

DIRT BIKE

Rider

A Motor Cycle News magazine
July/August 1982 85p



Win
one-
inside!



**ATCs-
Are
they
here to
stay?**

**Hudson
should never
have won-Jobe**

**Dave Thorpe-
Exclusive
colour feature**

COMMENT

IT used to be the case that if something was running smoothly and successfully you left it alone. Nowadays it seems that the men who govern our sport have a different philosophy - if something is running smoothly and successfully for the benefit of the majority then it must be time for a change.

Both the ACU at national level and the FIM at international have recently taken giant backward steps for moto cross by messing around with systems and procedures which even if they had thrown up problems, at least worked to the good of the majority.

This year, the ACU's moto cross committee introduced a new scoring system for British championships with the intention of: a) making downfield racing more intense and b) easing the problem of selecting candidates for relegation to the support series.

What they have succeeded in doing with what is undoubtedly the most complicated score-system in use anywhere in the world is to reward consistent mediocrity at the expense of race-winning talent which might not exhibit the same consistency; make sure that no-one injured early in the season can get back into the reckoning; and make points chart keeping an almost impossibly-confusing task.

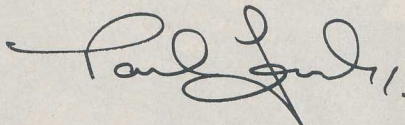
What they have failed to do is make

downfield racing more intense though it must be admitted they have made it easier for themselves to decide who goes down to the support series and who stays up. But most importantly the new system is well on its way to producing final championship positions which bears, at least in the middle ranks, little or no relationship to the true standing of the riders.

The series is only half over but the ACU should admit they have made a mistake and return to the system that served them well since 1978. The riders don't like the new system, the fans don't understand it and it hasn't achieved what it set out to do.

The ACU isn't alone in experimenting with changes this season. The FIM has changed its system of qualification for grands prix to almost universal condemnation.

They are looking into the possibility of bringing in a new scoring method for the GPs which will give points down to 15th position. One of the plans they are looking at is a French idea but the other is more interesting. It's a British system - the one we abandoned at the start of this season. Interesting eh?



