

**ALL-COLOR
ISSUE!**



**FIRST TESTS: 1990 CR125 & XR200
PLUS—HONDA'S OUTRAGEOUS 1991 FUTURE BIKE!**

**DIRT
BIKE**

DIRT BIKE

WPS
34355

ATT'N
RETAILER:
PLEASE
DISPLAY
UNTIL
DEC. 21

DECEMBER 1989 • \$2.50 CANADA \$3.00
UK £1.60

MINICROSSER SHOOTOUT:

KAWASAKI vs. HONDA

vs. YAMAHA vs.

SUZUKI vs.

KTM!

**HOW TO EARN MONEY
WHILE YOU RACE!**

**SPECIAL PRO RIDING
SECRETS BONUS SECTION:**

**MOTOCROSS & OFF-ROAD RACING
TACTICS FROM RICK JOHNSON,
KEVIN HINES, RANDY
HAWKINS, DAN SMITH
& MORE!**



**ANOTHER DIRT BIKE FIRST:
FROM BLACK & WHITE TO
ALL-COLOR!**



ISSN 0364-1546



ON THE COVER:—Shane Trittler wheelies the 1990 XR200 across a Yuletide stream for the lens of Ed Arnet, and the 1991 Honda Cub 90 awaits its first Christmas. Tasteful cover design by De-West; separations by Valley Film.

WARNING: Much of the action depicted in this magazine is potentially dangerous. Virtually all of the riders seen in our photos are experienced experts or professionals. Do not attempt to duplicate any stunts that are beyond your own capabilities. Always wear the appropriate safety gear. *Dirt Bike* does all of its testing and photography legally on public land, or private land with permission from the owner(s), and we abide by the local laws concerning vehicle registration and muffler/spark arrester requirements. We are not responsible for quality of aftermarket accessories we use.

BIKES

- 22 1990 HONDA CR125R
White frame and a red-hot motor
- 36 1990 80cc MOTOCROSS SHOOTOUT
Picking a winner in time for Christmas
- 42 EXTREME PERFORMANCE XR1100R
Four-cylinder, 150mph dirt bike
- 72 1990 HONDA XR200
Back to basics with Big Red

COMPETITION

- 26 MOTOCROSS DES NATIONS
Americans dominate in West Germany

HOW TO RIDE SPECIAL

- 44 RICK JOHNSON'S MX TACTICS
Good tips from the Bad Boy
- 53 MAKING TIME IN THE WOODS
Randy Hawkins' tight tree tactics
- 54 HOW TO RIDE DEEP WATER & MUD
Kevin Hines' submarine strategies
- 56 HIGH-SPEED SURVIVAL TECHNIQUES
Dan Smith's high-speed secrets
- 58 SUPER HUNKY'S VET TRICKS
Going fast with a slow heartbeat

FEATURES

- 28 1990 NEW BIKE HANDBOOK
Selling, buying and keeping it new
- 60 RICK JOHNSON RIDING SCHOOL
R.J. makes *Dirt Bike* staffers go faster
- 62 VINTAGE SUBSCRIPTION AD WINNER
A CZ250 for Linda Bean
- 64 WHERE TO RIDE IN ILLINOIS
Developing trails, not condos
- 70 RACE CONTINGENCIES
Millions to be won while having fun

DEPARTMENTS

- 8 FROM THE SADDLE
- 10 CHECKPOINT
- 15 RIDERS WRITE
- 16 BITS & PIECES
- 90 MR. KNOW-IT-ALL
- 94 NEW PRODUCTS
- 96 CRASH & BURN

DIRT BIKE Magazine, ISSN 0364-1546 (December '89) is published monthly by Daisy/Hi-Torque Publishing Company, Inc., with editorial offices at 10600 Sepulveda Boulevard, Mission Hills, California 91345. Subscriptions \$15.98 for 12 issues (one year). Canada add \$5 per year, and all other foreign add \$6 per year for additional postage. Copyright ©1989 by Daisy/Hi-Torque Publishing Company, Inc. All rights reserved. Nothing in this magazine may be reprinted in whole or in part, by mimeograph or any other means, without the express permission of the publisher. Contributors: Photographic submissions must be 5x7 or 8x10 glossy black and white, or 35mm and larger color slides. Please mark each photo with owner's name and address. Manuscripts should be typewritten. Unsolicited contributions, manuscripts, photographs and illustrations must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Unless special arrangements are made in advance, all published material becomes the sole property of Daisy/Hi-Torque Publishing Company, Inc. The publisher does not assume responsibility for unsolicited material. Second class postage paid at San Fernando, California 91340, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *DIRT BIKE* Magazine, P.O. Box 9502, Mission Hills, California 91395-9502. Printed in USA.

