

Samurai shootout! Japan's best 250cc MXer

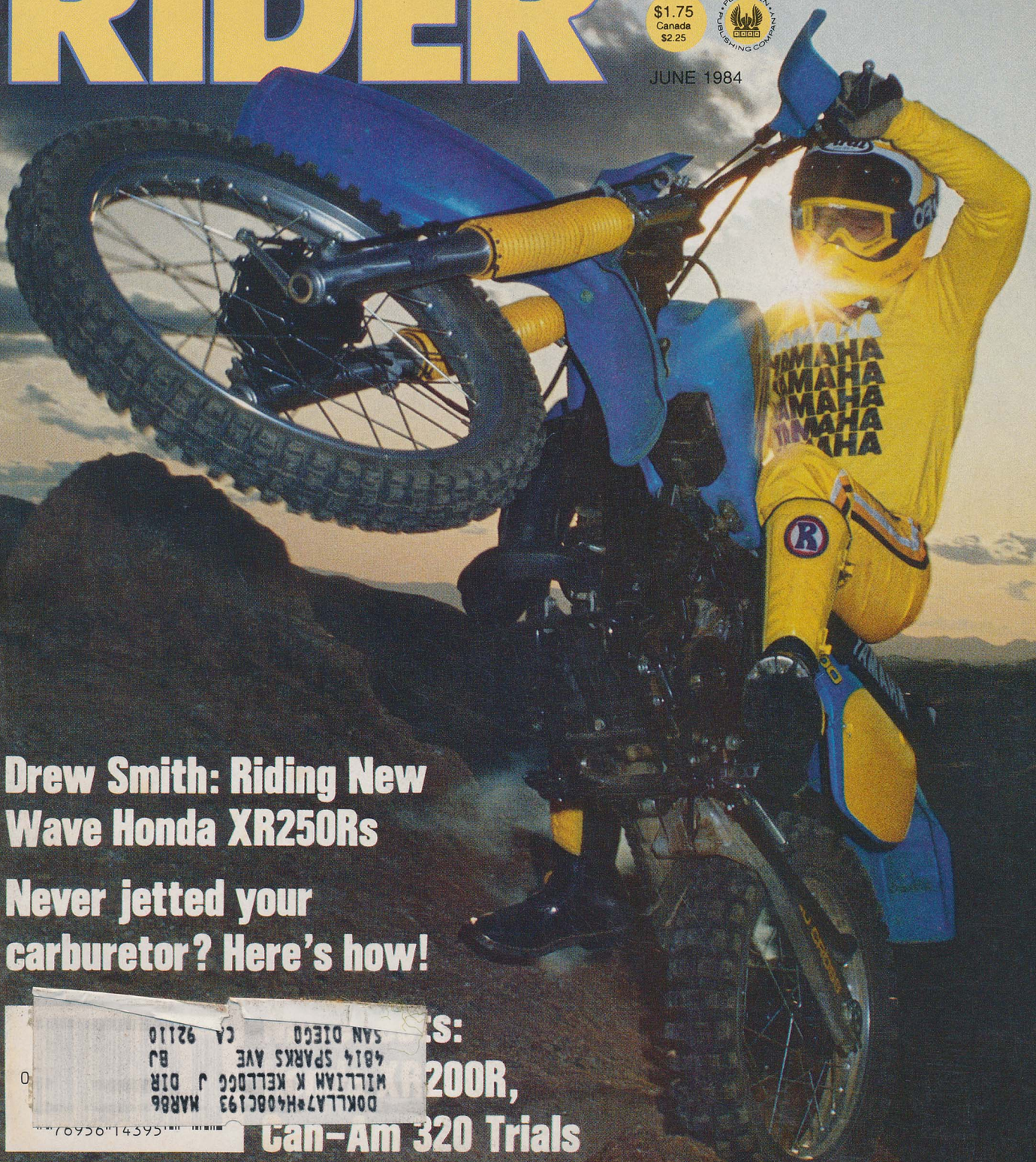
DIRT RIDER

Yamaha IT200L NEW BLUE CONTENDER

\$1.75
Canada
\$2.25



JUNE 1984



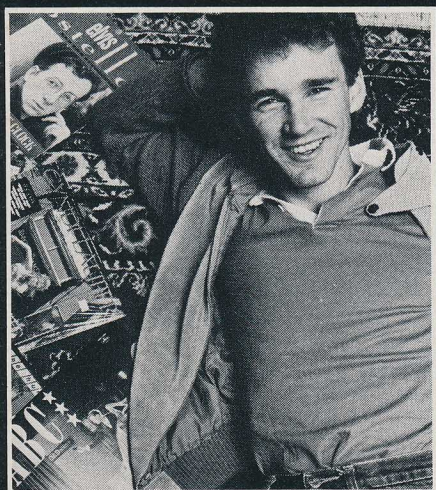
**Drew Smith: Riding New
Wave Honda XR250Rs**

**Never jetted your
carburetor? Here's how!**

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DOKLA7#H408C193 MAR86
70956 14395
S:
200R,
Can-Am 320 Trials

DIRT RIDER

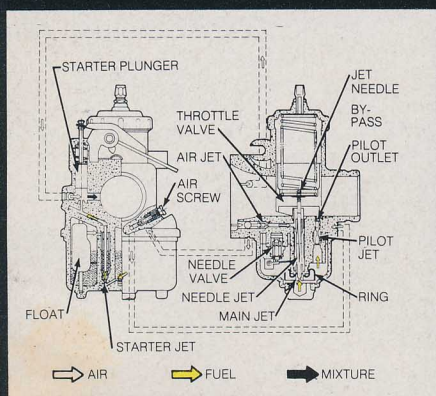
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ON THE COVER
There's a new challenger to Kawasaki's KDX200. Yamaha's hot new IT200L could put Team Blue "on time." Photo by Rich Cox.

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PHOTO: BOB CARPENTER
 Stripped naked, the XR200R's all-new frame and engine is easily scrutinized. Steeper steering head angle and RFVC engine are the biggest changes. Action photo shows John Drury trail plonking in the hills above L. A.

There certainly has been a whole lot of shakin' going on with the new generation of XRs. Honda's best engineers started with a clean sheet of paper and completely redesigned the XR200R for 1984. This year's bike is so far removed from last year's bike that some people will never adjust to the changes. A completely different frame and a radically redesigned engine have given the XR200R, long known as the perfect play bike, a brand-new outlook for the road ahead.

TECHNICALLY SPEAKING