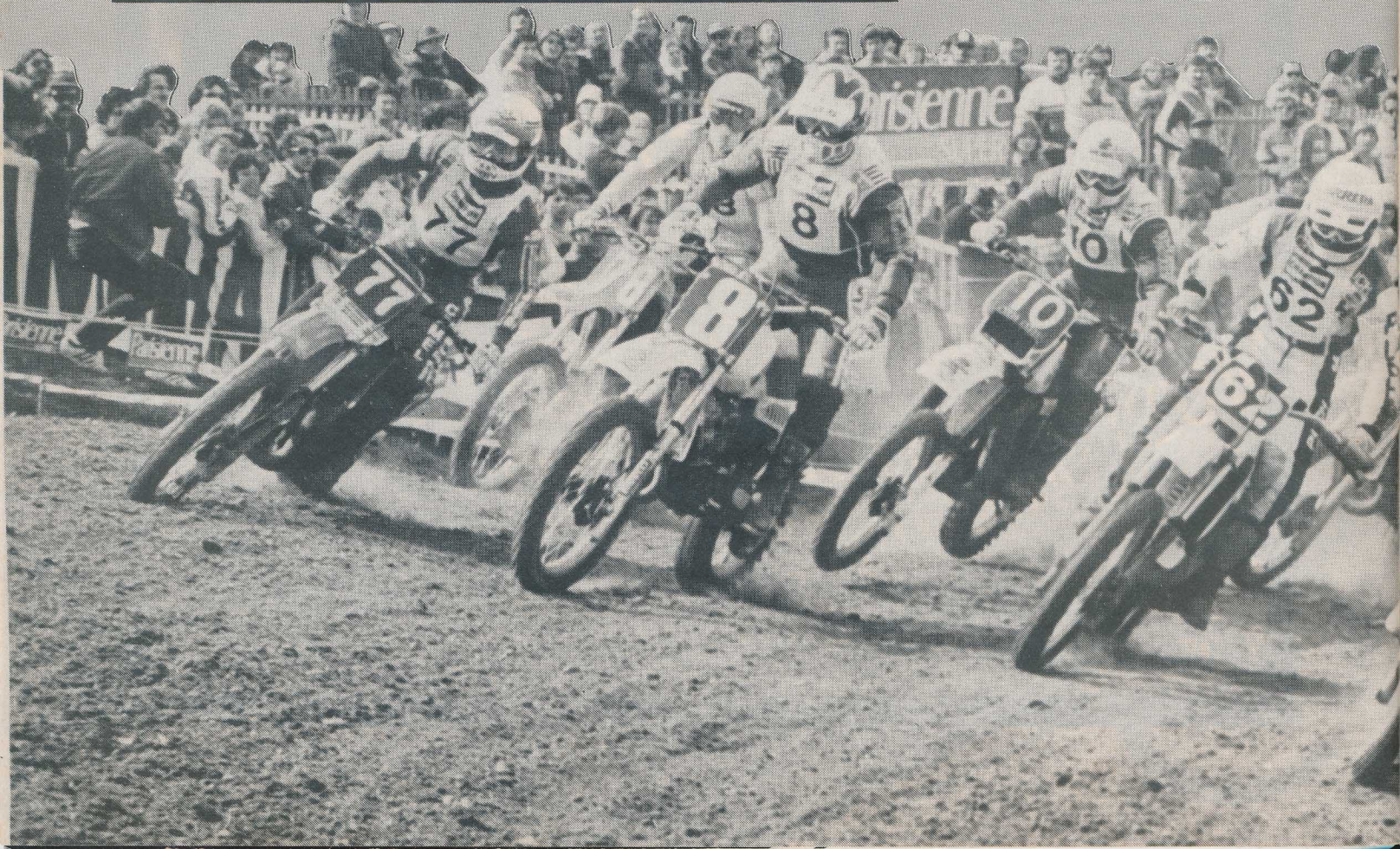
EDITOR

COMPETITION WINNER



Lucky winner of our recent 'Win a Yamaha' competition is Neil Titterington, seen receiving his prize here from Jim Tyrer of Tyrer Brothers Motorcycles, Preston.

Neil, 26, from Ingleton, Lancashire is married with one child and works as a fork lift driver.



CONTENTS

NO 7 JULY-AUGUST 1982

-
- 6 SUPERSTAR FACTFILE**
All the griff on Erik Geboers
-
- 10 ENDURO IMPRESSION**
We ride Yamaha's IT 175
-
- 14 ATC SPECIAL**
First of six pages. We ask 'Are they here to stay?'
-
- 15 WIN AN ATC**
Great free-to-enter contest to win a Honda three-wheeler
-
- 16 SUPERTRIKE?**
We scare ourselves witless aboard the ATC 250
-
- 22 WORKS WONDERS**
We take a pictorial look at the new 250 and 500 works bikes
-
- 25 DAVE WATSON**
DBR's action columnist
-
- 26 DAVE THORPE**
Raising a few points on Britains new score system
-
- 28 DIRT BIKE BRITISH**
A look at Wilcomoto's brand of Hereford Lightning
-
- 33 SUPER SCHREIBER**
Scottish winner Bernie tells his tale
-
- 35 WINNER AND LOSER**
Colour of how Eddie Lejeune lost the Scottish plus Schreiber in action
-
- 36 STAR SHOT**
Great pull-out poster from the French 500 grand prix
-
- 38 DOUG FOX**
Britain's other great sidecar star's emerging from the shadows
-
- 42 DIRT BIKE BYGONES**
A look back to the start of the AMCA
-
- 47 BURNICLE'S BEAT**
GP fiasco. Jack looks at the new qualifying system
-
- 49 GEORGES JOBE - EXCLUSIVE**
Suzuki's star is still haunted by his 1981 defeat
-
- 54 DAVE THORPE INTERVIEW**
Austrian GP winner Dave reviews his debut season so far
-
- 58 YOUTH GOSSIP**
How the makes shape up
-
- 61 WRITE IN**
Your chance to let off steam
-
- 62 STADIUM SPECIAL**
Supercross at Stoke speedway
-
- 65 TRACKS**
Martin Christie on the trail of the trials tyre
-
- 67 SUPERSPILLS**
Another mindblowing mess-up which could win you a prize
-
- 69 SUPER SUZUKI?**
PE 175X enduro on test
-
- COVER: Dave Thorpe in vivid 125cc action at Frome. Picture NICK HASKELL.**

