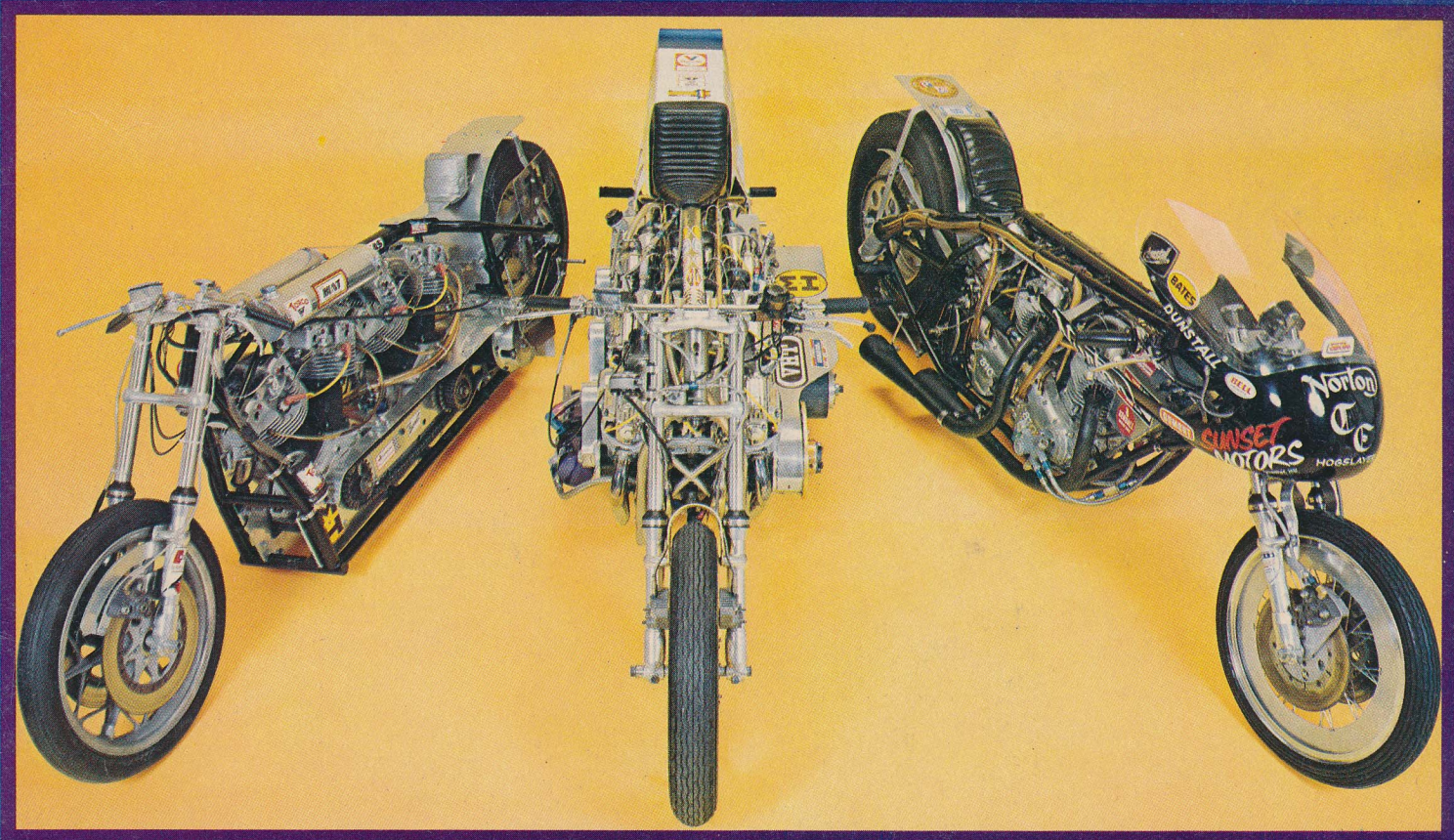


# Cycle

FEBRUARY 1976 75 CENTS

## AMERICA'S TOP FUEL DRAG RACING KINGPINS

**RUSS COLLINS' HONDA (7.86 - 179 mph)**  
**JOE SMITH'S HARLEY-DAVIDSON (8.02 - 183 mph)**  
**T.C. CHRISTENSON'S NORTON (7.93 - 177 mph)**



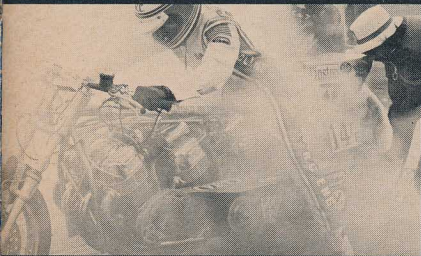
**Rickman's High-Buck Honda 750 and Kawasaki Z-1 Kit Bikes**

950952 MNN B0729199 741C FEB77  
T C MANNING  
PO BOX 723  
KEYSTONE HTS FL 32656  
02

**3 Ways To Make It A Winner**

**180 mph Factory Road Racer**

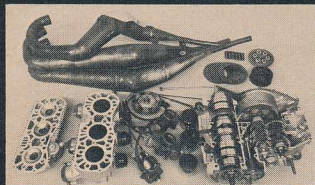
**He Talks About the ISDT**



p.28



p.44



p.50

## Road Tests

- 38 Honda XL-350  
*Engine? Superlative. The rest? Ordinary.*
- 65 Honda CB-125 S3  
*You could call it a second-guess mini-hot-rod.*

## Features

- 28 These Three  
*... have made Top Fuel their own. By Cook Neilson.*
- 44 Custom XL: the C&J Monothumper  
*Some people trick-frame it . . .*
- 46 Custom XL: A Four-Stroke Maico  
*... and others swap-frame it . . .*
- 47 Custom XL: Bell's Baja Bullet  
*... and still others win Baja with it. All by Dale Boller.*
- 60 The Rickman Hyphenates  
*That is to say, hyphen-CB-750 and hyphen Z-1.*
- 78 Double-Time Express  
*When you say ring-ding, you'd better smile. By Cook Neilson.*

## Competition

- 56 Carl Cranke Talks About the ISDT  
*And brother, he ought to know. By Dale Boller.*

## Technical

- 48 How Things Work: Hydraulic Disc Brakes  
*Put the squeeze in here, and it comes out there. By Gordon Jennings.*
- 50 Suzuki TR-750 Road Racer: A Look Inside  
*Grubby fingers on top-secret parts. By Gordon Jennings.*
- 74 Product Evaluation: Widder Electric Vest  
*Brisk-weather warmth at a decent price. By Cook Neilson.*
- 87 The Shop: Honda CB-500 Linkage Fix  
*A two-anna-three-anna-three-anna-three . . . By Jess Thomas.*

## Departments

- 4 Editorial / *Racing* / Cook Neilson
- 7 Letters / *Calculating Readers*
- 8 Newsline / *On the Christmas Rebound*
- 10 Pipeline / *Drags, the English Heartland* / Jim Greening
- 14 Tips / *More Honda Hints*
- 71 Road Test Index
- 98 Classified Ads
- 101 Readers Service

P. Thomas Sargent, *Publisher*  
Cook Neilson, *Editor*  
Phil Schilling, *Executive Editor*  
Dale Boller, *Managing Editor*  
Gordon Jennings, *To Be Continued*  
Jess Thomas, *Technical Editor*  
Dave Holeman, *Associate Editor*  
Margaret Beschen, *Production Director*

Paul R. Halesworth, *Art Director*  
Teri Lamoureux, *Art Assistant*

Michael Shuter, *Contributing Editor*  
Jim Greening, *Contributing Editor*  
Kevin Cameron, *Contributing Editor*  
Beverly Collins, *Editorial Assistant*  
Bettina J. Costello, *Assistant to the Publisher*

Joe Mesics, *Associate Publisher*  
Edward J. Judge, *Eastern Regional Ad Manager*  
Randy Pelton, *Midwestern/Southeastern  
Sales Representative*

