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## **WHO CAN BEAT BOB HANNAH?**

- SUZUKI PE175
- HUSKY 250 WR
- RM100 MX ER



## **WATER WINGS IN OKLAHOMA: JOHN ZINK NATIONAL**



ISSN 0034-5468



## Husky 250 WR Enduro

# WOODS RIDER WEAPON

Cold weather racing test

By Vic Krause, DB's Midwest Editor

Photos by Tom Best and Jeff Fox



You bet it was a harsh winter in the Midwest! Weather report broadcasts throughout the country focused on the incredibly harsh weather the central Midwest endured throughout the winter months. Numerous cities posted the lowest temperature readings in recorded meteorological history.

In the Chicago area, the daily commuting was a nightmare, and when the streets saw all that snow, they committed suicide and left gaping holes everywhere. It wasn't a pretty picture. But then this story isn't for the weak at heart, nor for the pampered portion of the country that doesn't

know the true meaning of thermal shock.

In December, in the midst of the worst winter of the century, on the outskirts of Chicago, there was only one clear-cut alternative to escape the boredom, frustration, and cabin fever depression — go test riding!! What



better way to mock Mother Nature, than to load up a brand-new 1979 250 WR enduro and hit the woods, or what's left of them.

Dick Bursleson cruised in one Saturday morning, mid-December, and dropped off Husky's latest entry in their battle to maintain enduro supremacy. Dick off-loaded the Husky with 16 miles on the odometer, and a shine on that bike that only comes once — when they're new. After sufficiently amusing himself in regard to our snowbound dilemma, he excused himself with the flimsy reason that his snow tires had just run out of warranty.

The first person to walk into the showroom and lay eyes on the new 250 WR, was a talented Hare Scrambles rider named Don Carqueville. Don had just wrapped up the 1978 season in the amateur Hare Scrambles category with a fourth overall for the State of Illinois. Impressive credentials for this part of the country.

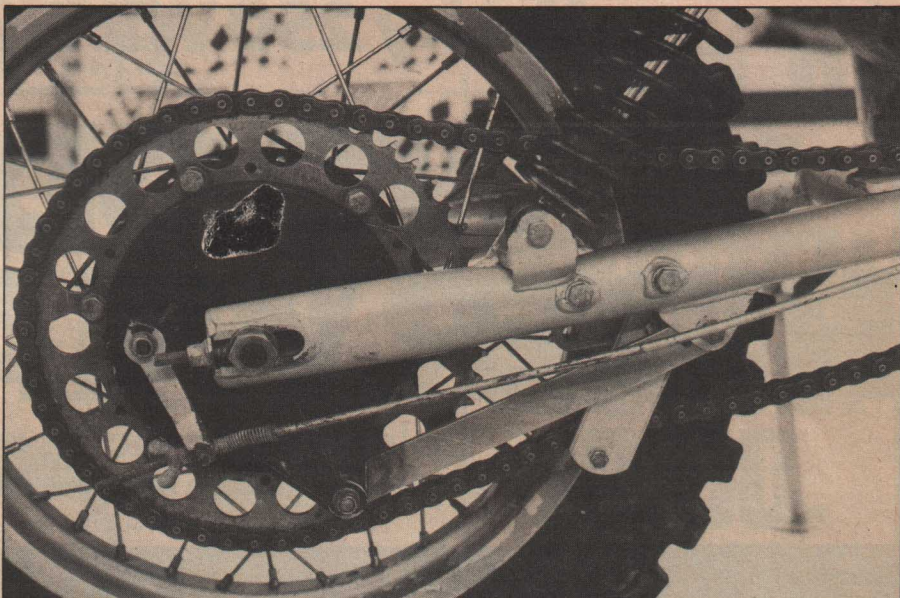
I was busy in the back putting away Metzeler tires, when I heard his oohs and ahs. When I spotted Don, I knew I had found my test rider. In addition to his riding expertise, Don was also the previous owner of a Husky 250 Malcolm Smith Replica of 1977 vintage and was in a more than capable position to estimate the improvements of the new '79 chassis, suspension and powerplant.