EDITOR: Paul Fowler
PRODUCTION EDITOR: Tony Smith
STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER: John Noble
EDITORIAL SECRETARY: Lesley Nagys
ADVERTISING MANAGER: Andy Foulkes
CONTRIBUTORS: Bev Bridges, Jack Burnicle, Martin Christie, Nick Haskell, Alex Hodgkinson, Peter Howdle, Eric Kitchen, Don Morley, Jim Reynolds, Harry van Hemmen.
EDITORIAL OFFICE: Dirt Bike Rider, P.O. Box 11, Huxloe Place, High Street, Kettering, Northants, NN16 8SS. (Phone 0536-84692). Telex: 34557 - Dirtbike

ADVERTISING OFFICE: Dirt Bike Rider, 8 Herbal Hill, London EC1R 5JB. (Phone: 01-837-3669)

SALES: Circulation Department, Bretton Court, Bretton, Peterborough PE3 8DZ. (Phone: 0733-264666)

PUBLISHED by EMAP National Publications Ltd., Bushfield House, Orton, Peterborough.

TYPESETTING AND ORIGATION by Arty Type of Whittlesey.
PRINTED by Pindar Print, Scarborough, North Yorkshire.
COPYRIGHT: East Midland Allied Press 1982



Are we ready for the ATC experience?

First of six pages on Honda's three-wheel phenomenon by Paul Fowler.

“I'll never catch on.” There's no doubt that to inventors, investors, marketing men and management masterminds throughout the ages those four words form the most oft-repeated and dreaded phrase in new product business.

Nearly a decade ago there were plenty of sceptics around to trot out their opinion when Honda introduced the first balloon tyred three-wheelers into the USA. “No-one will buy them,” they were told. And lo and behold no-one did. Not at first anyway.

But now the sceptics, like their forefathers who condemned the petrol engine, the telephone, wireless, bicycle and all inventions back to the wheel itself, have been proved wrong and the ‘All Terrain Cycle’ or ATC is here to stay.

In the US ATCs are far and away Honda's biggest-selling product with around 100,000 units a year compared to a fifth of that number for their next best seller.

Britain still has a long way to go before the machines catch on to the same extent but it came as a huge surprise to me to learn that Honda last year sold more three-wheelers than moto cross bikes. And that was with a very limited advertising and promotions effort.

Taking all three models together Honda sold 1,262 ATCs compared with just over 1,000 moto cross bikes.

This year they are planning a total promotional spend of around £37,500 and say they expect sales to be ‘very significantly higher’.

It seems that despite the carping cries of the sceptics, the ATC is going to be very big business indeed.

Honda's efforts are being watched very carefully by the other major Japanese makers to see just how they fare in this first year of major product hype for the ATC. Only Kawasaki have attempted a market presence and that is on a very small scale indeed but Yamaha and Suzuki both have a range of ATCs on sale in the States and a boom here would certainly see them entering the UK marketplace.

Chief among Honda's efforts is the Honda/UDT ATC 250 championship with 12 rounds carrying total prizemoney of £7,400. Honda are convinced that competition will play a big part in the development of the ATC as the novelty and leisure markets and despite its perhaps shaky, unsure start, there are many spectators who would agree with them.

Whatever happens – whether ATCs are going to disappear as quickly as skateboarding or stick as fast as Superglue – Honda's schedule of running championship rounds at major grass track, moto cross and speedway events should give them the biggest audience of off road enthusiasts possible.

However, the fact that they have chosen to run things in this fashion is an indication that three-wheeling has yet to find its true niche. The first competitors have been refugees – sometimes even very successful ones – from various branches of motorcycle sport. Indeed if the first meeting suffered from a lack of excitement on the track it was probably due to the fact that many riders had hardly ridden ATCs before at all. But Honda's Tony Cartledge sees that as an encouraging sign.

“I agree it wasn't perhaps as exciting as I might have hoped but the crowd seemed to like it. Anyway the sport is so new there's no time for anyone to have developed any style or fancy technique. You imagine if we were now to see the first-ever scramble – I bet they went slow and fell off a lot there but the sport developed as time passed and look at it now,” he said.