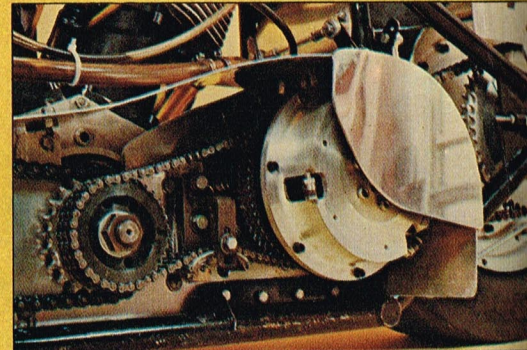
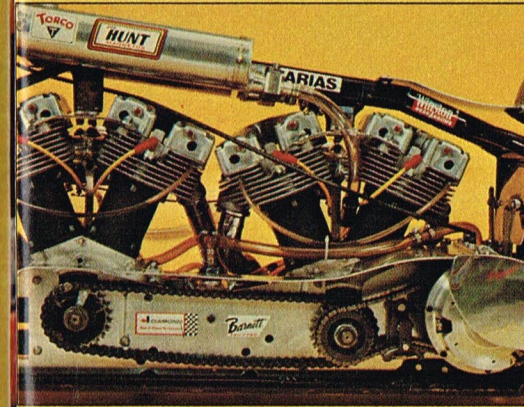
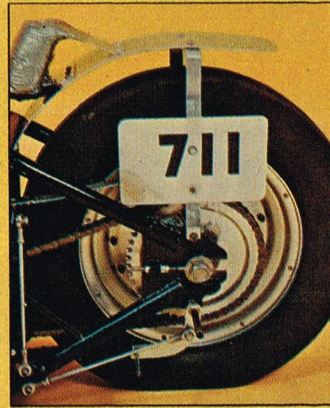
John C. Kohr, *Western Ad Representative*  
Linda J. Sutton, *Western Sales Representative*

Edward D. Muhlfeld, *Publishing Director*

This Month's Cover: Three bikes, seven engines, and 900 horsepower—that's the substance of the machinery Larry Willett was asked to photograph for *Cycle's* February cover. To assemble that much power any other way would have taken ten Honda GL-1000s, 12 Kawasaki Z-1s, 45 Suzuki 125 MXers or 90 Honda CB-125s.

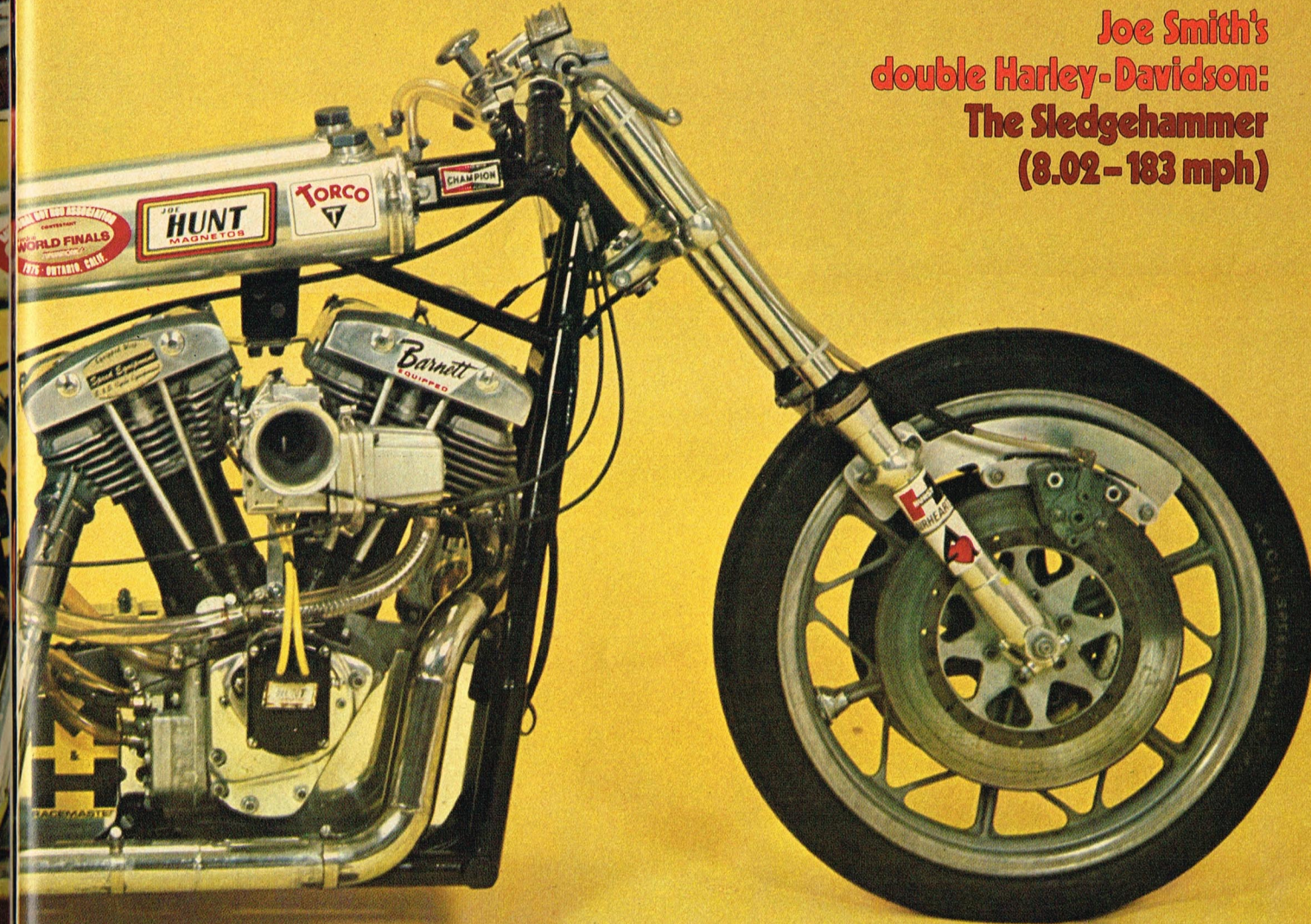
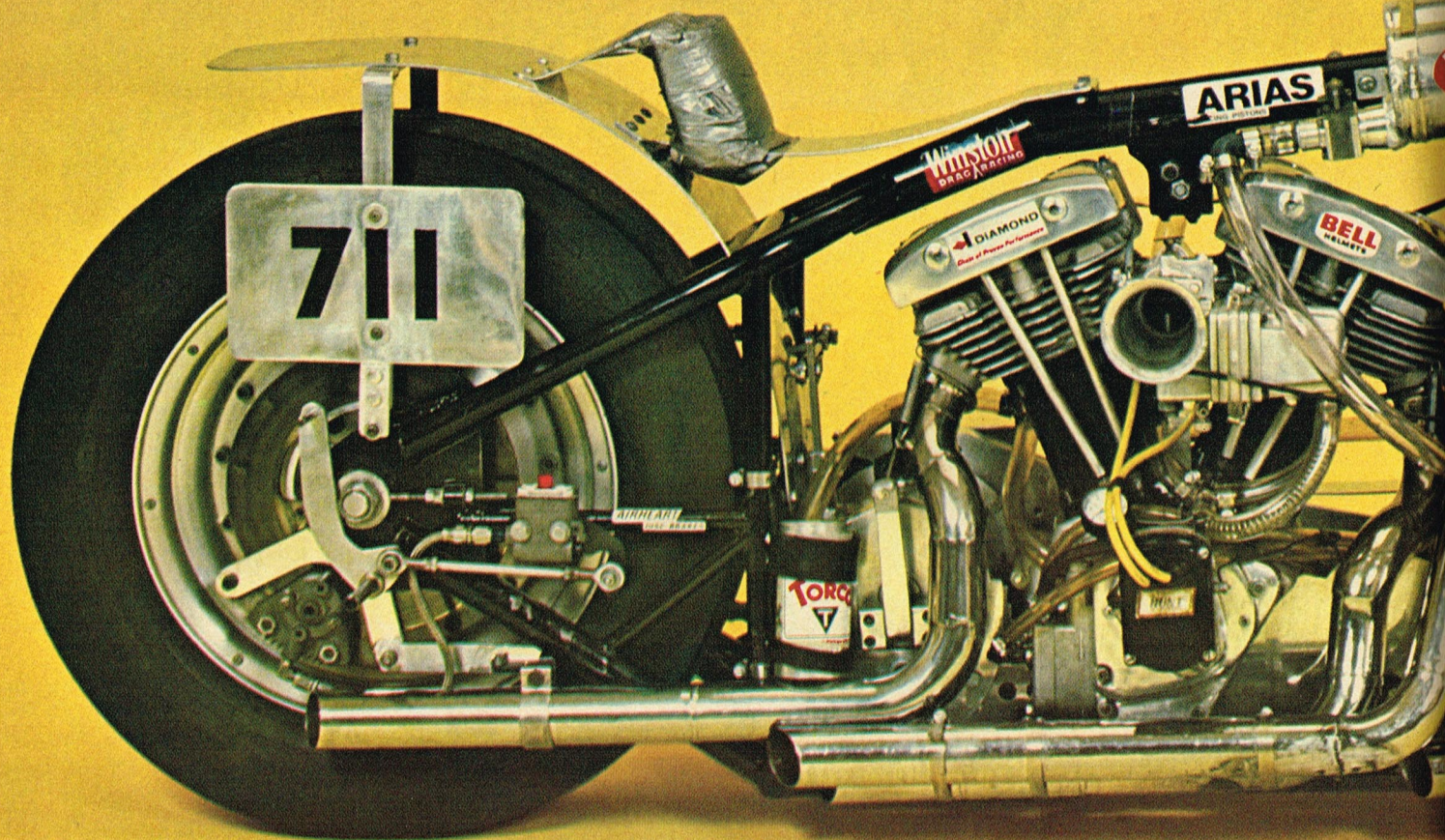
● So Top Fuel drag racing has finally shaken down to these three: Joe Smith's double-engined sledgehammer of a Harley-Davidson; the light, lyrical, stinging twin-motor Norton of T.C. Christenson and John Gregory; and Russ Collins' Mighty Wurlitzer of Speed, the triple-engined Honda, as much entertainment and kinetic art as it is race bike. Coming from entirely different directions these three have met not at a place or time, but at a very precise rate of acceleration; only sixteen hundredths of a second separate them in terms of how long it takes to traverse a quarter-mile from a standing start. The double-engined Harley has roots extending back to the mid-Sixties, when its builder, Joe Smith, was trying to get a series of Knucklehead engines to live on jolts of nitro they found unappetizing; the double Norton's forebearer was an injected single-engine rig that was the quickest and fastest of its type; and the Honda came from, well, it came from the boundless imagination and busy fingers

