

HURRICANE



Storm warnings are out! Bob "Hurricane III" Hannah has vowed to come back once again.

Whether Hannah can come back from serious injuries a third time seems to be on the minds of fans and foes alike. A water skiing accident took the Hurricane out for a full year with a broken leg early in his career. When Bob showed up to race again, his detractors said, "No way will he make a comeback!" But the Hurricane blew back with a vengeance.

After an unhappy breakup of a seven-year career at Yamaha, the Hurricane left the team looking for better sailing.

He found it at Team Honda, and Hurricane II was born. Hannah was brash, cocky and arrogant. He said what was on his mind but always backed it up. To the fans he was still the hero, the guy who never gave up or disappointed them. But the 1983 season didn't go the Hurricane's way. A crash while practicing for the Orlando Supercross broke his wrist and eliminated any chance for Hannah to capture the title he had so valiantly sought. His teammate, David Bailey, went on to capture a record three National titles, and Hannah was left with nothing, except the satisfaction of having proven his point. Hannah had said he'd thrash the competition before the season began and he did just that.

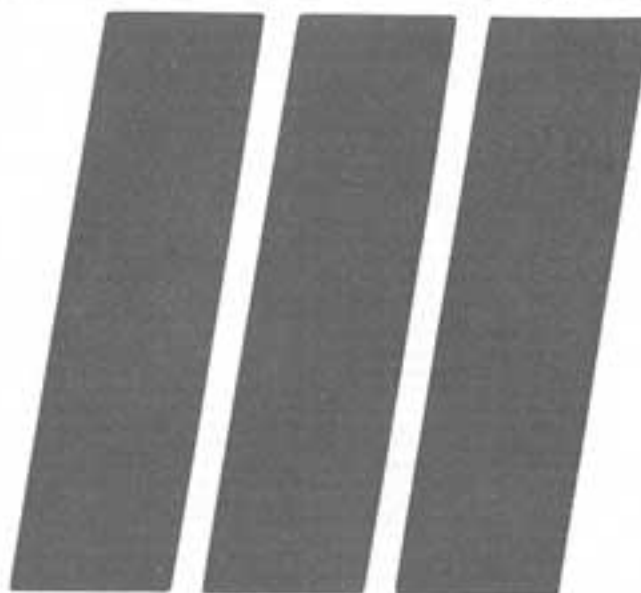
With his wrist healing too late to capture any titles, the Hurricane decided he'd have to wait until the new season to prove his point once and for all. Bob Hannah was, and would always be, a winner.

But a freak training accident in the desert flipped Hannah over the bars and into an embankment. His bike cartwheeled into him and left him with a busted pelvis and severely bruised kidneys. The pain was the most intense in his life.

Hannah would be on the mend for some time, and the layoff and new injuries would have some profound effects on the premier American MX star. We had an opportunity to talk with Bob while he was out at Saddleback practicing, and we got some of his always quotable quotes about his plans for a new year. Is Hurricane III on the way?

MOTO: Just to get things started, Bob, how's your comeback going? How long has it been?

Bob: Well, I had a month in at Anaheim, minus three days. I took off three days. I was slow. Well, not slow, but slower than what I wanted. I want to be where everyone else



By Ketchup Cox

is, and it's going to take at least three months. I thought I could do it in a month, but there's no way. I rode every day and still couldn't do it.

MOTO: What about Anaheim? Were you disappointed about that?

Bob: Yeah. I don't think you'd ever see me in eighth or ninth and not p.o.'d. In third I was p.o.'d!

MOTO: What are you doing differently this time?

Bob: Nothing, really. Same as I did last year, just at it every day, six days a week. I take one day off for business, you know!

MOTO: What's hurting? Your crash was a while back, but what happened?

Bob: Well, I got hit real hard in the back in that crash, and it busted my pelvis in two places—at the bottom and at the top. I hurt everywhere—where my legs hook on, all the way through my hips and joints, and even my legs. I'm real weak in my legs. I had a piece of bone pulled off and that hurts. I either have to have an operation to have it removed, or wait till it dissolves. And the whole time it's in there, it hurts.

MOTO: Is there a lot of pain when you ride?