Others at the NEC for the first round were much more impressed but it was the comments of one experienced motorcyclist who has watched all forms of the sport that I found the most perceptive.

“It's like speedway. Quite good to watch but absolutely nothing to do with motorcycling. You look at all the people who are cheering and really enjoying it. They're all car drivers and people on a family outing,” he observed.

And he was right. There's no doubt that ATC racing is a curious hybrid which sits uneasily on the perimeters of motorcycling, uncertain of the direction to take.

Unlike speedway however, the options are much, much wider. No-one will know until the end of the season which of the methods of racing will prove to be the most successful. Moto cross tracks or ovals? Or will the future lie with the more placid four strokes and ATC trials? Only time will tell.

What is certain is that though it commands most public attention, ATC



ABOVE: Ken Bridge, sales manager of United Dominions Trust shakes hands with Gerald Davidson, Honda's senior executive manager, to finalise UDT's agreement to sponsor the Honda ATC 250cc national championship.

Tony Cartledge, Honda's off-road co-ordinator is keeping a close eye on the situation, as he is responsible for development of this new race series.

racing is only part of the market and a small one at that. It's worth looking at some of the other things that make ATCs such an irresistible proposition.

Certain models have proved very popular with farmers. They are light, cheap, manoeverable even over ploughed fields, stable and can pull trailers. For the same reasons the Forestry Commission is very interested indeed as are the Army. (It is rumoured, though no-one will confirm the story officially, that the South Atlantic Task Force took one along for evaluation.)

Leisure parks as far apart as Wales, Northamptonshire and Scotland have bought ATCs and are selling rides as an added attraction.

And lastly there is the simple leisure market. People are buying them to simply ride for fun.

Whatever ATCs may or may not be – and there are many differing opinions – riding them is certainly fun. Whether that fun can be transmitted to the public via the race series is another question. But if in the end it cannot the future of the breed in this country is going to be tough.

Clearly the competitions side has a long way to go but the likes of Kevin Phillips, who has won virtually every ATC event he's entered, hope it's going to take off in a big way. For let's face it, if it does turn out to be ‘another speedway’ people like young Mr Phillips will have a meal ticket for many years to come.

It will take time before we can really decide exactly how to react to the curious red rocket hybrids but in the meantime Honda and Mr Phillips are not going to let us ignore them.

