

We know for a fact that KTM will offer a hyper-charged lineup for 1985. You can look for a water-cooled 495 weighing under 220 pounds, and a wild 250 complete with White Power forks and a disc brake. KTM's 125 will receive a boost in both the scream department and the suspension. And, all-new is the 350MXC. The 350 is aimed directly at the cross-country market and is KTM's answer to the Husky 400.

#### THE EXPERTS DECIDE

Why did KTM decide on a 350 and not a full-fledged 400? A meeting of the minds considered all the angles. The best and most usable power. The lightest weight. The easiest to handle. They knew their 250 was ultra fast, very light, and packed some serious juice in the tiny powerplant. But, a competitive Open class cross-country/enduro scooter would need more off the bottom, a beefed-up mid-range, plus the revvability of the 250.

The experts decided to stroke the 250 motor, coaxing the needed low and mid-range out of the existing engine. They figured the bike would then storm off the bottom, carry through a meaty mid-range and pull to Saturn on top.

We had a chance to test the only 350 powerplant in the world at the Blackwater 100. The '85 mill was packed into an '84 chassis. Very shortly we'll have a complete 350MXC in our hands, and it will get a full-on evaluation.

Word has it that the finished version will sport White Power upside-down forks, a full floating front disc brake and all-new rear suspension. Once again it will be based on a White Power shock, but the leverage system will resemble the Honda Pro-Link, with a swingarm-mounted dog bone and a frame-mounted fork to control the rising rate. Other changes include a low-slung gas tank, a softer seat, and basic cosmetic updates. Right now, our eyes focused on the 350 motor, and how it would stack up against the 400 Husky mill.

#### PACKIN' THUNDER

By simply eyeballing the 350, you can't see anything zoot. Its outward appearance is identical to the 250. Inside, it's another story. KTM used a longer stroke coupled with the same 250 bore to make up the big changes. A Type 54 Bing is used, as is the standard 250 L/C pipe. It shares the same wide-ratio transmission as the 250MXC.

Some riders complained about the wide gaps found in the 250MXC tranny. While the 350 shares the gearbox, there are *no* strange spreads between gears. We feel that the added thrust of engine eliminated the bog feeling of the 250 once shifted into fourth or fifth gear.

Starting the 350 is a joke. Tickle the carb and give a halfhearted jab at the kickstarter and it fires. Once it was warmed up, we took to the tight West Virginia trails prior to the race, just to check the jetting and get a feel for the new motor. As we turned off the pavement and into the woods, a hot-blooded smile took control.

Where the 250MXC lacks, the 350 takes

# WIDE-RATIO LIGHTNING

By Tom Webb

Heartache in overdrive



There's no comparison between the 250 and 350 in the off-the-bottom power delivery. The added punch tightened up the wide-ratio tranny, and all the gears are spaced dead-on.

over. It grunts as the throttle is cracked and then blasts into a dreamlike powerband. Off the bottom it snorts with force. Unlike the 250 with its killer mid-to-top hit, the 350 starts low and builds, ending with a zippy hook at the upper revs, much like a motocrosser. This gives the rider trialslike first and second gears, letting him tractor over the technical sections that prove to be just too much for a typical 250.

As delivered, the jetting was dead-on, as were the gear ratios. First gear steamrolled muddy, slippery trails. When the rider botched a slimy uphill, the bike took over. It would thug, plug and surge at near idle, all the time keeping that critical forward momentum. We don't know the exact gains of the 350 over the 250, but we would hazard to guess that the low and mid-range is 15

to 20 percent stronger than a well-tuned 250MXC.

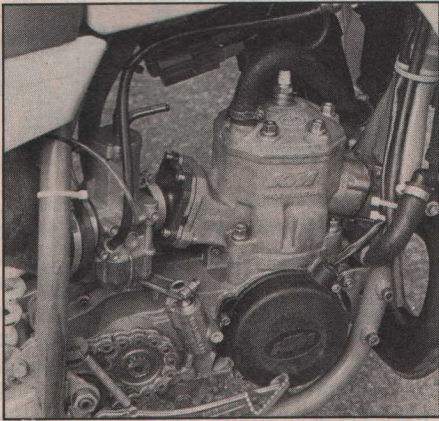
From the middle strength of the engine to the top-end hit, you can feel the additional muscle. That critical, much-abused center spread of power is enhanced over the 250, making it all the easier to ride. Rather than concentrate on what part of the powerband you're in, you slip it up a gear higher than normal and use the added torque to pull you through a demanding section.

On top, the 350 rips into overdrive with a serious hit. It's not in the same league as the awesome 495MXC, but is much more usable and dead-on for the enduro/cross-country rider.

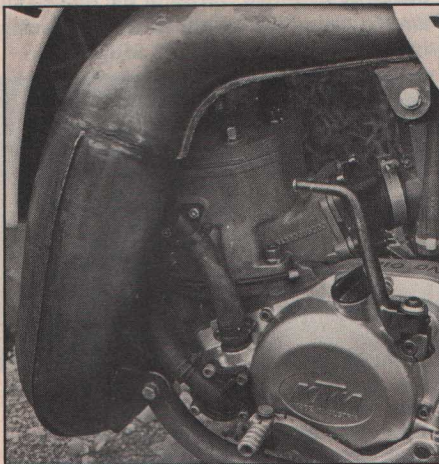
#### WHEN PUSH COMES TO SHOVE

KTM's main nemesis in the Open class enduro/cross-country market is the Husky

## 1985 KTM 350MXC



Even the most learned eye can detect NO changes from the 250MXC engine to the 350: same carb, same cylinder, same pipe and same ignition.



Our engine arrived just prior to the Blackwater 100 race. Notice the "No Oil" written on the side case. It had been air-freighted direct from Austria, then bolted onto a 250 chassis.

400WR. They attacked Husky from two sides. Their engine might not put out the striking low-end charge of the Husky, but there's enough. It does things the 250 isn't capable of, yet still feels like a robust quarter-liter machine. The added spirit carries through the rest of powerband—less than a full-blown 500, but much more than a healthy 250.

Their other goal is ridability: light weight, quick handling and the latest suspension garb demanded by the masses. The production 350MXC should tilt the scales at 216 pounds. That's about 30 pounds less than the Husky.

In the motor department the KTM is definitely big league. It's tractable, torquey and easy to handle. We can't judge the rest of the package until a full-tilt unit sits in our garage. We'll go out on a limb and say that a 216-pound, tractorized rev-mobile should prove to be more of a threat than a nagging itch to the Husky 400. Look for a full test shortly. We hear that our 1985 350 is airborne from Austria and pointed toward the stagnant yet plush DB offices. We can't wait! □

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