



KTM 400 GS6 ENDURO

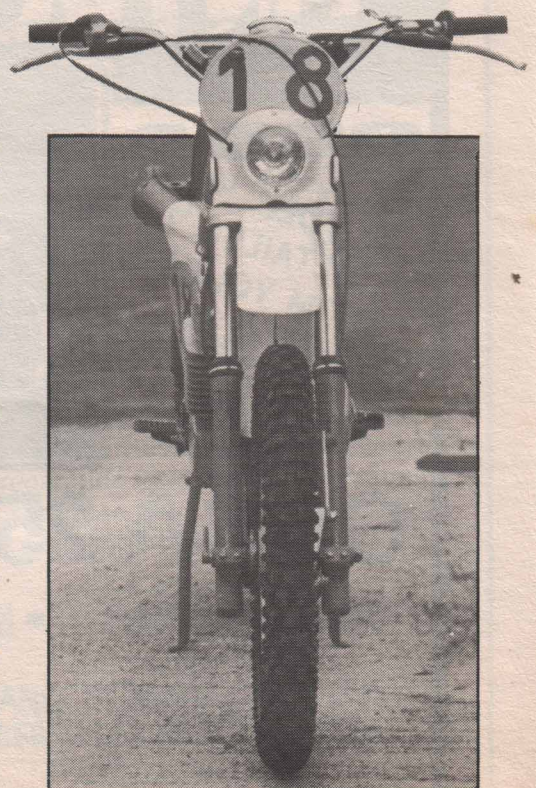
THE BRITISH TROPHY Team for the 1978 International Six Days Trial, commonly known as the Olympics of motor cycling, were mounted on Austrian KTM two-strokes, and achieved a highly commendable third place behind the 'professional' teams of Czechoslovakia and East Germany. Thanks to twice European motocross champion Dave Bickers, who loaned his personal mount (not his Gold winning 350 unfortunately!) we can bring you this test of the 400 model which our team rode.

Our tester is Chadwell Heath, Essex, dealer Dave Rayner. A 175cc enduro specialist Dave (who was 28 in July) rates himself a good National and two-day rider. Twice an ISDT competitor, he was the first to ride an Italian Laverda (a 250 two stroke model) in the event when it was hosted by Italy, back in 1974. Two years later, in the Isle of Man, he was

supported on a 350 MZ by the East German factory. For the past four years he has scooped the 175cc class in both the Beacons and Isca events in Wales. His record in the Welsh Two-Day includes a second in the 350 class aboard MZ, a 175 class win on a Yamaha, and a silver medal on a 250 DKW.

Competing in the occasional European two-day event, Dave was formerly a scrambler and car rally driver. Now sponsored by Shenkers, German-owned shipping agents, Dave has been busy scrambling a 500 Yamaha four stroke and riding a modified Yamaha DT175 in national enduros and a modified 400 YZ scrambler in club enduros. Successes this year culminated in winning the class award in the Welsh International.

Here he gives his impressions of the new 400 KTM GS6 after his first trip aboard the Austrian two-stroke.



THIS WAS my first time on a 400 KTM, and I was surprised to find how rideable and smooth it appeared. I imagined that it would vibrate, particularly through the bars, like a DKW I once rode which blistered my hands. But the KTM is surprisingly smooth for a big two stroke.

After being used to a small bike, I found the engine to be very tractable and with a definite feeling of torque low in the rev range. This feature, and the six speed gearbox giving such a wide range of ratios means that there is power for any situation.

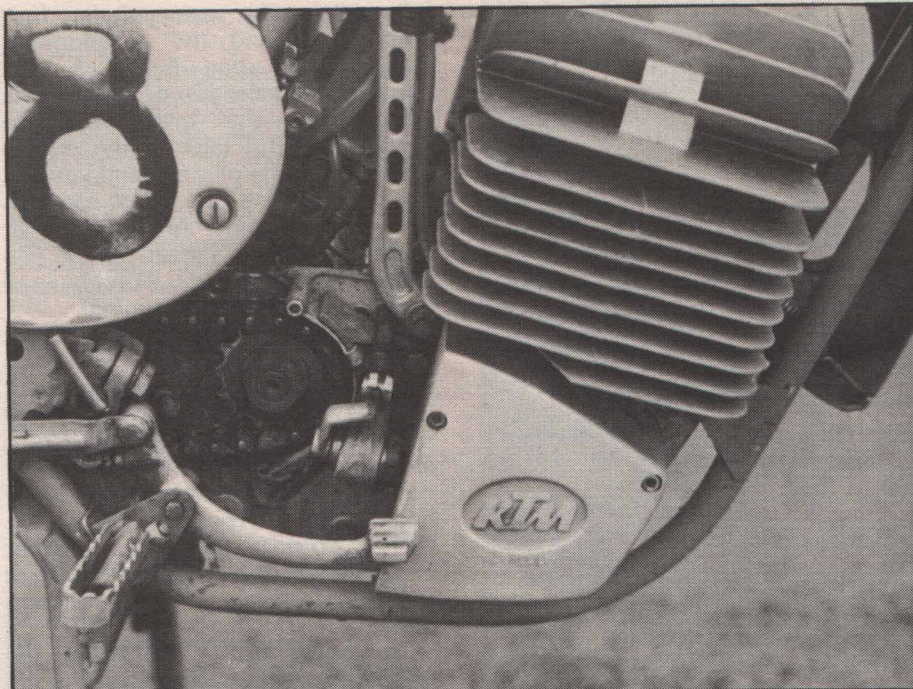
Starting from cold was awkward. The Bing carburettor has to be flooded, and because of the physical height of the machine it is difficult to reach the top of the kickstarter to get a good stab at it. Once warmed up, the bike fires readily from the saddle using the left foot. Dave Bickers had sensibly extended the kickstart heelbar to allow full contact for the width of the foot on the downswing.