Between Joe Smith's double-engined Harley-Davidson, Russ Collins' triple-engined Honda and the double-engined Norton of T.C. Christenson and John Gregory, Top Fuel drag racing has become a seven-second, 180 mph squabble—and one of the best shows in town. By Cook Neilson



COLOR PHOTOGRAPHY: LARRY WILLETT

# THESE THREE



**Joe Smith's double Harley-Davidson: The Sledgehammer (8.02-183 mph)**

of Russ Collins, motorcycle racing's greatest showman.

The bikes that were forces to be contended with a few years ago no longer are. Big-inch single-engined 74s and Sportsters peaked in the 9.0 to 8.8 second range; what made them into museum pieces were the early double-engined

Harley-Davidsons, whose presence at drag strips was preordained by the progress made by M&H Tire Company's Marvin Rifchin, who introduced the six-inch-wide racing rear skin, and by Sandy Kosman, who saw to it that (for a price) the new tires had wheels to mount on. The result of M&H's and Kosman's efforts was simply this: there suddenly was traction enough to contain the horsepower provided by two enormous engines lashed together, and the competitive days of the single-engined Sportsters and 74s ended . . . just like that.

The single-engined 74 that stayed competitive for the longest time, namely Joe Smith's, should not escape without notice, however. Not only did Joe use it to win the Indy Nationals in 1971 and 1974 (he was runner-up in 1973), but it propelled him to motorcycle drag racing's first sub-nine-second quarter-mile. Using engines of different sizes (all over 100 cubic inches), using different induction systems (carburetor and fuel injection)

and developing more and more progressive drive train components, Joe's single was not only a tremendous race bike in its own right, but served as a test bed for components and ideas that, in 1975, brought forth the current double.

It is a beast of a motorcycle, Joe's double. It weighs 530 lbs. and its wheelbase varies between 75 inches and 76 inches. The engines Joe used at Ontario to run 182.55 mph displace 102 cubic inches each. The crankcases are late-model 74s, with bores of 3 $\frac{1}{16}$  inches and strokes of 4 $\frac{1}{2}$  inches. The stroker flywheel assemblies come from S&S, 10.4:1 pistons from Burkhart Engineering.

Mondello, of drag car fame, worked up Smith's cylinder head ports. Joe does his own valve seats, Burkhart handles the guides and valves and the valve springs are Offenhauser's. Valve head size is stock (1 15/16-in. intake, 1 $\frac{1}{8}$ -in. exhaust), but the stems have been ground down to 11/32-in. The guides are fabricated

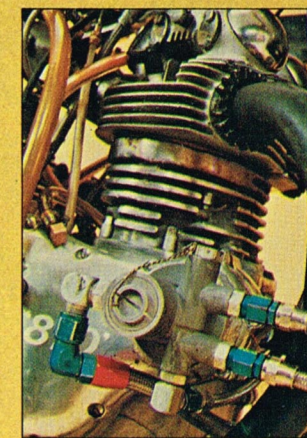
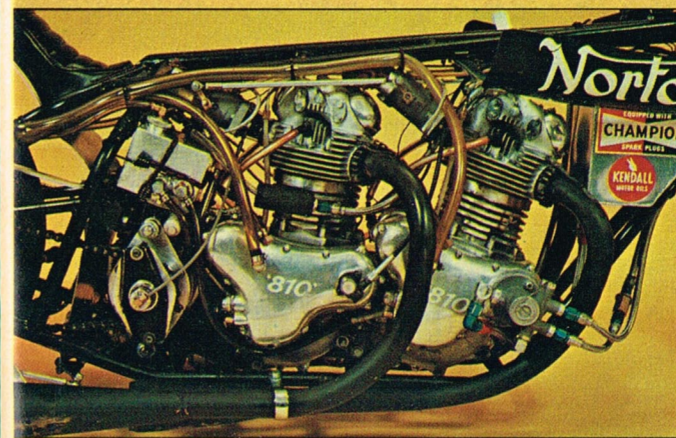
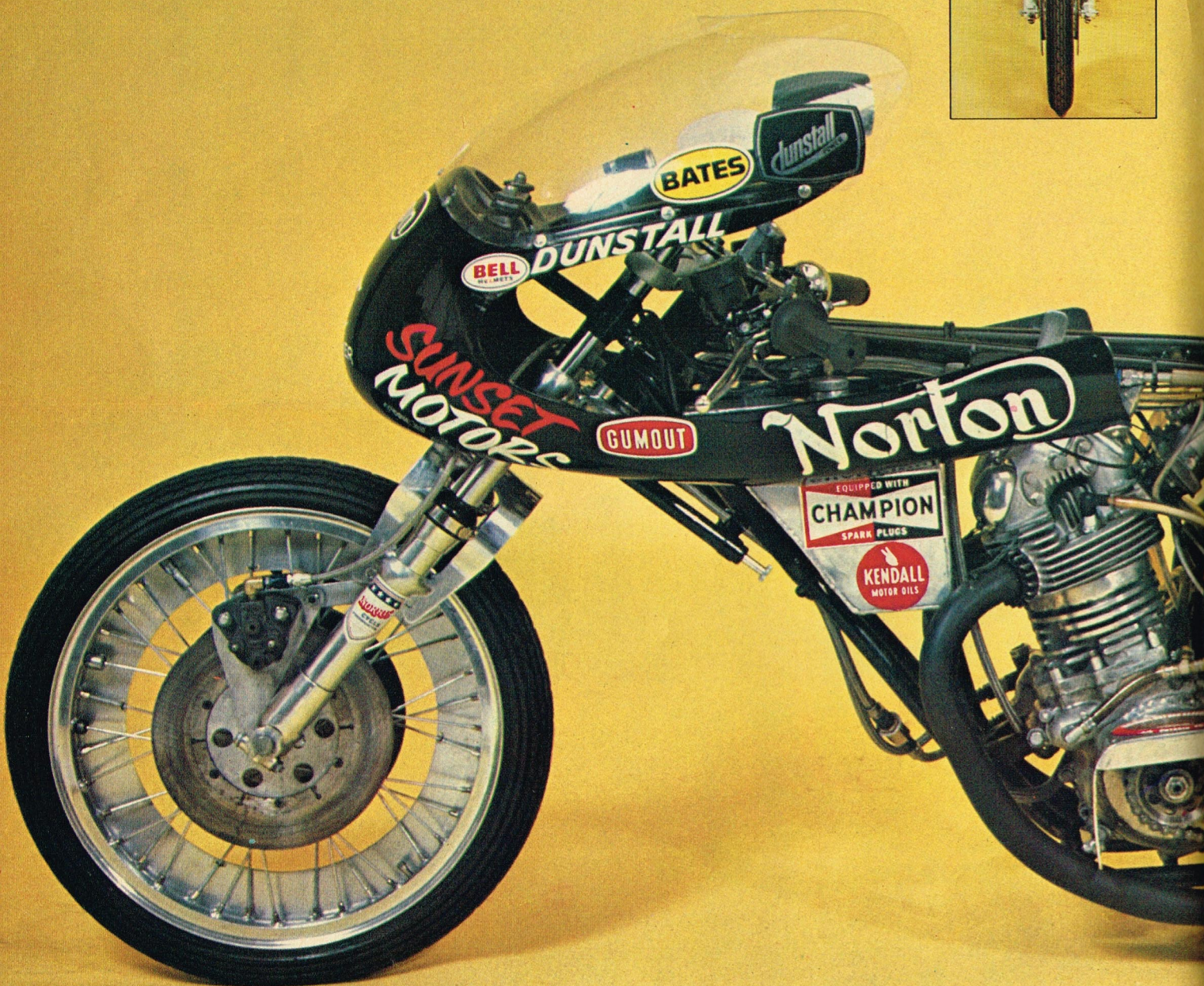
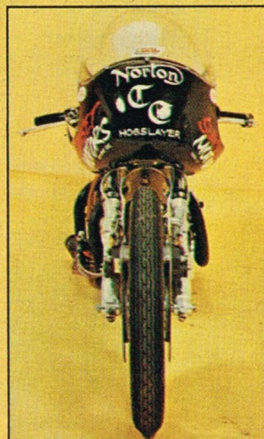
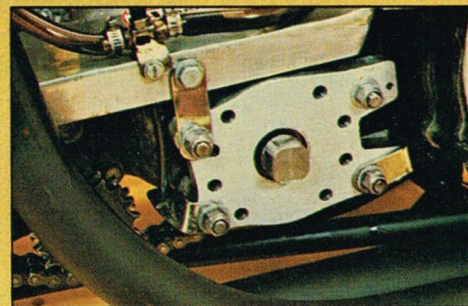
from 4130 steel and fitted with aluminum-bronze helicoil inserts.

