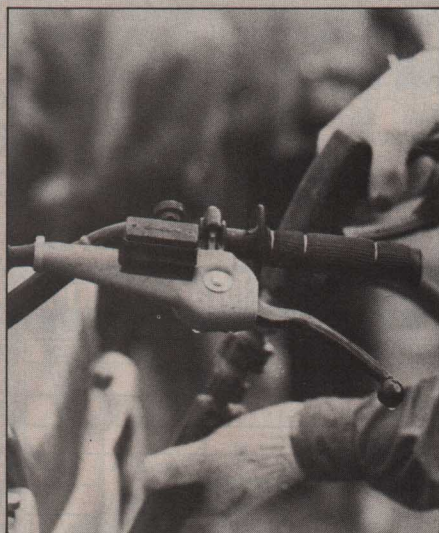


Probably the biggest news this year is the emergence of the water-cooled 500cc Honda works bikes. Here's Andre Malherbe's machine being hosed off after a practice session. As you can see, travel is not outrageously long, as most of the factories have settled in with 12½ inches front and rear as just about optimum.

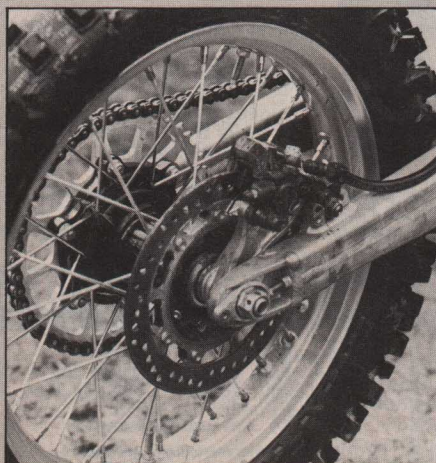
BIKES OF THE GRAND PRIX STARS

Technology rears its ugly head... and it's water-cooled

By the Editors of *Dirt Bike*



A hydraulic clutch is said to give the feel of a 125 clutch. We squeezed the lever and it felt more like an 80!



Team Honda is trying several different braking systems on their bikes. It seems that a disc rear has split popularity among the riders. Malherbe's bike is shown here, without the protective cover.

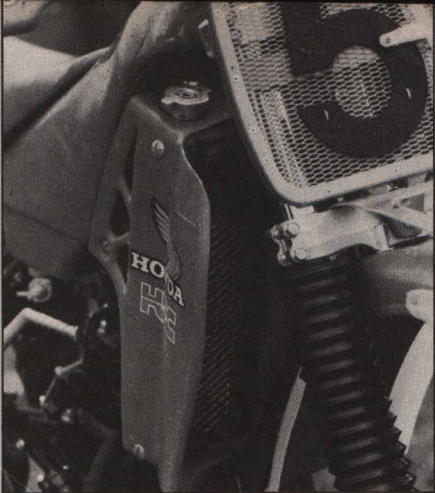
Want to see what the factory aces are running in Europe? Sure you do. All it'll take is about two grand for a round-trip ticket, another thousand for a rental car and fuel, and about six weeks of spare time. Not to mention a nearly unobtainable pit pass to get you close enough to examine the bikes.

In our unrelenting search for facts (and the all-important good time!), the editors of *Dirt Bike* forced themselves to go to Europe to do this otherwise thankless task for you. We roamed the pits, camera in hand, and made our questions known with no more than six words in any language and much colorful grunting and finger-pointing. The results, you see here.