Bob: Yeah. It's getting better, though. Yesterday is the first day I didn't eat aspirins. I was taking six a day or so just so I could ride. Three bumps and I couldn't ride anymore. And I couldn't slam anything. Today is the first time I've been able to slam any-

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thing. So I've been beating it. Ten hours the past two days in the desert, and today I just came out here—fabulous! It's the first day I've been in a good mood since I've been on the bike.

MOTO: Why is that?

Bob: Well, seeing that I'm starting to do things right, you know. I'm hitting stuff, sliding, turning. I think I'm just starting to come around.

MOTO: Is that what happens? You lose that edge?

Bob: Yeah. Obviously I can ride; I've been riding fast for ten years. But you don't have an edge when these guys have been riding all winter and you're lying in a stupid bed. I'm not gonna beat 'em, no matter how badly I want to right now. I want to beat them as badly as ever, and I think I can. I'd



give me another six or eight weeks to really be back. I've got a lot of catching up to do. I've been watching all these guys—they're all doing real well. Everyone who didn't take off time is hauling. After I broke my leg, everyone asked me questions, and I asked them questions. The rumor was that everyone got faster. I think that's bull crap. I don't think anyone's faster this year than last year. I know they aren't! Do you suddenly get faster? No. They're the same. They can be beaten; you just have to work to beat them. You have to work harder than they do, want it worse than they do.

MOTO: How do you motivate yourself?

Bob: Same as I always do. I want to win really bad, and I just put everything into it. I'm gonna try hard till I quit; then I'm getting out. I don't like running eighth and ninth. I don't even like running second and third, and when I can't win and know it, I'm getting out. The only thing that motivates me is that I want to win and make those guys know I beat them. That's the only thing. Otherwise I'd quit. I don't like all this bull crap—looking like a jerk coming in sixth and seventh, getting lapped. I got lapped that first race at Golden State. I just pulled off



"Then I was beating heroes; now I'm beating guys who are trying to take away my job."

as soon as O'Mara lapped me. I pulled off before he lapped me. I saw him coming and just left. I'm not that kind of rider; I never was and never will be. I'll quit before then. I don't like racing, I like winning. It's the only thing I like. That running at the back of the pack is for the birds, I don't need it. I'll go home and do something I want to do. I'd rather go water skiing or fishing than run at the back of the pack.

MOTO: You know, you were holding out on your contract with Honda, right?

Bob: Well, they didn't want to pay.

MOTO: Well, a la Donnie Hansen, you ended up getting hurt before you signed your contract.

Bob: That's a chance you have to take.

MOTO: Did you feel any parallels there? I mean, Donnie did the same thing.

Bob: Yeah, I'm real lucky I didn't get hurt worse, and I didn't even go back to Honda till I could walk. It was a couple of months before I went in there to sign. If I'd gotten hurt worse, I'd have been out a bunch of money, to say the least.

MOTO: Did you get what you wanted with Honda?

Bob: Yep. Or I wouldn't be here. I told them I'm gonna be back in the lead.

MOTO: What did you think of the new young guys like the O'Show? He was coming on really well—and Jeff Ward, Ricky Johnson...

Bob: I don't think Ward is a new young guy. He's just never done it—still hasn't.

MOTO: Well, let's talk about the others. What do you think?

Bob: They're great. More natural talent than I've got. I can see it in their riding. But as for them wanting to win worse than I do? No way! And in drive and determination? No way!

"I want to ride 25 hard races and take off the rest of the year."

MOTO: What gives you the drive and determination that those guys don't have?

Bob: Well, I'm saying that in my opinion they don't have it. You've seen me on the track, I just don't give up. Those guys give up. I've seen them give up. One of them gave up a weekend ago. I'm out there to win. There's a bunch of guys out there to win, and there's a bunch of guys out there just putting around. O'Mara just won his first Supercross, and now that may give him a little taste of it. I had the taste of it a while back, and now I know that's all I want. Some of these guys have never had the taste of it. Once you start winning, I don't know, you just have to win. I'd say there are only three guys out there who've done much of it—Barnett, Glover and myself. Don't you agree?

MOTO: Pretty much...

Bob: No one else has won anything to speak of. O'Show never won a Supercross till last weekend.