With an unladen saddle height of just over 37 inches the KTM is definitely one of the tallest machines on the enduro market. At 5ft 8in I felt comfortable on the bike and particularly liked the riding position, but I would hesitate to recommend the machine to a rider shorter than myself. I was only just able to touch the ground with both feet.

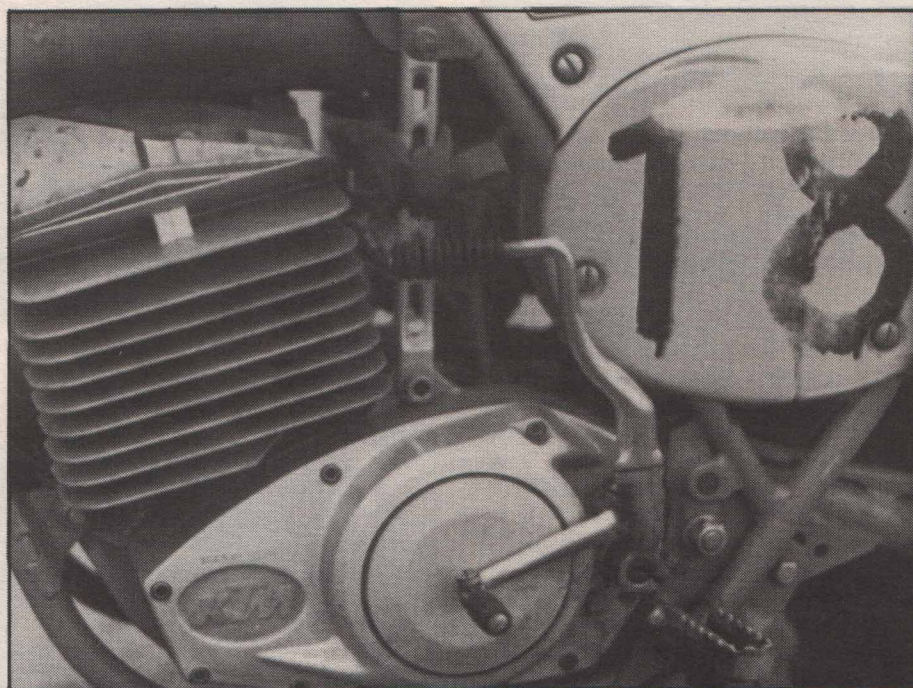
I liked the way the handlebars gently sweep backwards to give a "close-to" riding position. Nothing sticks out and the location of the rear brake and gearchange lever felt just right. The gearchange itself was good, if slightly notchy, but definitely positive. One typically European drawback was the lack of primary kick starting. If you stall the machine and come to a halt, you then have to find neutral before you can kick it back into life.

On the plus side for Europe the Italian Marzocchi suspension front and rear gave an excellent ride. Racing over bumps was just like riding on tarmac. I weigh 12 stone and was very impressed with the way it worked, and the amount of travel both ends gave.

At first, the KTM feels as though it has enough power to tip you over backwards. That is until you get used to it, and then it feels very controllable. The International Six Days Trial is increasingly becoming a speed event and some of the top enduros in Britain are placing more emphasis on speed, so the power the KTM develops is very necessary for a high placing. But for the average clubman I think the power would be an embarrassment. It's amazing the number of riders who either don't realise, or won't admit, that their



Magnesium cases to that big two stroke motor help keep the weight down — and the cost up! Note how access to carb is obstructed by the engine tie-down bars. Exhaust note is kept reasonable by large silencer. Gear pedal is of the fold-back variety. Air filter is readily accessible beneath left sidecover, retained by elastics. Note extended kickstart.



capabilities do not match those of their mount. You would have to be 101 per cent fit to do this bike justice.