Win a **TRIKE**

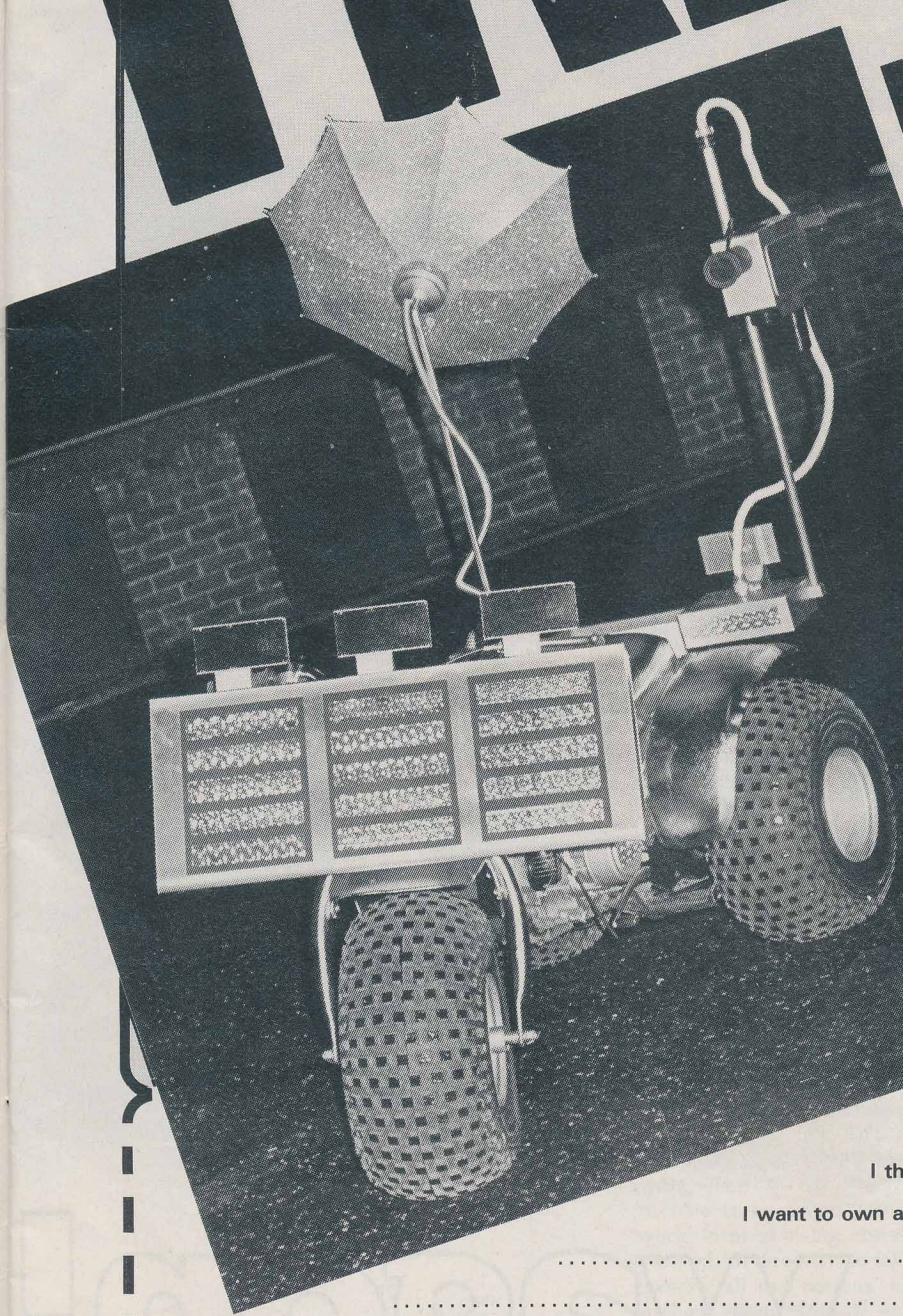
**ATC
SPECIAL**

**In this great
free to enter
competition**

You can win a great Honda
ATC three-wheeler just by
answering a simple question.

All you have to do is
study the picture of our heavily
disguised Star Prize and tell us
which ATC is underneath the
space aged paraphenalia and
why you want to win it.

Please send entries to:
Dirt Bike Rider,
P.O. Box 11,
Huxloe Place,
High Street,
Kettering NN16 8SS.



I think the ATC is a:

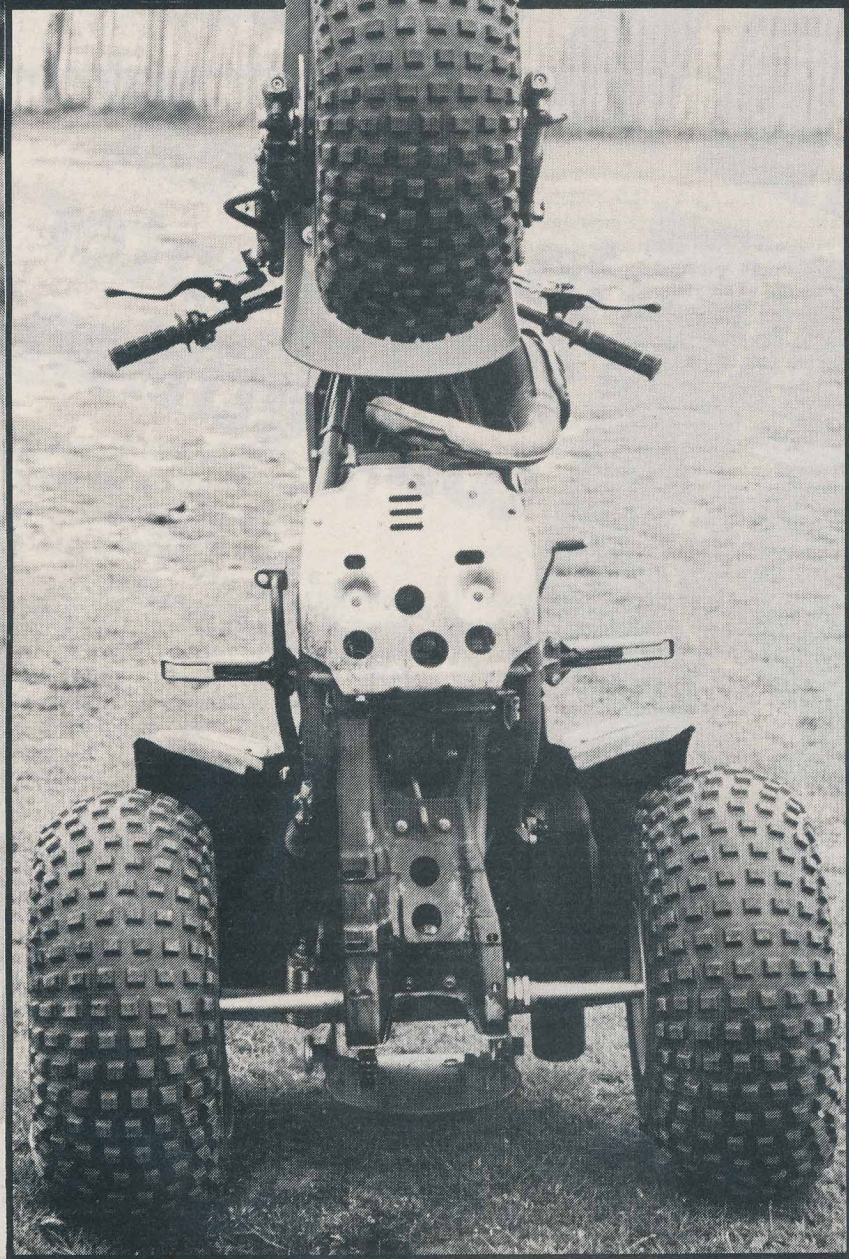
I want to own a Honda ATC because

(Not more than 21 words).

Name Address

All entries must be on an official DBR form. Closing date, August 4. Winner announced September issue.

Three wheels



Begging for attention: The 250 was a wayward nature for you to master - and it's half the fun doing so.

on my wagon!



Among the first generation of a new era of motorcycle riding and Honda pin great faith in the success of this model.

Paul Fowler scares himself silly aboard Honda's top-line ATC.

Riddle. What's red and frightens people? Answer - Honda's top of the range three wheeler, the ATC 250 R-C.

Well, perhaps that's a little strong, but it is red and it certainly scared the hell out of me at our first acquaintance. However, perseverance is the keyword and things do get better after a while.

The first time I came across the ATC was at Honda's 1982 European Press launch in Ibiza where, in between riding all the other bikes on offer, I had a short blast aboard it, demonstrated the art of falling off the back and handed over to a Japanese gentleman who appeared to be able to make the machine travel faster over sand dunes than I can ride a big road bike on a timing strip.

There was something that caught my eye as I went about my other testing chores though. The 250 ATC seemed to attract every kind of looney that the journals of Western Europe could muster. Every rider but one managed to bale off at top speed and the one who didn't fall off managed to go completely ga-ga and steer his directly out to sea, only to be halted by the incoming Mediterranean.

Whatever else it may be, the ATC 250 is a bike that holds you in its spell no matter how hard you try to resist and constantly invites you to master its wayward nature.

But there simply isn't any taming this ultimate in motorcycling toys. Don't get me wrong when I say toy - I don't mean that it's a machine to be trifled with - just that as a hybrid form of biking, the ATC doesn't yet know which direction to take and Honda, in covering all the options, have produced a machine sitting uneasily on the borderline which separates playthings from offensive weapon.

There's no doubt that Honda have pinned a great many hopes on the ATC in general and the 250 in particular. In the States three-

wheeling has taken off in a big way and all the major moto cross makers market trikes.

Here it was Honda who took the first step into the void and boldly decided to create a whole new style of off-road racing with a series of their own.

And at the hub of that series, sponsored to the tune of by finance giants UDT, is the 250R-C. The bike is among the first generation of ATCs built solely for sport, for the desert and dune races of the US and hopefully for Britain's ATC championship. There would be no other reason to mate Honda's legendary Red Rocket 250 moto cross motor with a high-spec version of the three-wheelers that Honda have been making for the agricultural and leisure markets for the last decade.

