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On the cover: John Whelchel jumps the YZ125 over the littlest YZ, while little Shela tries to keep low. Photo by Tom Webb.

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HUSKY XC 250

THE ULTIMATE WOODS BIKE?

You Have to Ride it Hard

By the staff of *Dirt Bike*, with special thanks to Dick Burleson

Basically, we were sitting around the now famous *Dirt Bike* offices discussing the merits of King Richard's 7th national enduro title, when a strange thought crossed our minds. How does that sucker keep winning year after year? It couldn't all be his skill; you can't win on that alone. No way, Jose. A percentage has to be the bike, otherwise, the almighty YEN would have lured him away long ago.

Since Dick has had such a tremendous allegiance to Husky, maybe it was that he was riding totally trick, one-off bikes that would have any factory rider drooling. Anyway, we decided to press on and, with a couple of calls to Husky, a bike was lined up for the last National Enduro of the year. This would be a race test on a typically tight woods run found in the Midwest. The bike would be a 1981 Husky XC250. Box stock. If there was any magic to this Swedish iron, we'd find out, real quick.

Wondering what the XC stands for? We were too. Simply stated, it means Cross-Country. Makes sense even to our feeble minds. The XC has taken the place of last years OR models. Folks at Husky felt that too many people associated OR with desert rid-

ing and XC would broaden the capabilities of the new Husky.

First Impressions

As we rolled the XC out of the van, the first thought was jeez, check out those big forks. Big indeed; 40mm to be exact. They looked giant compared to the pencils found on last year's bike. "Almost 12 inches in those babies, and not a flex to be found," beamed Dick, as we threw it on the stand.

Second, a large void existed between the rear fender and tire; 12 plus! It looked more like a motocrosser than anything. Dick explained that the majority of people racing Huskys were taking the CRs, putting a spark-arrestor on 'em and riding the local event. Dick's been doing it for a couple of years, so Husky decided to offer a woods bike with the long legs of the MXer. While the travel is increased, the seat height remains a mere 38 inches; still short enough for Burleson's small 5'9" frame.

The other thing that caught our attention was the totally redesigned gas tank. While still incorporating the traditional good looks of the old Husky gas tanks, the new one is much slimmer, making weight transfer to the front of the seat a simple proced-

ure. In the past, they were fairly bulky at the seat/tank junction and sliding forward could result in instant grief. Even with the slimmer profile, 55 miles to a tank is no problem.

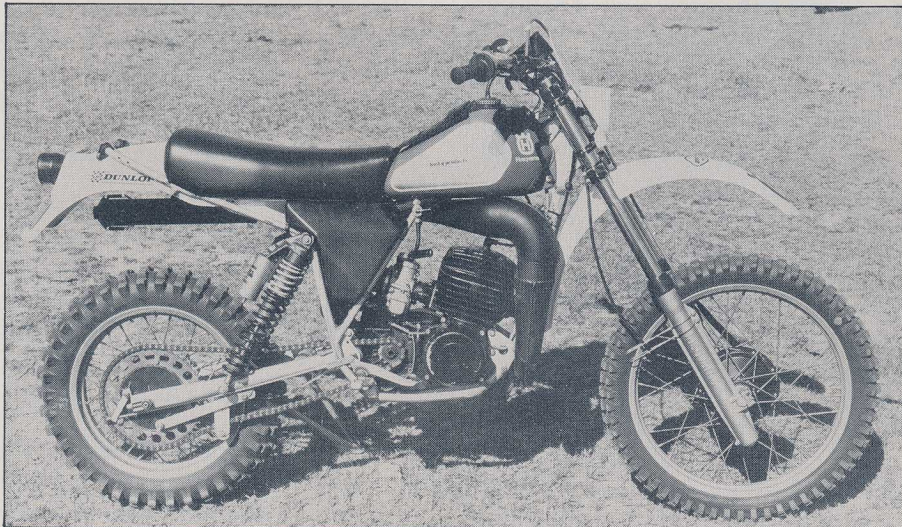
Other Zoot, Stock Tidbits

Huskys have been coming stock with Ohlins shocks for the last couple of years. The XC is equipped with the new generation piggyback style shocks. These state-of-the-art units feature Heim joints and dual-rate springs. Piggybacks eliminate the hoses and reservoirs from being bolted in strange places on the bike.

