

FIRST TEST! YAMAHA IT400 SHOCKER

DIRT BIKE

JUNE 1976

34355

\$1.00
UK40p

**HUSKY 360
AUTOMATIC
RIGHT THE
FIRST TIME**

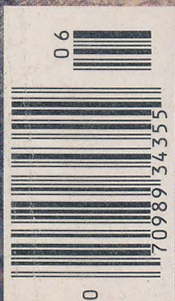
**FALSETTO
FLASH-OUT!
SUZUKI 100 vs.
YAMAHA 100 vs.
HODAKA 100**

**TIPS ON
SURVIVAL,
FORKS &
PHANTOMS**

**ONE DAY IN
ALABAMA**

**TWO HOURS
IN FREMONT,
CALIFORNIA**

OFF-ROAD MODS FOR HONDA'S XL-350



DIRT BIKE

JUNE 1976 • VOLUME SIX • NUMBER SIX

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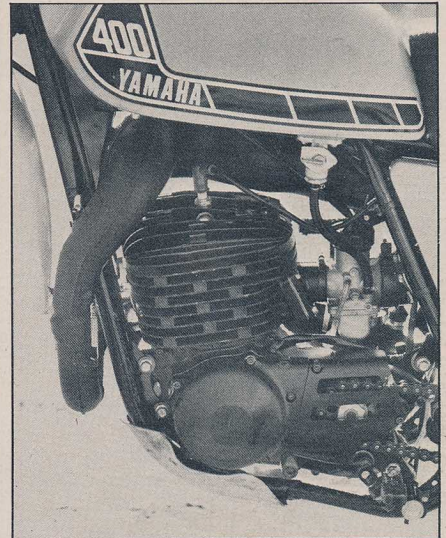
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ON THE COVER: Jim Connolly and Yamaha's IT400 get on better than expected. By either of them. Photo by Len Weed.

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XL350 ENDUROFICATION

TRAFFICATOR TRANSFORMATION

by the staff of DIRT BIKE

Ah, umm, well, ah. . . if you read the test on the XL350K2 (got that?) in the April issue you probably got the idea we thought the ideal spot for the bike was on the pavement.

Fairabout is turn play, so we jumped, leaped, accepted, didn't decline the opportunity to ride an XL set up for dirt riding, more specifically, enduro competition. Not



Everything you ever needed for riding two-up without a headlight at night in a snowstorm. And more.

a bucks-up Baja runner (we've already told you about Big Red), but an economically altered stock bike.

We rode a machine prepared by American Honda for Larry Langley to campaign for the '76 District 37 enduro season. Last year Larry won a national enduro out here, riding his own XL hybrid — an enlarged XL350 engine (410cc) in an XL250 chassis. That ride was good enough to place him fifth in the Western Region for the national enduro series.

After the initial set-up Larry rode the bike locally in the Prospectors D37 event, taking fifth overall, second in the A Heavyweight class. Then we rode (sometimes double) the bike on several outings. (See Donner Memorial Trial Ride.)

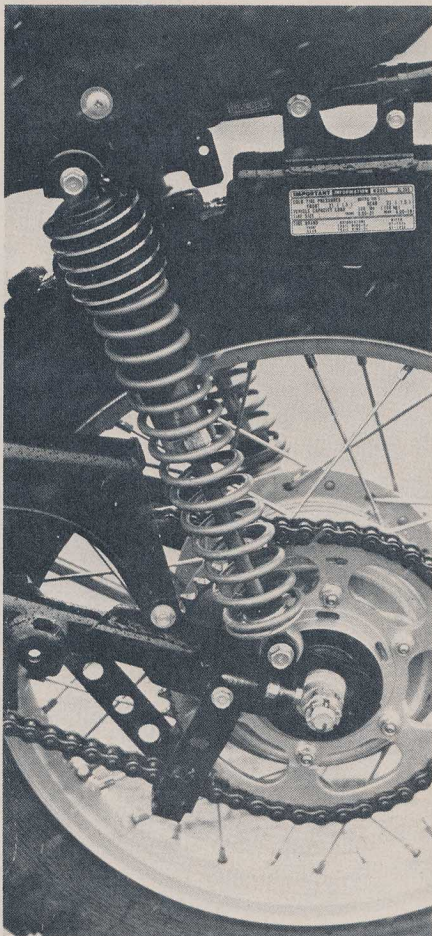
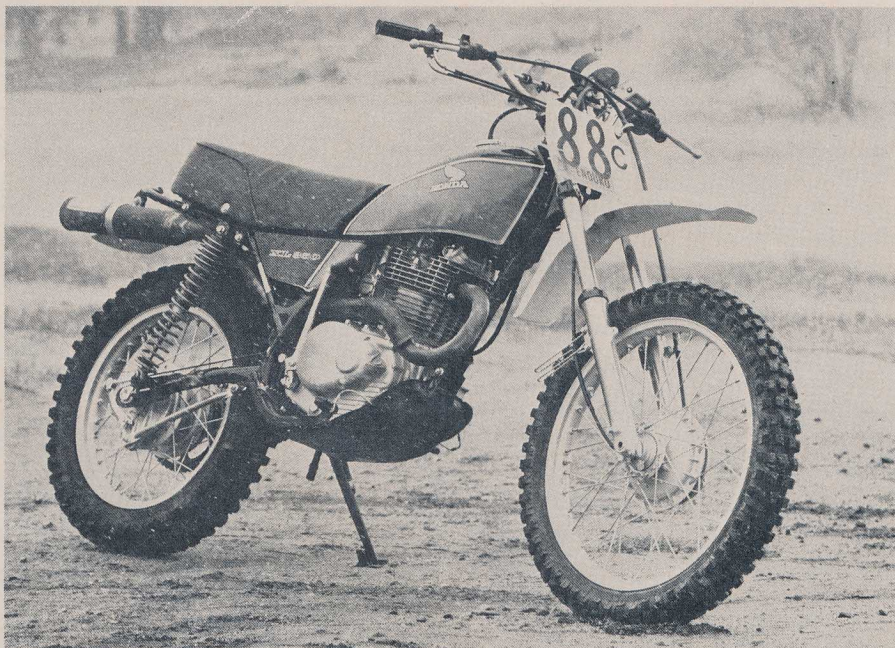
LITTLE JIM DANDY XL-ENTIFICATION ECONOMY KIT

