

TAKE IT TO THE LIMIT

DANNY "MAGOO" CHANDLER

I woke up

By Ketchup Cox



From the wildest rider in America to the fastest has all been a matter of the right breaks and a fierce desire to win for Danny "Magoo" Chandler. Magoo's philosophy is still crash or win.

□ Athletic coaches refer to it as the "right stuff." It is the stuff that astronauts, Grand Prix drivers, and top motocross riders possess in abundance. It is that willingness to push oneself beyond the imposed limits we find in our lives. Only when limits are exceeded do we make significant advances. That is why there are always records to be set and records that will be broken.

Danny "Magoo" Chandler has ricocheted from obscurity to fame, back to obscurity, and back again into a new-found fame of sorts. Known as the wildest rider in America, the cherubic red-head from Northern California has crashed his way into the hearts and minds of the American public by always giving it 110 percent every time he mounts a cycle. His exploits and antics out on the track have shown that Magoo has always had the right stuff when it comes to racing. But the right stuff doesn't always get you the right stuff!

In the past, Magoo has spent more time in ambulances and emergency rooms than in the pay-out lines and trophy stands. His willingness to go to and beyond his limits wasn't always matched by his equipment. Thanks in large part to what was for Chandler a lucky break (in the truest sense of the word) when Jim Tarantino fractured his leg and couldn't ride, Magoo got Tarantino's ride and turned the brief LOP-sponsored audition into a factory contract with Team Honda.

Since then he has gone on to win the 500cc USGP at Carlsbad, the Superbikers competition over Steve Wise, and all four motos of the Motocross and Trophee des Nations. From being the wildest rider in America to becoming the fastest racer in the world has all come about for Chandler in just two years.

MXA:— *What has changed to turn Danny "Magoo" Chandler from the most spectacular crasher to a winning rider?*

Danny:—I think I've finally gotten some good breaks. I'm training harder than ever now, I'm with a good company, and I'm even getting some good press these days. Not so many out-of-control crash shots like before.

MXA:— *Do you think that winning the USGP at Carlsbad was the turning point of your career?*

Danny:—I always knew I could win. Carlsbad gave me the confidence that yeah, I can do it. Now I go to the races knowing that I can win if I don't fall down. Before, I was going to the races hoping I would win or try harder than anyone else. Now I don't try as hard and I win races.