Honda envisioned the XR200R as a more serious enduro bike this year, but they emphasize that the old charm is still there. Gone is the raked-out "chopper" feel of the XRs of old. In its place, steep steering head angles have been substituted. Honda has set new boundaries for rake since the 1983 XR500R possessed a 25.5-degree rake and the 1984 CR250R sported a 26.8-degree rake. Now Honda has pulled in the rake on the XR200R a surprising 2.8 de-

Whole lotta shakin' going on

HONDA XR200R





OPINIONS

I'd love to say that I love the Honda XR200R, but I just can't. I expected so much more since it was so radically changed. Basically, though, it feels like a hopped-up old bike. A Kerker kit would do as much for the old engine as all of Honda's valves, carburetors and assorted extra weight did for the new bike.

The XR200R is no longer simple to work on, and most of our beginner friends found it hard to start. I wish Honda had spent their time and energy trimming down last year's 200, while pumping up the standard engine a bit.

The XR200R is losing its charm for women and beginners, and it still isn't good enough for experts.

—Bob Carpenter

Age/Ht./Wt.: 24/5'9"/185 lbs.

Motorcycle(s) currently raced/ridden:

Honda CR250R, Husqvarna 500XC

Riding ability: "Gimp of the month"

Having owned both the 1983 and the 1984 Honda XR200Rs, I prefer the '84 model, especially its throttle response and turning characteristics. Getting the throttle response took a great deal of work; there isn't much reference material available, and the new carburetors are much harder to work on than the old ones.

I ended up with Metzeler tires, front and rear. I chose the rear tire because Metzeler offers the smallest available 17-inch tire. I think that making the bike to accept an 18-inch rear wheel would have been a better choice for a small bore.