Both top and bottom shock mounts incorporate studs welded to the frame and swingarm that the shock slips onto. Two 6mm bolts hold them in place. Sano setup. Easily removed, no nuts to mess with and the whole system is well thought out. The mounting stud on the swingarm is angled upward five degrees. During compression, this forces the shock inward on the swingarm, rather than outward. This takes all the load off of the 6mm bolts holding them in place. Ingenious. Dust seals are found on the bushings, and these insure a long life for the Heim joint.

Noise emitted from the Husky was very low. Two reasons for this: 1.) The expansion chamber, which is primarily a CR unit, is constructed with two walls. Between the walls, there's a layer of fiberglass, helping to keep the decibel level down. 2.) The icing on the cake is the spark-arrestor/silencer, which also makes it off-road legal wherever you ride.

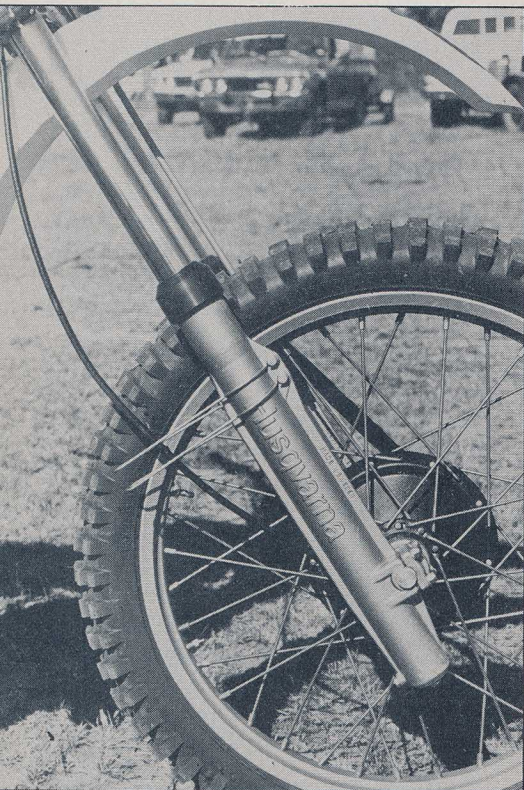
Again, a 17-inch rear wheel appears as a stock item, a factor that keeps the seat height low while still allowing a long-travel rear end. The gold rims remain, and the folks at Husky assured us that the problem of the paint flaking off is history; only time will tell. The rims are accented by the gold front forks, giving the bike a functional look while keeping the good European lines.



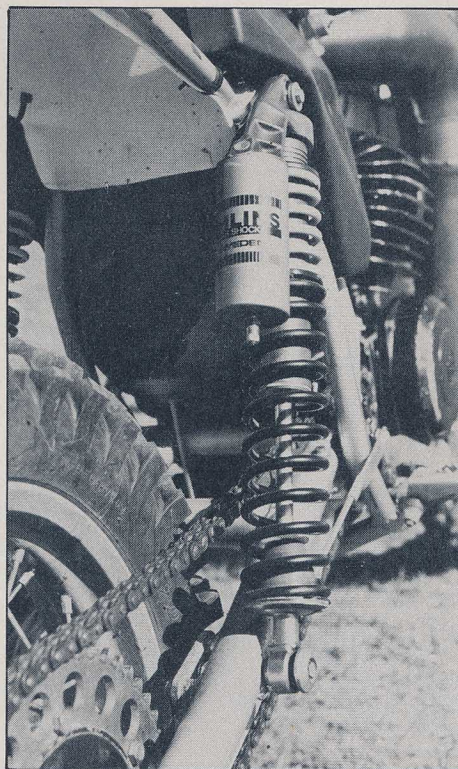
Since our bike was preproduction, it wasn't equipped with the FIM style number plates that will be found on the showroom models.



Associate Editor Tom Webb motoring away from the start of the Tulsa National Enduro.



40mm forks provide a major improvement over last year's smallish models.



Piggyback Ohlins worked great; they're mounted on studs welded to the frame and swingarm and pivot on heim-joints.

Both hubs are conical in design and laced up with good sized spokes. During the event, the spokes were checked at all the pit stops, but they remained secure. The rear brake pulls directly over the swingarm pivot point, making the action precise and lessening the chances of chattering over stutter bumps. While the front brake wasn't as strong as some of the Japanese units offered, it had a positive feel to it. Traveling down the left side of the forks, the front brake cable was routed in a way that, while braking, no pulsating was felt in the handle. On the front backing plate, the brake arm tucks in close and prevents the chance of eating tree bark for lunch. Summing up the binders, they were good, yet didn't have any tendencies to lock up unexpectedly. The shoes are large and offer a good brake surface area, which explains their stopping power.