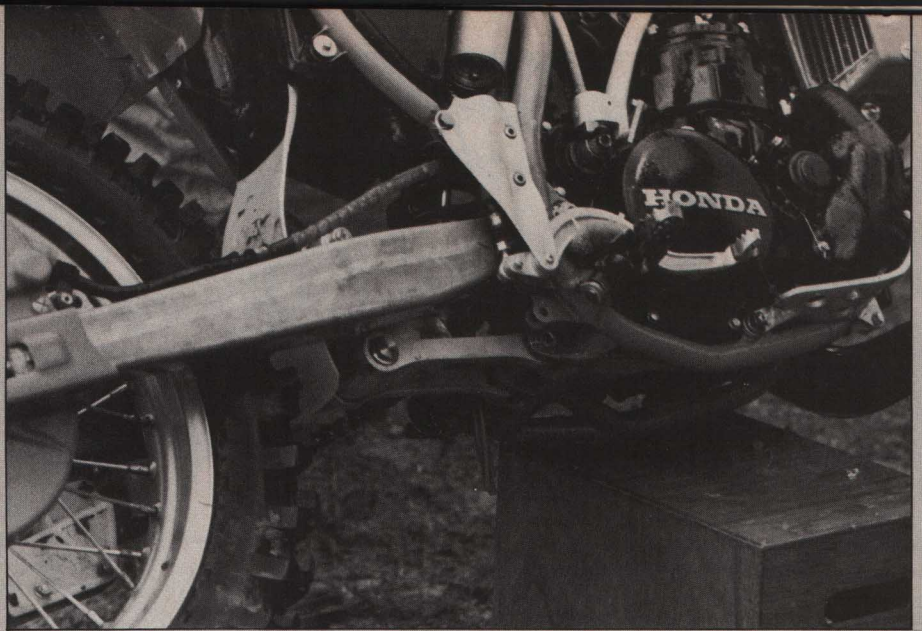
But, like anything new, the high-technology hardware here will be old hat in another 12 months. Then we'll have to go back and do it all over again.

Sigh. Well, *someone* has to do the dirty work. □

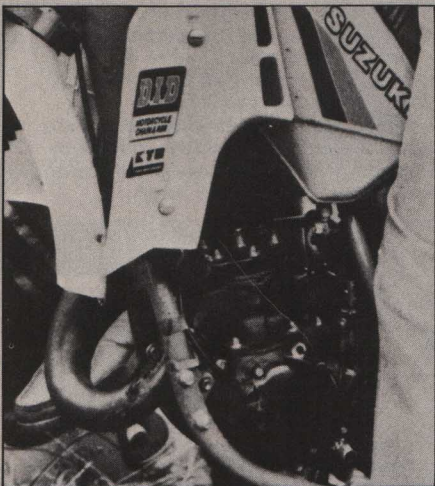
HIGH-TECH HOT IRON



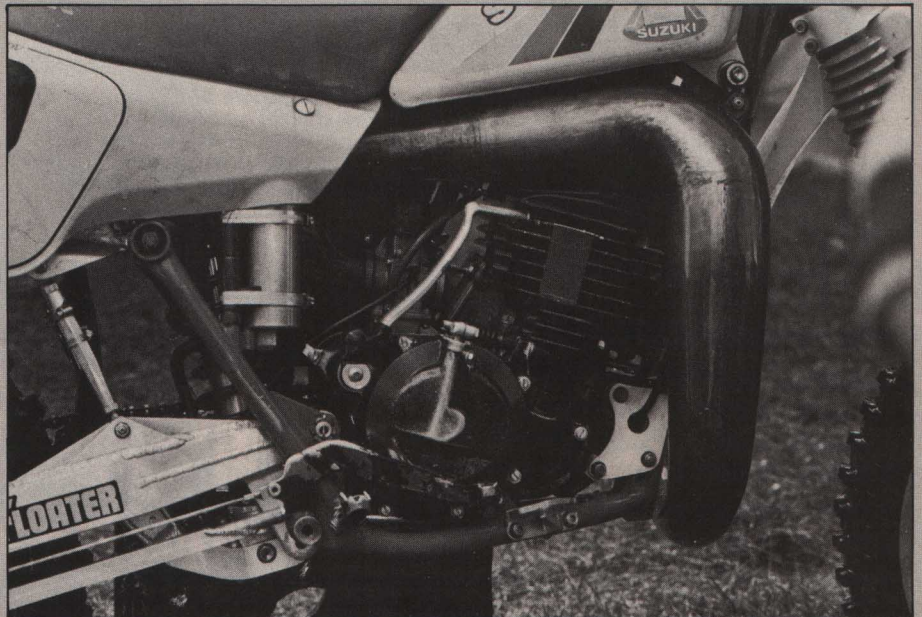
Very unusual is the fact that the 500 has two radiators and both of them have radiator caps, indicating a non-linking system. This would allow the bike to have a sort of fail-safe backup system should one radiator be damaged. Both radiators are fed by the same pump, and a temperature-controlled flutter valve determines how much flow goes to which radiator.