MOTO: What do you think about guys like Kent Howerton? And Barney (Mark Barnett) is starting out slow.

Bob: I'm not worried about Barney. I'd hire him in a second over anybody in the world because I know he's just like myself. He may be getting beaten now because he took a vacation—there's no law against taking a vacation. Some of these jokers know that if they take a vacation, they won't stay with us for any part of the year, and they see that if they don't take one, they're gonna beat us at the start. But they're not gonna beat Barnett all year. I'd lay every penny I've got on that. No way! I know him too well!

MOTO: What about Kent Howerton?

Bob: I think he has to do the same as me. He can go as fast as anyone, but not unless he works seven days a week. If he doesn't, he's not gonna do it, just like me. O'Show and Lechien and Ricky Johnson have got too much talent, they've got it too easy. They're 16 years old and they're fast. But Howerton didn't have that; I never had that. Howerton has to work on that, same as me. He's old, man, he's not 16. He's got things to do; he's got a wife and a business; he's been around a long time. These kids don't have anything else to do but think, "Hey, I'm gonna beat Bob Hannah next weekend and be a hero!" If Howerton or Barnett loses, it's big news. It's big news to beat me. But if I win the Supercross, it's not big news. I've won 35 of them! What's the big news? But if I lose, it's big news. Bob Hannah's no good, he'll never be any good anymore. The more I hear that, the angrier I get.

MOTO: Is it really worth the money? Is the risk worth the money? You've had some serious injuries...

Bob: It must be, or I wouldn't be here. I don't have anything else I want to do right now, not really. I just want to play. The only thing I'd rather do for work is fly—I like



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flying. But other than that, I don't have anything else I'd like to be doing. I want to ride. I've got a lot of things on the side, but I'm concentrating on riding now. I've just got to work harder than Lechien and O'Mara to beat them again. I swore last year that if I won, I could care less about ever winning again. But I've already reneged on that. I want one more time!

MOTO: Do the fans matter to you?

Bob: Sure. You're darn right! I like having them. If I didn't have the crowd appeal, I wouldn't have the drive I have. I have a point to prove to myself. Well, I proved my point last year; this year is just . . . well, I'm gonna continue to do it.

MOTO: Has your riding style, your attitude or any of that changed?

Bob: No. Then I was beating heroes; now I'm beating guys who are trying to take away my job. You have to beat everybody! Then I was the Ronnie Lechien beating the Jimmy Weinerts and the Steve Stackables and Tony DiStefanos. It was more fun for me then, because I was beating big names. Now I've got to do everything I can to beat nobodies . . . kids. Then I was racing with heroes, guys I looked up to, saying, "Man, that guy's fast." Now I feel like a jerk, thinking "Sheesh, I can't beat this guy?"

MOTO: You say that John Wayne is a bigger hero to you than anybody. Why is that?

Bob: Oh, he's the greatest at everything. He's been my hero since I was a kid! I watched every one of his Westerns. I own a bunch of his Westerns now. I've got rifles and replica pistols . . . When I had that broken pelvis, I watched 20 movies in one weekend! All of the ones I own.

MOTO: Did you ever meet him?

Bob: No. I wish I had.

MOTO: Got his autograph?

Bob: No.

MOTO: Would you get his autograph?

"I think everybody ought to come to the 250 class to prove once and for all who's the best."

Bob: Oh yeah! I'd get it in a second. It's probably the only one I'd want. Well, Clint Eastwood, maybe.

MOTO: What do you think John Wayne personifies in relation to your racing?

Bob: Oh, he's a good guy that everybody likes. A tough good guy, though. He can back up anything. If he says this is the way it is, he'd fight for it, anytime. That's the way I'd like to be.

MOTO: You said you'd rather ride the way you did last year than win the championships like your teammate David Bailey did.

Bob: Yeah, I said that, and then I felt

kinda bad when I read it, because it came out a little wrong. I didn't mean to cut him down. He won it, and he did the best he could. He beat me in the series, but I was proud of the way I rode—still am. And I wouldn't trade it for his championships.

MOTO: Did that have an adverse effect on the relationship between you and David Bailey?

