 250 PRO: 1. Lisa Akin; 2. Mercedes Gonzales; 3. Amy Brooks; 4. Karen Leitinger; 5. Stephanie Jones.
- 125 NOV: 1. Melinda Smith; 2. Elsie Flores; 3. Sharon Brown.
- 250 NOV: 1. Dana Bell.
- 250 BEG: 1. Susanne Downey; 2. Julie Putnam; 3. Ginger Van Dyke.
- VET PRO: 1. Lori Watson; 2. Kitty Mayfield; 3. Jeri McClinton.
- VET SPTSMN: 1. Susan Brennan; 2. Barbara Perry; 3. Linda Smart.
- 125 INT: 1. Tara Harrison.
- 250 INT: 1. Helena Leitner; 2. Debbie Arbogast; 3. Brenda Conner.

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