I find the XR200R is very comfortable to ride and its dependability seems on par with other XRs. I'm glad I bought one, but I wish Honda had ironed out a few of the small glitches *before* I bought one.

—John Barnett

Age/Ht. Wt.: 39/5'11"/169 lbs.

Motorcycle(s) currently raced/ridden:

1984 Honda XR200R

Riding ability: Veteran A enduro rider

It seems that after years of having Hondas XR250R as the "old maid" in their line-up, Honda has moved the honor to the XR200R, formerly their bestseller among off-road machines. To me, this newest 200 seems to be a mistake. I rode our test machine, a rejected bike with Metzeler tires and last year's XR200R through a series of whoop-de-dos. The fettle '84 XR performed much better, and it was less prone to swapping than the older single-shocker, but I truly preferred last year's engine.

I just can't see the added maintenance, extra moving parts and weight as a trade for a couple of horsepower. Then, to have the jetting off on carburetors that are too hard for the beginner mechanic to jet only compounds the problem. If you want to sell me one put last year's engine in this new frame.

—Karel Kramer

Age/Ht./Wt.: 29/6'1"/185 lbs.

Motorcycle(s) currently raced/ridden:

Husqvarna 400WR, Kawasaki KX250C2,

Suzuki RM250E

Riding ability: B enduro rider.

grees, bringing it to 26 degrees. On top of that, the wheelbase is short at 53.7 inches. In comparison, the Yamaha IT200, a very stable bike, measures 57.7 inches. The difference is readily apparent on the trail. The frame, swingarm, Pro-Link pieces and rear shock are all identical to that on the 1984 XR250R (tested in *Dirt Rider* March 1984). The rear shock, a Kayaba unit, does have a lighter spring. At 486 lb./in., the spring is simply too soft. We found that a 638-lb./in. spring from Progressive Suspension (P.O. Box 8591, Long Beach, CA 90808, 714/898-2951) worked much better.

The forks, manufactured by KYB, feature 36mm-diameter stanchion tubes. Dual bushings are used—one on the tube and one in the slider—they're still called Dual Syntallic® as that is a Honda trademark.

The XR200R has the same headlight as the XR350R, so it will accept the optional 55-watt headlight kit that is available through Honda.

Red hand guards, identical to the ones on the 250, adorn the XR200R. For this test, unlike the 250 test, they have remained intact. No amount of crashing or fall-overs could persuade them to abandon ship. It's funny how these hand guards have been so reliable, while the XR250R's hand guards were just looking for an excuse to fall off.

Although the XR200R and the XR250R do have a lot of parts in common, there are several differences worth noting. The 200 has rubber dampers in the clutch, while the 250 uses springs. The rear brake backing plate and front brake drum are aluminum on the 200, while the 250 and 350 use magnesium. The 200 uses an 18mm and a 20mm carb to feed its 199cc engine. The engine side covers on the 200 are aluminum instead of magnesium because it dissipates heat a bit better, although they are a touch heavier. And, to ward off any more complaints about the XR200R popping out of first gear, the detent is deeper in that gear and the spring tension has been increased by 20 percent.

Valve timing on the XR200R is milder than on the XR250R, with 10 degrees of overlap during the 220-degree duration for both the intake and exhaust. The intake valves open at five degrees BTDC and close at 35 degrees ATDC. The exhaust valves open at five degrees ATDC and close at 35 degrees BTDC. Valve sizes are, naturally, smaller on the 200. The intake valves have a diameter of 27mm, while the exhaust valves are 23.5mm in diameter.

The same automatic decompression release lever found on the other XRs is hooked up to the XR200R. But on the small XR200R we didn't experience the problem of having our leg accidentally activate the mechanism. The XR250R had a nasty habit of releasing compression just as you were going off a jump or trying to loft the front end with power.