Summed up: pull off the street-legal necessities, modify and adjust the suspension, change tires, change gearing, add a pipe and attach enduro instruments.

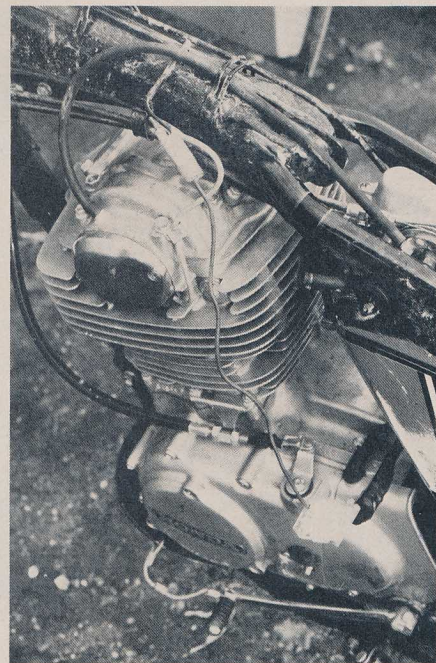
The lights, turn signals, lighting control switches, battery and wiring harness were removed. The coil wire, ignition points wire, and the black and white wire from the lower generator unit were connected with a jumper made from accessories. If you use Honda's terminal kit (code number 25243, part number 07692-001-000), you don't have to cut the XL's wiring harness. Four-way plug-in dual connectors accommodate the ignition, points, coil and kill wires, utilizing a jumper about ten inches long. The four-way connector is in the terminal kit, but it's necessary to change the terminal ends using wire crimp-ons. It's possible to hook up lighting by running a jump to the ignition. (The bike we rode didn't have lights, but we will do a follow-up on lighting the bike for the Greenhorn Enduro.)

An S&W fork damping kit was installed. It retails for \$59.50. S&W springs were also used. They go for an additional \$11.95. Use Bel-Ray ten-weight oil. The fork kit adds a quarter-inch of travel (and better

damping) to the '76 XL, more to earlier models which used topping springs. The '76 doesn't have topping springs, it uses hydraulic topping with longer travel. One thing to keep an eye on is the fork seals. Loss of oil can lead to topping, which can



The Works Performance shocks bolt right on. Sixty-pound springs hold the bike up, the damping does the work over five inches of shock travel.



The jumper wire, hooked up after removing the battery. The four-way plug at the top, into which the points and coil wires are plugged, was scrounged from another bike. Similar pieces can be found at motorcycle junkyards (inside almost any Japanese headlight) or electrical shops. The six-way terminal at the bottom of the jump wire is from the Honda terminal kit. It hooks up with the stock wiring from the lower generator unit. It would be possible to use another six-way terminal at the top of the jumper wire, but it would require a three-way splice.

do some real damage if it isn't corrected. Fork boots assure longer fork seal life.

An alternate front suspension approach. Works Performance Products will notch the damper rods for better operation, particularly on

washboard ripples and similar jarring terrain. They charge \$15; send 'em your standard damper rods. The address is 20970 Knapp St., Chatsworth, California 91311; (213) 998-1977.