You have to admit that the 250-RC provides a startling contrast to the farmers favourites we've seen previously.

It sports front and rear suspension, a manual clutch, five speed gearbox and proper kick start to begin with. Then there's better tyres, hydraulic disc brakes front and rear, a heavy-duty 'O' ring chain and a motor complete with balance shaft.

Although the bikes are not street legal they come with lights and thumb operated throttle, both of which are removed for competition. The bike I rode had a conventional twistgrip and no lights but hadn't been fitted with a (compulsory for competition) sidecar cross style auto cut-out which stops the engine as soon as you fall off.

There's no doubt about it. The 250 certainly looks worlds apart from the other ATCs. While the others look unsophisticated - almost crude, the quarter litre model has a certain purposeful aspect which says 'watch out'.

I assume that Honda have invested its top-line trike with suspension in order to keep the price of other models low but they could all

Three...

do with it.

To ride an ATC at all it's necessary to make a drastic reappraisal of your previous motorcycling experience. Indeed, apart from knowing the basic technique of clutch and gear operation it's probably an advantage if you can't ride a two-wheeler.

The fact that there are three wheels and that the two rear wheels operate with no differential means that pointing the front wheel won't necessarily get you where you want to go. For example the slightest camber will immediately make the bike want to go emphatically in the direction of down. Salop clubman Dave Smith found this out to his cost on the day that I tested the bike at Hawkstone Park, scene of the third round of the ATC series. On the famous GP start straight he decided to have his first taste of ATC riding and despite valiant efforts to progress in a straight line he succeeded only in making an impromptu inspection of the paling fence.

Starting the crimson motor with the back-to-front kick start was psychologically perplexing but simple in the extreme as the motor crackled efficiently to life at the first attempt. Exhaust note was surprisingly quiet to an ear attuned to 500 moto crossers but apparently noisier ATCs are on the way as serious competitors attempt to coax even more power from the motor by attaching non-standard silencers.

On the grand prix startline at Hawkstone a few test starts in the company of Honda men Steve Beamish and Kevin Ruddock proved that the 'big red-un' rockets off the line with glee when notched into second and wound up. In fact its performance even surprised the two moto crossers who had expected a much bigger degree of wheelspin on the concrete surface. In the event, after an initial bout of spinning, the trike powered away from the

line with the front wheel doing its best to part company with the deck.

Winding the power on through the gears, the power is instantly on tap though it can take you just a little by surprise as it arrives with a distinct bang. Gear ratios seem to have been well selected though first is perhaps a little on the low side and it baffles me how anyone could hold the thing flat out in top on any surface rougher than a billiard table.

All of which brings me to the subject of handling. The basic problem in discussing the handling of this ATC is that there's nothing to compare it with. None of the other ATCs measure up in either performance or suspension spec and you certainly can't judge it by any two-wheeler yardstick.

The nearest equivalent I can think of is the snowmobile though that only really qualifies as a source for comparison on the grounds that its steering is just as imprecise and vague and that body lean plays a vital part in actually getting the vehicle to go where you want it to.

The key to getting the thing to turn at speed is learning how to drift the outside wheel while keeping the power on and the weight over the indise wheel to stop the whole schemozzle turning turtle.

That's the theory. Putting it into practice is a rather different matter and I have to confess that it's unlikely that I'll be winning any ATC races. Still knowing the theory means I'm half-way there. Until you manage to master the technique, it all seems very strange but I'm assured that once mastered the whole experience becomes much more enjoyable.

The sand of Hawkstone Park's GP circuit may not be the ideal place for a beginner like myself to start my ATC career but some of the loose sand on the field normally used by spectators is ideal for practising turn technique.

However the deep ruts, rough ripples and formidable whoops of the main track provided an experience which can best be described as bone jarring.

When the undulations run straight across the track and you can hit them at right angles

it's no problem and there is even a conventional two-wheeler feel to the way the ATC copes. But most of Hawkstone's big whoops are diagonally across the track and it's here that my inexperience showed up. As you ride a diagonal whoop the fact that the rear wheels are parallel means that one will crest the top ahead of the other. This makes the bike pitch, yaw and roll like a Task Force frigate in the South Atlantic swell. This has two main effects: First it will make the machine deviate from a straight course no matter which direction the front wheel is pointing in: Second it promotes in the rider an almost irresistible urge to put out a steady foot.