You may have noticed in the photographs that the S&S carburetors on Smith's Monster-Glide are . . . different. Gordon Kateley, a long-time friend and helper of Smith's, welded and machined dual float bowls for each 1 7/8-in. carb. Why? Because the bike kept running out of fuel, forcing Joe to shift early and keep the engine speed down to avoid starvation. The Kateley bowls, installed just before Ontario, were responsible in large part for the bike's 180-plus trap speeds. Main jets are "about" .300-in. in diameter; the dump tube measures "about" .307-in.

The engines are coupled with Diamond # 530 chain connecting two extra-large drive sprockets; dual-row Azusa Engi-

neering chain and sprockets carry the power to the rear wheel. A standard Sportster clutch, extended one inch to hold 11 sintered iron Barnett plates, is engaged by a Smith-designed, Scott McDonald-machined pressure-plate/"hat." Unlike Russ Collins's, Smith's slider is hand-actuated and connects to a Lenco two-speed, foot-actuated transmission. The Lenco is a 43% overdrive unit; Joe plans to switch next year to a B&J transmission like the one in Danny Johnson's double Sportster. It is underdriven in low and direct in high, just the opposite of the Lenco.

Joe has been building his own chassis since the mid-Sixties. The double's frame is fabricated from 4130 tubing, its steering head angle is 40 degrees, its trail measures 7 1/2-in. and it carries engine-mount plates made of 7075 aluminum. ("The 7075 stuff is too brittle. For next year I'm switching to 6061 T6.") The front end



assembly is comprised of a Kimtab mag, an Avon Speedmaster tire and a Ceriani fork; a Cragar rear wheel with a Kosman center section mounts the M&H six-inch slick. Airheart hydraulic disc brakes are

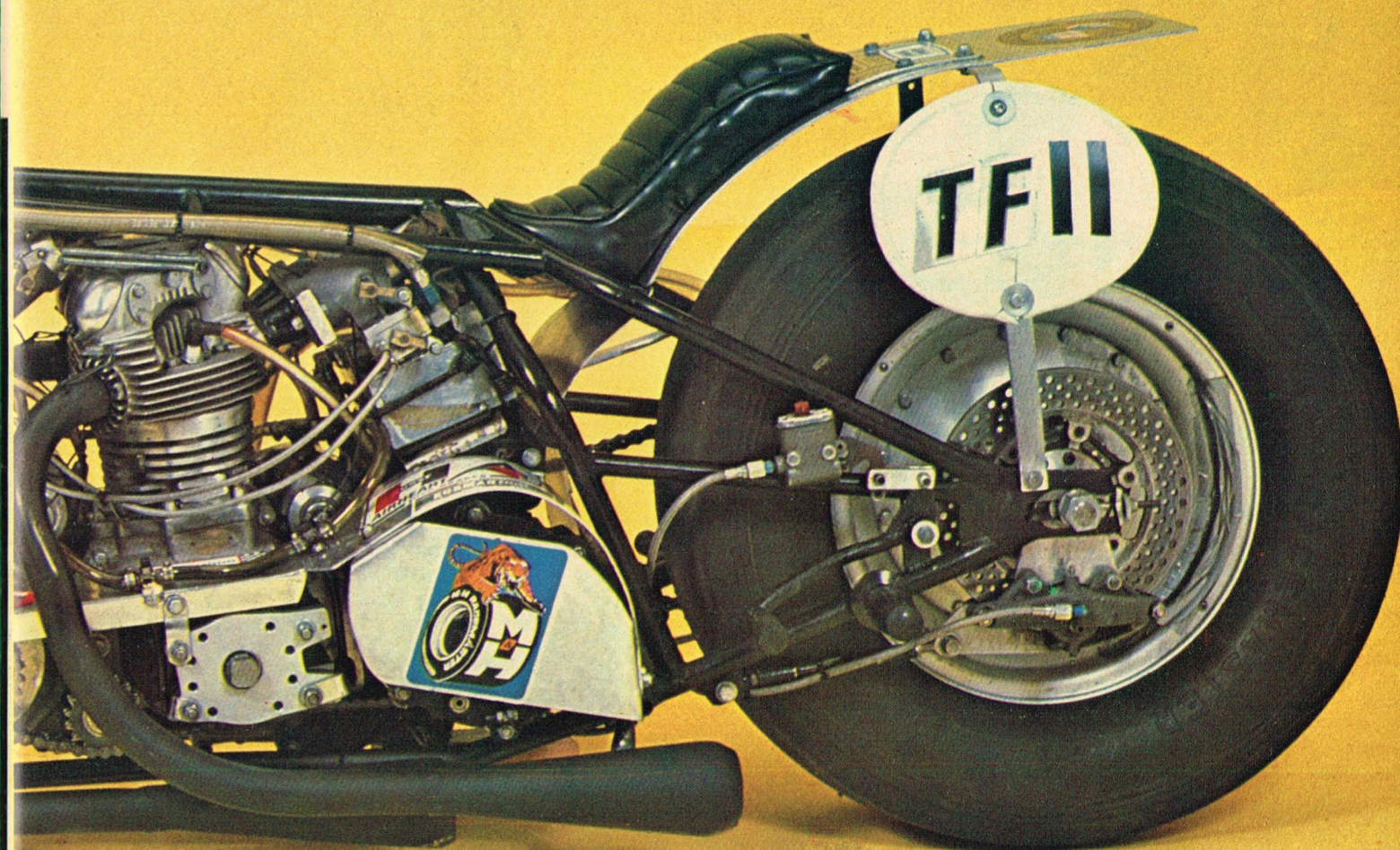
used fore and aft.

The bike's 1975 record is impressive in its consistency. It ran 174.48 mph in 8.39 sec. at Pomona's Winternationals, set an 8.49 sec. track record at Bakers-

field, an 8.39 sec. record at National Trail in Columbus, Ohio, was runner-up at the Bowling Green meet with times of 8.55-169.17, ran 8.34-174.41 but broke at Englishtown, New Jersey, won the AHRA's bike meet in Kansas City with a track-record 8.65-169.81, won the Indianapolis Nationals for the second year in a row with a record ET of 8.19 and a speed of 176.81; was runner-up at Ontario with best times of 8.02-182.55; and won the Fremont meet.

