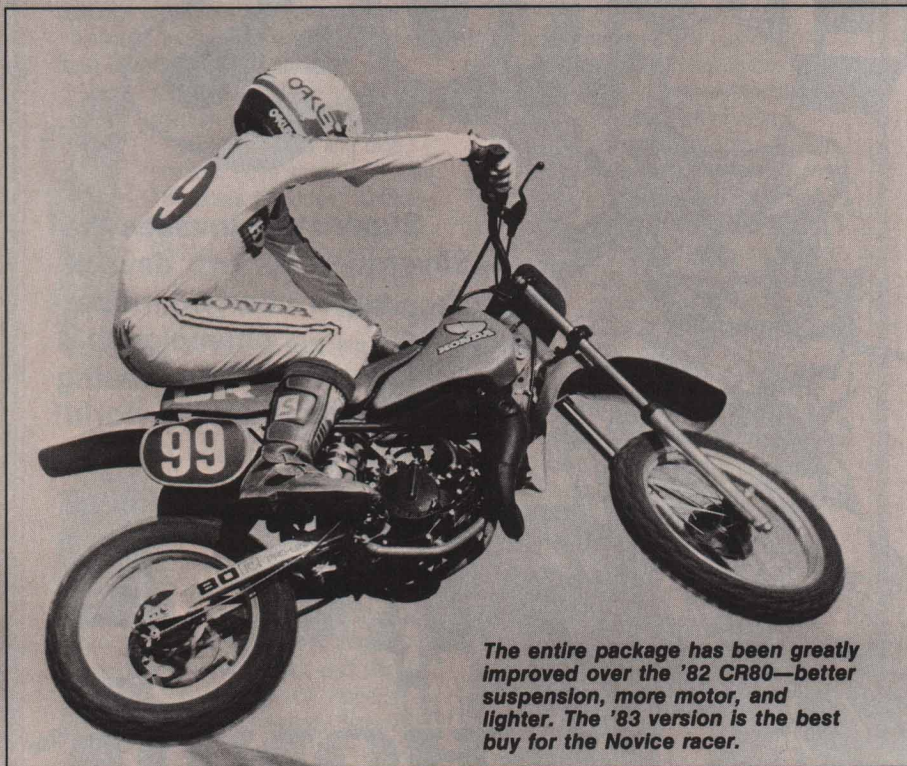


ONE MINICROSSER TO GO, HOLD THE REVS

If Hannah were a midget, this is what he'd ride

By the Staff of DIRT BIKE



The entire package has been greatly improved over the '82 CR80—better suspension, more motor, and lighter. The '83 version is the best buy for the Novice racer.

No doubt about it, 1983 is the year of the Honda. By dominating nearly all aspects of motocross racing in '82 and applying this winning knowledge to its 125, 250 and Open lineup, the CRs are going to be tough to beat. All of the big bikes handle, are fast, and real light. The question is whether this winning edge was transmitted down to the 80 class. On looks alone, the CR80 is a clear-cut winner. It's your basic scaled-down Hannah replica, all the way to the blue works-style seat. But, as we all know, looks don't win races.

WHAT'S NEW

First off, and most important, is the addition of watercooling. A single radiator handles the chore; it's mounted in tightly on the left side of the bike, under the tank. A 26mm Keihin feeds the fuel, which is sucked through new fiber reeds. Again, the trans is a six-speeder but with the ratios tightened over the '82. Exhaust is carried out through a centerport system, compared with last year's sideport. New clutch plates and springs are stronger and resist wear better than the old ones. There's a whole new power curve and more travel to soak up the zonkers. Sounds good, but how does it work?

RED BOOST

Honda tried to design the new engine to rev harder and longer. It does, in comparison with the '82 CR. But next to the KX or the RM80, the Honda is a clear-cut torquer. Fast lap times are accomplished by short-shifting, not revving. This is almost identical to the way the CR480 has to be ridden. A fine theory for an Open bike, but a block wall for the hyper mini Experts. They feed on 12,000-rpm screamers, not torquers.

For the learners and Novices, there couldn't be a better powerband. It hits low, right at the first crack of the throttle. The punch continues into the mid-range and then stops. This translates into a bike that can be ridden without much difficulty. Mini Experts won't be able to handle the short-sided powerband. They ride on the fringes of sanity, tapped out all the time. With gobs of torque and no top end, some serious grinding is the only answer for the Pros who want to be competitive.

BUMPS, GRUMPS AND JARS

Like the bigger CRs, weight has been taken off and moved around to be carried as low as possible. The bike is nimble and very light, making for nice manners on the track. If we were shooting out the '82 and

'83 CR80s, the race wouldn't be close. The '83 outhandles, outworks and completely outdoes its predecessor. But, up against the long, tall KX80, the Honda suspension feels harsh. The front end doesn't want to conform and the rear end squats. It's not balanced. Rear shock preload is critical here. Dial it up until the front bites. Remember: Small increases make for big changes.

Even so, the rider must stay forward on the bike in order to go fast. Overly tall bars hamper this style, making it tough to get forward. Mediocre fork action isn't a big plus here either. Changing the fork oil to a lighter viscosity helps the action considerably. In stock form they flick and chatter, testing the rider's durability.

BITS AND PIECES

With the exception of the overly tall bars, all the handlebar gear is tops. Deluxe throttle, easy clutch and a strong front brake work without a hitch. The tank is skinny, and this combined with the safety seat make for comfortable movements by the rider. Directly opposed to the progressive front brake is a light-switch-type rear stopper. It's either on or off, no in between.

Shifting has been improved and a folding lever has been added. Both the shift lever and brake pedal stick out too far, making for easy bends in a crash. The preload is adjusted via a screw-type setup like the big CRs, not a cam as in the past. It's a tight fit where the reservoir bolts up. Mounted right next to the shock itself and directly under the pipe, testers complained that it bothered their legs.



Resembling its bigger brothers, the little CR has a smart saddle/tank/radiator setup. All of the craftsmanship is top-notch.





Off the line, the CR pulls strong. Once into the higher gears the Honda lacks the upper rpm zip to run with the leaders.

Jaws rims with rim locks replace the old-style steel models. These babies are aluminum and trick. IRC tires work fine until the edges wear, then they become marginal. The front numberplate looks like an afterthought, very unlike Honda. Mounted high on the forks, it's supposed to allow more airflow to the radiators. It looks dumb.

GEARED FOR WHOM?

It's obvious that Honda is going after the abilities of the average rider with its 80. Percentagewise, this is probably where the biggest market is. For all but the top screamers, the power characteristics of the CR80 fit and work better than the high-revving models the competition offers. □



HONDA CR80R

ENGINE TYPE	Water-cooled, 2-stroke
BORE AND STROKE	49.5mm x 41.5mm
DISPLACEMENT	79cc
CARBURETION	26mm Keihin
IGNITION	CDI
TRANSMISSION	6-speed
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	5 L (1.32 gal.)
WHEELBASE	1230mm (48.4 in.)
GROUND CLEARANCE	270mm (10.6 in.)
SEAT HEIGHT	780mm (30.7 in.)
WEIGHT (CLAIMED), DRY	62 kg (136.7 lbs.)
SUSPENSION:	
FRONT	225mm (8.9 in.)
REAR	210mm (8.3 in.)
TIRES:	
FRONT	2.75 x 17 IRC
REAR	4.10 x 14 IRC
INTENDED USE	Motocross
APPROX. RETAIL PRICE	\$949
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	Japan
DISTRIBUTOR	American Honda Corp. 100 West Alondra Blvd. Gardena, CA 90247

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