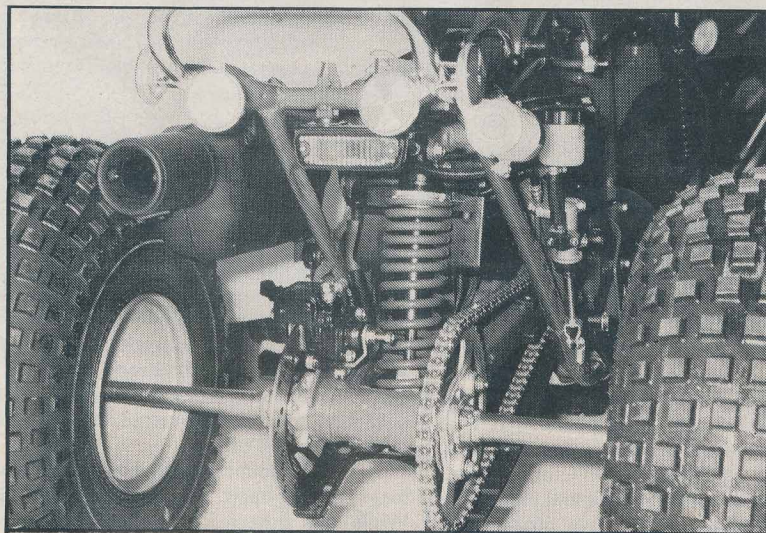
Rule number one: Never but never put your feet down when in motion on an ATC. Result of such action is at best a tyretrack on the outside of your boot and at worst a broken foot inside it.

It seems that the answer is simply to let the trike do what it wants and point it back in the right direction as soon as you can. Any attempts to fight and keep the rear end on a level plane meet with complete failure.

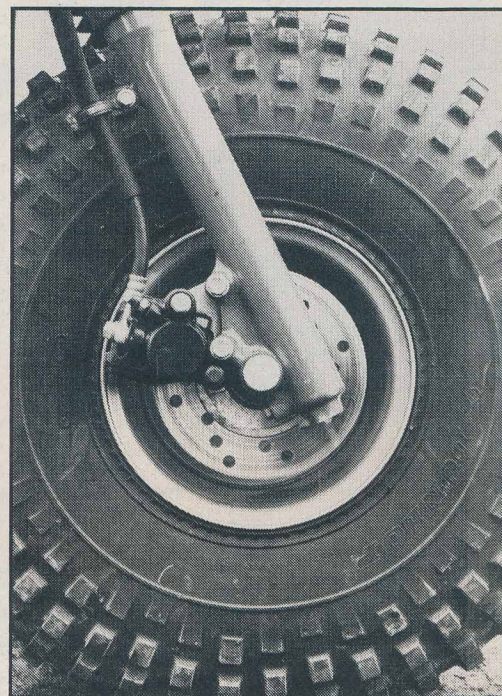
Front suspension is a definite improvement on the tyre-only suspension of the other models but the forks on the test bike bottomed far too easily for my liking. It was difficult to assess the rear suspension which uses a Showa nitrogen-filled monoshock but on landings over jumps it seemed to work well in conjunction with the low pressure tyres which I suspect account for most of the machine's cushioning.

Disc brakes front and rear proved to be fine stoppers and the rear brake is brought into service as a parking brake by a clever device linked to the clutch lever.

It seems a shame on the whole that so few people will actually get to sample the delights and dangers of the 250R-C. It really is at the very pinnacle of a type of motorcycling that combines the old fashioned attractions of the passtime - speed, excitement and danger with just the possibility of a soiled underpant.



ABOVE: Nitrogen-filled monoshock rear suspension works well in conjunction with low pressure tyres and the rear brake becomes a park brake thanks to a clutch lever device.



RIGHT: Honda's miniscule front disc is as effective as it is neat. The massive tyres operate with a pressure of just over 2psi.

Seaside wheelies were the order of the day when Honda introduced their three-wheeled wonders to the European Press. Since then interest in ATCs has taken off mightily. Will it last or will the expected trike explosion be just another TransAtlantic flash in the pan?