Bob: What, the interview? Yeah, maybe it did . . . sure. But I didn't mean to take anything away from him, and I'd like you to write that, too. I didn't mean to take anything away from him or any of those guys. To me, one win is better than ten seconds. Ten seconds may mean \$100,000 to those guys, and they may even mean that to me, but I'd really rather have the one win, because I'm there to win. Even if second paid more than first, I'd go for first and lose money, because that's what I'm there for.

MOTO: Do you feel your best racing days are behind you?

Bob: Probably . . . yeah, probably . . . though that may just be for now . . . I'm kinda in a p.o.'d mood since I haven't been riding well. Maybe not . . . I may come on real strong because I'm really gonna work on it. If I've got it, I'm gonna have it, I'm gonna do it, because I'm working out at it until I do, till it happens. Sooner or later there's gonna be a day when I can't do it anymore. I don't think it's here yet. Maybe in three or four years, I don't know how long, but there is going to be a day when I can try seven days a week and those kids are still gonna beat me. When that day comes, I don't think it's anything to be ashamed of. Hey, I'm getting older, and tired of it, tired of being hurt. I don't think that day is here. I can still beat those guys if I work hard enough.

MOTO: So, the Hurricane hasn't blown out yet, huh?

Bob: No, not for a while yet. Hurricane III is coming soon.

MOTO: It's out in the ocean just waiting to hit the shore?

Bob: Yep, he'll be here soon, it's just a matter of time.

MOTO: Do you think you'll go for it like you have in the past? Same style of riding?

Bob: The exact same . . . soon as I get my timing back. I'm really riding badly right now. I'm disgusted with myself.

MOTO: What is it? Is it just the timing?

Bob: No, I don't want to fall. I'm still sore from the last fall. I'm tired of lying in a stinking bed and all that crap, and I'm ready to go for it. You know, if you're not ready to go for it, it's just not gonna happen. You have to be ready, then you let it all hang out. Like I said, I'm there to win, not to get beaten.

MOTO: How will you know when you're ready to go for it?

Bob: I can feel it, I can feel it coming on right now. That's the reason I'm in a halfway



Hannah expects 100-percent effort from everyone around him. His mechanic, Brian Lunniss, puts forth enough effort that Hannah bought him a Ferrari at the end of the 1983 season.

decent mood. I was pretty teed off when I first got here this morning, and I've been teed off every day for a month now.

MOTO: Do you feel that a lot of the younger riders with less experience are better because of the nature of the tracks?

Bob: Sure. If that Anaheim race had been at Unadilla, I'd have been in the top three, guaranteed, just because of the track. But Anaheim was at Anaheim, with a bunch of stinking double jumps, and gnarly whoopedos and stuff like that. I just wasn't ready for it. It's a whole different ball game, you're darn right it is. I go to Unadilla, and a little more brains are involved, a little more finesse, a little more line picking, and outsmarting the guy in endurance. Supercross is a different thing. You just gotta be ready for it.

MOTO: If you were picked this year to go to the MOTOCross and Trophee des Nations, would you go?

Bob: No.

MOTO: Why not?

Bob: Because the year's too long—pure and simple. I'm too tired to want to go over there. If I rode 25 races this year and they asked me, I'd say yes, but I'm gonna ride 40, and I'm gonna be dead tired.

MOTO: What about this? There are going to be separate stadium and outdoor series.





"I'd say there are only three guys out there who've done much of it (winning)—Barnett, Glover and myself."

Bob: It's an even bigger joke than it's ever been.

MOTO: Where do you think the sport is headed?

Bob: I don't know. . . I wish the AMA would've worked out all the problems with everybody and we were all still AMA. I'm still with the AMA. Maybe they had problems, but there's nothing that couldn't have been worked out. We've got bigger problems now with the two groups. It's way out of hand, if you ask me. The whole thing started when the riders and the factories wanted to do fewer races because of the budget, and

"I don't like looking like a jerk. Racing's not for fifth and sixth. When you're a beginner, yeah, maybe, but otherwise, win or crash it."



the riders were tired and getting hurt. Now we're back doing more races than ever. It's a joke! I don't want to ride that many races. I want to ride 25 hard races and take off the rest of the year. I don't like to go to small races, because I don't go there to prove anything. I like to go to the big races; I go there to win, then go home.