Long travel Works Performance

shocks were bolted on the rear; no modifications were necessary. The top shock mount position was moved forward slightly for a mild cantilever approach with the new K2 model. Particulars: 14 $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch shock, 60-pound springs (the damping does most of the work), 5-inch shock travel (5 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches reduced by two rubber bumpers) and 6- to 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch wheel travel. The stock shock measures 14 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches. The replacement shocks pick up about an inch of wheel travel. Retail is \$114.50, including springs. The shocks have a 90-day warranty and are fully rebuildable.

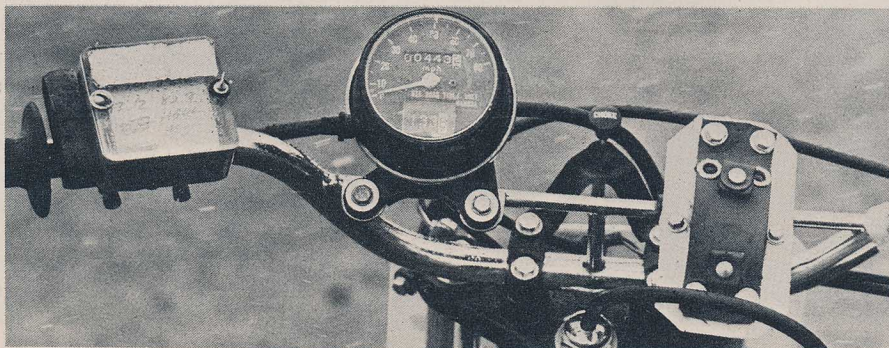
Knobby tires, rider's preference. A 4.00x18 rear seems adequate. If larger rear rubber is used, care must be taken that there is sufficient clearance. The bike we rode had six-ply Cheng Shins.

Clockwatchery mods. The speedo was mounted on the handlebars, rider preference. It's easier to read and the brake cable doesn't obstruct the view as the suspension works. A longer CB750 speedo cable was necessary, and it bolts right in. A plastic magnifier was added to make the odometer easier to read at speed. The speedometer was cut open at the base, with some very delicate surgery, and a bar magnifier, available at stationery stores, was cut down to one inch in length and positioned, using a plastic compatible glue. A mileage route guide and time piece mount were added to the handlebars.

Brush cables were attached to both foot pedals.

The bash plate was extended on the left side for better case protection. The air silencer, that large circuitous baffle under the seat, was removed for better breathing. Stock air setup was kept. The stock Keihin carb was retained with standard jetting. The idle was set a little bit faster (an additional 200 rpm) to avoid a possible stall at a checkpoint. This doesn't affect steep downhill descent performance any, because of the dual push/pull throttle cable system on the bike. When the throttle is turned off on a downhill, the engine runs slower than the idle adjustment for additional engine braking.

The motor was left stock. For those who want to go to a bigger powerplant, either Long Beach Honda, 5115 Atlantic, Long Beach, California 90805; (213) 423-1433; or

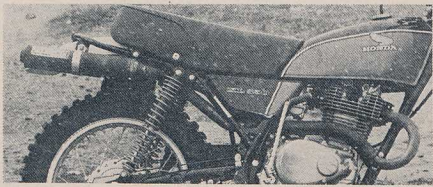


Timekeeping setup. Do not read message in left-hand route guide unless you're 18 or older.

Powroll Performance Products, P.O. Box 1206, Bend, Oregon 97701; (503) 382-6395 are recommended.

With standard gearing (15/45) the XL will top 80 without floating the valves. A 14-tooth countershaft, a Honda part, was added for enduro usage.

A Bassani XL USMR upswept muffler replacement was bolted on — \$45 with spark arrestor, \$35 without. They also make a complete pipe for the XL, \$50, with a clamp-on spark arrestor available. Your local dealer can order the pipe or muffler replacement from Bassani, 3726 E. Miraloma Ave., Anaheim, California 92806; (714) 630-1821. The Bassani bolt-on tucks



Bassani muffler replacement saves weight, keeps bike quiet, both important considerations.

