

VERTEMATI GP500

A close look at a cottage GP winner

By Stefano Padovani and the DIRT BIKE staff





Meet the world's lightest motocross thumper. The Vertemati Racing SAS GP500 tips the scales at 110 kilos, or 232 lbs., with no fuel in the tank. That's lighter than a stock KX or CR500!

If last year's 500 World Championships were an upset, then the '94 title chase is like smoking a cigar in a canoe made of dynamite. Jacky Martens took the '93 GP title aboard a mega-trick Husqvarna 610, with mega-backing from Cagiva/Husqvarna. The four-stroke revival was brought on by Vertemati in '91, when Walter Bartolini turned some heads in the 500 GP wars, pulling several holeshots aboard a Vertemati-modified Husaberg 501. Joel Smets replaced a retiring Bartolini aboard the Vertemati Husaberg in '93, but the Belgian spent the entire season in the shadow of his countryman. Smets has come into his own this year, though, aboard a hand-built Vertemati SAS GP500. Smets was the fast qualifier at the first GP and smoked everyone in Austria, winning both motos of the second round of the series.

Martens then put on a midseason charge to close on series leader Marcus Hansson, while Smets has struggled with crashes, mostly. At round nine in Portugal, Martens and Smets traded moto wins, with Martens taking the overall. His four season moto wins moved Smets into a solid third in the standings. What makes this so controversial is that the Vertemati brothers built the bike in the off-season, and they are using the GPs as a testing ground! Never has a first-year effort by a cottage industry been so successful.

BUILD IT & THEY WILL WIN

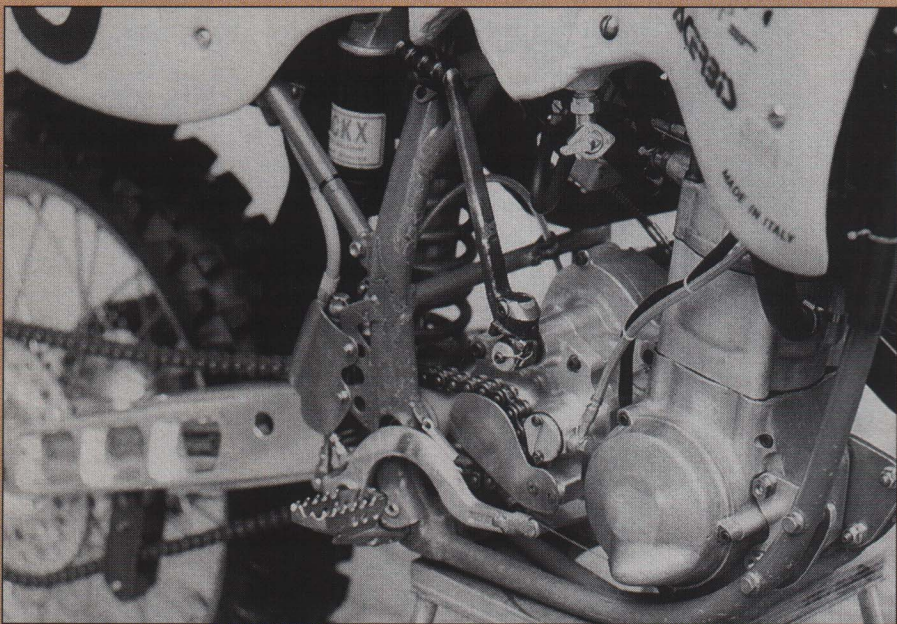
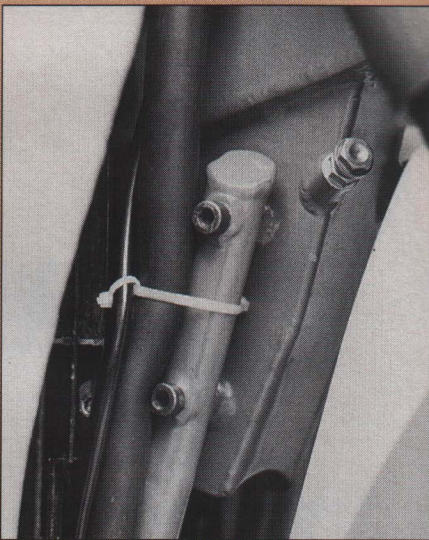
Brothers Vertemati have been into GP racing for a long time. Alvaro Vertemati raced the Italian championships for several years, and he and brother Alvaro were Husqvarna dealers in Italy for five years. Then Cagiva took over the Swedish marque, and the Vertematis couldn't hang with the changes Cagiva made. So, after two years, they returned to a Swedish mar-

When welds fatigue, you throw the frame away at considerable expense. When bolts fatigue, you replace them for pennies. Vertemati spends lots of lira on its baby, but it's spent wisely. ►

que—Husaberg. The move paid off with the '91 World Enduro title. Proud and flamboyant, the Vertematis fielded their own GP effort with Italian Bartolini and, later, Belgian Smets, but "we grew tired of the problems and spending money for no return with Husaberg," Guido said. For '94, the brothers decided to build their own GP thumper. They did it in four months.

Based loosely on the Husaberg, the bike turned heads early. The team has smoked the HRC-kitted Hondas and surprised the Husqvarna team on several occasions. The Vertemati factory bike started out with a Husaberg top-end on Vertemati cases, but the brothers have since developed their own cylinder and head. The new all-Vertemati motor will be liquid-cooled, although the bros toyed with the idea of air cooling. Its kickstarter rotates forward, on the right side of the bike. Why? In typical Italian style, the answer is, "Why do the Japanese do it backwards? Going forward is simpler, plus the kickstarter is now on the right side."

Like the ultra-trick CCM that John Banks campaigned back in '73, the Verte-



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◀ The GP500 has the kickstarter on the right side, where it arcs forward. There is no counterbalancer. Check out the hydraulic clutch fitting (in front of the countershaft sprocket).

mati uses a three-speed transmission. The thinking? If you never use first or fifth, why carry that weight around? The ignition is by SEM, and the Vertemati is lubricated by Spring 5W50 oil. Surprisingly, the team uses 98-octane pump fuel. Carburetion is a 40mm Dellorto, although the Vertematis are looking into using a Mikuni or Keihin.

Innovation doesn't stop with the lightweight motor. The frame cradle bolts to the backbone/steering head, as does the sub-frame. The swingarm is an absolute work of art. Alvaro designed the billet aluminum arm and their friend Fumagalli makes the