Thirty-seven milliseconds later, the bike was loaded into the back of Don's pickup, and he was already mapping out the route to the closest Hare Scrambles in the region. We assumed that Dick did all the break-in that was necessary, and now it was time to go race. However, before he left, Don beat me out of my own personal Griff enduro jacket, six quarts of oil, some Husky patches and a box of plugs. A real smooth talker, and I suspect he made a tidy profit selling those parts at that race. Like my customers say, "Don't worry, Krause, just write it off."

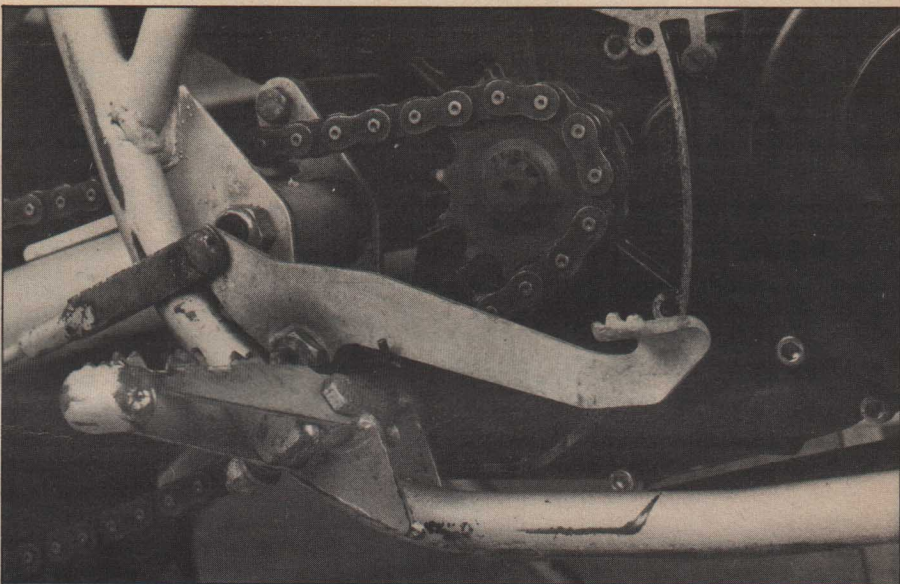
The bike was campaigned throughout the winter months in about four competition Hare Scrambles. The following is an amalgam of riding impressions and assessments of performance as a result of those experiences. Any thermally decadent West Coast rider need not read any further. This story is for the strong at heart.

#### Pre-race visuals

Prior to thrashing the bike in competition, we inspected and commented on all the innovations for the '79 model. The chassis, of course, is the new triangulated frame



**Strong swingarm, simple tensioner and non-floating rear brake assembly make up a well-thought-out sub-section.**



**Good attention to detail. Countershaft sprocket is close to swingarm pivot, pegs grip and brake pedal pulls over swingarm pivot centerline.**

motocross design, which has been engineered to accept suspension components that will provide in excess of 12 inches of travel and do so in a flex-free fashion. Using this frame for the enduro model guarantees a totally rigid package, and an absolutely flexless ride. Although the air box design has been one of the most highly touted features of the new model, a few observers expressed concern about deep water problems that might ensue. The ease of servicing the filter is apparent to even the most clumsy rider.

The fenders appear tough and cosmetic, as well. The layout of the headlight and the speedometer portion of the motorcycle was cleanly done.

