



Horsepower is fine, but to go fast you really need to look the part. Between the UFO plastic and Wide Open Racing's MXA graphics, our 300 looked outrageous.

In life and engine tuning there is always a hard way and an easy way. Ask anyone who has tried to get more horsepower out of an engine—conventional wisdom says the hard way consists of porting, polishing, remachining and redesigning. The easy way consists of bigger pistons. It's been that way since the first steam engine. Is it still that way?

We weren't sure. That's why we wanted to try the Cycle Gear Suzuki 300 kit on a motocross course. It's probably the most race-proven big-bore kit on the market.

WE'RE LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD CCs

Cycle Gear's Suzuki 300 kit exists because, several years ago, Cycle Gear honcho Dave Bertram wanted to race the Open class in enduros. In this country, people just scratch their heads and wonder why, but in Europe there's quite a demand for little big bikes. There, no one rides a 500 except hardcore motocrossers. They all want bikes that are slightly larger than 250cc and able to enter (legally) into the Open class. That's why European companies like KTM and Husqvarna make 300s and 360s.

The first overbores that Bertram and engine whiz Jeff Slavins created were a little crude. They did what they were designed to do, though, and got Bertram into the Open class in the ISDE. They were reliable enough to finish two Six-Days. Bertram, however, wasn't satisfied. The

CYCLE GEAR SUZUKI 300

Class struggle

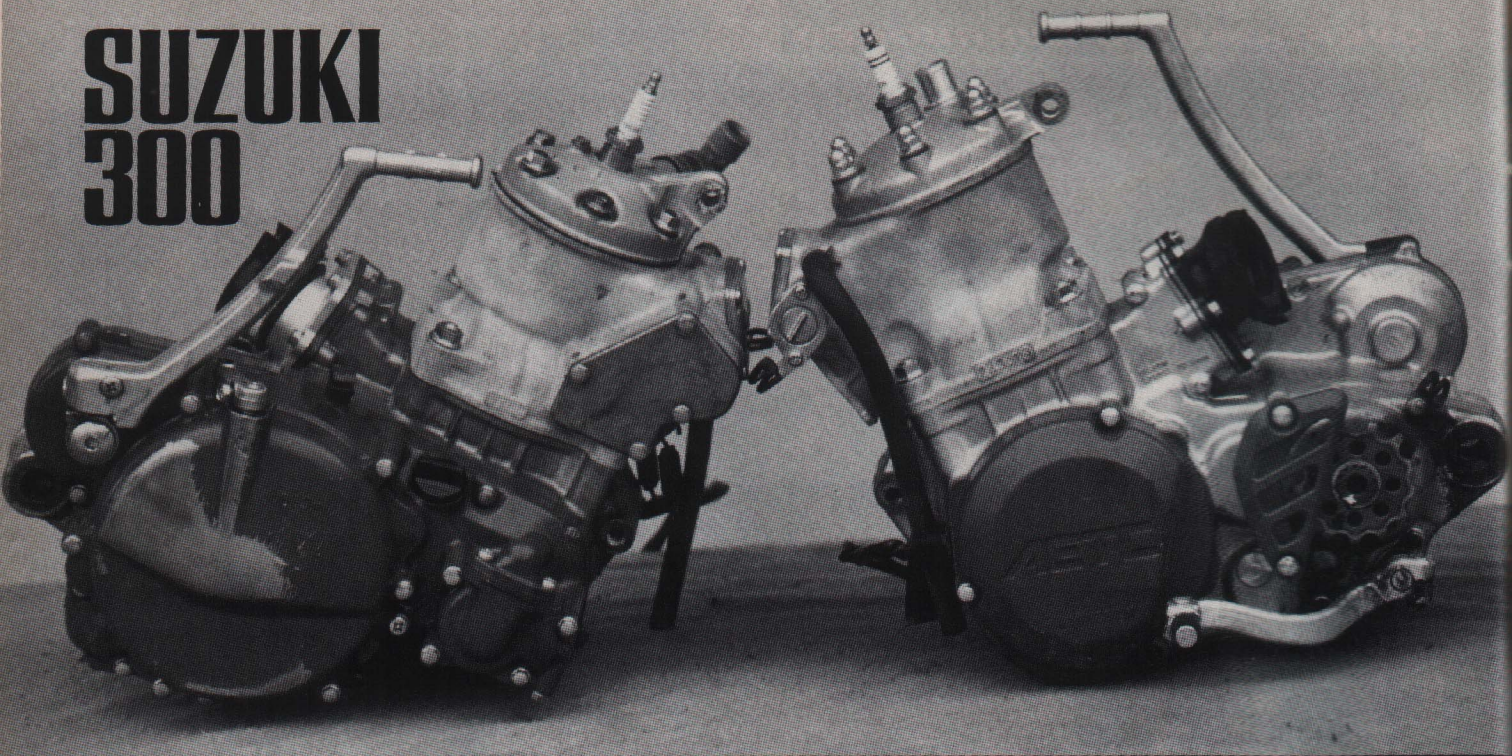
By the staff of DIRT BIKE

original kit was only about 10cc larger than stock and didn't really give any performance advantage. Also, it required the use of looser tolerances because the Nikasil coating in the machine was carved away and replaced with a steel liner.