HONDA XR200R

Make/model.....Honda XR200R
 Serial number.....Frame:
 JH2ME0507EK000057
 Engine: ME05E-5000084
 Price.....\$1625
 Number of dealers (U.S.).....1800
 Warranty.....Six-month
 Customer service.....American Honda Motor
 Corp.
 100 W. Alondra Blvd.
 Gardena, CA 90247
 213/327-8280

ENGINE

Type.....Single-cylinder
 four-stroke with Radial
 Four-Valve Combustion Chamber
 Displacement.....199cc
 Bore x stroke.....67 x 56.5mm
 Compression ratio.....11:1
 Horsepower/rpm
 (measured).....17.0 @ 9000 rpm
 Torque/rpm
 (measured).....11.2 @ 7000 rpm
 Carburetion.....Two Keihin,
 18 and 20mm
 Exhaust.....Dual steel exhaust
 into steel spark
 arrester/silencer
 Ignition.....CDI
 Lubrication.....Wet sump
 Air filtration.....Oiled polyurethane foam

DRIVE TRAIN

Transmission.....Six-speed
 Primary drive.....3.316:1 (gear)
 Final drive.....3.846:1 (13/50)
 Gear ratios (internal).....1st 2.769:1
 2nd 1.941:1
 3rd 1.450:1
 4th 1.174:1
 5th 0.960:1
 6th 0.815:1

CHASSIS

Frame.....Steel, diamond design
 Rake/trail.....26°/4.1 in.

Front suspension.....KYB leading axle
 air/spring fork,
 36mm stanchion tubes,
 9.6 in. travel (measured)
 Rear suspension.....Pro-Link with KYB
 gas/oil shock, four-way
 adjustable rebound damping,
 9.0 in. travel (measured)
 Brakes.....Front—Twin-piston caliper disc
 Rear—Single-leading shoe drum
 Wheels.....Front—1.60-21 D.I.D
 Rear—1.85-17 D.I.D
 Tires.....Front—3.00-21
 IRC Vulcanduro VE-32
 Rear—110/90-17 IRC Vulcanduro VE-32

MEASUREMENTS

Weight (wet, no fuel).....239 lbs.
 Weight (wet, tank full).....259 lbs.
 Weight distribution.....113/126 lbs.
 (47/53%) (Fr/rr, wet no fuel)
 Weight distribution.....125/134 lbs.
 (48/52%) (Fr/rr, wet, tank full)
 Wheelbase.....53.8 in.
 Fuel capacity.....2.6 gal. total
 Reserve capacity.....0.4 gal.
 Sound test.....103 dbA
 Ground clearance.....12.8 in.
 Seat height.....35.0 in.
 Swingarm length.....21.0 in.
 Swingarm pivot
 to center of countershaft.....2.8 in.

PARTS/COSTS

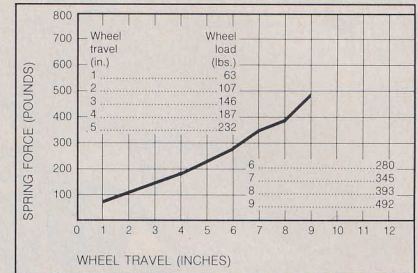
Maintenance manual.....\$2.49
 Carburetor jets.....Main—\$3.53
 Pilot—\$4.26
 Needle—N/A
 Needle jet—N/A
 Sprockets.....Front—\$13.08
 Rear—\$57.89
 Handlebar levers.....\$10.21 ea.
 Shift lever.....\$19.51
 Piston kit (complete).....\$41.43
 Rings only.....\$10.47
 Cylinder.....\$102.49

Head.....\$224.53
 Clutch plates.....Friction (5)—\$4.41 ea.
 Steel (4)—\$2.88 ea.
 Air filter.....\$9.76
 Brake shoes.....Front—\$8.63
 Rear—\$6.98
 Chain.....\$67.98
 Seat.....\$113.80
 Fenders.....Front—\$38.07
 Rear—\$33.63
 Fuel tank.....\$131.46
 Cables.....Clutch—\$6.96
 Throttle—\$9.18
 Front brake—\$9.67

