

Women's Motocross History

1994 W.I.M.S.A. Ladies Motocross World Cup

OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA, MAY 29, 1994

On a normal day the track would have been closed, the racers would be home in bed and the track owners would be crying in their coffee about another day of lost revenue, while cursing the weatherman and God, worrying about the freshly planted sod washing out, and saying "Why couldn't it rain during the week!" But May 29, 1994 was different. The rain was torrential in Oklahoma City that day, but the WIMSA SANCTIONED 1994 WIMSA Ladies Motocross World Cup would go on.

Leonid N. Majorov, the Mobil 1 sponsored TAIS Sport Russia team manager, who brought his Moscow women's team to America for this race, commented at 4:00 AM race-day, "This is very good whether for my girls". The Australians, Tania and Jodie Millard, somewhat pensive, but being from Australia and accustomed to torrential rainstorms, were eager and ready to go. The French, Ukrainians, and New Zealanders, up at 5:00 AM, were collecting their gear and waiting patiently for the vans to arrive to cart them to the track at 7:00 AM. The racers, all women from around the world, were ready to do battle for the world cup title at Motorcycle Raceway, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma that day, in the slippery mud... an extreme challenge and danger to anyone who has ever been on a motorcycle. Women, with the guts and drive to risk their lives to compete where only one would be crowned world champion.

Everyone was quiet during the ride to the track, as the rain pelted the vans and made navigating the highways dangerous. The pervading thought, despite the language barrier was, "Will the weather be clear at the track?" The 40 mile trip from the Bud and Norma Harris's home, the gracious hosts of the international riders, gave each rider the chance to contemplate their presence here in America, and muster the fortitude to present their best performances, in conditions that would test their skills and resolve to the max. Women, about to make a statement about womankind... a statement that transcends gender, and speaks of the character of humankind. Women willing to risk their life for a cause that they believe in. Brave women athletes, with a common goal... The 1994 WIMSA Ladies Motocross World Cup championship title... A fitting display of courage on the Memorial Day weekend.

As the vans pulled up at Motorcycle Raceway that and preceded to slip and slide and spin their wheels in the six inches of mud on their way to the pits, where box vans had to be hauled in by tractor toe... the rain stopped, the sun came out, and the wind began to blow. The Australians took off their shoes and wallowed around ankle deep in the red mud preparing their bikes for this world class competition. Others placed planks on the ground to avoid ruining their shoes. All in all, race preparations had

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begun that morning and the 3 hour rain delay gave the racers and their pit crews additional time to prepare their machines in the muddy quagmire.

The storm had passed, the sky was clear, but the damage had already been done! The beautiful track and racing facilities at Motorcycle Raceway were turned into a scene reminiscent of early spring on the battlefields of Europe during World War II. Tank races would have been more appropriate that day, and it is certain that the mechanized infantry would have not even considered the possibility of traversing the terrain on motorcycles!

The track was bad... very bad! To cross it on foot you had to be prepared to change your clothes or spend the day looking like an animated clay sculpture. Despite all of this the ground crew at Motorcycle Raceway was able to transform this track from hell into one suitable for competition... a task that would have resulted in the congressional medal of honor had it occurred on D-Day on the beaches of Normandy.

In total, nearly 100 women racers, from the United States and abroad, showed up to participate. There were 11 classes including the 125cc and 250cc Pros. The 1994 WIMSA Ladies MX World Cup turnout was unprecedented in U.S. history, as far international involvement and level of competition is concerned, and showcased the dedication, skill and accomplishments of female racers worldwide.

Track announcer, Larry Snow commented, "In the 125cc and 250cc Pro classes, the performances were unbelievable! If I didn't know better, I could have sworn that I was watching a Pro mens race. These women pro racers are awesome... fast, agile and extremely competitive... indistinguishable, performance-wise, from the pro men." Nine time US National Women's Motocross Champion Mercedes Gonzalez and WIMSA MX School instructor, who taught the May 28, 1994 WIMSA MX School, was present at track-side to witness the competition and comments, "I am really proud to be here today to witness these races. I can't believe the level of this competition! It is obvious by the performances today that Women's Motocross has reach a new level in the history of the sport. I take my hat off to The Women's International Motorsport Association for putting on this exceptional event!"

A lot was at stake that day, and everyone knew it. Texan Dee Ann Wood would be defending her 1993 U.S. National Championship Title and number 1 plate in the 125cc and 250cc pro classes on a Team Green, LSC, Shoei, Answer, Oakley, Acerbis, Dunlap, FMF, CTI, Motul, DID, Sunstar sponsored Kawasaki 125cc and 250cc green machines. She would be defending her title in the 125cc Pro Class from an international field of 14 women pro racers, and from an international field of 9 women racers in the 250cc Pro Class, all who were eager to take the title away from her.

