



Team Motorcyclist lined up and awaiting the start of the second day. Left to right, Roger Riddel aboard a Yamaha 400, Bryon on a Yamaha TT500, Dave atop a Can-Am 250 and myself riding our featured RM. We were one of only two teams that finished intact.

Hey, this crazy world of specialization can really cramp some of us dirt bike riders' riding style. Take motocross and enduro bikes for example.

Both these beasts are so sophisticated in their own particular fields that they're like helpless infants when taken out of their exclusive domain. If you happen to be locked in tight in one or the other of these areas, that's great, but what about us guys who enjoy doing both—you know, like motocrossin' one weekend and maybe running a two-day enduro the next. What are we supposed to do, buy two individual bikes? It'd be nice, but unfortunately most of us can't afford that route. The next best solution then is finding a motocross bike that can handle both situations with as little modification as possible. The ideal way is to use strictly bolt-on goodies so you can easily alter the bike back and forth and hit every event you want to.

Many of you may not be aware of this but Suzuki's RM370 fits this ticket perfectly. It's already proven itself as one of the best motocrossers on the market and with its super torquey engine, plush Cadillac-type suspension, motocross frame geometry and high ground clearance, it takes to the boonies like it had been reared there. All it needs is a couple of items to put wind into its lungs and give it the needed protection and stamina to go long distances.

I didn't arrive at the forgoing conclusion from just listening to "pit racers" talk. I spent two long days aboard a 370 in the recent Tecate 500. Threading my way through 500 miles of Baja wilderness was more

than enough time to determine a bike's capabilities, and the RM totally proved itself in my own mind. Nearly 300 bikes lined up for the start of the two-day event and of those entrants, only seven were RM370s. Two days later only 86 riders made it to the finish line, five of which were aboard RMs; mine was one of the five. That's a pretty good percentage for a bike that has known nothing other than a motocross track since it was born.

If you're interested in preparing an RM for off-road battle, I can help steer you down the right path. First of all you're going to need some heavy duty tires because being stuck out in the middle of no-man's-land with a flat tire is a mighty lonely feeling. I swapped the stock two-ply jobs for a set of Goodyear Eagle D/SS; a 3.50-21 four-ply in front and a 4.50-18 D/S II six-ply Baja in the rear. The 3.50 has never been known to give exceptional traction, but it makes up for this downfall by being super strong—it's tough enough to split rocks without going flat. The Baja rear tire has proven itself in off-road competition and is used almost exclusively by all the desert "hot shoes." I took one more precaution by injecting a bottle of Kawasaki Flat Proof into each tube to ward off any cactus punctures—for my efforts I was rewarded with going 500 miles without a single tire problem.

I left the rear suspension completely stock and since the front end already had a Trickit fork kit in it, that I had installed back in the April issue, it needed no further modification. I really began to realize the improvement the fork kit made after about 200 miles and would strongly recom-

CROSS COUNTRY RM

How To Turn A Great Motocrosser Into A Long Distance Runner For Less Than \$200

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY RICH COX

mend it for any off-road riding. The Suzuki suspension is truly remarkable, especially going cross-country. It just glides over the rough stuff, always in control and ever so forgiving. I think it's the first time my butt didn't even get sore.