Not particularly easy to turn because of its height, the KTM can make up for the seconds lost in corners in a straight line because of its sheer engine power. The front end never showed any tendency to push away, and this characteristic which increases cornering confidence, was confirmed by Dave Bickers.

In general it seemed that the best way to ride the KTM was to keep my

feet on the footrests as much as possible — the same technique motocross riders use on their long travel suspension mounts. The only difference is that it is a lot more difficult in enduros when you don't know where you're going! I never found bottom gear necessary. For uphill work second or even third would take care of the severest climbs. Perhaps first could come in handy over very slow trials type going.

The brakes felt very progressive



and were without snatch. The only improvement I can see would be to make the rear stopper a fully floating unit. Though I didn't experience any rear wheel hop with the brakes on downhill, it is a situation which would arise in an event. For maximum effective braking, both wheels have to be on the ground and a fully floating unit is the only answer. The clutch felt very light, though when starting off it seemed a bit close to dragging when comparing with counterparts from Japan a lot of European bikes do not quite feel as good in the clutch area. Once under way there was no need to resort to the clutch lever, and the clutch never showed any signs of slip.

Looking quite compact overall, the KTM is a bit cluttered with brackets here and there. Its opposition from Japan tends to be very clean in appearance with no excessive gusseting, but the previous models from the KTM factory looked even worse.

Though the factory made its name through enduro successes, this particular model seems to owe much to the moto-cross models — and unfortunately some of the features are incompatible for enduro work.

Removing the front wheel requires no less than seven operations! The torque arm has to be loosened

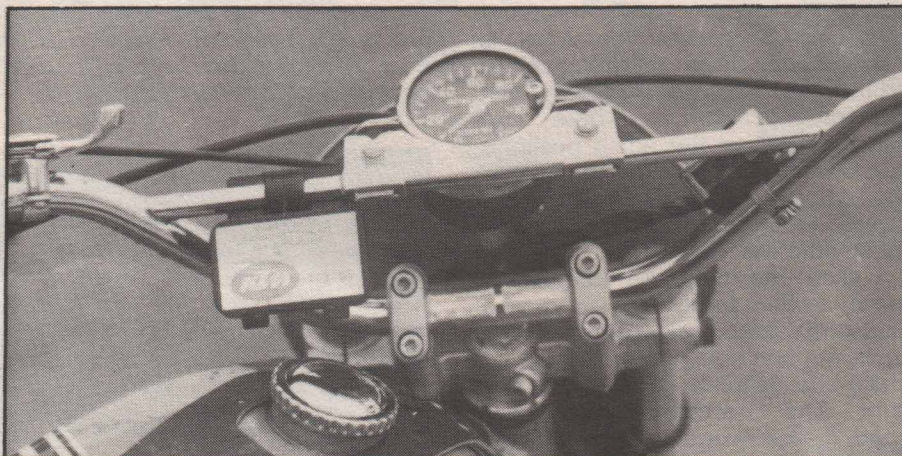
followed by the main spindle, four pinch bolts and the speedometer cable. That's bad news. A box containing a selection of main jets is clipped to the brace on the handlebars. But look at the engine stabilisers in the pictures and you will see that getting the West German carb off is a swine. Anyway, the jet box is so easy to steal that if you leave it on the bars you won't have to bother with carburettor tuning!

In practicing wheel removal, Dave Bickers has found that at least the rear wheel is quickly detachable, but the sprocket snags on the inside of the chain guard making it a bit of a struggle to pull the wheel free. Of course, this can be cured by hacksawing off part of the guard. KTM could make a further improvement by permanently fixing the chain adjusters to the swinging arm.

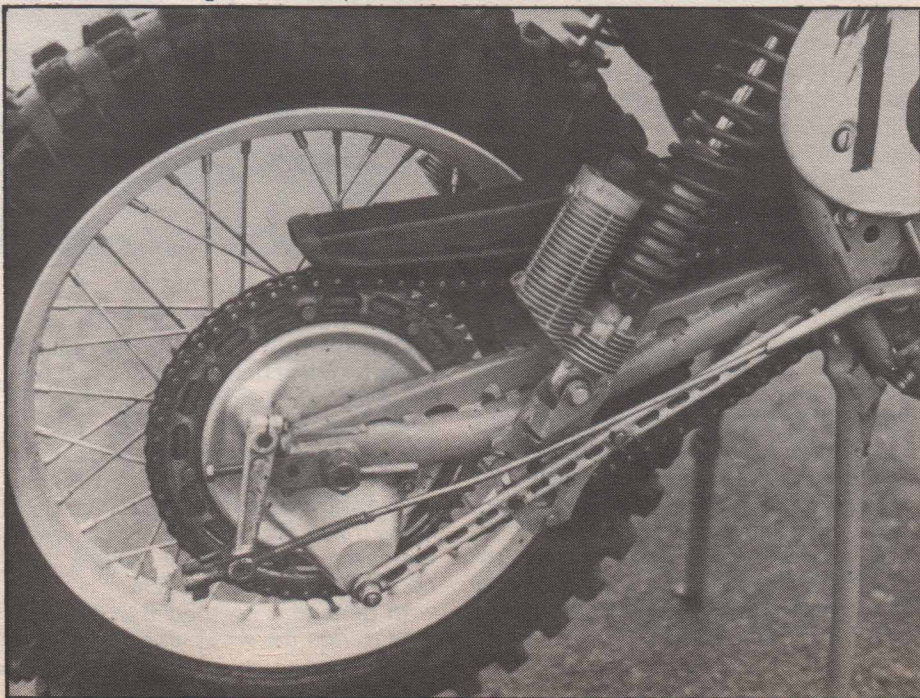
No longer with a sidestand, the KTM has a main stand which is good

