

SUZUKI PE400 ENDURO

TORQUE TANK

If You Can Get The Traction, It'll Idle Up a Redwood Tree

By the Dirt Bike Staff



There's something awesome about a big-inch enduro bike. You have this little feeling locked away in the back of your head that you can blast up, over or through just about anything that might get in your way. The feeling exists because—more often than not—it's real.

Any of the serious 500 class enduro bikes have a surplus of power. When a long uphill pops up in front of you, it's not necessary to slip down a gear or two and start looking for the smoothest lines. Nope. You just twist the right side of the bars a bit more and your speed will increase as you go up the hill. Try the same thing on a 175 whatever, and you'll be hunting for lower gears and gyrating all over the bike searching for just the right weight transfer. And then, when you're five or six feet from the top, the engine will hiccup, sigh once and die. It's then that you wish you were on a big enduro bike... like our test PE400.

Just about the only times you'll wish you were not on the mighty PE, will be when you have to horse the bike through a rough section... or pick it up if you've lost it.

The PE is heavy; make no doubt about that. Too heavy, we feel. The

spec sheet says that the bike weighs in at 249 pounds, bone-dry. Let's examine this for a moment. Consider that the gas tank holds nearly three gallons of mix—that's nearly 20 pounds. A quart of oil in the gearbox and about 400cc in the fork legs adds a few more pounds.

You can see that you're right in the 275-pound range... and that's without tools and enduro aids you absolutely will want to add. And 275 pounds is almost XR500 country. Fat city. Down the Yellow Pork Road, etc.

After looking carefully at the biggest PE, we honestly don't know where the weight comes from. Probably, most of it comes from the frame, which is a dead ringer for an RM-N or T chassis. Except that the PE frame tubes are mild steel and not chrome moly like its motocross brother.

A beautifully crafted aluminum swingarm is at the rear and magnesium case covers are on the engine. Some weight could be pared off by swapping some of the steel pieces with aluminum, like the brake pedal and the shift lever. The exhaust system does not appear to be overly bulky, and the silencer/spark arrestor does a great job at keeping the bark down, especially

when you consider that it's not one of those huge monsters like the scrap metal mounted on the XRs and TT500s.

Strangely, the weight of the PE could not be felt when riding the bike, even with the tank filled to the top. The PE is a very tall bike, and riders under 5'10" will have difficulty slinging a leg over the saddle.

Once you get on the bike and settle down, you'll immediately notice how far forward the layout of the PE makes you sit. If you're a normal rider—say about five feet eight and 200 pounds—with your arms in the normal riding position, you'll be seated at the front edge of the saddle, with your upper thighs touching the tank.

This makes it easy to weight the front end for turning, but also demands concentration from the rider to get his weight and body back for the high-speed rough stuff. The shorter riders will find themselves occasionally getting smacked in the butt by the back edge of the saddle and getting their feet lifted off the pegs.

Actually, it's probably best to have this sort of a seating position, as the N and the T based framed are not noted as the best turning units around, and without heavy front-end weighting, have enough washout to make steering accuracy at low and middle speeds suffer.

Our test bike was easy to thread through tight sections and would flip-flop through esses nicely. The only limiting factor is that the steering lock is too restrictive. Still, that's easily fixed. All you have to do is file the nubs off the bottom triple clamp to get whatever increased steering arc you might want. They're aluminum, so this should be an easy task, and should not affect the strength of the clamps, either.

Hey, but what about the motor? The engine is an absolute delight. The revs can be dropped to the basement and the PE will chug right out with no sweat. Deep sand or mud could be totally ig-

nored. You can idle around a tree at five miles per hour in third and roll the throttle on smoothly without a hint of bogging or chain-snatching.

The first and most obvious comparison that comes to mind for speed freaks is, how does the bike stack up against the IT425? Well, the 425 will edge the PE400 by about two lengths through the gears and by five or six mph on the very top.

However, the PE will gain revs quicker than the IT and will actually spurt out of a turn sooner and harder. Where the IT425 is like a freight train, the PE is more nimble and responsive. Because of the tall saddle and long travel (10.1 at the rear and 9.8 in the front), the PE has a distinct tendency to wheelie. So you have to watch it a bit in the lower gears until you get used to the power.

