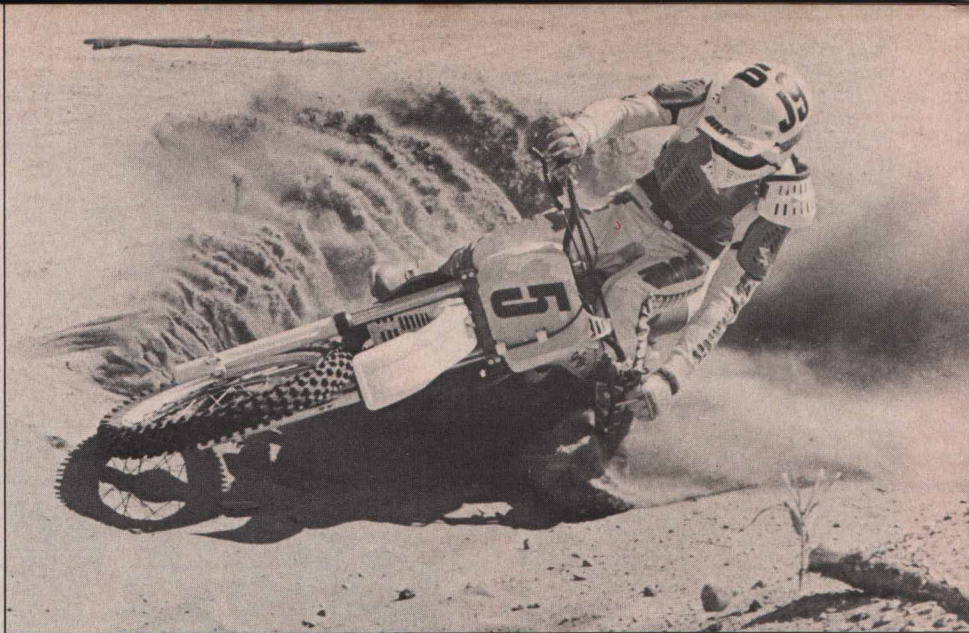




HUSQVARNA 500CR MOTOCROSSER

The Husqvarna 500CR is not what we'd call a hard-line motocrosser. It's available with either a four- or six-speed tranny, carries more than three gallons of fuel, and has suspension that's aimed toward the do-it-all rider. You can motocross, desert race or trail ride the 500CR quite comfortably.

This adaptable personality is appealing to the rider who demands a versatile machine that will take abuse beyond the normal life span of today's bikes. The Swedes focus on the strength and reliability of the Husky, not on frenzied power and thin frames that live six months, max. With this approach, the bike suffers in some areas and gains in others.



Jon Miller at work on the 500 Husky. Although the rake has been pulled in, the bike is extremely stable. Working the corners is comfortable with the slim tank setup.

SIX-SPEED THUNDER WAGON

Testing the
MX/Baja/GP/desert/trail bike special

By the Staff of DB

WHAT'S NEW?

Basic updates highlight the performance side of the Husky. It's fitted with a new pipe and revised jetting in the 40mm round-slide Mikuni. These little changes are aimed at smoothing out the abrupt hit of last year's 500. You have a choice of transmissions—either a four- or six-speed. We opted for the six-speeder simply because it will motocross plus do a number of other dirt activities.

Once again the frame is Conan strong and has a 28.5-degree rake. This radical fork angle (for Husky) finally puts the bikes in the mainstream of thought when it comes to quick-cornering machines. A slim plastic tank replaces the aluminum unit, and it holds more fuel, to boot. It's a low hanger, storing a major chunk of gas just above the carb.

All other visible features, like wheels, brakes, forks, shocks and handlebar gear, appear unaltered from the '83 model.

POWER IT DOWN

While changing the pipe and fitting in some jet hardware sounds petty, the results are astounding. The entire powerband has been polished and toned. Now it's healthy right off the bottom end and flows smoothly into the nucleus of the power—the mid-range. From there it blends into a modest top-end punch. This is all accomplished with the stock jetting! It fires on the first or second kick, hot or cold, and runs cleanly from the bottom to the top.

Out of the corners, it's potent. The power builds quickly from zero revs and snarls right into the mid-range core. This is where a shift-early approach makes for better lap times.

As you move into the full-throttle side of the 500, it tapers off quickly and chokes rather than pulls. Basically, it's not killer awesome for an Open bike—more like balanced. If you short-shift and use the power



Air time is neutral, even though the bike is too heavy. Plush front suspension soaks up the hits just fine.

correctly, it'll snort with vigor.