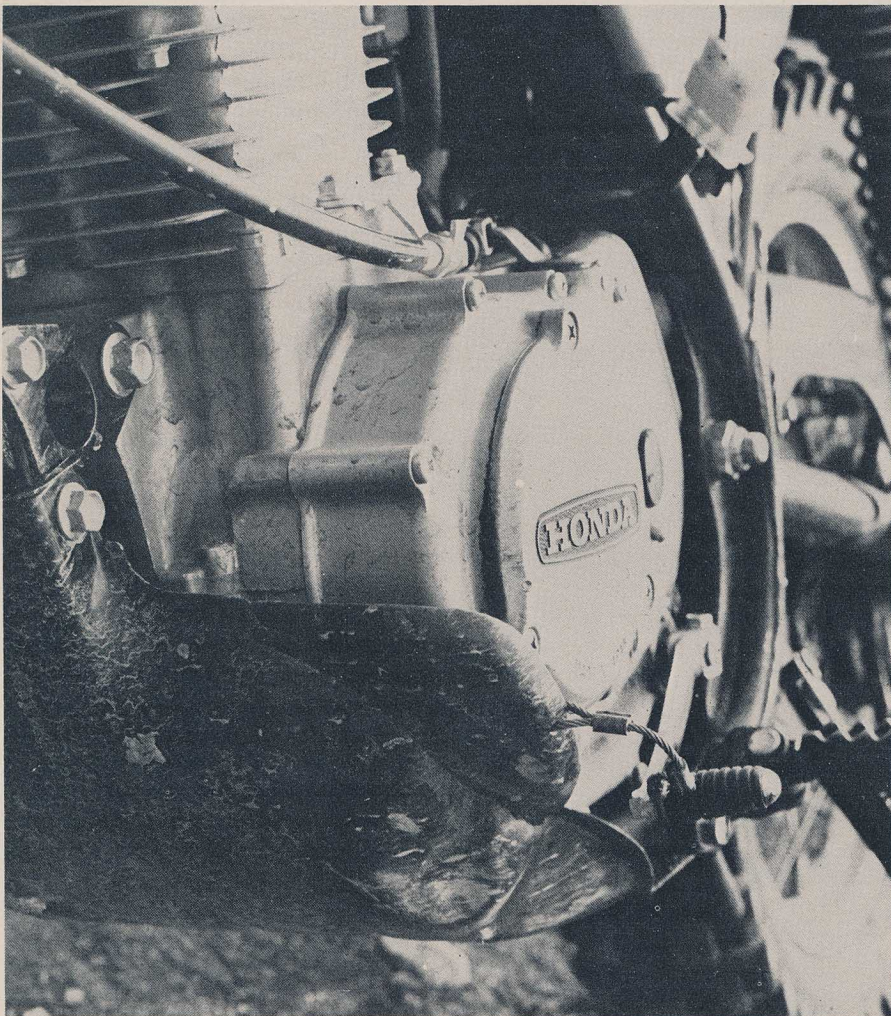
in well and is quiet. It was necessary to file down the fin area on the right Works shock. The suspension was worked full travel to determine that the filing provided sufficient clearance.

BIG MAN, BIG BIKE

Larry's a big guy, six foot one, 230 pounds, which explains why a big bike like the XL350 doesn't intimidate him as it does some smaller riders. The stripped bike, with a full gas tank, weighs in at 310. That's 27 pounds heavier than a fully fueled TT500. Larry liked the geometry changes made in the '76 chassis. He felt it was both more stable and better turning. He feels the new



Positive proof that turn signals are good for something. Change the amber to red and hook up the brake light.



Brush cables are a functional, cheap modification. Note extension welded on stock base plate.

center porting, along with the four-valve setup (the TT500 has two valves), is an advantage. He said he could outpull the TT500s down low, that the Yamahas couldn't go as slow in tight terrain, yet his bike never stalled.

He's going to go to the 410 package for more uphill acceleration. There wasn't a hill he couldn't make with the stock engine, but with the 410 in his old bike he could accelerate up rather than having to downshift. He's also going to move the footpegs back one inch. He told us that with the pegs back and the 410 engine in his old bike he could carry the front wheel whenever he wanted to. This isn't so easy with the stock machine.

He also told us he was able to take the TT500 (with stock shocks) in the rocks, because he had much better rear end performance with the Works shocks.

He'd like the bike to be lighter, but feels it's a lot easier to make the new K2 model competitive because of the better geometry. He feels the most noticeable improvement is bolting on long travel shocks. "It's heavy, but I'm sold on Honda reliability. I've finished three straight Greenhorns. In three years I've had one DNF when a shock loosened up and the swingarm broke as a result. I have total confidence that I'm going to finish."

SUMMARIZATION

So where is the enduro-ized XL350 in the scheme of things? It's still a big, heavy motorcycle. Going down one tooth gives it excellent low end performance. Within the confines of its steering geometry and weight it can be putted around in a tight gully full lock without having to feather the clutch to avoid stalling. We rode it over several miles of a tough observed trials loop without ever bogging. It seems stable enough for fast cowtrailing, and refrains from getting sideways through the whoops. The Works shocks definitely work. It proved its dependability and grunt as our snow tow bike. It's still a big man's bike, but it was transformed from a machine no one wanted to ride (as a stocker) to one that was actually a pleasant cow-trailer, hillclimber, gully plonker, a big ol' S.K. Special. We rode the stock XL because we had to for the test, we'd ride the modified XL again because we'd want to. 