The juices were flowing as 250cc Pro riders lined up at the starting gate. The MOTOWORLD cameras were rolling. Tension was running high. The gate dropped and they blasted off in the first of the two 12 lap motos. It was an awesome start on a treacherous track in moto one. Texan Dee Ann Wood broke ahead and gained the lead through the whoops, and blasted over the double doubles, airborne over the mud, extending her lead further. A battle was shaping up for the number two spot between Yamaha mounted Shelly Kann from Mazeppa, MN, Corina Chinen from Honolulu, HI on a Kawasaki and Michaela Gonzalez from Colorado Springs, CO on a Kawasaki. French rider Virginie Ringebach on a Kawasaki was in hot pursuit, gaining ground on the turns. The battle of the leaders lasted the entire moto. Mud was flying everywhere! The crowd was ecstatic. The leaders were on the green machines, but you couldn't tell it from the stands. The red mud that covered the bikes and riders made it look like Honda was having a field day. Texan Dee Ann Wood was un-catchable. It was a race for second and third. Dee Ann Wood took the checkered flag first, followed by Shelly Kann with Corina Chinen finishing third and Michaela Gonzalez on her tail, coming in fourth.

Moto one on the big bikes was over. Jamie Pamintuan from Long Beach, CA finishing seventh commented when asked, "How was it out there?", said: "It was hard keeping the bike up on the turns. I was slipping and sliding everywhere. The track was an exceptional challenge."

There was even more competition in the 125cc Pro class as fourteen pro women races lined up at the starting gate. The track conditions had improved further, as the sun was slowly drying out the course. The tension mounted. Fourteen 125cc engines roaring, awaiting the gate to drop. The start was excellent. The field was out at an impressive pace, but again, it was Texan Dee Ann Wood who took the lead, with stiff competition from Shelly Kann aboard her YZ125 in fast pursuit. As the field spread out, New Zealander, Shelley Hickman on her RM125 and Michaela Gonzalez on a RM as well, were gaining on the leaders through the turns and in the whoops. The track, becoming less of a factor as it dried out, enabled the PROS to get on the gas out of the turns and sail through the air over the doubles and tabletops leading to a very exciting 125cc Pro race. The duels for second were at times awesome. But at the end of moto 1, it was Dee Ann Wood who beat the field to the checkered flag with Shelly Kann finishing second, Michaela Gonzalez in third and Shelley Hickman from New Zealand coming in fourth.

Laura Harris riding her YZ80 sponsored by: Gary Emig Racing, Maxey's Yamaha/Honda, Road & Track Motorcycle Supply, Baker Boys Screen Printing, Motorcycle Raceway, Cousins Bar & Grill, Reid Racing sponsored Yamaha, took three titles in amateur ranks.

In the 80cc women's class, Laura Harris finished first in a two moto sweep. Jennifer Dubois from France on a Big Wheel KX80 provided to her by Dick Lane's Kawasaki, came in second overall.

Australian, Jodie Millard on at CR80 finished third overall on a bike provided to her by Oklahoma Honda, followed by Angie Thomas from Oklahoma riding a CR80 as well.

In the Vet+30 class, Susan Cheney from Colorado took the first moto over Oklahoman Laura Harris and Wendy Edeal from New Mexico in exciting racing action. But in moto two, it was Laura Harris who prevailed over Wendy Edeal and Susan Cheney after Susan developed problems and finished in third place.

The Women's Intermediate Class provided electrifying race action as Laura Harris once again took a two moto sweep. Tara Sparkman also from Oklahoma finished second in both motos over the Mobil 1/TAIS Sport Russia team member, Ekaterina Kazarinova from Moscow, Russia.

In moto two, the 250cc PROS dazzled the crowds with their stellar performances, on a track now dry and fast. Shelly Kann took the lead, leaving Dee Ann Wood to deal with the pack after she had a bad start. Maintaining her lead for 3 laps, Shelly Kann gave an impressive performance of speed and jumping ability, while Dee Ann Wood fought her way through the pack and provided a show of her tenacity and world class abilities. In the end, it was Texan Dee Ann Wood who regained the lead and finished first under the checkered flag. Shelly Kann, fighting all the way, finished second followed by Hawaiian, Corina Chinen, who finished third with Michaela Gonzalez finishing forth in close pursuit.

As the gate dropped for moto two in the 125cc PRO class, it was Michaela Gonzalez who took an impressive lead and maintained it for nearly half of the moto, leaving Dee Ann Wood with something to worry about for nearly six laps. Corina Chinen provided to be a serious challenge to the leaders in moto one, but blew a head gasket and was not able to race moto two. The race for second, third, and forth places was awesome, with stellar performances from all the riders. When the checkered flag fell it was, once again, Dee Ann Wood who finished first, followed closely by Michaela Gonzalez, finishing second. New Zealander, Shelley Hickman finished third with Shelly Kann finishing fourth.

The racing was done... Texan Dee Ann Wood was no doubt the WORLD CHAMPION, earning the 1994 WIMSA Ladies Mx World Cup Title, in an impressive back to back two moto sweep in the 125cc Pro and 250cc Pro classes. Mercedes Gonzalez presided at the awards ceremony handing out trophies and prizes to the winners. It was an emotional ceremony, with speeches from WIMSA president Tami Rice, who praised all the women racers, and spoke about future WIMSA SANCTIONED international events planned for 1995.

In total, six countries were represented at the 1994 WIMSA Ladies MX World Cup. They were: Russia, France, Australia, New Zealand, Ukraine, and America. The United States boasted participation of riders from ten states, in what was a fitting showing of the commitment, skill, and solidarity of women racers world wide.