MOTO: Are you doing anything different at home? Are you still going up to Idaho?

Bob: No, I haven't been up to Idaho in about a month. I've been in Southern California. In Idaho there's too much snow. I'll maybe go there starting in May.

MOTO: What are you doing for recreation? Still flying your planes?

Bob: No, not for a month, and I don't see doing it in the next two or three months. Just nothing but riding and racing. And I go running for fun. When I leave here for the day, I'll run five miles for fun. When I'm running, I think about what I'm doing and why I'm doing it.

MOTO: What goes through your mind at that time?

Bob: I think, *Is it worth it?* Then I think, *The day it isn't is the day I'm quitting.* I may quit in two years. I have a two-year contract.

MOTO: What then?

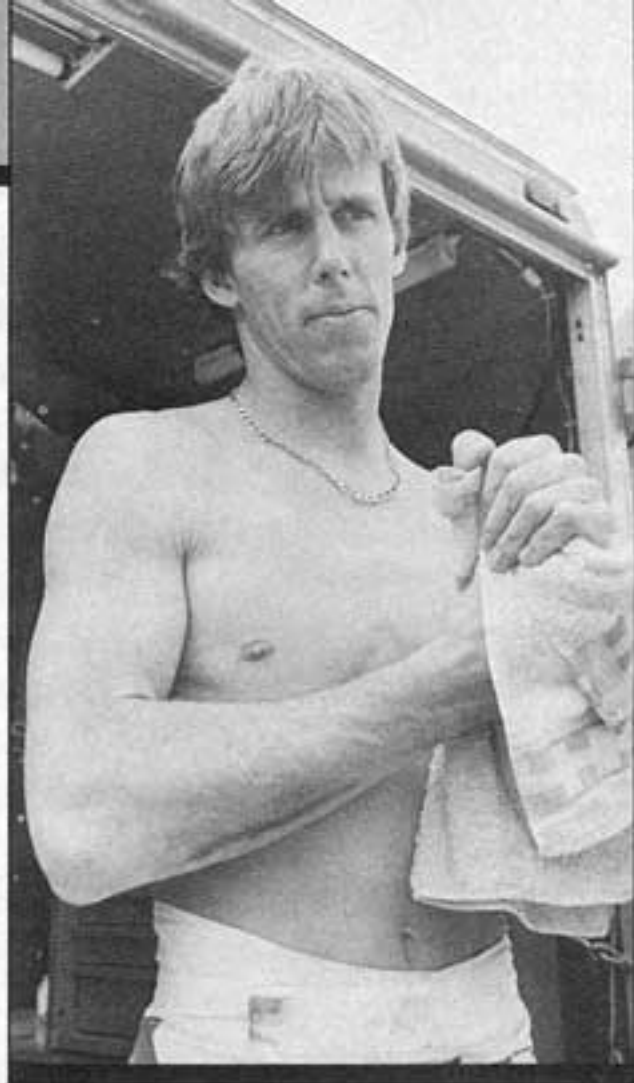
Bob: Nothing for a year or so, and then I don't know what I'm gonna do. Maybe work on HRP. Or work on the races or something. Otherwise I'll be goofing off. I'll do something, I just don't know what yet.

MOTO: So you just have to get all the planes, the cars, everything out of your system?

Bob: Well, I haven't done anything lately. I just got back last night. I was out here Monday and Tuesday. I was out at Riverside Wednesday and Thursday. I've been out to the desert, and I'm here today (Friday), which is gonna be a light day, just testing the race bike. I'm tired from riding all week. Tomorrow I'll do the Golden State, and Monday it'll start all over again, getting ready for Seattle. And I'll continue this pace till I'm winning, till I get hurt, or until I go on vacation this summer! I'm behind by three or four months; I've got a lot of catching up to do. If I had a four-month lead on these guys, I don't think they'd catch me. I say that if we all had taken off as much time as I've had to, I'd be in the lead again. I'm not in the greatest shape, let me tell you. I'm sore and worn out.

MOTO: When you're running and thinking about whether it's all worth it, what is the final decider? Is it the money that makes it worth it?