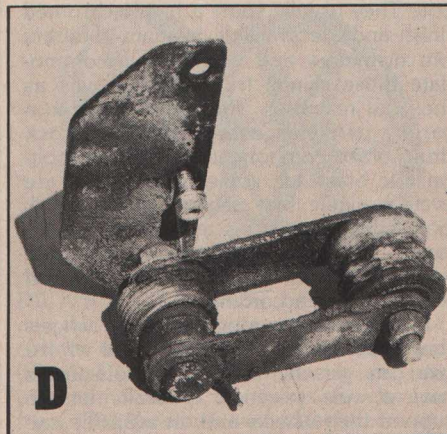
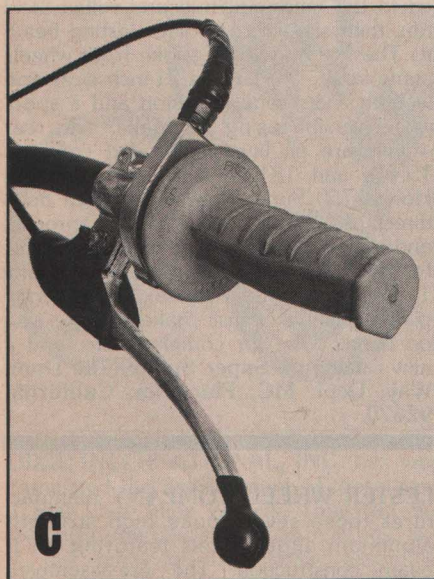
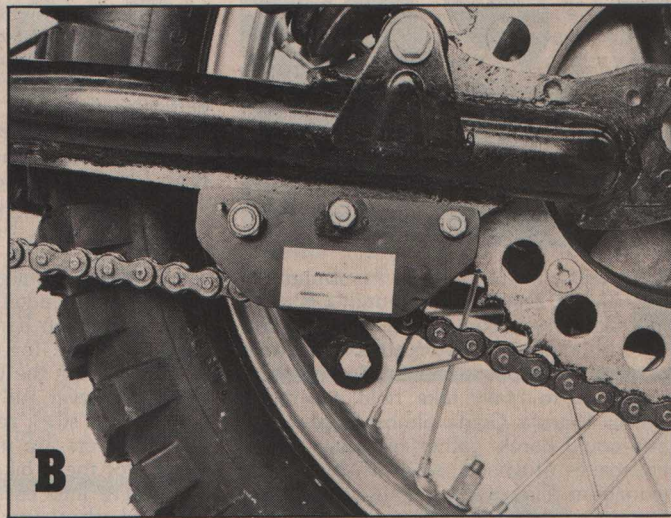
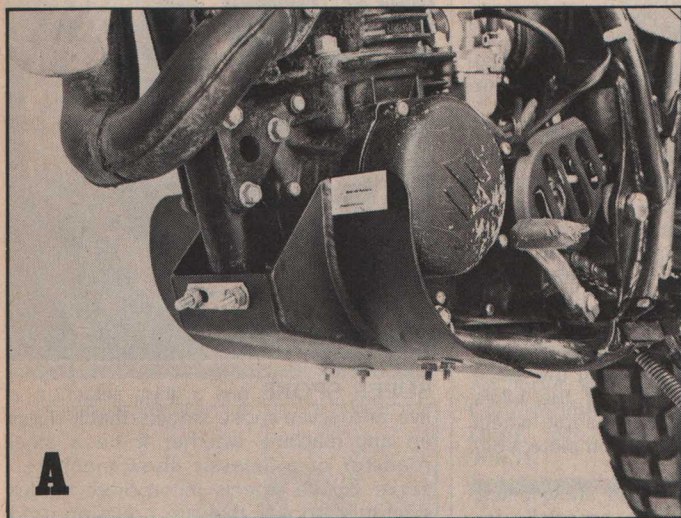
A larger gas tank was next and it turned out to be the biggest problem as I had a difficult time finding one that would fit. The RM has that offset front axle that places the fork tubes back more than most bikes and therefore they hit most of the accessory tanks when turning the wheel lock to lock. I finally acquired a universal 3.2-gallon plastic tank from Graham's Sheet Metal and although it too is not a perfect fit, it'll work with a little fitting. It clears the forks easily but sits down on the frame backbone too far and lays against the pipe. I put a small crease in the



pipe, stuffed a bunch of foam underneath the tank and proceeded to bounce along for two days without a problem. The RM is no bird when drinking fuel, but it ain't no pig either. There was one 70-mile section with about 20 straight miles of knee deep sand that had many of the two-strokes seizing up tight and running out of gas; I ran wide open in fourth gear and still made it to the gas stop with gas to spare.

For protection I installed a skid plate and chain tensioner, also from Graham's Sheet Metal. The RM has about 10 inches of ground clearance and even though it rarely drags its belly, it's further insurance that you'll make it to the finish line. The chain tensioner bolts on in place of the chain guide and is a must for long distance races. During these enduros

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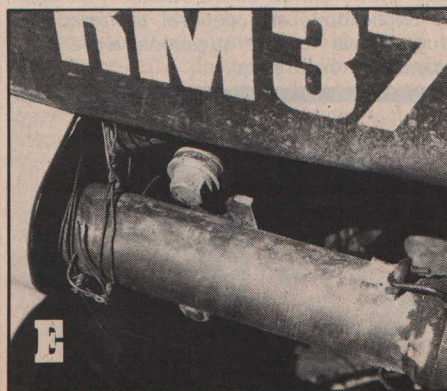


A Graham's aluminum skid plate is light and offers good protection around the engine cases. Be sure to cut mounting bolts off flush with the nuts to prevent getting hung-up on anything.

B Graham's chain tensioner is made of aluminum with a black anodized finish and bolts directly in place of the stock chain guide. Roller is made of tough nylon and turns on roller bearings.

C New Preston Petty GP grip is designed for smaller hands and is made of extra soft rubber—it's now hexed only halfway around and conforms to the hand much better than before.