Joe's bike is the only Top Fueler in history to have exceeded 180 mph in the traps; it is the only one of these three bikes that has not recorded a sub-eight-second ET. The reason is the rear tire. The Christenson-Gregory Norton and the R.C. Engineering Honda both use M&H's new eight-inch rear slick, which wasn't clearly identified as the tire to use in 1975 until Joe's chassis was already complete. The double 74's rear section was de-

### The Christenson-Gregory double Norton: The Stinger (7.93-177 mph)



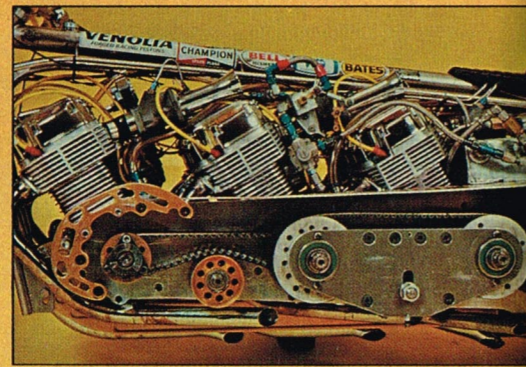
**THESE THREE**

signed to accommodate a six-inch tire; that is all it accommodates.

"ETs of 7.50 to 7.60; trap speeds over 190 mph. That's what it'll take in 1976. I'll even say I'm gonna do it." To get where he wants to be next season, Joe is currently building an all-new motorcycle. Because of the limitations of his current chassis, Smith has had tire limitations too. The new chassis will be wide enough and stout enough to accept an 8-in. rear tire; with the big tire Joe can go back to using his 108-in. engines, which were simply too strong for the 6-in. M&H. Other changes will include the B&J trans, an MTC rear wheel and a Crower clutch. Much will stay the same: carburetion, Champion N64Y (or N63Y, or N65Y) spark plugs, an 87% nitro brew (mixed exclusively by his wife Pat), Torco oil, Webcam cam shafts, Joe Hunt magnetos. He'll win a lot of meets in 1976, for the same reasons he won a lot in 1975: his equipment is powerful, tough and reliable; he's a superior rider; and as a rider and as a designer/mechanic, Joe Smith doesn't make many mistakes.

The double-engined Norton of John Gregory and T.C. Christenson is in many ways the antithesis of Smith's bruiser. The

Harley's displacement is well over 200 cubic inches; the Norton displaces well under 2000 cubic centimeters. Joe uses carburetors; the Norton breathes through fuel injectors. The double Harley is moderately heavy at 525 lbs.; the Norton is exquisitely light at 450 (and so is its pilot, who weighs 125). The Harley presents itself as a rock-crusher; the Norton beguiles. The Monster-Glide looks like it ought to be a jet, and is. The Norton looks like it ought to be a stone, and isn't. The Harley revs at 6000; the Norton, 8000. The Harley engines are vintage 1975; the Nortons were born more than a decade earlier. Smith bought his transmission from Lenco and modified his clutch; John Gregory and T.C. Christenson *manufactured* their clutch and built their two-speed trans out of a Rambler overdrive unit. Joe's bike uses 87% nitro; the Norton has to cope with a steady diet of 95% nitro, 2½% propylene oxide (a truly nasty chemical used as an igniter that was originally compounded to control the growth of micro-organisms in foodstuffs) and 2½% methanol. Much potential remains in the double Harley; the Norton is completely strung out and facing retirement (to be replaced by a Norton triple, about



## Russ Collins' Triple Honda: The Mighty Wurlitzer (7.86 - 179 mph)

which more later).

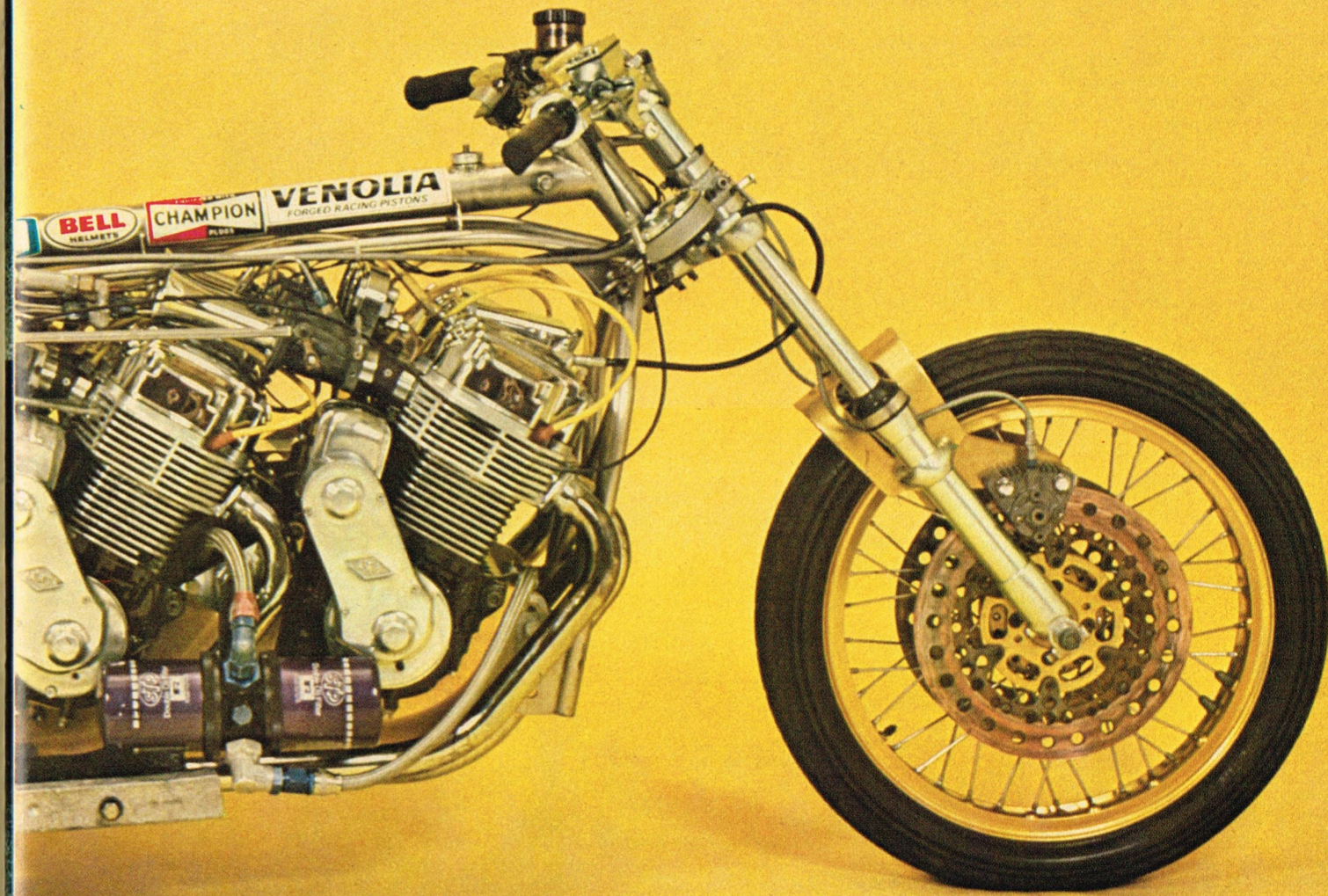
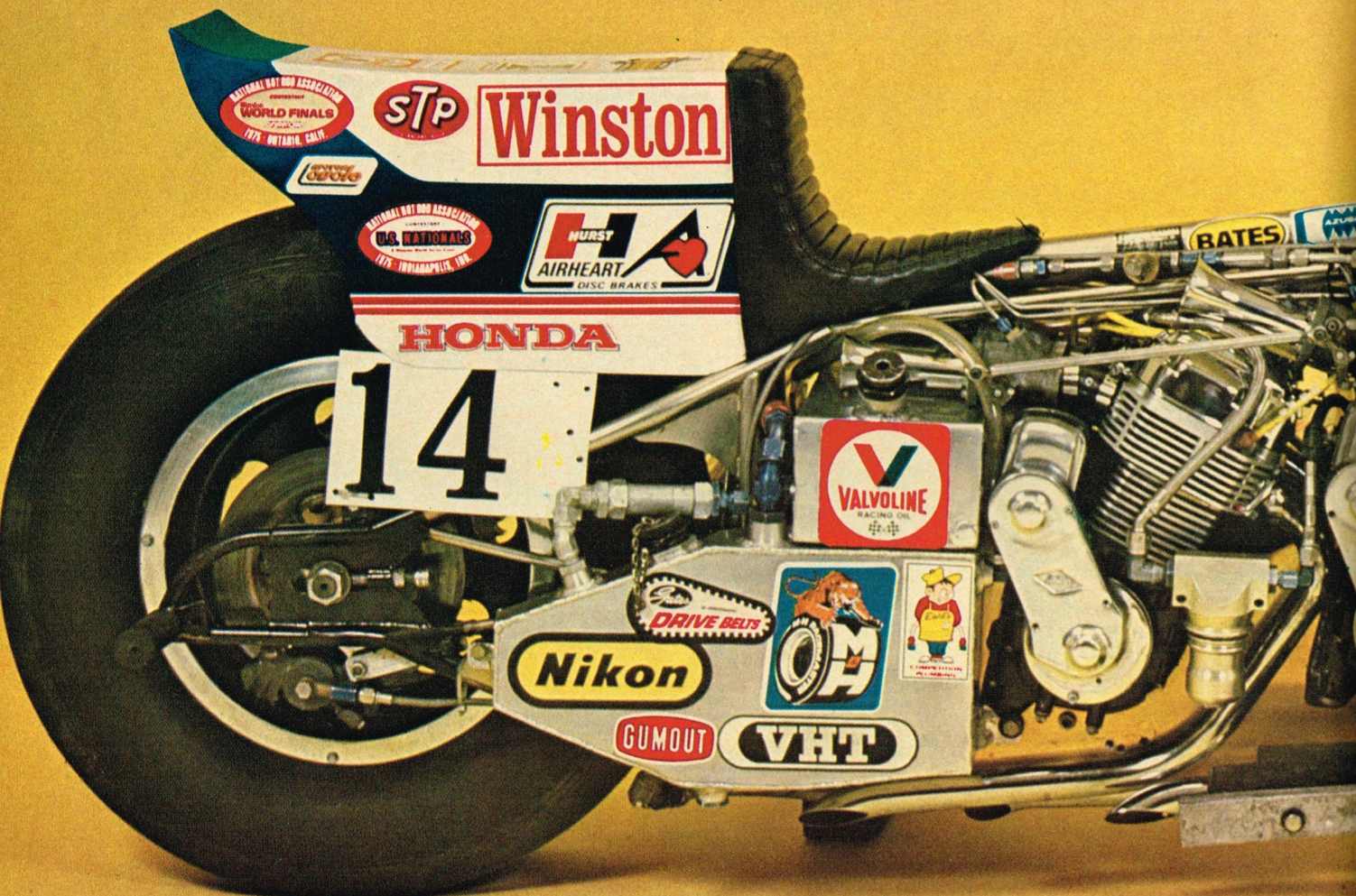
Brilliant as the little bike has been all season long, it truly came into its own at the Ontario SuperNationals. The triple Honda set a new ET record, which it has been capable of doing for some time; Joe set a new speed record, which he has done frequently in the past; but the Norton won, with a brilliant string of seven-second passes (7.99—175.78, 7.93—175, 7.93—176, 7.95—175) that would be nearly impossible to match for consistency.