Bob: No, I get paid well, but I could quit, I don't need it. I like getting paid for what I'm doing, but I told Honda I'd quit *this* year if I didn't get paid so much money—and I would have. I think I'm worth more money than anyone riding in the U.S., and if I didn't get paid more than anybody, I'll quit. And that's the way I feel about it. But really, when



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it comes right down to it, I want to win. I want to race cars later, and I'm sure I'm gonna want to win at that. I don't like doing something and losing. Really, I just want to win, I'm not satisfied with second, third or fourth at all, I just don't like it. I go home, I don't like looking like a jerk. Racing's not for fifth and sixth. When you're a beginner, yeah, maybe, but otherwise, win or crash it. And if you can't, you better work harder—as hard as you can—and if you still can't, quit. You just don't have it anymore. That's what my attitude is. Believe me, I'm not just hanging in there for the money. I may ride a year in the end for the money, but I don't think so. I think if I do cut back, say I ride two years and sign another one, I may cut back and ride 500 Nationals only.

"O'Show and Lechien and Ricky Johnson have got too much talent, they've got it too easy."

MOTO: No Supercross?

Bob: No, just 500s or 500 GPs. I wouldn't mind doing 500 GPs just to do them. And if I went over there, I would try 100 percent to win them. If I didn't win, I'd have had some fun. But no, the only reason I'd do it is for fun. If you think I like it out here, you're crazy. I hate Southern California. I hate these tracks. I hate Saddleback. I just don't like to be out here in the dust with all these people all over me, and the noise and the dirt and the wind blowing. Man, I'd rather be in Ketchum! I like it out there. I'm here because this is my eight-to-

(continued on page 70)

HURRICANE III

(continued from page 61)

five job, and I do it the best I can, the best I know how. I come here and work, and if I need a slippery, crappy track to work on, well, I go to a slippery, crappy track. If I need to go to the desert, I drive 2½ hours and go to the desert, stay overnight in a flea-bag motel and ride the next day in the desert. Whatever I think is best to get ready for the next race, I do. If I have to go on the road and stay a month, I do it.

MOTO: *You treat it like a regular job?*

Bob: It's just a job. The whole job boils down to Sunday, two motos. Sunday's not work for me. Monday through Friday is work for me. Sunday is a play day. Sunday is what it's all about—winning that race. It's not a job for me, it's the fun part, beating those guys, making them puke! No really, I want to run some of these new guys like they've never been run. I hope I still have it in me. Ronnie Lechien or the O'Show is gonna ride the 250 class; Barnett's gonna ride the 250 class and Ricky J.'s gonna ride the 250 class, okay? That's gonna be one heck of a class! I think everybody ought to come to the 250 class to prove once and for all who's the best. I think Glover ought to come, and anyone else who thinks he's someone ought to get in there, and we'll find out who is the best, because I think Ricky J. and those guys are gonna haul buns. I know Barnett's gonna haul butt, and I know Ricky J. wants it, and I know I want it. There's gonna be some serious racing in that class, and I think Bailey and Glover ought to get their butts back in there too and make it *the* class in the U.S.

MOTO: *Well isn't that how stadiums are anyway?*

Bob: Yeah, but it's not outdoors. You get some guys coming from last place outdoors, like Barney. You don't get guys coming up from last indoors. No one does. I don't. Well, I suppose you could, but you better be riding good that night, and you better have a good track. Most stadium tracks stink; you can't pass on them. If we happen to come to one you can pass on, I can come from last, but I'd have to ride well. I think the 250 class is gonna be rugged, and I want to make some of those guys hate life; I want to make them so tired they can't get off their bike after the race. And they may be making me that tired, I don't know, but I plan on being the guy to beat.

MOTO: *When everything is all said and done at the end of this year, do you want to make any predictions?*

Bob: No. I don't have any of those. I made them last year, and I couldn't back 'em up because of my broken wrist. Until I broke my wrist, I backed up my predictions. I'd never say it if I didn't plan to back it up, so I don't have anything to say. I could fall off today and bust my stinking arm and I'd have opened my big mouth for nothing.

MOTO: *So the bottom line is that Bob Hannah wants to win worse than anybody else out there.*

Bob: I feel that's the truth. ■