Just before Team Honda capped a full day of testing at Carlsbad Raceway, Guy Cooper was given the opportunity to throw a leg over a '90 production CR125. After a few laps Cooper wheeled into the pits and quipped, "Can you make my race bike work like this?" Strong words.

HOW STRONG IS IT?

Engine: It's a fact that Honda has been on top of the tiddler thrust game since the mid-'80s. The reasons can be pinpointed to phenomenal power curves, great transmissions, next-to-perfect clutches, ease of maintenance and unbelievable reliability. Performance has been so good these last four years that manufacturers are still trying to capture '86-style performance—and many claim that Honda is, too!

How do you top performance like this? Honda attacked the problem by incorporating the long overdue and *real* exhaust valve Honda Power Port (HPP) system to control burnt gases. A bigger 36mm Keihin controls incoming fumes. Racers have been throwing this size carb on their CR125s for quite some time. A more rigid crank design and heavier halves smooth power. To offset the increased crank mass, a lighter ignition rotor is used. Ignition curve is the same.

Where's the big performance gain? Past CR mills didn't feature smooth and low climb onto the pipe. Although this sometimes made corner action challenging, the mid-through top-end thrust was so long and usable it easily smoked the other manufacturers' offerings. The Power Port mill now pulls lower and climbs smoother onto that fabulous midrange explosion. Gone are the days when the CR would hiccup, cough or hesitate after the revs dropped way down and then the throttle was cracked open. Now it's smoother and definitely not slower! This new power delivery works like magic on slippery hard-pack tracks while the strong mid and top will come into their own on loamy terrain. Our '89 with an FMF pipe, silencer and high-velocity reed cage pulled stronger through the mid and top, but couldn't come close to matching the low through mid characteristics of the '90. In theory, the bigger carb allows for complete top-end potential to be realized, although it can't really be noticed on the track when compared to the '89. We watched Mike Kiedrowski race against Jeff Matiasevich at the Goat Breker Honda/GFI Fall Series at Perris Raceway. Kiedrowski was trying in earnest to keep Matiasevich at bay. He was revving the '90 CR like his race bike, but the top-end simply wasn't there. The CR was popping like mad as Kiedrowski revved its guts out in search of more power. Since all the ingredients are there, hop-up shops will have a field day with the CR. It has better low to mid, identical mid through top and a 36mm carb—all the hard-

ware required to make the CR mill deliver National-winning power.

Clutch and tranny operation remains as it has for a while—perfect. The ratios are right, shift lever movement is precise and quick, clutch free play doesn't change when



MOTOCROSS TEST

1990 HONDA CR125R

"This is better than my works bike."—Guy Cooper

By the DIRT BIKE Staff

Poor suspension performance due to contamination ruined the otherwise great feel of the new CR.



hot and it's bulletproof. If you're a plate thrasher, change tranny oil often as the aluminum-to-friction abrasion will contaminate the oil rather quickly.

A comment that often arises is, "It works great, but that Power Port service is a hassle." Honda is aware of Power Port intricacy and therefore designed completely new oval slides that seal better and use a gear-driven linkage mechanism that makes it easier to pull the top end and service the valves.

Chassis: Steering head angle is now a quar-

ter-degree more slack (from 26.5 degrees). Trail is up 7.5mm to 119mm. Increased steering stem size houses a larger top tapered bearing. These geometry changes were made to rid the CR of front end nervousness. Additional steering head gusseting improves front end rigidity. Better weight transfer under acceleration is accomplished by moving the engine up 3.5mm. The 125 received the same further inboard rear master cylinder mount, narrowed lower subframe mounts along with wider, higher footpegs and sturdier chainguide as the 250 we tested last month. Ten percent denser seat foam is covered by a stronger seat cover. Seat thickness is now identical to last year's optional high seat, which many CR riders opted for.