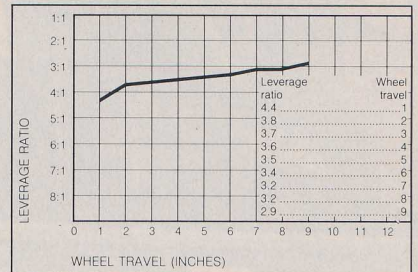
OPTIONS

Quartz 12v/55w halogen headlight ..\$25.46
 Regulator.....\$34.61

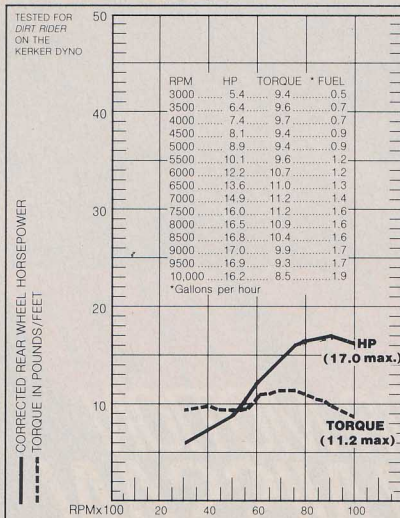
REAR WHEEL LOAD



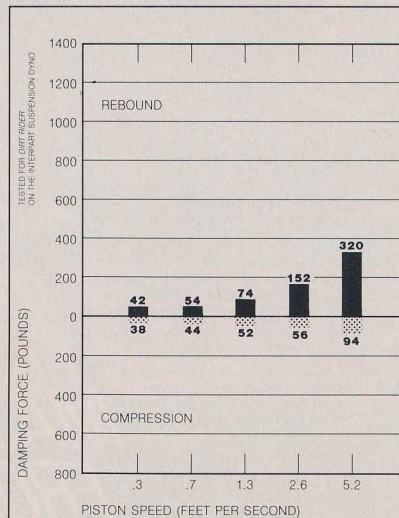
REAR WHEEL LINKAGE



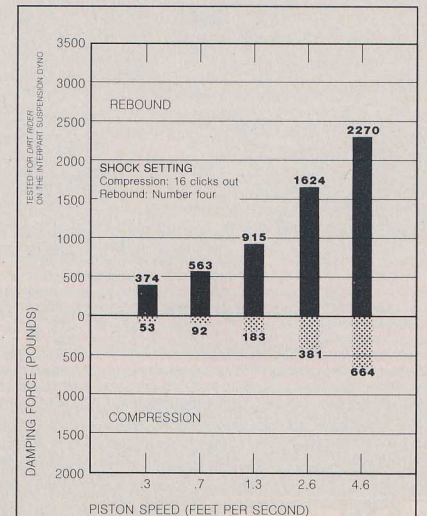
MOTOR HORSEPOWER/TORQUE

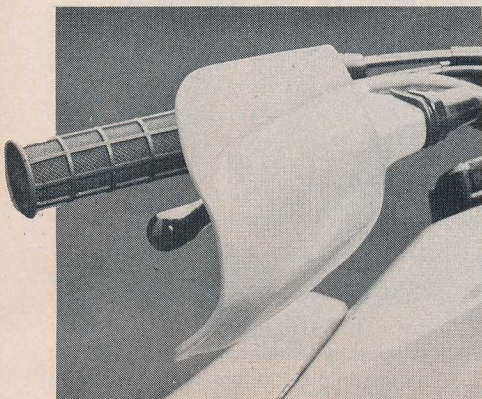
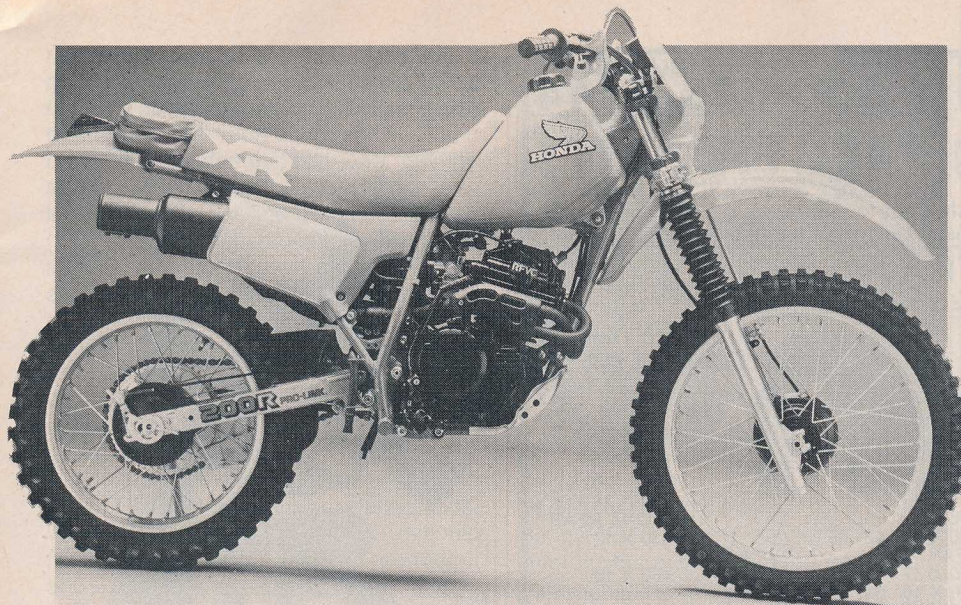