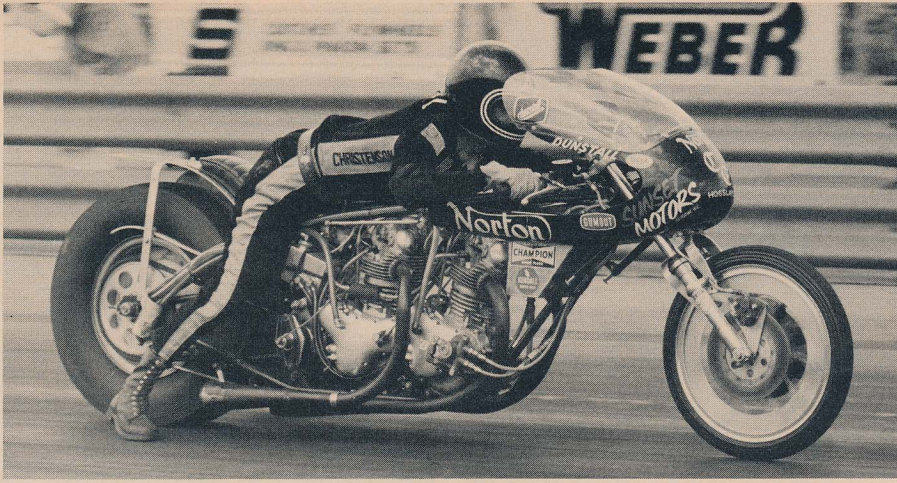
Consistency almost always wins drag meets, and the Norton guys are almost always consistent. Their 1975 record, briefly: they won the AMDRA Memphis meet on May 5; won a match race series in Cincinnati, with the day's top speed and low ET, on May 24; qualified quickest at the June 15 Bowling Green meet; qualified quickest at the July 11 NHRA SummerNationals meet in Englishtown; won the AMDRA Cincinnati meet on July 20; won a match race series in Canada on August 5, and another one in Cordova, Illinois on August 22; set an unofficial motorcycle ET record (8.02) and finished in the runner-up slot at the Indianapolis Nationals on September 1; set a new

European record and won the match race series at Santa Pod, England on September 21; won another match race there the following weekend; won the Atco AMDRA meet (for the fourth time) on October 5 after qualifying with the meet's quickest ET and fastest speed; won the Ontario meet for the third time with a stream of sevens; and picked off Irwindale with a last round shot fully two tenths quicker than the day's previous best Top Fuel ET.

If Joe Smith's Harley-Davidson worships displacement and Russ's Honda is a monument to complexity, the Norton is a serenade to technology. It would have to be, when you consider that it is powered by such little old engines. They displace 810cc; the cylinders, heads and pistons are all heavily-reworked Dunstall items. The top two cylinder fins have been shaved, welded together and filled for more support for the Grade 6 head bolts, and the heads were 0-ringed to solve a persistent leakage problem. The combustion chambers are full-hemis with

## THESE THREE





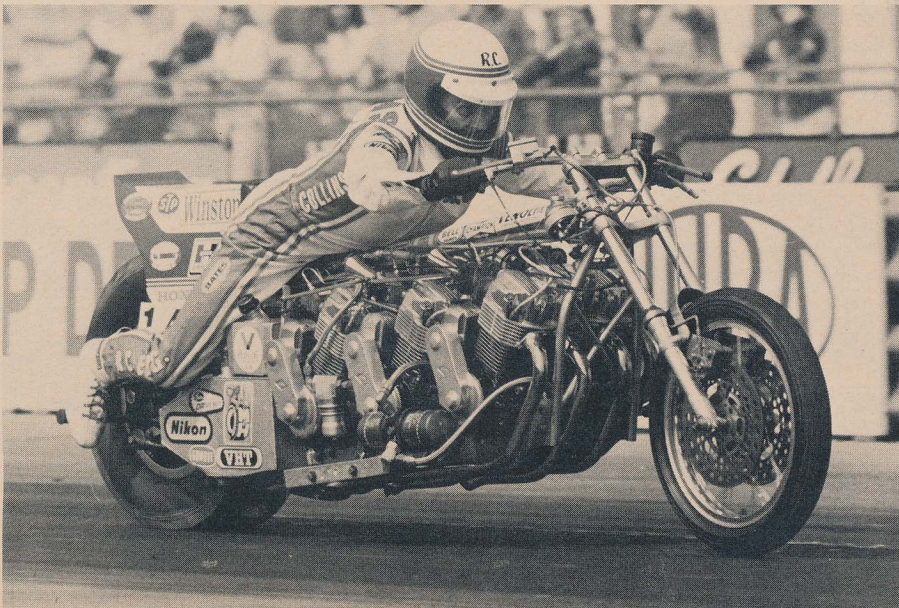
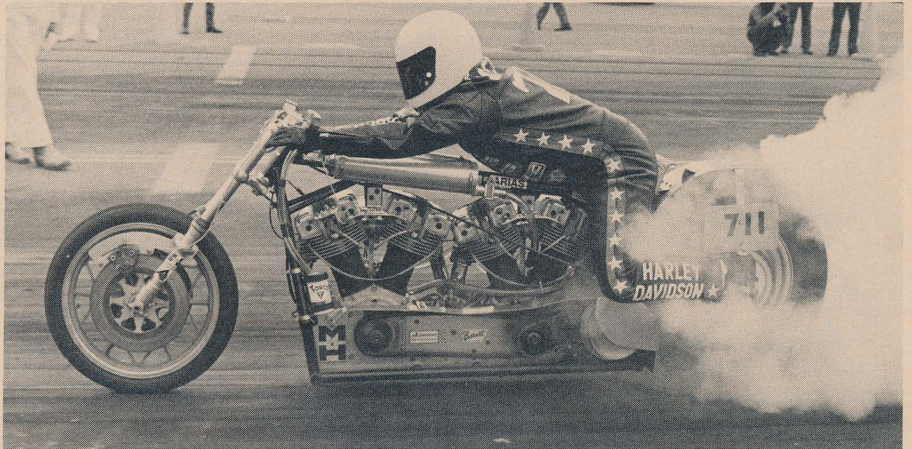
## THESE THREE

1 1/8-in. intake valves and 1 7/16-in. exhausts, and the intake valve angle was changed by Dunstall from 28 degrees to 26 1/2 degrees. Intake ports measure 33mm. Pushrods, valve springs, cams and titanium collars all come from Norris. The cams produce .438-in. of valve lift.