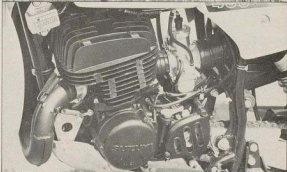
One thing we liked about the PE was the fact that it featured a primary kick-start, which the big RMs do not have. Yup. You can just leave that sucker in gear, squeeze the clutch in and boot away. We found that the PE was a two- or three-kick starter, but the kicks had to be good, strong, hard ones. This is not a wimpy engine, make no mistake about that.



Tidy front end has a lot of neat, small features: rock guard over headlight, raised number plate and multi-purpose, quick-disconnect tool.

There's more than enough travel at either end, but we felt the forks were far superior to the shocks. As with any good set of KYB forks, you have air caps and a multitude of adjustments available to you. They absolutely can be dialed in to suit even the most fussy riders. We ran ours for the duration with whatever Suzuki puts in, and were pleased. Some riders swear by 2½-weight fork oil, though. Experiment.

The shocks on the PE do not have re-



The engine shares a lot of RM components. Skid plate could and should be extended to protect case covers better. Pipe is vulnerable to rocks.

more reservoirs, and only have a preload adjustment. No damping adjustments are built into the shocks. Quite frankly, it's about time that the RM shock technology was passed on to the PE. Our shocks chattered too much over stutter-bumps and also rebounded too quickly. With time, the compression damping should fade, but then, so will the rebound damping. This will make the rear-end kick-up even more pronounced. Plan on a lot of front-wheel landings or the purchase of accessory shocks.

Our test PE was quite possibly the best-shifting Suzuki we've ever ridden. We could even find neutral with the engine running. At times, we shifted up and down without the clutch. Backing off the throttle fractionally was all it took.

One nice touch and one glaring error come to mind. The rear wheel is a genuine quick-disconnect and should be a real time-saver for those fiends who ride Qualifiers and live to tell

about it. A slot in the backing plate rides on a lip of the aluminum swing-arm. Just remove the chain, back off the brake adjuster, slip the axle out and the wheel practically falls on the ground. Very nice setup, indeed.

The complaint is with the front brake. For years now, Suzuki has had small-diameter, very wimpy brake cables. The housings flex badly and it takes a long and hard squeeze to get the front wheel slowed down. Our PE front brake action was the poorest to date. We know riders who have cured the braking deficiencies on their RMs by going to a YZ cable. Perhaps this can be done here. We'll experiment down-stream.

While we're on the subject, the levers are still the same old shapeless items they gave you back in the days of the Challenger and the Cyclone. It's high time that Suzuki copied someone—anyone—in this department. By the way, there's an excellent throttle assembly on the PE. It's a straight-pull

unit and is well-made.

Bits and Pieces

Our taillight fell apart in the first hour of riding. The problem is the too-small washers that butt against the rubber housing. You could replace them with larger washers and solve the problem before you lose the taillight.

The speedo cable is nicely routed and has clean and smooth guides. Strangely, the cable itself unscrewed on us three times over the period of a month.

A detachable sidestand, just like the

RM's, is stock. Side panels are FIM-style and are tucked in closer than those on the MXers. Your legs don't get pushed out too badly.

The skid plate doesn't offer much protection for the CDI cover, and should also extend farther back. There's



Large, easy-to-read odometer is ideally located. Cable does not get in the way when riding.

an unprotected area of the cases just waiting for a rock.

The rear brake is cable-operated and crosses over to the other side. Normally, we've come to expect this sort of arrangement to be mushy, but we were quite pleased with the brakes at the back end.

The brake pedal and the shifter are not folders. They should be.

