

AH, SO, VERY INTERESTING

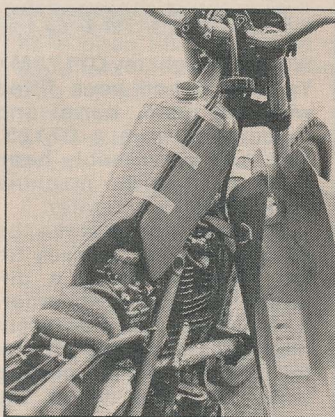
JAPANESE trials champ Mazaya Yamamoto doesn't speak a lot of English – and even less French – but he admits his prototype 250 Honda, with monoshock back-end, will almost certainly go into production.

Staying with the great Eddy Lejeune for his second visit to Europe, Yamamoto warmed up for the bike's world championship debut in Scandinavia by twice finishing third in Belgian trials during August, at Bertrix, and Aywaille. The first was a Belgian championship final, where Lejeune was beaten by Bernard Cordonnier (Fantic), but still clinched his fifth home title. The other was an international event in which Dutchman Eddy Moerman (Montesa) pipped Lejeune by just one clean.

On both occasions, Yamamoto showed a clean pair of heels to a lot of local talent. He's learned a lot from practising with the champ. And he's proved that Honda's latest rock-bug is more than a match for current bogwheels, includ-

ing Yamaha's successful mono.

The Honda is all new. The motor is still a four-stroke OHC but the pot leans forward an extra five degrees to give a better weight distribution, and the crankcase is so small it wouldn't look out of place on a



Removal of the tank cover reveals just how compact everything has had to be made. The channel formed into the top of the tank prevents the throttle cable from becoming trapped.

90cc machine. Ignition is back on the cam-shaft, as on Lejeune's 360, and an oil cooler nestles in the front part of a completely redesigned chassis.

According to Yamamoto, who is obviously in the know, the latest brainchild of the Honda Racing Corporation weighs about 86kg (which works out at around 188lbs) complete with oil and 3.1 litres of petrol in a novel tank arrangement. Instead of being part of the superstructure, the tank is a separate container, sandwiched between frame tubes. The prototype is plastic, with a see-through level, but Yamamoto says production tanks will be aluminium.

The plastic top is just a moulding. It provides an extra layer for the tank and carries the ultra low seat – only 27 inches from the deck when the rider sits on it. Vents in the sides of the tricolour clip-on moulding help carb breathing and cooling of the new monoshock

suspension with remote damper.

Not merely a revamped version of Honda's Pro-Link system, the suspension has a virtually horizontal spring unit with linkage to an alloy swinging arm. Long rear spindle slots enable wheelbase variations of 15mm – obtained by changing small locating steel plates for snail cam adjusters.

Neatly triangulated, the frame is mainly built of lightweight oval tubing, with alloy bash plate under the motor. But the rear sub-frame is completely detachable, being bolted to the front for clear access to the suspension set-up and carburettor.

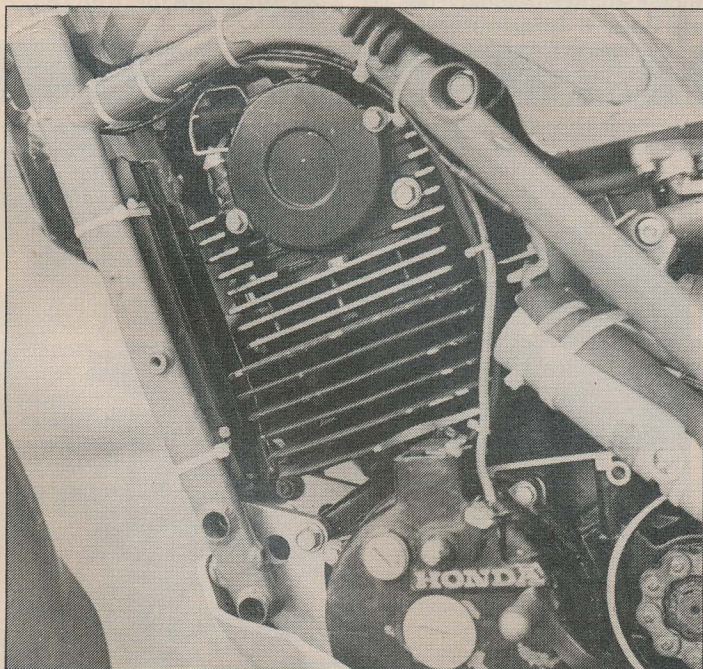
The front fork is the same as on Lejeune's world beater but the hubs are new – with a plain cable operated rear stopper sporting a vulnerable looking external return spring. Ground clearance is half an inch greater than on the standard Honda 200TL. Footpegs are a shade lower.

A lot lighter than Lejeune's 360, which he's pruned down from 102 kilos to about 98, compared with 94 kilos for the present production 200, the Yamamoto bombshell also boasts a higher sixth gear to provide a decent cruising speed between sections.

A stainless steel exhaust is obviously temporary and Lejeune, who praised the rear suspension's ability to clout rocks without kicking back, had doubts about tiny handlebar levers more like the type you see on BMX bikes. The reapproachment between modern trials technique and free style BMX hasn't escaped Honda's designers!



The feet-up champion of Japan, Mazaya Yamamoto, samples a lump of European rock on the very special 250 Honda prototype.



The engine, a 250cc single, is tipped forward in the frame to alter the weight distribution. There is no space in the crankcase for the ignition system and so it is carried on the left hand end of the camshaft.