FRONT SUSPENSION DAMPING



REAR SUSPENSION DAMPING

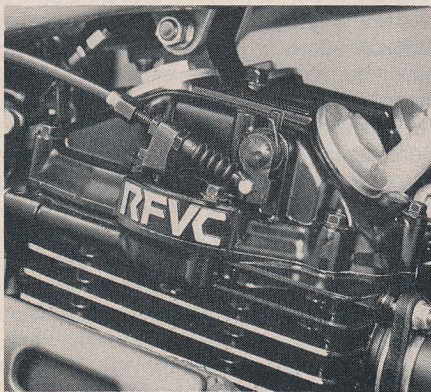




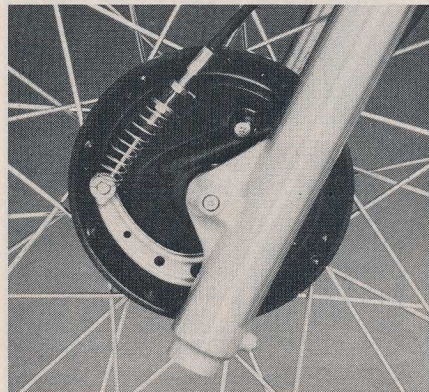
We've grown accustomed to Honda's handguards. How'd we ever live without them?



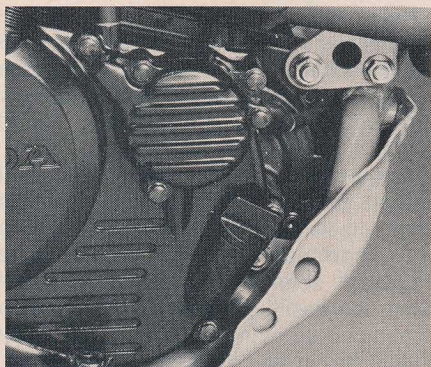
The rear suspension was too soft for our overweight testers. Extra preload helps.



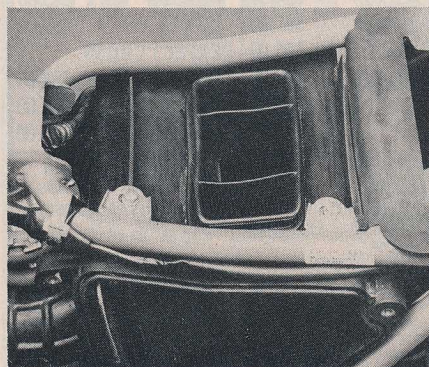
A redesigned engine netted two extra horsepower. The bike gained nine pounds.



A standard front brake is more than enough to pull the XR200R down to a safe speed.



A round cover houses oil filter. Below is oil filler hole. Get to know them well.



As usual, Honda went all-out trying to keep the XR200 waterproof.

Some changes have helped the XR200R cosmetically. The front fender used to stick up in the air so much it looked comical, while the headlight above the front number plate appeared lopsided. With that combination, nobody could see the numbers on the plate. Adding injury was the huge speedometer/odometer perched high above the light. What a difference a year can make! Now the front fender slopes down, if it slopes at all. The number plate is above the light with a much larger area available for numbers, and the odometer is small and compact. The seat continues up onto the tank and contributes to the racier look of the XR200R. Unfortunately, many testers complained that the seat is too thick where it goes up onto the seat and prevented them from moving as far forward on the bike as they would have liked.