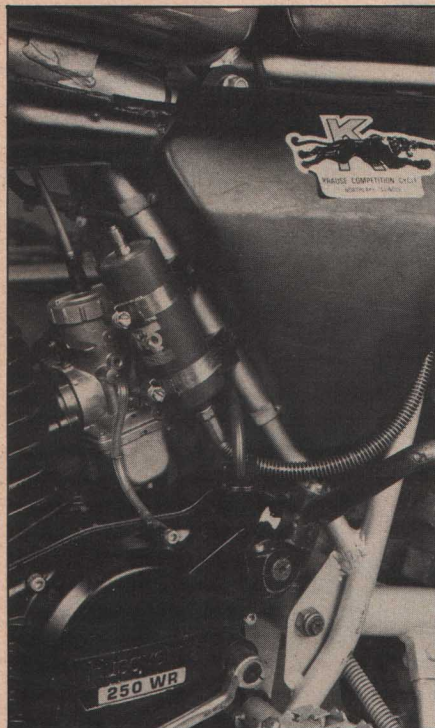
Another striking design change was the rear brake lever assembly, and the rear brake stay bar/chain tensioner assembly. Both designs look extremely efficient and totally out of harm's way, for the first time.

More than one backyard engineer suggested that the upper shock mount securing screws be changed from the slot type, to perhaps an Allen head. No problems were ever encountered, but the slot screws simply appear to be out of place and don't look up to the job.

The lack of a skid plate seemed to make everyone nervous, as visions of banging over logs conjured up the image of a dented frame or a hole in an engine case.

I can say in advance that neither

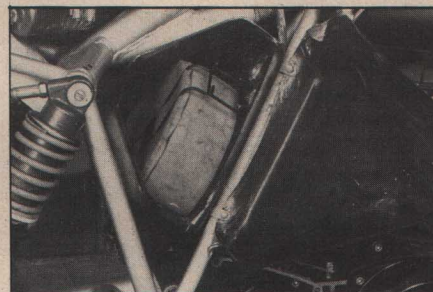




Left-side reservoir packs in tight to the carb. Pipe tucks in cleanly under side plate.



Proven VDO is easy to read and easier to reset.



Air box is absurdly easy to service. It's the best breather yet from Husky.

### Husqvarna 250 WR

ENGINE TYPE . . . Single-cylinder two-stroke  
 DISPLACEMENT . . . 245ccm  
 BORE AND STROKE . . . 69.5 x 64.5mm  
 COMPRESSION RATIO . . . 13.8:1  
 TRANSMISSION . . . Six-speed gearbox  
 CLUTCH TYPE . . . Disc light alloy  
 CHAIN . . . 5/8 x 1/4-inch  
 PRIMARY TRANSMISSION . . . 29/70 = 2.41  
 SECONDARY TRANSMISSION . . . 11/53  
 GEAR RATIOS . . .  
 CRANKSHAFT: WHEEL . . .  
 1 . . . 24.0  
 2 . . . 18.1  
 3 . . . 14.4  
 4 . . . 12.1  
 5 . . . 10.2  
 6 . . . 9.0  
 GAS/OIL MIXTURE . . . 1:25 (4%)  
 FUEL TANK CAPACITY . . . 11.13 liters  
 (3.0 U.S. gallons)  
 CARBURETOR . . . Mikuni 38mm

ELECTRICAL . . . Motoplant CDI  
 FRAME: Chrome moly tubing — heat-treated  
 REAR SUSPENSION . . . Heat-treated  
 . . . swingarm in sealed needle bearings.  
 . . . External reservoir type Ohlins gas shocks.  
 TRAVEL . . . 254mm (10.0 inches)  
 FRONT FORK . . . Husqvarna leading axle fork  
 . . . with die cast sliders, and air valves.  
 TRAVEL . . . 254mm (10.0 inches)  
 WHEELS AND BRAKES . . .  
 Front . . . 3.50x21 — 160mm brakes  
 Rear . . . 5.00x17 — 160mm brakes  
 Rims . . . Light alloy  
 DIMENSIONS . . .  
 Length . . . 2140mm (84.2 inches)  
 Height . . . 1159mm (45.6 inches)  
 Height at seat . . . 909mm (35.7 inches)  
 Ground clearance . . . 304mm (12.0 inches)  
 Wheelbase . . . 1495mm (58.9 inches)  
 Weight . . . 107kg (232 pounds)  
 SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE . . . \$2149 U.S.  
 F.O.B. Columbus, Ohio

outcome occurred, but it is a likely possibility should you not install a skid plate. Many oohs and ahs were overheard regarding such things as the 17-inch rear wheel, the Ohlins shocks, the 38mm Mikuni carb setup, the whirlpull throttle, the air forks and a number of other improvements.