Bits and Pieces

One thing noticed was the ease of the clutch and front-brake action. The light pull of both levers can be attributed to the cables. Both house lube fittings on them, and Dick explained that they should be oiled before every ride.

HUSKY XC 250

Saddle foam has been improved this year, offering a firmer feel while riding. Older models had the foam break down quickly.

A giant air box is hooked up to the 38 Mikuni. Utilizing two spring clips to hold the filter in place, just pinching them together lets the filter slip out. Pull the right side cover out and the filter is staring you in the face. The air box is simple, effective and easy to service.

Almost forgot to mention the gas cap. Gone is the ventless type found on earlier models. It's offset on the tank, and not a drop of the precious stuff leaked out.

As with last year's bikes, there's a bar welded under the motor for protection. Running lengthwise on the bike, the skid bar dips about an inch lower than the bottom frame rails. Average coverage for the cases but lotta luck throwing it on a milk crate. Balancing at a 45-degree angle isn't one of its better tendencies; you'll need to make a custom stand for it. For desert or heavy rock use, we suggest a full-coverage skid plate.

Other stock items include a Gunnar gasser throttle, split perch Magura lever assemblies and a folding shift lever. (Where's the folding brake lever?) Husky finally took off their blindfolds when it came to the kickstarter. Still not great, but it tucks in far enough so that it doesn't interfere with your leg. Like most European bikes, it's found on the left side. Operation is marginal, but the bulge is gone.

Riding the Swedish Way

While talking to the King about riding the Husky, he says that its best traits are found when it is ridden aggressively; weight forward, power on through the turns, using the clutch whenever possible. When practicing, we found this absolutely true. The Husky turns best *when you are on the gas*. Start cruising, get a little tired, and all the nice mannerisms disappear. A smaller flywheel is found on the XC, as compared to the WR. This is another reason for assaulting the trails, rather than just motoring. The bike would explode from tree to tree when ridden correctly, just like Burlison. Back off, lazily move your weight to the rear of the bike, and it steers like a battleship.

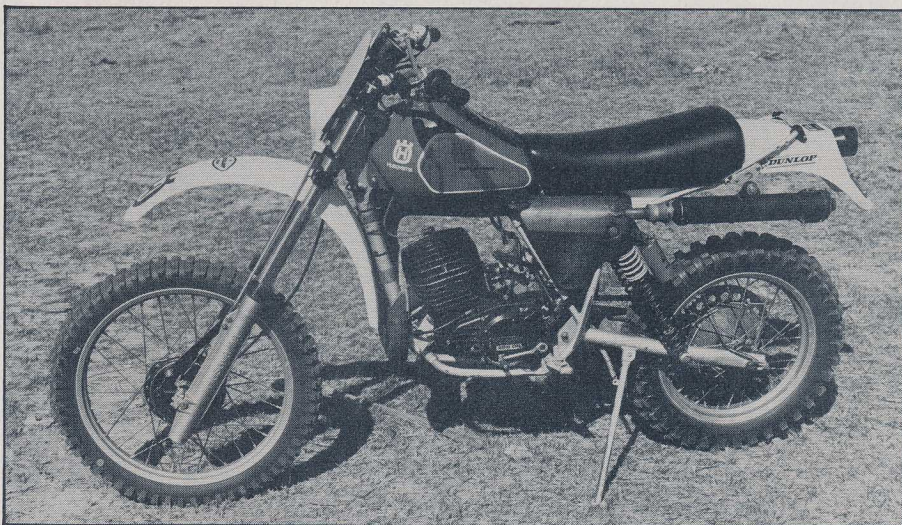
Finally, it was time for the race. Zero the odometer, and we're gone.

After riding the bike for a while, you feel like the bars are a tad too high. A little lower would allow you to get your weight forward and over the bars while turning.

The suspension soaks up anything that the trail has to offer, quite easily. The forks are the single-best improvement and their action is great and flex-free. Over rocky trails, the front and rear suspensions are soft enough to keep the wheels from reacting violently; they stay in contact with the trail. Big jumps and large whoops are not a threat either. The suspension is very progressive; soft on the small stuff and able to handle the hard, heavy impacts upon demand.

In the real tight woods, the power-on style that the Husky demands had us rocketing from turn to turn. Weight over the front wheel when entering a turn, power on, clutch it and, the XC was through the turn effortlessly. During the enduro, the long test sections in the woods brought out the finest in the XC. The tighter the trail, the better the Husky would go. Even with very little time on the bike, the Husqvarna had us going for a top-five finish overall.