With the six-speed gearbox there's a low-enough first gear and tall-enough sixth to satisfy nearly everyone. There's plenty of torque for the plonker, and top gear hits the 85-plus-mph mark.

HIT AND RUN

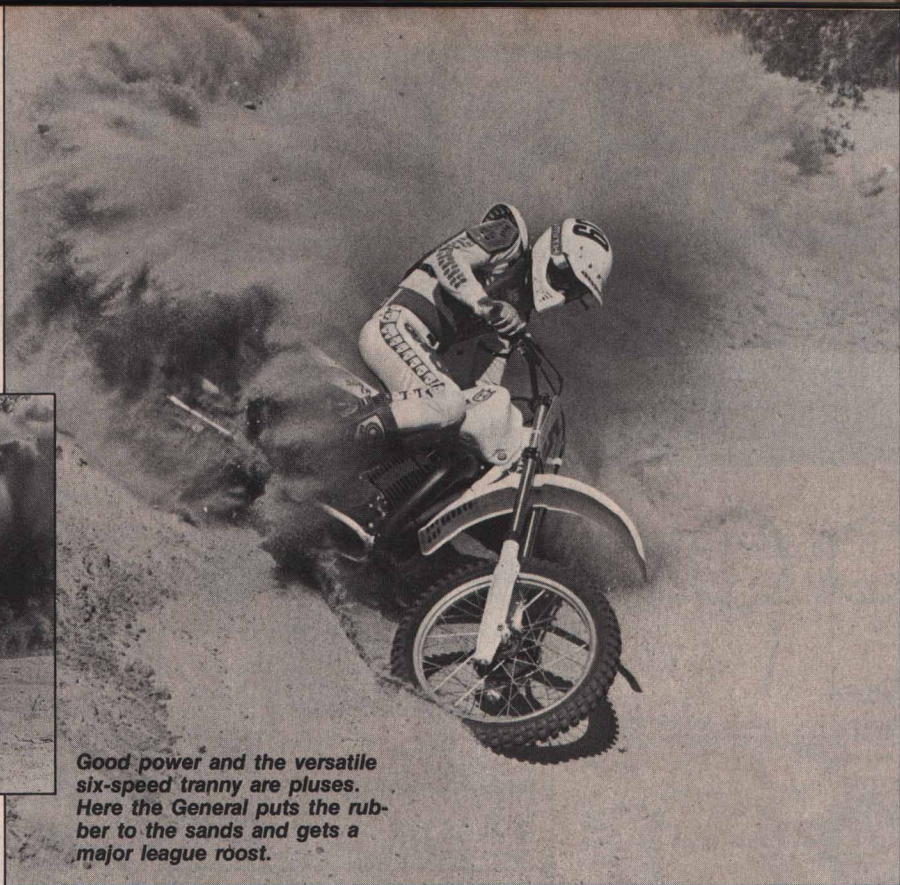
With the new rake and the slim, low-dropper tank, turning is no longer a struggle. No matter what the terrain, the CR sticks with just a little rider input. Get forward and it'll grab a line without conflict. It no longer demands precise throttle and perfect body positioning to negotiate corners. You won't wiggle under the quick-steering Hondas or YZs, but then again, you don't have to sweat bullets on tight, hard-packed turns.

HUSQVARNA 500CR MOTOCROSSER

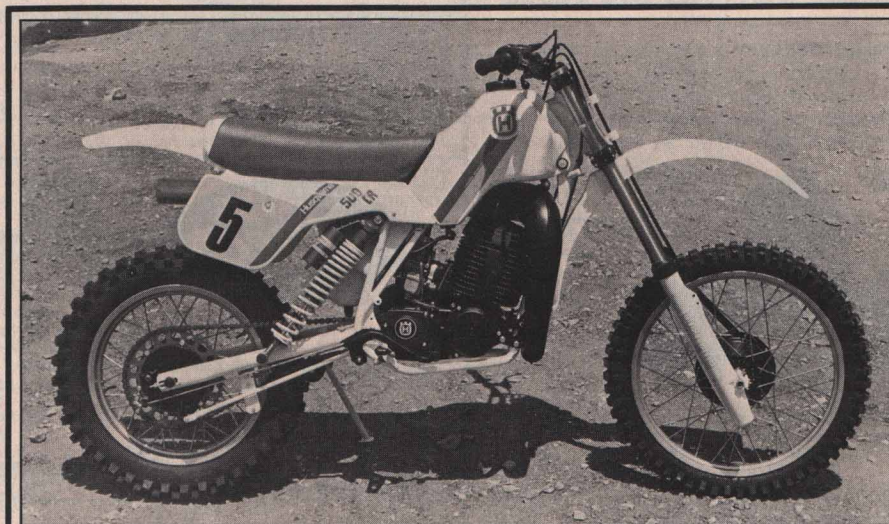
We found that the forks worked best with 12½-weight oil six inches from the top of the tubes. Their action is smooth and plush. They feel too soft for motocross, yet take the hits in stride. Again, they're deluxe for the desert rider. Somehow they tame ugly rough desert terrain without a fault.