The specifications of the Norton's lower ends are confounding. Gregory uses standard, unpolished connecting rods, standard rod bearings fitted up with .0005-in. extra clearance, and a pair of stock (although thoroughly massaged) early Sixties Atlas cranks. The crank journals' oiling holes have been cross-grooved for better lubrication. The cranks have been rebalanced to a 92% factor by Ray Belluci, and lightened by 5 1/2-lbs. each. In two seasons of racing the lower ends have never given trouble—and these lower ends have to contend with 150bhp each. Before Gregory and Christenson made their own Teflon oil seals, the Norton was good for five or six runs on a set of lower-end bearings. The nitro-proof seals bumped that figure up to 25 runs, and the combination of the trick seals and

Kendall Nitro 70 oil now protects the lower ends for a season or more.

There are three specific areas of high-level technology on the Norton: the induction system, the drive train and the chassis. Induction is handled by a fuel injector (Hilborn # 105 04A) from a midget Offenhauser, cut in two and adapted to the Norton's cylinder heads with homemade manifolds. The Hilborn BL630 pump drives off the front engine's cam shaft and is rated at 3.4 gallons per minute. Three



lines come from the pump: one goes to a #57 Hilborn metering valve, one returns to the tank through the high-speed jet (known as the "pill"), and the last bleeds pressure back to the tank when the throttle is closed at high engine speeds; it is intended to keep the injector pressure from blowing the lines off the bike at the end of a run. The relief is set to open at 37 psi at 6000 rpm.

The metering valve, which regulates the amount of fuel going down the intake ports in response to throttle opening, was fitted with a special low-speed bypass system when Gregory installed a larger pump two years ago. They were finding that under heavy air conditions, the original pump wasn't doing the job. But if a larger pump were added it would over-feed the engines at low speeds—thus the metering body bypass.

"Injection can be dialed in much, much closer than carburetors," Gregory says. "When the injectors are off by 8 or 10%, they're still better than carbs, and when the injectors are right, there's absolutely no comparison."

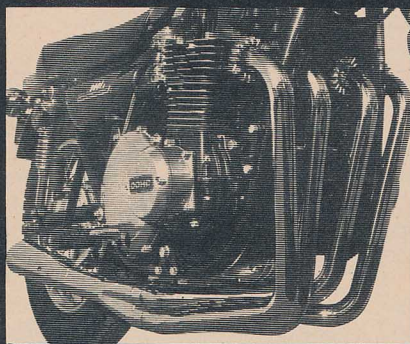
Christenson and Gregory were the first to try an automotive-type slipper clutch, the first to try an automotive-type two-speed transmission and the first to use an eight-in. tire. The clutch is completely

of their manufacture; they made the patterns, machined the castings and contracted with a stamping company to fabricate the plates. (The clutch is also used by Danny Johnson and Marion Owens.) The two-speed, fabricated before Lenco began supplying transmissions to motorcycle people at the request of Sonny Routt, is a classic example of American hot rod thinking, coming from an unlikely place (a Rambler, of all things) and doing an unlikely job.

The chassis was built in 1972 because of Christenson's and Gregory's desire for a wider (8-in.) rear tire, a lower, lighter bike and then-revolutionary drive line components. The drive line, which had earlier located the clutch and transmission input and output shafts on the bike's left side, was rearranged so that the output shaft drove off the bike's right side. This more balanced division of mass permitted Gregory to remove 40 lbs. of ballast

(Continued on page 88)

# HOOKER



## Horses \$16 each

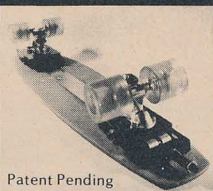
It's Hooker's 4 into 1 system, part #27151 for 1973-76 Kawasaki Z1. \*Dyno-tested it delivered 83 horsepower at 8,500 rpm. (Stock read 73 horsepower.) That's 10 extra horses at roughly \$16 each. Hooker systems make horsepower.

Hooker has over 200 exhaust systems for the latest super bikes. Ask at better dealers, now. Or write Hooker at 1032 West Brooks Street, Ontario, California 91762.

\* Testing was conducted on a Stuska dynamometer, November 7, 1972, at Hooker's California facility by Product Development Engineer, Dick Lytell.

A suspension system on a skateboard? That's right. It's Hooker's revolutionary contribution to high performance skateboarding. A simple adjustment of Hooker's suspension system can dial in just the right performance attitude:

releasing the energy of a flex board for the wildest hotdogging or assuring the stability and security of a rigid board for high speed runs. Available in 24" and 27" lengths, the suspension system can be easily installed on your flexible board. Or, for the ultimate performer; order the fiberglass Hooker Tune Flex board complete with suspension system, sure grip deck, double action trucks and urethane wheels. It's cheaper to buy the best the first time. And you can order direct, sight unseen and know you'll get the best just because it's from Hooker.



Patent Pending

Yes, I want the best. Send me a Hooker.

24" Hooker Tune Flex Board:

\$58.40 Yellow: \$59.40 Rainbow

27" Hooker Tune Flex Board:

\$59.40 Yellow: \$60.40 Rainbow

\$19.95 Suspension System 24" 27"

Undecided? Send \$1.25 for information on all Hooker products. My weight is \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Master Charge: BankAmericard

Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Enclose check or money order payable to Hooker, 1032 West Brooks St., Ontario, Calif. 91762. Freight included. California residents add 6% tax. Offer void where prohibited. Sorry, no C.O.D.

## THESE THREE . . . Continued from page 37

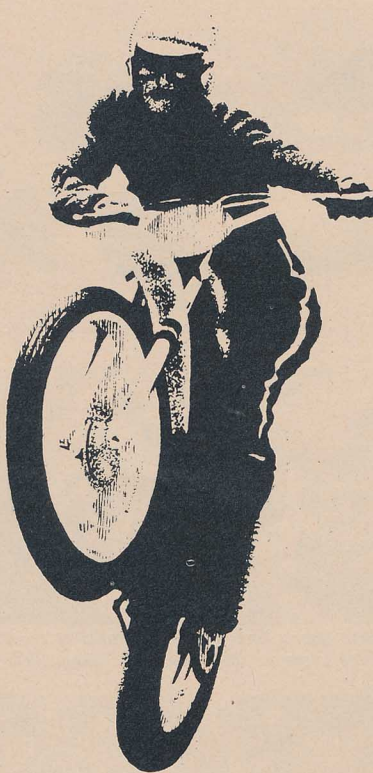
from the right-side, and move the clutch 1/8-in. closer to the Norton's center-line.

The head fairing is there not necessarily to enhance penetration but to make the bike easier to ride. Because of the injection linkage Christenson can't wrap his legs around the bike like other riders do; without the fairing he could use only his arms to contend with wind-blast.

Gregory and Christenson, recognising that their current dragster is at the end of the line, have already begun building their 1976 race bike. It will be powered by three Norton engines, and times of 7.50-185 mph are anticipated. The triple, astonishingly, will be two inches shorter than the double.

Three engines or no, you can rest assured that the bike will fulfill Christenson's and Gregory's primary requisites: it will be as light as they can get it, it will be simple, it will be reliable—and it will win.

If you can get it in your mind that Joe Smith's double Harley-Davidson is a Sherman tank and the Norton a Side-winder missile, then Russ Collins' triple-engined "Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe" is a Rose Bowl Parade float. Think of the double 74 as an operatic basso, the Norton as Rita Coolidge and the Honda triple as the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. It glitters. It shines. Hundreds of feet of braided steel hose entwine its length like Christmas tree decorations;



ERIC GUSTAVSON

multi-colored mechanical mysteries gleam forth from every available space and cranny. "If you sat down and sketched out a bike like Russ's," says John Gregory, "you'd figure that it simply couldn't be built."

It weighs 850 pounds—400 more than the Norton and 320 more than Smith's Monster-Glide. It has its own remote electric starter. It uses belts to carry the primary drive instead of chains. Its clutch cannot be engaged or disengaged manually. It has fittings on the intake horns for nitrous oxide injection. It uses two gallons of fuel mixture per run, and carries on-board two gallons of 70-Wt. Valvoline oil. It costs Russ Collins between \$250 and \$300 to make a single quarter-mile run. It has to be unloaded from its truck with an electric winch and sling.