Long, rough uphill were tamed easily; the 250 would pull them without the slightest hint of bogging. The motor pulls from the bottom. Off-camber hills became a joke; just throw it in a higher gear and lug the engine.



HUSQVARNA 250XC

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| NAME AND MODEL | Husqvarna 250XC cross country |
| ENGINE TYPE | Single cylinder, two-stroke |
| BORE AND STROKE | 69.5 x 64.5mm |
| DISPLACEMENT | 245cc |
| HORSEPOWER (CLAIMED) | N/A |
| CARBURETION | .38mm Mikuni |
| FACTORY RECOMMENDED JETTING: | |
| MAIN JET | 430 |
| NEEDLE JET | R2 |
| JET NEEDLE | 4 from the top |
| PILOT JET | 45 |
| SLIDENUMBER | N/A |
| RECOMMENDED GASOLINE | .94 octane min |
| FUEL TANK CAPACITY | 2.9 U.S. gallons |
| FUEL TANK MATERIAL | Aluminum |
| LUBRICATION | Oil/gas mixture |
| RECOMMENDED OIL | High quality two-stroke |
| OIL CAPACITY, GEARBOX | 1.6 liter (.42 gals) |
| AIR FILTRATION | Foam type |
| CLUTCH TYPE | Wet, multi-plate |
| TRANSMISSION | Six-speed |
| GEARBOX RATIOS: | |
| 1. | 21.85:1 |
| 2. | 15.83:1 |
| 3. | 12.04:1 |
| 4. | 9.63:1 |
| 5. | 8.15:1 |
| 6. | 7.22:1 |
| GEARING, FRONT/REAR | 13/53 |
| IGNITION | Motoplant |
| PRIMARY KICK SYSTEM? | No |
| RECOMMENDED SPARK PLUG | Bosch W4C |
| SILENCER/SPARK ARRESTOR/ QUALITY | Excellent |

| | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| EXHAUST SYSTEM | Up pipe through frame |
| FRAME, TYPE | Single downtube, chromoly |
| WHEELBASE | 59.3 inches |
| GROUND CLEARANCE | 13.9 inches |
| SEAT HEIGHT | 38.2 inches |
| STEERING HEAD ANGLE (RAKE) | 30 degrees |
| TRAIL | 152mm (6.0 inches) |
| WEIGHT WITH ONE GALLON GAS | 231 lbs. |
| RIM MATERIAL | Aluminum alloy |
| TIRE SIZE AND TYPE: | |
| FRONT | 300x21 Barum |
| REAR | 5.50x17 Barum |
| SUSPENSION, TYPE AND TRAVEL: | |
| FRONT | 300mm (11.8 inches) |
| REAR | 310mm (12.2 inches) |
| INTENDED USE | Off-road |
| COUNTRY OF ORIGIN | Sweden |
| RETAIL PRICE, APPROX. | \$2350 |

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HUSKY XC 250



Husky style demands weight forward, power on and liberal use of the clutch; Burleson demonstrates.

Shifting was positive. The throw is longer than on Japanese bikes, but any missed shifts were usually the rider's fault. An area where the Husky is in the dark ages is primary start; they still don't have it. If you never stall it during an event, then the non-primary start won't bother you. Most of us are human, though, and locking up the brakes and killing the motor in a tight section is commonplace. Trying to find neutral once you've stalled on a gnarly, rocky trail will get you snarling with anger. The Husky 430 (available soon) has primary kick. Why not the Husky 250?

Summarized . . .

As you've probably figured out by now, we fell in love with Husky's newest woods weapon. The bike we rode was stock—down to the bone. To make the bike enduro legal, a headlight, speedo and WR fender were installed. These come stock on the WR models.

What doesn't come from the factory on the WR is the 40mm fork assembly or the +12-inch travel found in the suspension department. This question now comes up: Would you be better off with the shorter enduro ready WR? Are the larger forks and increased travel on the XC worth the extra cost of having to fork out for a speedo and lights? It is our feeling that the XC is well worth the added expenses of having to buy the accessories to make it enduro ready.

Last month, we tested the KDX 250 Kawasaki. At that time, we felt the chance of someone bettering that bike was slim. Well . . . Husky takes it, by a nod.

All in all, the Husqvarna XC250 allowed you to get through the woods and tight trails with maximum efficiency. Ridden right, you can focus all your attention on speed. And, if trophy hunting is your bag, the XC is the bike you need.



Gargantuan get-offs! Endless endos! Fabulous feats of self-inflicted fanny flogging!

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