

What purpose does the Honda XR-80 serve? It's relatively slow, doesn't have much suspension, lacks about four inches of wheelbase compared to the 80cc two-strokes, and is ten to twelve pounds heavier than the competition. To the experienced racer, the XR80 isn't competitive. But are we all racers? How about the inexperienced, the beginner, or just the cruiser?

The little Honda is easy to ride. With the calm power output, it's right up the alley of the entry-level rider. High-revving two-strokes just intimidate the unknowing, while the 80cc XR purrs gently and allows its driver to ease into the sport and still have fun.

A four-stroke engine lets the learner plonk along at comfortable speeds, yet when the rider gets brave enough, it will pull up decent-sized hills without stalling. The five-speed transmission is spaced in a way that lets you cruise on

fire roads, but is still geared low enough for tight play riding in the hills.

Other features make the XR fun for the rider. It's nearly a bulletproof machine. Since the motor is the same basic unit they've had for years, by simply changing the oil occasionally, it will last and last. The noise level is barely a whisper, allowing you to ride in some fields and hills without being a nuisance to the neighbors.

Another big plus is that there's no mixing the gas and oil—just straight gas in the tank. Easy. The Honda gets unbelievable mileage out of the small, 1.2-gallon tank. Our pint-sized testers could get two or three trail riding sessions out of one tank.

When breaking in the Honda, be sure and keep an eye on the spokes and the footpeg mounting bolts under the engine. If these loosen too much, they strip and become a problem, since they

thread directly into the cases. The clutch is typical Honda. It doesn't grab until let almost all the way out, then it snaps with a big rush. Use caution at first.

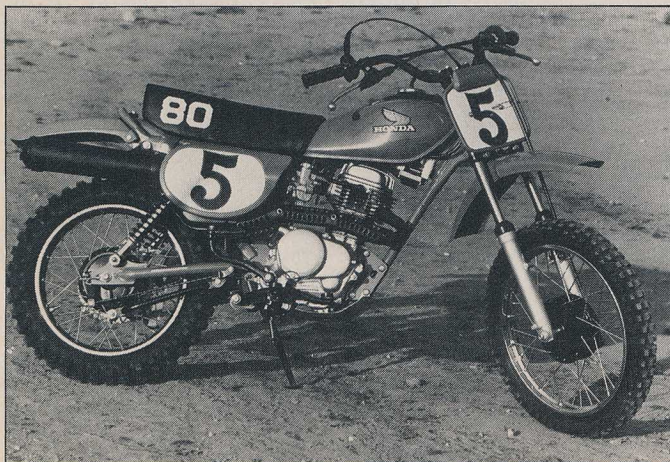
Although the shocks are in a laid-down position, they're harsh. Same with the forks. It's a simple case of too much spring for too little a bike. Once again, the brakes are top-notch, just strong enough without an overkill. The sidestand is a bogus unit that sticks out too far and catches the rider's leg. A spark arrester is stock, making it nice for forest areas.

Though it seems unlikely, the Honda XR80 has an important place in the off-road market. Basically it's a perfect learner's bike, designed for the entry-level rider. Easy to ride, nearly maintenance-free, and quiet. What else could you ask for at \$698? □

1982 HONDA XR80

Just add gas and go!

By the Staff of Dirt Bike



Although it hasn't been changed too much in the last few years, there is an important place for the Honda XR80.



The XR80's four-stroke motor allows for easy riding, whether you're a cruiser or a beginner.