All that has changed now. Bertram contacted Wiseco and had a 73.5mm piston made especially for this project that would make the displacement come out to 300.2cc. Then he found a process that enabled him to recoat the cylinder. Instead of Nikasil, the coating is called Nicom. This results in a more reliable, tighter-fitting top end.

Another problem that had to be worked out involved the power valve. Two years ago, *Dirt Bike* tested a Honda 300 kit marketed by Klemm Research. That kit did away with the power valve completely. As a result, the motor had a very hard-to-use powerband. The Cycle Gear kits retain the power valve, which is a very good thing. The biggest problem with the current kit is the amount of labor involved. The customer sends his barrel, power valve and head to Cycle Gear, and they have Slavins put over 20 hours of labor into it. When the customer gets everything back, he has to do a little grinding on his engine cases to get it all together. The people at Cycle Gear recommend that you split your cases to do this, but they admit that they have done it themselves by stuffing rags into the

SUZUKI 300



Cycle Gear's 300, which was based on an RMX, is on the left, the stocker is on the right. The motors interchange—barely.

crankcase and turning the motor upside down. All the grindings should just fall out. The cost of the kit is \$899, which makes it one of the least expensive over-bore kits on the market.

HOW & WHY WE DID IT

We really wanted a 300 motocross bike. We knew that Bertram designed the kit for enduro use, but hey, dirt is dirt, right? "Send us down a 300 kit for an RM," we asked.

Bertram scratched his head a little, said, "It should work for motocross," then went out and yanked the motor out of Jon King's RMX and sent the whole thing to

us. The biggest difference between a kitted RM300 and a kitted RMX300 should have been crank weight, and a little extra flywheel would be just fine.

There were other differences, we found, as we tried to stuff the RMX engine into the MX frame. We couldn't use the RMX's head stay—it comes off the front of the engine while the RM's comes off the rear. The ignition, coil and black box all were different and mounted in different spots, too—nothing that a pound of zip-ties wouldn't fix, though. We changed carbs, from the stock Keihin PJ to a 39mm Keihin PWK. That's not included in the kit, but it made the jetting task a lot easier. Then we were off to a motocross track to have Rodney Smith try the thing for us.

GLEN HELEN ACID TEST

It was a pure motocross test session. We had Rodney Smith, a former GP rider, at Glen Helen, a former GP track. The motorcycle, however, was a former enduro bike. It was obvious from the first crack of the throttle that the 300 was designed for off-road racing. There's virtually no hit off the bottom—it's just a smooth, linear progression of power. That's the kind of delivery you want when you're climbing up a slippery pile of rocks somewhere in Massachusetts. It's not a great power delivery for a moist, loamy, perfectly prepared motocross track. The problem with Glen Helen was that it was too good a track. The traction was perfect. As a result, our RMX/RM hybrid felt sleepy off the bottom.

It took several good stabs on the clutch lever to get the engine past the soft area of the powerband. In the midrange, it made some pretty good steam, and it definitely revved higher than a stock RM on top. At high revs, though, it vibrated

Enduro bike? It didn't matter to Rodney Smith. If this is a motocross course, this must be a motocross bike. ►

excessively. Much of that probably was due to the missing head stay. At any rate, between the meek output on the bottom and the heavy vibes on top, we spent most of the time riding the 300 right in the middle. It was effective there and capable of turning good lap times.

It was clear, though, that we were wrong. Dirt isn't dirt. Where you have good traction, like on a prepared MX track, you don't need any of the attributes that the Cycle Gear 300 offers. It's too hard to keep the powerband from falling into the dead low-rpm zone. The 300 would make hard stuff easier, with its smooth power delivery, but it makes easy stuff harder.

THE WORLD OF LITTLE BIG BIKES

So far, of all the overbored 250s that we have ridden, the only one that would make a significantly better motocross bike than a stock 250 would be the Noleen 360 we tested in the March '93 issue. It also is the most expensive. We would have reservations about putting the Cycle Gear kit on an RM, though. There simply are other, easier ways to get a horsepower increase.

On the other hand, we are certain that the Cycle Gear kit would make a big improvement to a Suzuki RMX. We can't wait to try the bike in an enduro. The kit isn't a half-hearted effort. It's done properly, with all the right parts and the right philosophies. It stands out as one of the best (and the cheapest) ways to get into the Open class. To tell the truth, the 250 class isn't such a bad place to be.

For more information, contact Cycle Gear at (510) 235-3300. □



What a change: The RM starts off as the most abrupt MXer you can buy. Add 50cc and it becomes the smoothest.