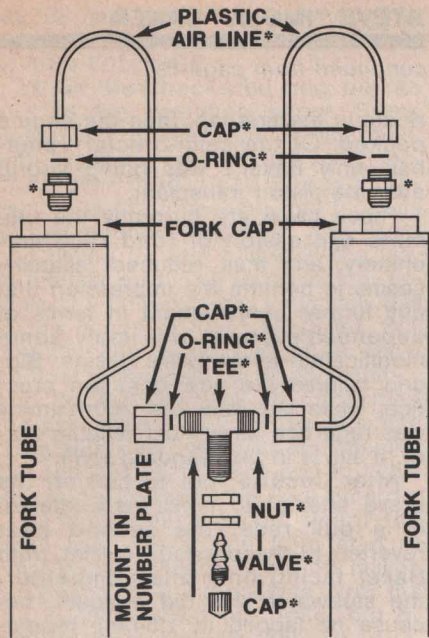
D After the enduro we removed the tensioner and as you can see, the roller is about half worn out. In another 500 miles you can pick up a replacement roller from Graham's.



E Aside from the throttle cable the only other part that busted was this rear pipe bracket. If you don't beef it up, it'll break on you everytime. Bailing wire and pliers can temporarily fix just about anything.

PRICE LIST

Goodyear 3.50-21 D/S.....	\$38.50
Goodyear 4.50-18 D/S.....	\$45.00
Trickit Fork Kit.....	\$29.95
3.2 Gallon Tank.....	\$34.95
Skid Plate.....	\$24.50
Chain Tensioner.....	\$17.95
Handgrips.....	\$ 4.00
	\$194.85



*INCLUDED IN KIT

Air Fork Plumbing If you're playing around with air forks, try this kit used for filling air shocks on cars. You can get them at most auto parts stores for about three bucks. The big advantage is not having to balance the pressure in the tubes, as you do with separate valves. Another is that with the larger volume, you don't lose as much air when taking a pressure reading.

Joe Borish
Verona, Pennsylvania

there's no time to adjust chains at the stops; therefore you're always running with quite a bit of slack in the chain. The tensioner takes up the slop and prevents any derailment. That sucker worked good too! Midway through the second day I did a berm shot off a rock which busted off one of the rear axle adjusters and loosened the wheel. Even though the wheel was flopping around loose in back, the tensioner still kept the chain from flying off. I ran a mile or so that way and figured it was due time to stop when the chain started catching on the side knobs of the tire. I used a pair of Vise Grips as an axle clamp and proceeded to finish the race that way.

A day before the race I received a sample pair of Preston Petty's new "GP Works Grips" in the mail so I thought I'd give them a try. Unlike his first pair that were hex-shaped around the entire grip, the new GP grip is only hexed halfway around and conforms much better to the hand than the original version. Anytime I can go 500 miles without even the faintest notion of a blister I'm satisfied; and I wasn't even wearing any \$30 super trick racer gloves either.

There were a couple of areas in which I missed the boat however. I would have liked to have installed a

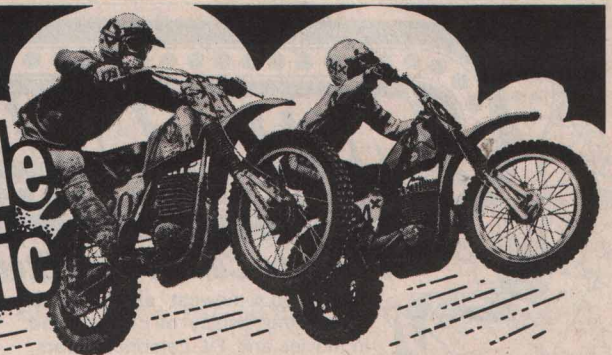
quieter muffler, and would have if I'd known of one that fit; the stock unit is way too loud when you're going to be on that baby for two days straight. Also, I should have geared it one tooth higher on the countershaft sprocket for those long, long straights in Baja. I had to buzz it super tight in some areas to keep up, and that in conjunction with bad Mexican gas can really be hard on an engine. I also should have taken a spare throttle cable along as mine shredded on me the second day. Since then I've heard of other Suzuki riders having throttle problems too, so it would be wise to carry one with you. I bummed a spare cable from a guy riding a Honda MR250 and after using a half role of super tape, I finally got it to work without sticking wide open on me—they trees come up might fast when the throttle sticks WFO.

That's it, that was all I did to that bike and it out-lasting and out-performed bikes having three times as much money in them and built specifically for endurance runs. I took my RM back home, took the extra pieces off, re-mounted the stock tires and proceeded to motocross the same bike two weeks later. Now is that a dual-purpose bike or was all this just my imagination?

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