It is in every conceivable way almost beyond imagining, and it has, in one season of running, done wondrous things for drag racing in general, and for the Top Fuel category in particular. At Ontario it became the first motorcycle in history to run a seven, with an off-the-trailer rip of 7.96-176.81. It then dropped that time to a 7.861-178.92, and ran a back-up 7.91-178 in the first round of eliminations to establish the 7.861 as a new ET record.

The bike then, characteristically, broke. It has broken frequently this season, which perversely gives it some of its charm. It breaks because it's heavy, because it makes staggering amounts of power and because it is on the forward edge of motorcycle drag racing technology, which alone is enough to guarantee sketchy performances.

There is no question that the triple Honda makes more power than the Norton or the Harley-Davidson; neither Gregory nor Smith dispute that. Nor is there any question about which of the three bikes moves the first 50 yards the quickest: the Honda, clearly. With its off-the-line charge and its top speed, the triple-engine should win every race it enters; what bike could run it down from behind?

All those things that give the bike its quickness and its speed also conspire against its reliability. It would be heavy to begin with—three Honda engines weigh a lot. But the automotive Crower clutch and the drive pulleys and the belts all pile more weight on the bike's left side, which must be balanced by 35 pounds of lead (in floorboard form) bolted to the right. A late addition (after Indianapolis and before Ontario) of outboard pulley support bearings for engines #2 and #3, housed in a steel girdle, added more weight still.

The bike's horsepower—close to 500—is an irresistible force. It works against an almost immovable object—850 pounds, secured to the track by a super-sticky M&H 8-in. rear tire. Something, as they say, has gotta give. All season, what's been giving has been the drive train. Chains were determined to be hopeless at the outset, and Russ switched to the kind of belts used to drive heavy industrial equipment, Chrysler superchargers and automobile camshafts. The

belts at least show promise—but they keep breaking, the last time at Ontario on a pass that saw Russ comfortably in front of Joe Smith until the belt coupling the front engine to the middle engine let go (Joe's 182.55 mph run won that round).

Complicating matters is the fact that Russ is learning week by week to extract more power from his 3288cc engine package. He constructed an injection flow bench and experimented on Ron Teson's single-engine Honda fueler (8.91—153mph), and found quickly that the triple had too much compression (the ratio was dropped from 11:1 to 10½:1) and not enough mixture. Running the standard 90% nitro dose through slightly larger nozzles cured the bike's detonation problems and cut back its ring and ring land breakage, and since then the powerplants have given no problems at all. Neither has the Crower clutch, or the Lenco two-speed transmission.

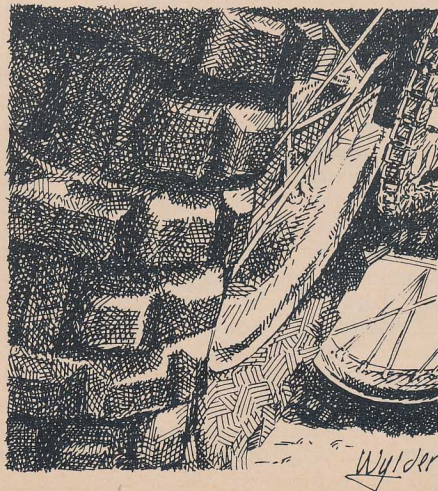
More than a motorcycle with which to win drag races, the R.C. Engineering Triple is a show-case and a business card. All of Russ's deep-motor after-market hop-up components are used: studs, cams, cranks, magnetos, bearings, springs, collars, keepers, pistons and rods. Just as it is important for any businessman to display his wares, Collins spent most of 1975 on the road, racing. From May to October he was a full-time touring racer, and it cost him between \$6000 and \$8000 per month to fulfill his scheduled appearance contracts. During those months he made about 20 appearances, and was paid between \$1000 and \$1250 for each. Naturally he can't do it alone; Slim Moffitt is the engine-builder, Byron Hines (who teams with Terry Vance to run the omnipotent Vance/Hines gasser, which didn't lose until Fremont) does the tuning and Dave Brewer handles coordination and logistics. It is in every way a professional, showy effort, made the more arresting by the wide range of possibilities that crop up once the bike sets its front tire on the starting line.

Anything can happen with the Triple. It can break. T.C. or Smith or Marion Owens can beat it. It can leave hard, look good and then demolish its rear tire with wheelspin. As devastating as its technical credentials may be, it is quirky, difficult and sometimes sullen. The people in the stands who root for it know that a win is an iffy proposition, and root all the harder; those who root against it know the same thing and are rewarded with frustrating regularity.

Joe Smith and the Gregory/Christenson team view their machines with professional detachment; both bikes will likely be for sale at the end of the '75 season. But Russ is passionately involved with his Honda. "Two of the best things that have ever happened to me in my whole life," he says, "were because of the bike. It won the NHRA's Best Engineered Vehicle award at the Englishtown Nationals in New Jersey in 1974, and at the Supers, it was the first bike in history to make a run in the sevens."

But he doesn't know exactly what to do with it in 1976. It is frighteningly expensive to campaign, and Russ realizes that—face it—the bike hasn't won that many meets. He can either add nitrous oxide injection for even more power and slug it out with drive line breakage problems for another season, or build a double-engined, supercharged Honda for racing and use the Triple for exhibitions. But sell it? He'd never sell it. He has his guts in the Biggest Honda, 4000 hours of his time, close to \$30,000 of his money and every stitch of his technical ingenuity. It has become a part of him.

There is an argument abroad that the giants like Russ, Joe and T.C. have hurt Top Fuel racing by obliterating the expectations of racers less committed than themselves. Smith drag races motorcycles for a living, Christenson and Gregory "made a little" during the '75 season and Russ's racing is an adjunct to his business, R.C. Engineering. These men are professionals; Top Fuel drag racing is at the center of their livelihoods. Between them they have raised the temperature of Top Fuel to such a level that few other competitors can stand it. These three, with few exceptions (Marion Owens, Sonny Routt, Danny Johnson), have made Top Fuel theirs—and in so doing have changed their sport from "something you do" to "something you watch." Top Fuel racing was fun in the late Sixties and early Seventies. Spend a couple of thousand dollars, build yourself a Sportster or 74, run 9.0s and win your share. Fun it was then; business it is now, and the quickest way to tell who does something for fun and who doesn't is to see who does it best. For now, determining "who does it best" has turned into a three-brand, three-machine squabble, and if no other Top Fuel competitor really has a chance, then that is truly the price of progress. Smith, Christenson-Gregory and Collins have all paid the price. Wanna run against them? Fine. You spend what they have spent, you endure the crashes they have endured, you embrace and advance the technology they have pioneered and you travel the 15,000 miles per year that they travel. You become, in fact, what they already are: professionals. Then—maybe—you can beat them. Not until. ●



# SHOCKING NEWS

The Bilstein Nitrogen Pressure Gas Motorcycle Shock Absorbers, previously seen only on factory works bikes are now available to dealers! Utilizing a 36mm high capacity oil chamber and pressurized nitrogen gas, Bilstein Shocks provide constant dampening action regardless of high temperatures or severe shock loads.

These durable motorcycle shocks are standard with a Heim joint. Designed especially for cantilever and forward mounted suspension set-ups.

Used with a pair of Ken Ross Super Motorcycle Shock Springs, Bilstein Nitrogen Gas Pressure Shocks offer the kind of "tuneable" suspension your customers are looking for. Bilstein Shocks and Ken Ross Super Motorcycle Shock Springs are available through International Cycle House, exclusive distributor for the motorcycle industry in the U.S. for Bilstein.

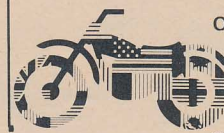


Some of the quality products from International Cycle House . . .

- Ken Ross Super Shock Springs
- Spring Installers
- Leak proof Fork Seals

I.C.H. the exclusive motorcycle distributor for Bilstein Nitrogen Gas Pressure Shocks - You can be the exclusive distributor of I.C.H. quality products in "your" area.

Our 24 hr. phone no.  
(714) 558-9543



Yes! I'm interested in International Cycle House's exclusive distributorship in \_\_\_\_\_ area. Send me complete details.

Dealer \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_  
State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_

INTERNATIONAL CYCLE HOUSE  
1708 S. Lyon St.  
Santa Ana, CA 92705