#### Engine characteristics

Prior to launching into this category of discussion, let us first describe in a little more detail the nature of the event and the test conditions used.

A Midwest Hare Scrambles event consists of a race for the checkered flag on a closed loop course of between five to ten miles in length, for a period of time of approximately two to three

hours. Given the right track conditions, these events can easily turn into a type of marathon motocross. All of the event hours logged on the Husky were on snow and ice-covered terrain, typical of a Midwest winter, and a patch of black dirt was a rare sight indeed.

Some may argue that testing under these conditions is meaningless; however, in actuality these conditions have a tendency to amplify any detrimental handling and power characteristics of the motorcycle. If a bike has an extremely narrow powerband, it'll be immediately obvious on a less tractable surface. If a motorcycle has a tendency to low-side, or high-side, you'll know it right away

when you blast around on frozen H2O.

Our story proceeds: The first event entered was in Columbus, Indiana, about 200 miles south of Chicago. The first problem was encountered when we tried to start the Husky which had sat all night in 10 degrees F temperature. A change in the pilot jet solved the problem, and the balance of our winter start-up problems dissolved. Don had no problem whatsoever starting the engine with the new-style kickstart lever. You have to keep in mind that he's a Husky rider. The form factor of the lever and the kickstarter gear ratio are somewhat less than desirable. An improvement, but still not 100-percent correct.

The first difficulty was encountered when upshifting the motorcycle. The problem wasn't with the actual engagement of the transmission itself, but rather with use of the lever. Don, who is accustomed to the shifting characteristics of a Husky from previous ownership, had difficulty upshifting; even when the position of the lever was relocated, he couldn't get comfortable with it, and perhaps a different length of lever would have eased his discomfort. Actual engagement of the transmission was positive and unfailing.

The first impression of the engine power characteristics of the WR is that this new '79 model is significantly faster than the past WR models. The powerband is still even and smoothly delivered, and lugging the machine in tight woods is no problem at all. Coupled with those factors, the machine also grabs rpm very quickly, and the acceleration is noticeably faster than it used to be. The machine is torquey and still exhibits a very fast mid-range rev buildup. The powerband invites relaxation. Even on some gnarly, rutted, frozen uphill sections, the motor delivered tractable, usable power that resulted in a surefooted ascent. The clutch operation was smooth and fade-free.

It would be very difficult indeed to prescribe a more suited motor for the task of enduro work. One could only ask that the Husky engineers provide a less-awkward kickstarting mechanism, which has been their bane for a decade. For the duration of our use of the Husky, we did not experience one failure. And, with the exception of the initial hard starting problem, quickly solved, the powerplant was totally trouble-free. If they only had an electric start!

#### Handling characteristics

The first reaction to seating yourself on the new WR is the comfortable, natural relationship between the seat,





the footpegs and the bars. Once under power, you can immediately feel the improved maneuverability, due to the slightly decreased rake and the use of slightly shorter suspension components. The interesting thing is that fast-speed handling doesn't seem to have been affected by this apparent reduction in rake. We must qualify by admitting to a rather limited ability to test that specific characteristic. For the extremely cold temperatures, we used LT-100 for the front forks, and the rear shocks were dialed. Log crossing could be attacked at will. Nothing harsh or unexpected happened. The suspension components are superb, and it's hard to describe a smoother ride. No, Husky didn't pay me to do this test, it's just that good a piece of machinery.

