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COURSE OF THE MONTH

# INDIAN DUNES/ VALENCIA, CALIFORNIA



John R. splashes across the Santa Clara River during the Viewfinders' Grand Prix, one of the many events that are run through the hills and sandwashes at Indian Dunes.

## Where half of L.A.'s riders thrash their dirt bikes By the Staff of DIRT BIKE

"Welcome to the Olllld Reservation," booms announcer John Grout's voice out of every speaker in the place, "Indeeyun Dunes motocross!" Every Sunday of the year, and most Saturdays, you can find an ACE and/or AME-promoted motocross at the Dunes; as well as a zillion (well, maybe only a million) dirt riders thrashing the hills and sandwash to powder. Indian Dunes' popularity is due in no small part to its location, only about 20 miles north of L.A.'s populous San Fernando Valley. Around these parts, 20 miles is considered a brief jaunt, so riders can get in a few laps after work or in the middle of a swing shift.

The 600-acre park lies in the middle of a 44,000-acre parcel, mostly filled with citrus groves and Magic Mountain amusement park. As desirable dirt riding real estate, the Dunes is unparalleled. An all-year river (the Santa Clara) provides mud, quicksand and running water, and a natural barrier between the mountains on the south end of the park and the wide whoopdie-strewn sandwash. Several small canyons yield access to the hillclimbing trails, which through sheer over-use are often filled with ruts and blinding caliche dust. But no one ever told you that climbing hills was easy. The view from the top is mind-tweaking.

Indian Dunes on a weekend afternoon is like no other place on earth. Bikes of all sizes, shapes and degrees of funkiness carom through the trails in all directions, occasionally disappearing in a cloud of dust. And the noise will drive you crazy, for the Dunes' management has not yet seen fit to institute a mandatory silencer rule. At times, the din in the pits is unbearable. DIRT BIKE thinks that the patrons of Indian Dunes are entitled to a bit more quiet for their \$3 entry fee.

No doubt the biggest attractions at the Dunes are the two motocross tracks. Both are laid out on soil that, if kept damp, is perfect for traction and berm-building.

### THE INTERNATIONAL COURSE

This is perhaps one of the most photographed motocross tracks in the universe. The first turn alone has appeared on the cover of DIRT BIKE twice (Feb. '72 and Mar. '73), and many of the photos in our tests are taken of riders crossed up in its broad corners. It was designated as the International course after a 1970 Inter-AMA race (the one in which Tom Rapp almost trounced all the furriners), and has kept the name since.

Two very distinctive parts of the

course are a series of three high banked switchbacks, and a long, top gear straight that is interrupted by three (one downhill, two uphill) jumps. Even on dusty days, the switchbacks are 100-percent traction near the berms, and their width allows up to four motorcycles side by side at any one time; A-1 crash and burn potential. The longest straight passes in front of a grassy knoll usually filled with well-lubricated spectators, and terminates in a long-radius right-hand sweeper. Watching Brad Lackey negotiate this turn is unearthly.

Returning toward the start hill from the long straight, it is necessary to go over the famous "Dead Tree Jump," so named because of the grotesquely shaped stump that





The high-bermed corners on the International track are almost worth the entry fee.

once guarded the jump's inside line. Not too long ago, the stump mysteriously disappeared in the middle of the night, probably torn out by one of the many riders who sacrificed their teeth to it.

The International track is short, no longer than 3/4-mile in length, and is not as demanding as the Shadow Glen track, so it's usually chock full of novice riders out for a taste of