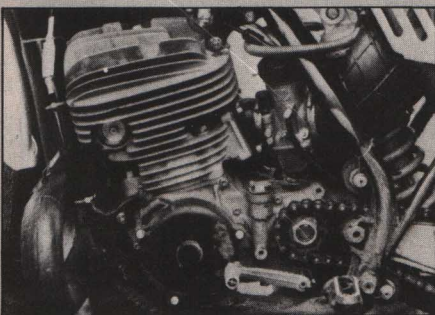
A worm's eye view of a works Honda. Note the very long primary rocker. Suspension is works Showa on this bike, but some of the teamsters are using Ohlins shocks.



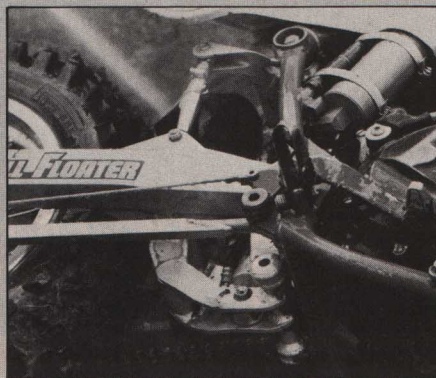
The works 125 Suzuki of Geboers' is very fast, and a great deal of the existing weight has been lowered dramatically in the frame. It has a case reed setup, unlike most of the conventional barrel reed cages. Suspension is factory Kayaba and the bike is right at the weight limit. Adjustable aluminum struts on the Floater suspension allow for steering changes from track to track.



Andre Vromans' 500 Suzuki has a 40mm square-slide Mikuni carb, a large reed cage, and a very long, slender torque pipe. There are both three-speed and four-speed versions being tested and raced. Suspension is factory KYB and the swingarm struts are adjustable.



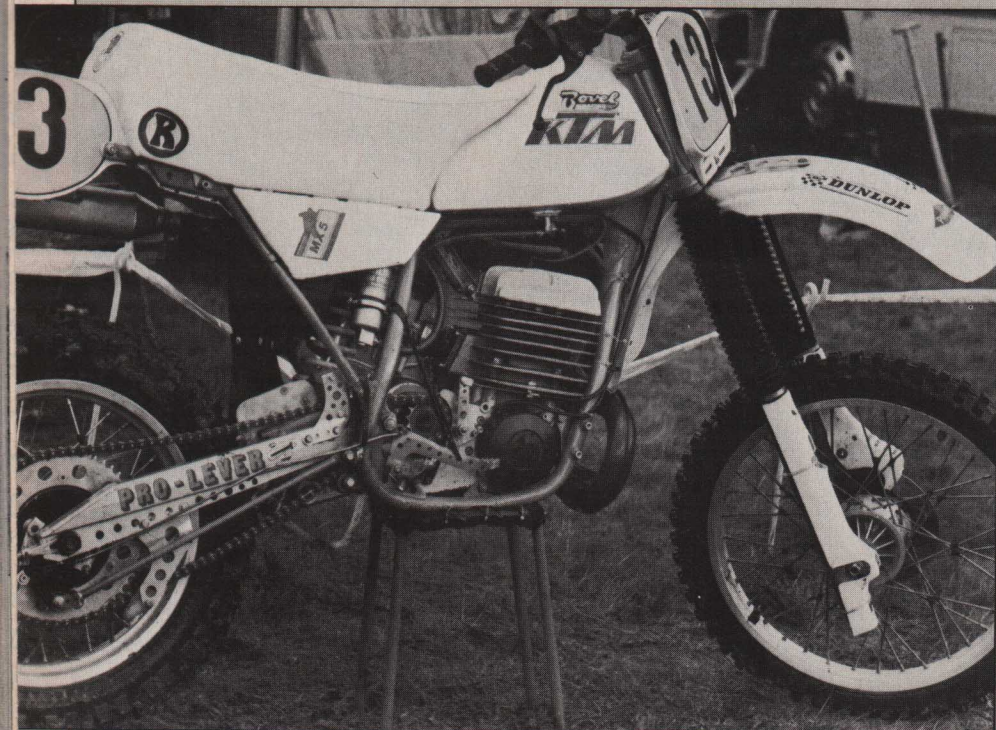
The works Yamaha of Carlqvist's. The monster motor has a power valve, a massive Mikuni carb and sand-cast cases and barrel. Suspension is Ohlins.