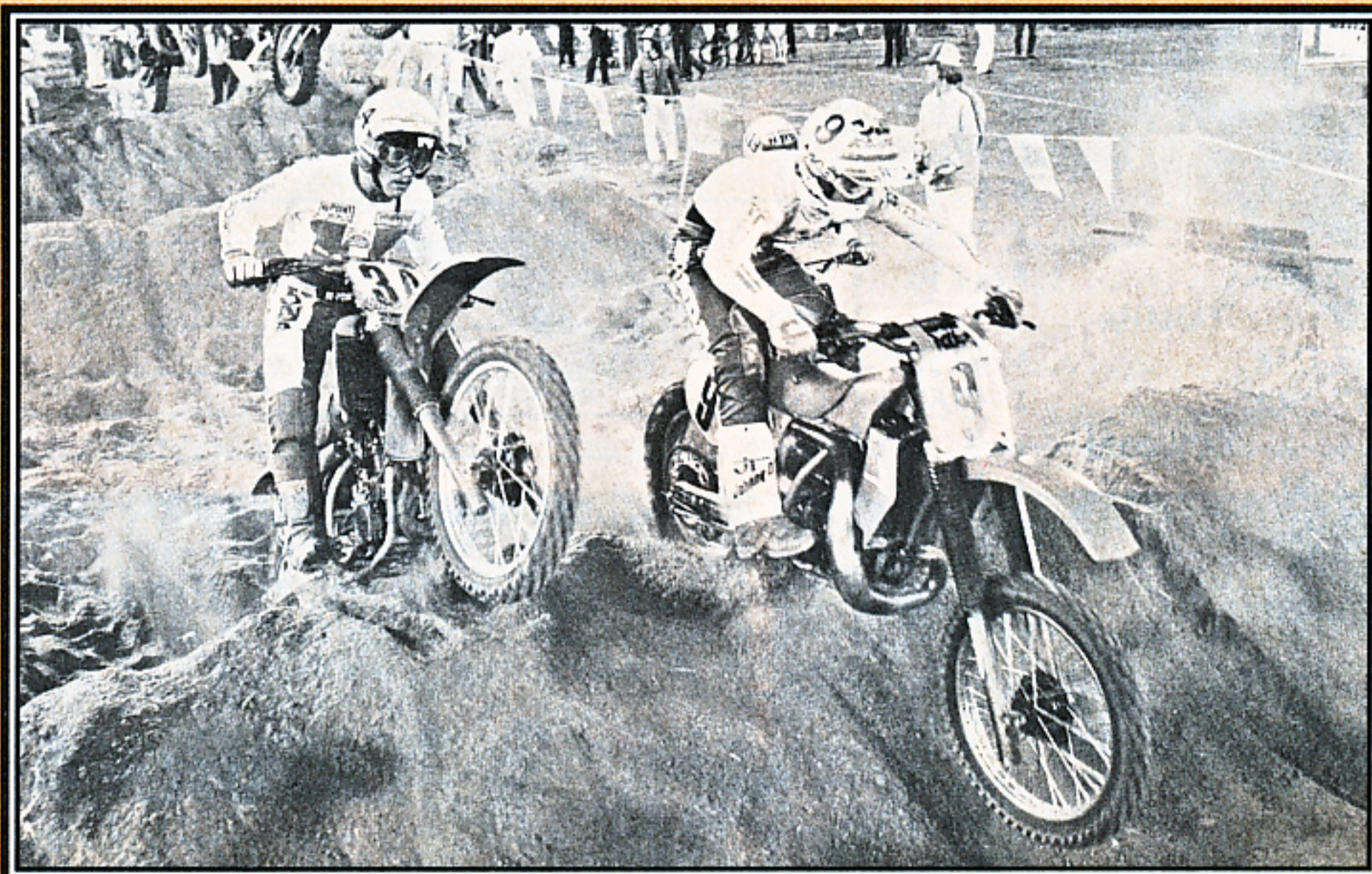
MXA:— *Isn't that a paradox of sorts?*

Danny:—It seems to be, but I guess

that's the way it works. Instead of losing twenty or thirty seconds crashing, I might only lose two or three seconds in a turn by slowing down just a bit. You go faster if you ride within your limits.

MXA:— *Do you think you've found your limits as far as seeing how fast you can go?*

Danny:—No, not really. I think I can still go faster and break out more speed if I have to. The main difference now is that with good equipment I don't have to take as many chances. Before, I was riding my production bikes beyond their limits. I rode them beyond what they were capable of handling. I ended up riding them on that ragged edge so much that I crashed too often. The thing about works bikes is that they can handle the speed difference. They're made to ride on that ragged edge.



Magoo started out riding production bikes with Team Honda, but was offered a works model at the start of the Nationals.



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"MAGOO"

MXA:— When you were privateering it, did you ever feel as if you weren't going to make it? That you weren't going to get that elusive factory ride?

Danny:— There were several times when I actually cried about it. I'd say to myself, *What's the matter? What did I do wrong? I always get all the bad breaks . . . maybe I ought to quit racing.* But there was always something inside of me that kept me going. I guess you could call me a true junkie about racing. Everyone I know who races is hooked the same way. You never want to give it up. Racing is an addiction, so you could call me a motorcycle junkie.

MXA:— You seem to have had more success on the big-bore bikes than on the 125s. Why do you think that is?

Danny:— I make too many mistakes to race the 125s well. When you make a mistake on a 125, you lose five seconds here or five seconds there. On a big bike you can make those kinds of mistakes and the power will make up for those little errors.