No one will fault the CR's pilot compartment. It's roomy, narrow, flat and gives a light, racy feel to the bike. The peg/seat/tank/handlebar/controls relationship is natural and more comfortable due to the taller seat. It has a tight, solid feel while slamming through the whoops or off a jump. Wider pegs ease foot pain from hard landings and the higher serrated portions will minimize ankle/foot injuries by keeping the feet away from the ground. It also makes the chassis a tad more sensitive to leg input. Honda 125s have always been turners and riders were never totally enthusiastic about chassis stability. Headshake could be pronounced over choppy terrain with the front tire skimming the ground under power. This could always be blamed on the geometry, fork performance or both. It was mainly a geometry trait, since our upside-down Showas didn't work that hot, yet the '90 chassis has put a stop to the majority of front end shimmies.

Suspension: The upside-down Showa forks feature all the updates of the new CR250. A double-clamped axle, tapered, grooved and narrower bearing surfaces, slicker SS7M oil and valving updates reduce chances of binding and harshness. Honda found that a too-restrictive rebound check valve was creating oil cavitation on compression. The check valve, which bleeds excess oil that the compression shims can't handle on spike hits, now allows more oil flow. While the rebound piston houses round shims, the new compression shim stack is triangulated. This should theoretically give less spike at high-speed compression hits. The bottoming cone, as with conventional forks, is lower in the leg on the bottom of the damping cartridge. This makes the tail end of the stroke smoother, since the crudely stamped steel preload/bottoming tube of last year's upside-down Showas wouldn't allow precise full-travel bottoming control. The standard 13mm of spring preload is still on the excessive side.

Race Tech measured the linkage ratio on our test CR and found it to be slightly different than the '89, so slight that no rider could detect any performance difference between the two—so it must be the result of production tolerances with all the linkage components combined. Compression is ten percent stiffer at low speed and ten percent softer at high. Rebound is the same flipper-type valve that holds the rear up to maintain a



We just had the White Bros. suspension boys look at the forks. They made a minor mod to quicken rebound, and performance was considerably improved. As you can see, the bike took on a new attitude!

balanced ride. Some claim that this style of rebound valve gives the rear a harsher ride.

Most 140- to 150-pound guys will feel that the standard shock spring (5kg—same as last year) and 3.6kg fork spring (from 3.7) will be in the ballpark. Unfortunately, most won't find the valving to be acceptable. Riders who are just playing and hard and heavier 150-pound-plus riders who are aggressive will find the suspension to be decent. Average-sized and quick, small-bore riders, like many of you potential CR owners, will realize suspension performance that isn't confidence-inspiring in the least. Such riders (140 pounds) find the suspension to be harsh while negotiating mid-sized impacts at race speeds and to ricochet while skimming cobbly terrain. Not good.

Now to the forks—grim. After three outings we came to the conclusion that there was no way they were designed with specs that would deliver such poor performance. We went back to Race Tech for a quick fork service and found the internals full of grit. It almost looked like metal shavings from years of fork wear, although we only had three days of riding on the bike. The chips had worked their way into, and marred, the Teflon bearing surfaces. This contamination must have happened during assembly unless spring/tube shaving is still a problem. In last year's forks the springs rubbed and shaved on the inside of the chrome tube upon com-

pression. Midyear, Honda had tapered the very top of the spring to prevent this from happening. It's also important to put the springs in correctly after service, since only one end of the spring is tapered. The exact cause of the internal contamination has not yet been determined. We recommend that fork oil be serviced on a monthly basis, depending on current fork performance and type and length of use, if consistent action is to be delivered. The performance of our 250 forks deteriorated rather quickly when not serviced frequently, but not to the condition of the 125. In conclusion, we found the forks to be superior to last year's but still not up to par.

Heavier, aggressive riders experienced more pleasant action from the back while the average hyper 125 speedster came into the pits muttering, "This thing is fast, but the suspension is horrible." Their complaints were similar to the front end—inadequate response over smaller sharp-edged impacts. Our next step is to set this puppy up for that "average" 125 pilot without spending an arm and a leg in the process.

Brakes: Progressive, strong, durable and natural operation and feel are just a few key words that will give you a good idea about binder performance. Honda still has an edge here.

Wheels: The rear hub won't break, the rims are more dent-resistant and the 18-inch

rear hoop will make the nonconformists happy. It's odd that all of the factory-modified racers have 19s, as they have proven to be superior performers. There are plenty of 19-inch tires available and, despite all the gossip, 19s don't get more flats, even in off-road conditions. The bottom line is that they perform better—everywhere.

Tires: Dunlop K490 front and K695 rear are a pair of high-performance tires that won't let you down on any track. You might find a set of better hard-track performers, but you'll be hard-pressed to find different styles of terrain-grabbers that are better performers wrapped up in one package.

