

OFF ROAD



RAMBLES

WHITEHAWK WONDER

To come straight out and win a national championship with your first prototype is something of a wonder, especially in the finnickity world of trials.

It may only be the ACU Schoolboy championship, but Mick Whitlock's TY80 Whitehawk conversion, in the hands of 11-year-old Andrew Clinkard, certainly caused a sensation.

Young Andrew was already leading the series when he tried the Whitehawk bike, and refused to be parted from it for the remaining rounds. So he was putting his title on the line, and conscious of this, Mick himself was as nervous as if it had been a World Championship.

The sighs of relief, when it proved to be a winner, were genuine. After all, it was a very rush job, and bristled with a host of novelties previously untried, like a fork pivot for altering the trail, height and wheelbase at the front axle.

But with the Whitlock experience in trials there should have been few worries. How the combination came about though, is as interesting as the machine itself.

Mick, of course, has been responsible for building all the Suzuki frames for Graham Beamish over the last few seasons, and his small workshop in Hambledon, a sleepy village in rural Hampshire, has been literally stacked to the doors with the Japanese conversions.

The success of those, however, brings its own worries for any small manufacturer. A quantity production gives no time for any other lines, and for a small builder, the danger of having all his



*Honda's Colin-Seeley-Framed 200cc trials machine made it's debut at Earls Court and got a favourable reception*

expensive eggs in one basket, however substantial, is ever present.

Mick's answer is a cautious expansion, and involvement in other fields. He's moved back into his old factory at Horndean, on the A3, to give room to continue Suzuki production, while experimenting with alternative models.

He wants to stay in trials, because that's where his experience and knowledge has always been, and the TY80 experiment is the first step. A kit, including frame, swinging arm, sump plate, footrests and brake rod, fork legs, wheels sprockets, tensioner and chain, all to make the little Yamaha a bigger, and better bike, retails for £192 plus VAT.

Production is in full swing,

and retailing is being handled for the north, by John Gaskell Motorcycles, of Belgrave Road, Halesowen, West Midlands (021-559-1270), and in the south, by Bob Gollner, of 228 London Road, Waterlooville, Hants, (07014-55024).

With Mick's track record, it will be interesting to see what comes next.

HONDA HITS TARGET

Honda's much rumoured trials bike finally came out from under the wraps. And like Suzuki they've turned to building the frame in England, at the tube-bending premises of road-race ace Colin Seeley, in Kent.

Revealed at the Earls

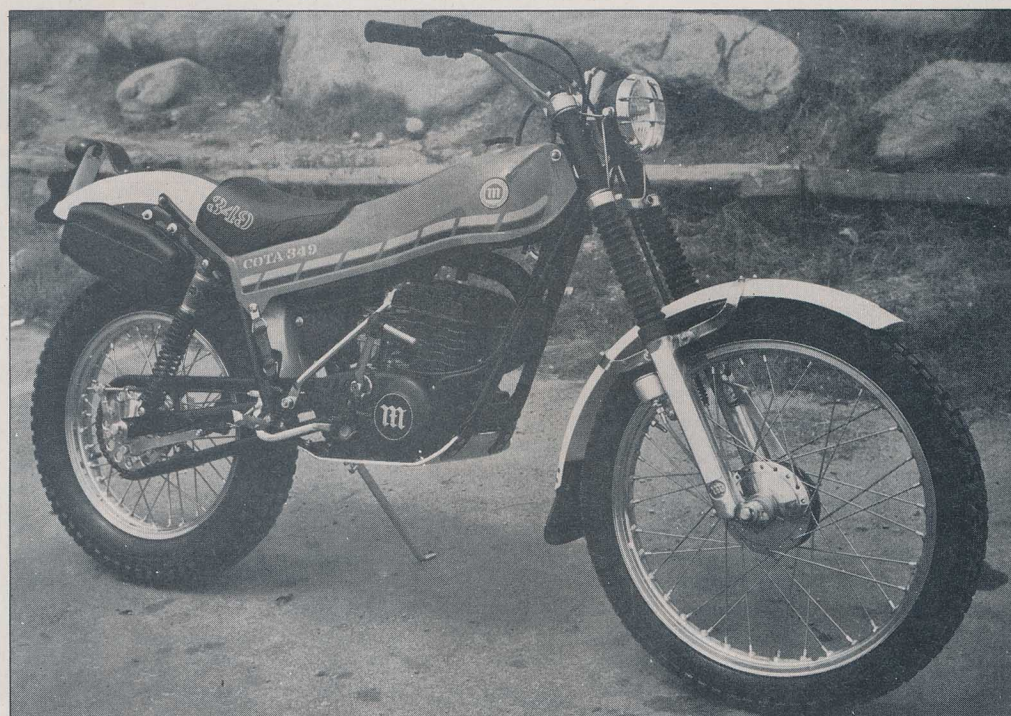
Court Show, and expected to be in the dealers by October, the new four-stroke, with a capacity of just under 200cc, is based on the tough little XL185 motor, with some special attention of Honda RSC.

Capacity of the six-speed ohc unit is increased by over-boring to 66mm (stroke remains at 57.8mm) and on an 8.3 to 1 compression ratio maximum power is 10.7 bhp at 6,500 rpm.

CR125 moto cross hubs are used, with Girling gas shocks on the back, and Marzocchi air forks up front, making it a light and attractive package at around 185lbs all-in. The use of other 'foreign' components, like Pirelli tyres, shows that this is no oriental toy, but a proper competition machine intended for the British and European market, and Honda have cut no corners.

They freely admit that their previous TL125, while popular, was essentially a play-bike, and that experiments with a 250-based machine have so far proved unsuccessful because of the weight factor.

The 200, however, looks rights, and is bound to win a few hearts among the clubmen. The production run at the moment is limited — Honda RSC sent over just 40



*Dubbed as the first of the 'new generation' Montesas, the Cota 349 is the result of two years development by the factory resulting in Malcolm Rathmell's Scottish Six Days win last May. Based on the 310cc Montesa, the new model features a full 350cc engine (bore and stroke, 83.4mm x 64mm) with an improved exhaust system. The engine, which has a redesigned six-speed gearbox, uses pressure cast magnesium-alloy side covers and a quickly detachable gearbox sprocket with a tough rubber cover. The fork legs have longer travel and are now air pressurised. Price of the bike is £1,169 including VAT and delivery charges.*