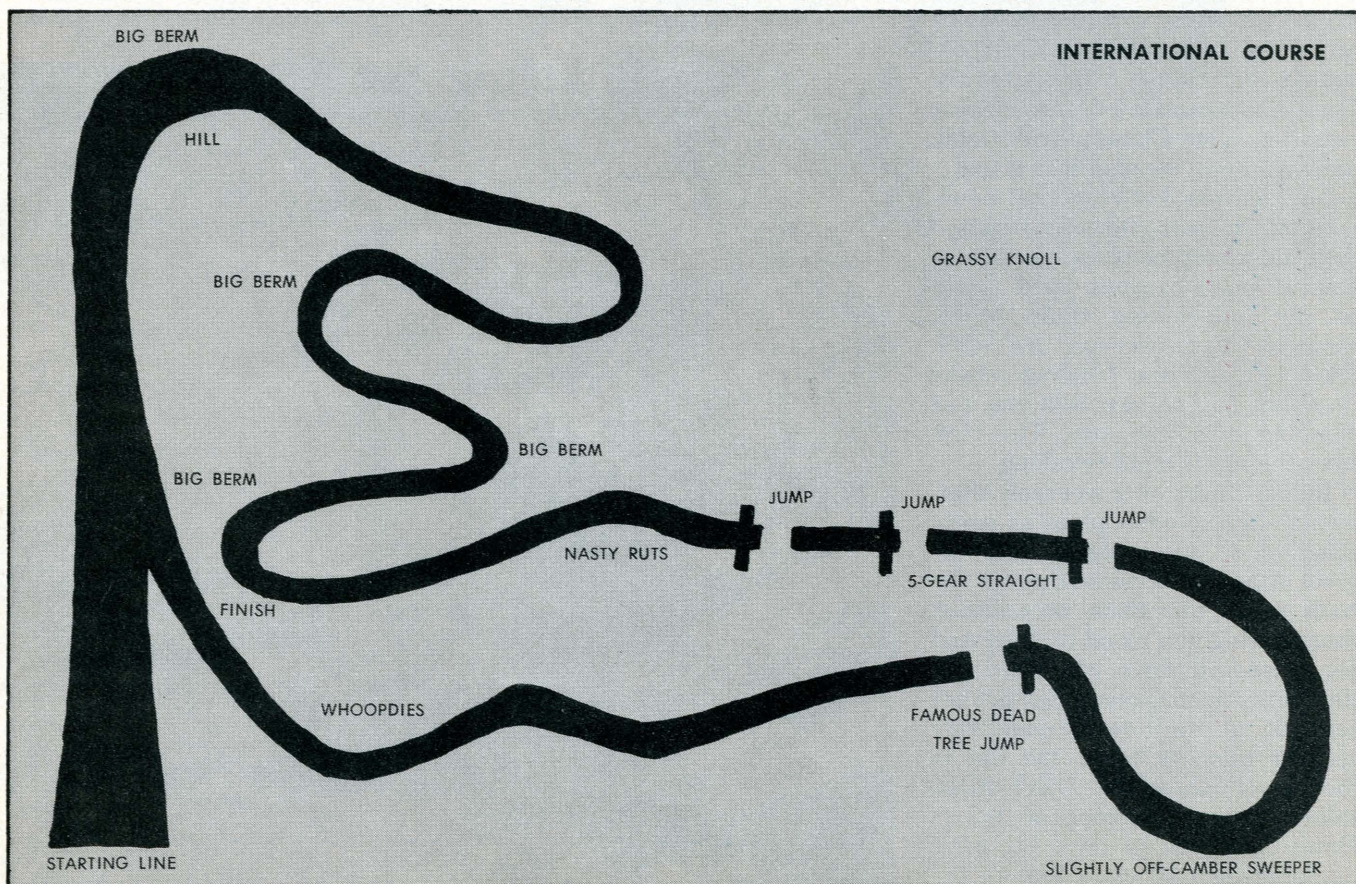
the action, not wanting the action to taste them. When this track is used for actual motocross competition, however, the constant pounding causes ruts and whoopdies in fork-squishing profusion.

#### SHADOW GLEN

Shadow Glen is one of the few, if not the only, motocross tracks in Southern California that is shaded