Berm corners were pure fun, and the Husky tracked like it was on rails. Roosting through the snowdrifts was a gas also. Surface conditions prevented any real assessment of the bike's

ability to nail inside corners, but the bike seemed to indicate a certain stability that would give it an affirmative reply in that department.

Wheelies? Ask Don! Coming up a hill out of a water crossing with an extremely wet seat and power applied, Don managed a very handsome loop because the Husky insisted on traction. One look at the rear fender tells the story. The brakes, both front and rear, worked fine, despite the fact that this year's Husky has eliminated the rear floating brake mechanism. Once wet, however, the performance of the brakes significantly deteriorates. It is evidently the same shoe material that Husky has been using for years, and the problem has always been there and still exists.

The suspension components have been reduced to provide 10 inches of travel on the WR models, as opposed to 12 inches on the motocrossers. The result is a totally rigid package that

handles any enduro terrain like a motocrosser, yet wouldn't exhibit any sign of frame or swingarm flex, even in an earthquake. Overkill? Perhaps! The alternative for increasing front and rear travel exists for any interested parties at a very nominal expense.

Like the motocrosser, the WR is stable in flight and smooth on landings. This machine is truly tailored for the Eastern enduro rider. The OR models were definitely built for the guys with sand in their eyes. And despite the low temperatures, we didn't have any complaints of fork seal leakage or shock failure. The performance is better than anything previously offered by Husky to the enduro rider.

#### **Post-race maintenance**

Subsequent to the competitive events entered, a log was kept of the various maintenance operations

*(Continued on page 62)*



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## HUSKY 250

(Continued from page 60)

performed, and areas needing attention were noted. The steering head, spokes and flywheel remained tight. The clutch and brake cables both seemed to be stretching and required adjustment after each event. The mag cover required silicone seal to keep it watertight, and the lower half of the air box was taped for any events where deep water would be encountered. No problems occurred. The gearbox oil looked good when changed.

One area that required constant attention, was the rear brake lever pivot points. Any neglect here would result in a rust-frozen situation — not uncommon for most enduro machines. To summarize, maintenance is normally what you would expect from any competitive enduro machine.

### Aggravations

The painted rims shed their golden hue at the first quarter car wash. Since the problem has been eliminated in production and covered by warranty, no further discussion is necessary. When watered down a bit, the seat becomes as slippery as a seal's butt and a corresponding aggravation is encountered when you slide backwards: your left thigh makes an intimate acquaintance with the left side number plate. We relocated the plate lower and farther to the rear, which helped alleviate the condition, but Lord knows why Husky doesn't go to a combination FIM-style side panel/number plate. The number plate setup has always looked bogus, and still does. The list of aggravations is really overwhelmed by the positive attributes of the machinery.

### Pleasantries

Access to the air cleaner system is a dream. Hopefully, water won't find it as easy to enter. Experience will determine if it will be susceptible and dictate what steps will be necessary to prevent it. The fenders not only look excellent, but do an excellent job of keeping mud off the rider. The new chain tensioner system works well, doesn't require a lot of maintenance, and no chain problems were encountered throughout the use of the machine.

The new design of the rear brake pedal is clever and convenient and well out of harm's way. The serrated teeth on the pedal also provide adequate security when actuating the brake. Starting the motorcycle was never more than a two- or three-kick affair, and the exhaust pipe is routed well out of the way of the rider's legs. Even though the seat does become quite slick when wet, it is extremely comfortable; in fact, it is claimed to be the most comfortable saddle made for an off-road cycle.

### Summary

If you compute a bill of materials of all the performance equipment that is provided as stock components on the Husky 250 WR, it doesn't take long to realize that you'd be spending in the neighborhood of \$3000 or more to build a bike with comparable features and quality. Based on current market prices, the cost of this new 250 WR is fair.

As of this writing, all of the 250 and 390 CR models sold out for the '79 model year. It is certain that the WRs are soon to follow that sales situation. An Eastern enduro rider can't do better. □

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