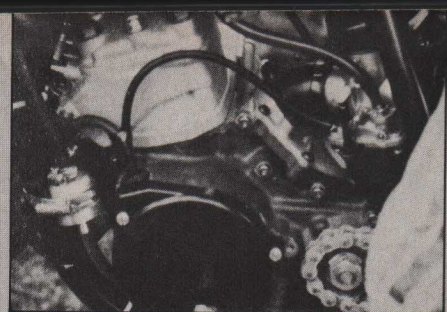
Here's a bottom view of the rocker linkage of a works Suzuki. Compare it to a stocker sometime.



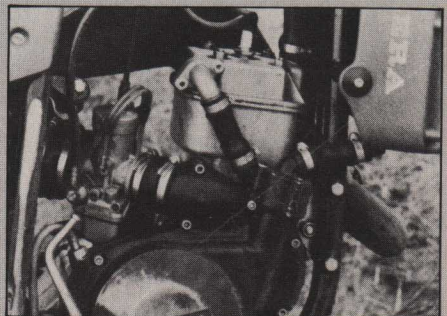
Suzuki teamsters in all classes have been experimenting with an ultra-light front disc brake. This particular assembly has been seen on the 125s and the works 250s.



Jaak Van Velthoven's KTM 495 has what must be the tallest saddle of any bike on the GP circuit. It's built up about 3½ inches taller than the stocker and is white, which certainly draws some looks. His bike started out life as a standard 495 but has an Ohlins shock and the very latest Zoke forks. Much attention has been paid to weight reduction, with the plastic on the entire bike being less than half the weight (and thickness) of stock parts. Holes are drilled everywhere and Jaak has the "good" barrel on his monster machine.



Jim Gibson, the sole American in the World 125 title chase, is riding this factory Yamaha with a rotary valve intake as well as a power valve exhaust.



The factory Gileras (Italy) are said to be extremely fast, but they have had reliability problems. They're water-cooled, use either Dell'orto or Mikuni carbs, and most use White Power shocks. Both the 125 and the 250 are water-cooled, but the 500—ridden by Russian Yuri Khudiakov—is air-cooled and about six kilos too heavy.

HIGH-TECH HOT IRON

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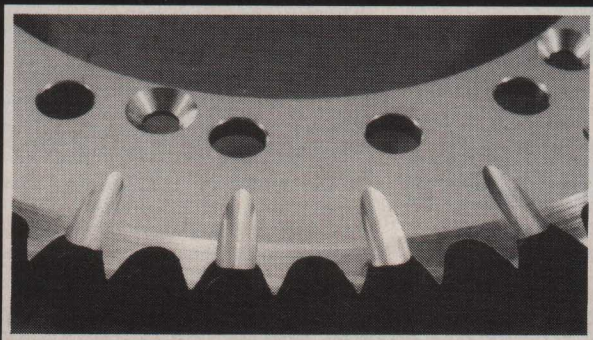
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