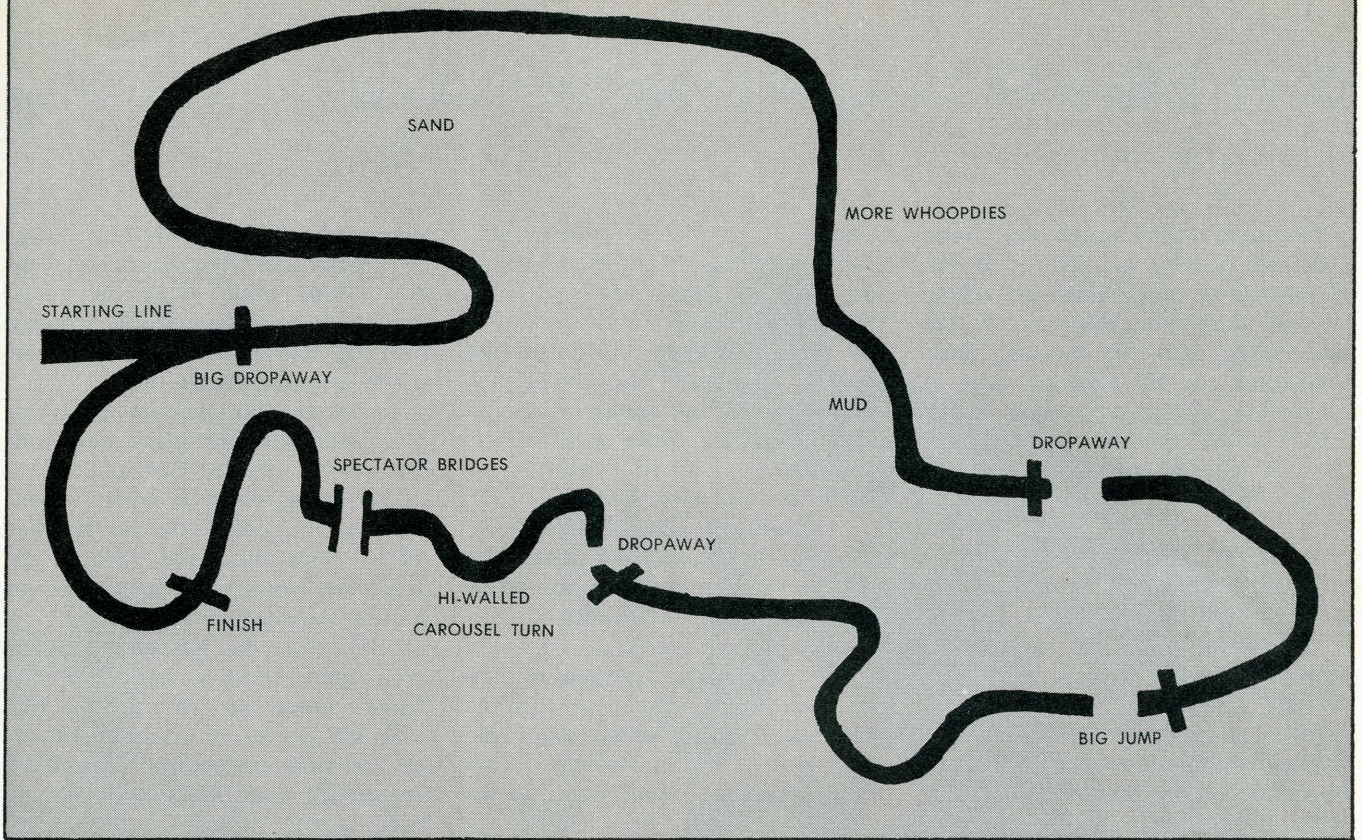
by trees. This may sound unbelievable to you folk in Maine, but such are the nuances of living in an irrigated desert. The cottonwood trees that line the track are nice for the spectators, for sure, but they make the track excessively dangerous. One of DIRT BIKE's test riders, Jim Connolly, broke his hip on one of the trees. The solution is to reroute the track instead of chopping down the cottonwoods. As long as we're talking about danger spots — a tall, barbed-wire-topped chain link fence surrounds sections of the track. In some places, riders have to use it for a berm. This fencing is extremely dangerous, and we're sure that the Dunes' insurance underwriter would swallow his heart if he ever saw it.

This track is tighter than the International track, and is far more challenging. Forty or fifty yards from the starting gate, the pack sails off a sloping eight-foot dropaway that makes the skin on their thighs taut and puckered. For example: Starting in second gear on a 250 CZ means you're peaked in third when you sail off into nothingness. Good fun.



MILLIONS OF WHOOPDIES (OUCH, OUCH, OUCH)

SHADOW GLEN COURSE



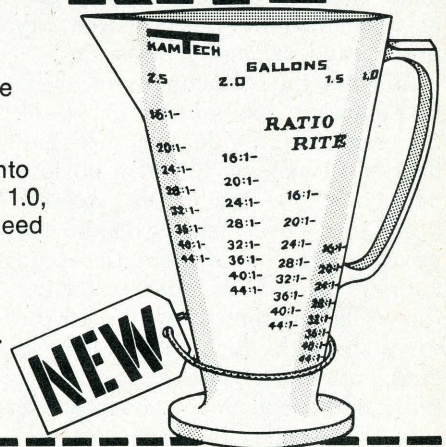
A quarter-mile-plus trip through deep sand whoopdies follows, and it is in this section that most races are won or lost. Then a mudhole large enough to accommodate one each Loch Ness monster, some winding around, and a serious launch-pad jump. More twisty-turny through the trees, into a hole, down a rough straight and you're done.

Shadow Glen is usually well-prepared, and we can think of few rides nicer than the first moto on this track; before the 300 or so juniors, beginners, seniors, professionals, mini bikes, powder-puffers and old timers get a chance to pulverize the surface into a condition rougher than the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

Indian Dunes is a pleasant place to ride your dirt bike. The weather is always perfect, it's located conveniently, within its perimeter are all the types of natural trail riding terrain that one could ever hope for, there are mini bike and speedway tracks, and an air strip. But it's noisy and excessively dangerous. We hate to have to badmouth a place where we spend so much time, but the entire problem at the Dunes could easily be solved with a few casual days' work and a new attitude. Please?

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