SUZUKI PE400T

Specifications

NAME AND MODEL Suzuki PE400T
ENGINE TYPE Two-stroke, reed-valve
single-cylinder
BORE AND STROKE 68mm x 70mm
DISPLACEMENT 250cc
HORSEPOWER (CLAIMED BY FACTORY) N/A
CARBURETION 36mm Mikuni

FACTORY RECOMMENDED JETTING:
MAIN JET 300
NEEDLE JET P9
JET NEEDLE EDH00-2
PILOT JET 46
SLIDE NUMBER 2.0
RECOMMENDED GASOLINE Premium
RECOMMENDED OIL (MFR.) Suzuki CCI
FUEL TANK CAPACITY 2.8 gallons (10.6 liters)
FUEL TANK MATERIAL Wt. metal-steel
GAS/OIL RATIO 20:1
LUBRICATION Pre-mix
AIR FILTRATION Foam element/air box
CLUTCH TYPE Wet, multi-plate
TRANSMISSION Five-speed, constant mesh
GEARBOX RATIOS:

1	.....	2.63
2	.....	2.00
3	.....	1.58
4	.....	1.22
5	.....	1.00

GEARING, FRONT/REAR 15:45
IGNITION PEI
PRIMARY KICK SYSTEM? Yes
SILENCER/SPARK ARRESTOR/
QUALITY Excellent
EXHAUST SYSTEM Expansion chamber,
high-pipe

FRAME TYPE Chrome moly steel, single
downtube, split cradle
WHEELBASE 56.9 inches (1445mm)
GROUND CLEARANCE 12.6 inches (320mm)
STEERING HEAD ANGLE 29.5 degrees
TRAIL 4.82 inches (122mm)
WEIGHT WITH ONE GALLON GAS 207 pounds
(116 kg)

RIM MATERIAL Aluminum alloy
TIRE SIZES:
FRONT 3.00x21 4PR knobby
REAR 5.10x18 4PR knobby

SUSPENSION:
FRONT, TYPE AND TRAVEL Leading role
telescopic fork, 9.8 inches
REAR, TYPE AND TRAVEL Swingarm/gas-
spring shocks, 10.1 inches

INTENDED USE, MFR Off-road enduro
competition

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN Japan
PRICE, APPROX. \$1099

PARTS PRICES, HIGH-WEAR ITEMS:
PISTON ASSEMBLY, COMPLETE \$58.29
RINGS ONLY \$18.94
CYLINDER \$161.70
SHIFT LEVER \$10.90
BRAKE PEDAL \$15.70
FRONT SPROCKET \$11.00

DISTRIBUTOR:
U.S. Suzuki
12363 Freeway Dr.
Santa Fe Springs, California 90670

OVERALL RATING, FROM 0 TO 100, VARIOUS
CATEGORIES, KEEPING INTENDED USE OF
MACHINE IN MIND:

HANDLING	.....	88
SUSPENSION	.....	90
POWER	.....	96
COST	.....	90
ATTENTION TO DETAIL	.....	92
EFFECTIVENESS, STONE STOCK	.....	92

A great odometer rides in front of the bars, with huge, easy-to-read numbers. No speedo is supplied, or needed.

The by-now-familiar all-purpose Suzuki tool is nesting by the front number plate. We'd rather see a tool bag on the rear fender, like the ITs and XR's.

Fenders were wide, deeply valenced and appeared to be well-made. They survived a few basic crashes and lay-downs.

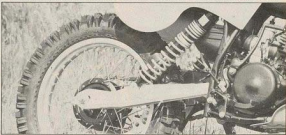
We did not like the tires at all. They were Dunlop Sports K290s, front and rear. We got the most out of them with 11 psi. At the recommended 14 psi, both ends skated badly on anything less than perfect traction conditions.

Most people who buy PE400s will probably not use them for enduros. We feel that most will serve as multi-purpose dirt bikes. Part of the time, they'll be used as play/trailbikes, part of the time they'll get raced at the local motocross tracks, lights and all, and the rest of the time they just might be entered in the occasional enduro.

In all of these areas, the PE will do the job. It's fast enough to win the Beginner or Novice class at your local track in stock trim, has more than enough beans to climb the tallest hills, and will do over 80 miles per hour cross-country. What are you waiting for? □



Pipe was quiet and not overly large. Good job here. Taillight will fall apart quickly.



Nifty aluminum arm and easily removable rear wheel. Shocks could use some help.