in that it is easy to pull this tall machine on to it. Weight bias is at the front which aids rear wheel removal: if a front puncture has to be tackled, Dave Bickers says that he holds the front end up with his head under the mudguard while the wheel remains almost in situ for an inner tube change. If the wheel has to be completely taken out, then the bike will rest on the bottom of the fork legs.

German Metzeler tyres are fitted as standard, though Dave had fitted a new Barum to the front of the test machine. Pins on the inside of the American Sun rims prevent tyre creep at low pressures. The finish on an enduro machine doesn't come high on my list of priorities. Paint on the front is sufficient. Overall I think the machine looked good even if the stick-on tank transfers were already showing signs of coming off, and the plastic headlight surround was



Above: Spare carb jets are clipped to the handlebars — more practical if carb could be easily reached. No kill button was fitted: only way to stop engine was to stall it. Rear wheel is hardly in the QD class, showing too much emphasis on moto-cross heritage, at the expense of the enduro practicalities.

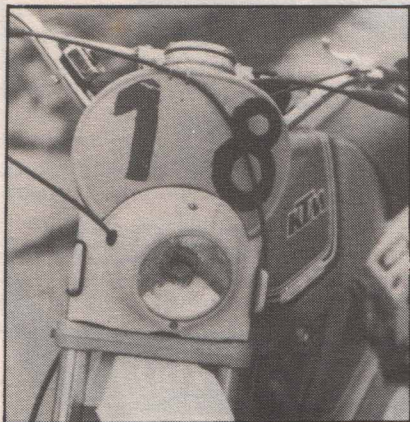


cracked after only two weekends of riding by Bickers. But any enduro machine is bound to deteriorate rapidly on the exterior.

As for the interior, judging by its looks and the good reputation of KTM in both moto-cross and enduros, I would say that the bike should be reliable.

I had always imagined the KTM to be a bit of an animal. The GS6 proved my pre-conceptions wrong; I could learn to live with it and if ever I get tempted out of the 175 class it could be because of the temptress KTM!

Headlight/front number assembly is retained by elastic, and complies with rules, but is more ornamental than useful!



SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE

Type: Air cooled single cylinder two-stroke. Crankshaft runs on two shoulder bearings, one ball bearing. Needle bearing big and little ends. Forged aluminium alloy piston, magnesium engine covers. Maximum power produced at 6,700 rpm.

Capacity: 356cc.

Bore and Stroke: 81 x 69mm.

Carburation: Bing piston slide instrument, breathing through oiled foam filter.

Lubrication: Petrol/oil mixed in the ratio of 1:20 - 25.

Electronics: Motoplatt CDI ignition system. 6 volt/21 watt generator.

TRANSMISSION

Primary: Straight-cut gears. 2.76:1 reduction.

Clutch: Wet multiplate.

Gearbox: Six speed unit, selection via left side gear lever.

Final Drive: Exposed, unlubricated chain.

FRAME

All welded, chrome-moly steel tube double cradle.

SUSPENSION

Front: Marzocchi hydraulic tele-fork.

Rear: Pivotted fork running on needle bearings and gas/oil Marzocchi shock absorbers.

WHEELS

Front: 300 x 21 Metzler moto-cross tyres, mounted on alloy rims with 36 spokes. 130mm diameter drum brake.

Rear: 450 x 18 Metzler moto-cross tyre with 36 spokes. 180mm diameter rod operated drum brake.

IMPORTER

Comerfords International, Portsmouth Road, Thames Ditton, Surrey.
Price: £1335.



Bob Gollner and his staff look forward to meeting you on stand F1 (upstairs) at the *National Dirt Bike Show '79*, where you can see not only the 'Peril' Trials machine but also Bob's Four Stroke Trials bike and some of Kawasaki's Supertrail bikes.

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