Looks: Identical white frame, new shade of red, gold forks, silver calipers and graphics tell the world you have a '90.

This is the end: Face it. Honda has been getting the majority of top-125-of-the-year votes with fabulous engines, reasonable suspension, excellent handling, great ergonomics and fantastic durability. The '90 is no exception. There are a number of speed and suspension shops that specialize in Hondas and will give you every ounce of performance imaginable. Although it's a hard package to beat, we'll tell you right now that either a yellow or one of the two white bikes is being voted ahead of the CR by many, and we have yet to wring out the green machine. As past performances have shown, the fight for the number one 125 slot will never be boring! □

Engine type Case-reed and HPP power-valved, liquid-cooled two-stroke
 Displacement 124.8cc
 Bore and stroke 54mm x 54.5mm
 Carburetion 36mm Keihin PJ oval slide
 Fuel tank capacity 2 gals. (7.5L)
 Gearing 13/51
 Lighting coil No
 Spark arrester Aftermarket
 Green sticker legal in stock trim No
 Wheelbase 57.4 in. (1457mm)
 Ground clearance 14 in. (355mm)
 Seat height 38.2 in. (970mm)
 Tire size and type:
 Front 80/100 x 21 Dunlop K490
 Rear 100/100 x 19 Dunlop K695
 Suspension:
 Front 45mm Showa inverted cartridge system, adj. comp., 12 in. travel
 Rear Pro-Link, Showa hard anodized aluminum piggyback, adj. comp./reb., 12.2 in. travel
 Country of origin Japan
 Suggested retail price \$3498

Distributor/Manufacturer:
 American Honda Motor Corp.
 100 W. Alondra Blvd.
 Gardena, CA 90247

CR125R



VITAL STATS

- Piston \$46.48
- Ring(s) \$9.64
- Clutch plate (F) \$7.34 (7)
- Clutch plate (M) \$5.82 (6)
- Front brake pads \$19.12
- Rear brake pads \$22.52
- Countershaft sprocket \$10.15
- Claimed weight 192.9 lbs. dry
- Actual running weight w/no gas 204.5 lbs.
- Sound output (MIC 20" test) 97 dB
- Time to remove/install air filter 45 sec./1:45
- 1/10th-mile acceleration 9.57 sec.
- Top speed (stock gearing) 64mph •

◀ Cooper's factory bike is basically what is now at your dealer.



Brad Nordloff

GUY COOPER

• **DIRT BIKE:** Guy, tell us about your involvement with the 1990 CR125R.

Guy Cooper: I rode the early prototypes for the 125, 250 and 500s and liked the geometry changes, especially the 250. It seemed like they were going in the right direction with the bikes, in my opinion. I first rode the production CR125 at Carlsbad, while we were out testing our '89 race bikes. The track had been watered so it was tacky, and my race bike was really hooking up well. It had

some serious horsepower, so I was cutting some quick times.

When we were done, the Product Evaluation guys came over and asked me to ride the '90. I said, "Sure!" I always like riding, especially when it's not my bike! It was full of gas and ready to go, so I did a moto on it. By this time the track had dried and my '89 was spinning coming out of turns. On the '90 the power is so broad and smooth that it hooked up well coming out of turns, and I turned lap times equal to my race bike on a watered track! I was impressed with the extremely wide powerband for a 125.

DB: What did you think of the suspension?

GC: It's not as good as the works Showa on the race bikes but it's really close. They made a lot of improvements and the action is good. In fact, as far as the rear goes, it's a toss-up between stock '90 and works as far as what we'll ride this weekend at Binghamton. I always have my suspension set up really harsh, where it works well when you're pushing, but it's not fun to just play around on because then it pounds you. The '90 is fun to play around on because it will take the G-outs yet soak up the small stuff. If I feel like doing a clicker off of a jump, it just soaks it up. The bike is fun to ride and forgiving, whether you're just playing around or going for it.

NAME: Guy Cooper

BIRTHDAY: February 24, 1962

HOMETOWN: Stillwater, OK

HEIGHT/WEIGHT: 5'7"/140 lbs.

FAMILY: Wife, Jayni

HOBBIES: Play riding, mountain biking, tennis, golf

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: '84 AMA Rookie of the Year; '86 & '87 AMA Top Privateer; '87 Swiss and Belgian Supercross winner; '87 & '88 third in 125 Nationals; '89 third in 250 Supercross, currently third in 125 Nationals

GOALS: To run the Nationals full-time for two more years, then kick back and have some fun racing. •