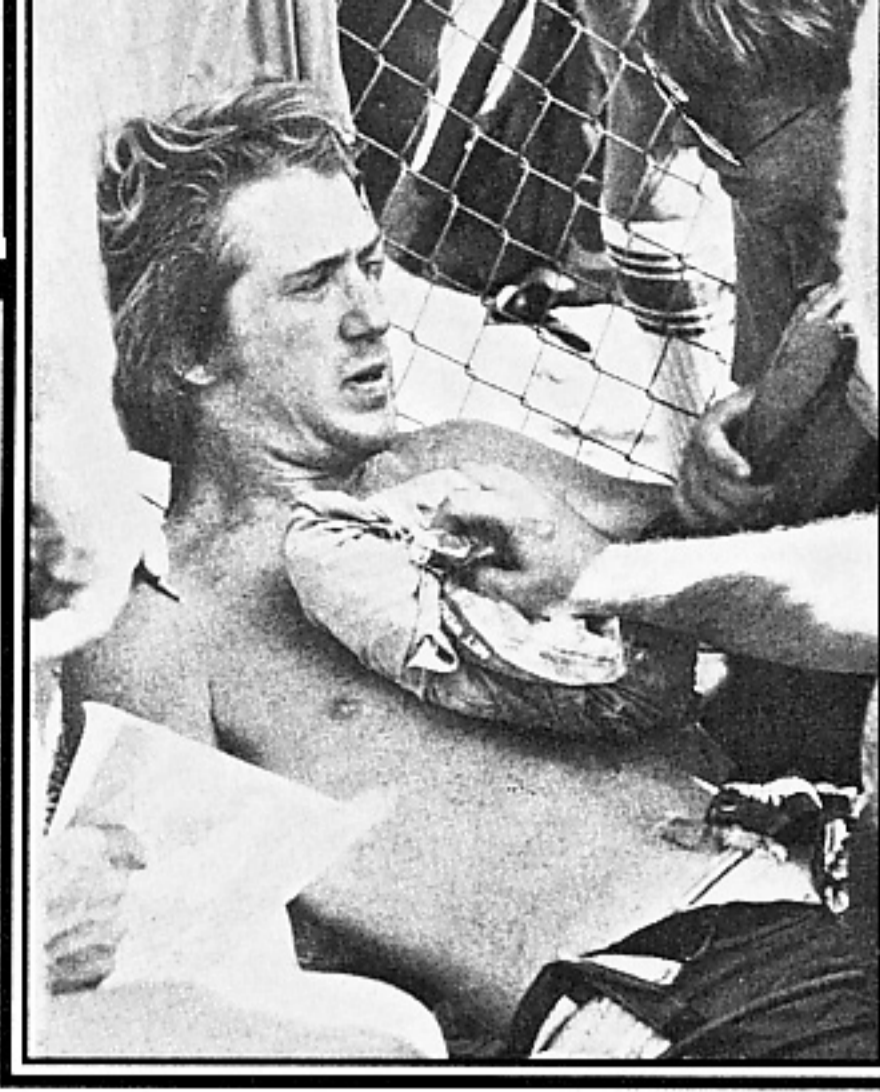
MXA:— How would you compare yourself with other top riders?

Danny:— I think I'm as good as anybody else, but I make more mistakes. I think I'm the type of rider who can go beyond the limit. I will go beyond the limit, as opposed to a lot of other riders . . . they'll go to the limit and that's it, they'll back off. I'll take it past my limit. I'll go for it.

Take a rider like Mark Barnett, for example. He's a strong and aggressive rider. I'm a strong and crazy rider. Barnett takes it to the limit and rides there the whole race. If I'm behind, I'll go way beyond the limit and ride that way until I catch up. Maybe I'm too aggressive. I'm starting to realize that I shouldn't ride so far beyond my limits as in the past. Maybe a little . . . but not so much. When you're way beyond it, that's when the mistakes start to happen.

MXA:— Why do you think it took you so long to get a factory ride?