The rear end of our test bike didn't have enough rebound damping. Heavier springs are a must for bigger and/or faster riders.



Good power and the versatile six-speed tranny are pluses. Here the General puts the rubber to the sands and gets a major league roost.



HUSQVARNA 500CR

Engine type Single-cylinder, 2-stroke, air-cooled
 Bore and stroke 86mm x 84mm
 Displacement 488cc
 Carburetion Mikuni 40mm
Factory jetting:
 Main jet 360
 Needle jet AA5
 Jet needle 7DH3
 Pilot jet 35
 Slide number 2.5
 Fuel tank capacity 12.5 L (3.3 gals.)
 Lubrication . . . Pre-mix (Bel-Ray MC1 recommended)
Gearbox ratios: 4-speed/6-speed:
 1. 13.5:1/18.7:1
 2. 10.24:1/13.5:1
 3. 8.23:1/10.3:1
 4. 6.96:1/8.2:1
 5. N/A/7.0:1
 6. N/A/6.1:1
 Gearing, front/rear 12/53
 Ignition Motoplat
 Recommended spark plug Bosch W4C
 Silencer/spark arrester Yes/No
 Wheelbase 1498mm (58.9 in.)
 Ground clearance 385mm (15.2 in.)
 Seat height 997mm (39.2 in.)
 Rake/trail 28.5°/131mm (5.2 in.)

Wet weight, no fuel 244 lbs.
Tire size and type:
 Front 3.00 x 21 Trelleborg
 Rear 5.00 x 18 Pirelli
Suspension, type and travel:
 Front Husqvarna, 40mm/300mm (11.8 in.)
 Rear . . . Husqvarna dual-shock ITC/345mm (13.5 in.)
Intended use Motocross/Grand Prix/desert
Country of origin Sweden
Retail price, approx. \$2945
Distributor/Manufacturer:
 Husqvarna Motor Corp.
 4925 Mercury St.
 San Diego, CA 92111
Overall rating of bike, keeping intended use in mind:
Handling Good
Front suspension Very good
Rear suspension Good
Power Very good
Cost Poor
Attention to detail Good
Effectiveness, stone stock Good

This rating system is included to aid in comparison of bikes in the same displacement and intended-use categories. Comparing the ratings of two dissimilar machines is a meaningless exercise in futility.

Anyone weighing over 180 pounds (or a fast, aggressive rider) will have to opt for the heavier accessory rear springs. Stock, it's too soft and bottoms easily. Our bike came with almost no rebound damping and nearly pitched us over the bars on downhill jumps. A change is definitely in order here. Yet in the faster off-road riding, that lack of rebound damping wasn't offensive. Odd.

BITS AND PIECES

The rear brake on our bike was touchy. Much like a light switch, it was either off or on. It would lock up and stall the engine with the lightest pressure. Eventually, we adjusted. On a heavy, powerful 500 the front brake just doesn't cut it. Compared with the competition, the action is anemic.

Cut the stock grips off and bend the clutch lever in so your hand will reach it. It's positioned too far out, and you actually have to take your hand off the bar to use it. The throttle pull is on the Goliath side—it's way too hard.

Not one of our testers had a nice thing to say about the Pirelli rear tire. The front Trelleborg is okay in loam, but on hard-pack it is useless. We popped on some Metzlers, and as usual, they tightened up the overall handling of the bike. Amazing.

GIVE IT TO ME STRAIGHT

Husky's reputation is basic: built to last and easy to ride. The 500CR puts out tractable power, is versatile, and the suspension performs with few glitches. It will live under serious abuse with decent maintenance.

Riders who don't demand feather-light rocketships and who want a bike that will last for two or three years should consider the Husky. It's a little heavier and slower, but it will outlive most and is at home on more than just a motocross track. □