Danny:— I think that in 1976 I could have been the National champion. That was when Hannah got his first Pro ride with Yamaha. I felt I could run with him or Broc Glover or anybody at the time. Those guys would come up to the tracks in Northern California and I would beat them or come in right behind. The same thing if we went down to Southern California. It was just that living in Northern California at the time you could hardly get any support or recognition. If I had lived in Southern California, I think I would already have been a National champion at least once, if not more. I think I would have been three-



At the Carlsbad National Magoo was floating like a butterfly until he was stung by a bee. The mighty Magoo is allergic to bee stings.



Chewing tobacco is one of Danny's favorite pastimes. No Happy Days for him, only Copenhagen will do.

or four-time National champion. I had the speed and I had the talent, but I never really had the backing. So I'd try extra hard to win and ended up getting a reputation as a crasher. I'd give it 120 percent all the time.

MXA:— What's the difference between riding for a Japanese factory and a European factory?

Danny:— I think the European factories have too much pride. They believe that stock is best and don't seem as interested in winning as the Japanese are. When I rode for Maico, their attitude was that they just wanted you to compete on the stock machine. Never mind that my mechanic and I knew that a part would fail and wanted to replace it with a better accessory part that wouldn't blow apart like the stocker. I ended up breaking in races that I knew I could have won. People never knew that I broke . . . they just figured that I crashed out or something.

MXA:— What happened after your Maico ride?

Danny:— Things went kind of downhill after that. I ended up taking 1980 off and not racing at all. Basically, I think that was a good thing for me. It made me sit down and look at my life. I was wild and crazy, living life in the fast lane, and going nowhere fast. I decided then and there that I was going to make racing my job and not my

hobby and get serious about it. I started training hard and settled down. I got my hair cut and started to work at turning my wild and crazy image around.

MXA:— What was your big break after that?

Danny:— LOP called me up about a week before the Trans-AMA series started to see if I wanted to ride a Honda in the 500cc support class. It was originally Jim Tarantino's ride, but he had been injured. They asked him who he'd recommend, and he said me. I had a support ride with Suzuki at the time, so I called them up first and asked them if I could get a bike for the support class for the series. They said they didn't see any publicity by riding that series, but that I could go ahead and ride the Honda.

MXA:— Is that how you worked your way into a factory ride with Honda?

Danny:— At first I thought I was just riding a bike for LOP, but I guess Honda was giving them the bikes and parts. So Honda had to approve me riding the bikes. I had heard through the grapevine that they weren't really sure that they wanted me to ride the bike. I kind of lucked out and got in there and won the first race, so Honda started backing me more and more, pulling me away from LOP. The first week we parked away from Team Honda. The second week we were next to them. By the end of the series I was working in their pits. At the last race of the Trans-AMA they came up with a contract to ride for them as a support rider. They told me I might have a good chance of getting a works bike for 1982. I wasn't really counting on it, but I sure hoped it would happen. So I trained and rode my production bike, and then the first National of the year rolled around and all of a sudden I had a works bike. Everything seemed to fall into place after that.

MXA:— Did you think you were going to do as well as you did in the Motocross and Trophee des Nations?

Danny:— I don't know what happened. I felt really good about getting to go there. I never really thought about the competition, I just went there to race. I wasn't thinking about winning, just racing. It seems to me that if I go to a race wanting to win, something always happens; but if I go wanting to race, I do really well.

MXA:— What did you think of the tracks and competition over there?

Danny:— The American riders are more used to stadium-type stuff, like double jumps. It seems we're better able to cope with things like that. European tracks are so wide open that

they're harder because there are so many lines you can use around the course, you've got to mentally figure out the track. In the States, except for a few tracks like Unadilla, there is usually one or two fast lines through a turn. In Europe, the tracks we rode on seemed more like roadraces—lots of mental concentration. They do have tricky sections, like some off-cambers and drop-offs we don't have, but then they have sweepers where you can ride your brakes and hold it wide open, never let off, and just downshift. I'm used to that kind of stuff. On tracks over here you've got to come in and brake hard, downshift, and make the turn.

MXA:— *Why do you think you did so well over there?*

Danny:—I don't really know. I just woke up in the right mood, I guess. To tell the truth, I surprised myself. I do that all the time. □