The seating position has been changed, with a little more room added to the distance between the seat and the pegs. Actually, one or two more inches are needed to make the transition from sitting to standing a smoother operation. We're happy to see that the ground clearance has been increased by one full inch—it's sorely needed on the XRs. Still, our feet were constantly knocked off the footpegs when running an XR hard through ruts, rocks, logs or any number of things.

Although the transmission oil capacity is up 0.2 quarts to 1.4 quarts, it still needs to be changed regularly since the RFVC engine runs at relatively high temperatures which causes the oil to quickly break down. Even if you perform only the barest of mechanical upkeep on your XR, be sure to clean the air filter and change the transmission oil. Other than that, the rest of the bike will live up to its four-stroke reputation of being reliable. We suffered no mechanical failures with our XR200R, and we flogged it to death.

Obviously, the engine is new for 1984. It's kind of hard to overlook two carburetors and two exhaust headers. As we explained in the March 1984 test of the XR250R, the Radial Four-Valve Combustion Chamber design of the new XR engines uses two carburetors, two intake valves, two exhaust valves and two exhaust headers. You might want to call them the "terrible twos" since the engine hasn't gained a whole lot in return for all the time, effort and expense that Honda has invested in the RFVC.

The bottom end and midrange power is virtually identical to that of the 1983 XR200R *Dirt Rider* tested in the October 1983 issue. The only place where more power can be found is high in the powerband. The 1984 XR200R put out 17 horsepower at 9000 rpm, while the 1983 model put out 14.7 ponies at 8500 rpm. Not only is the gain—2.3 horsepower—no more than what a good engine kit would do to a 1983 model, but the maximum power comes later in the powerband. The XRs continue to take on more and more

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NEW MOTO 4

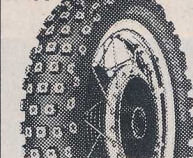


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3.00 X 21



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of the characteristics of two-strokes as far as their "revviness," while they are losing their vital "torqueness."



ON THE GAS

The increase in high-rpm power, coupled with the usual low and midrange power, has not only made the XR200 feel like it has lost some of its low-end grunt, but now it doesn't carburet well, either. When compared to a stock 1983 XR200R, the 1984 bike feels a bit sluggish. While we were testing the new 200 at a local enduro, we had the chance to ride a 1984 model that had been rejettted with a smaller pilot jet and a bigger main jet. The difference was quickly noticed, as the bike seemed to pull stronger throughout the powerband and start more easily.

Beginners and weaker riders were constantly frustrated by the XR200's refusal to be cooperative in regards to starting. Several times we found ourselves push-starting the 200 when we would have rather been riding. We're not sure what jetting changes are needed, though, since we haven't been able to test them. When we get that problem straightened out, we'll report our findings in "Test Wrap."

One problem we have sorted out concerned the rear shock spring. It definitely needs to be replaced with a stiffer unit if you weigh more than 160 pounds. With the stock spring, the bike bottoms out much too easily, even when the preload is bumped up higher. The stock XR250R shock spring could be stiffer, too. Like the XR250R, the XR200R's shock is prone to fading when ridden in extremely

rough territory. During a typical enduro, it probably won't become apparent, but we rode the 200 in a grand prix that used half of a motocross track and included some pretty tall sky jumps. Not only did the shock fade, but half of the bike shook loose, too. The gas line fell off three times (zip-ties cured that), the left footpeg came loose and dangled (extra bolts fixed that) and the shift lever was bent into the side of the cases, making shifts extremely "unpositive." Our tester didn't realize the problem was merely a bent lever or he would have fixed it right away instead of struggling the last three laps in second gear.

If nothing else, we at least rode the XR200R in a wide variety of conditions. We rode it in the desert, in the national forest, at a motocross track, a grand prix and a National enduro.

The National enduro put Honda's slogan that the XR200R is "competitive enough to win the 'A' class" to the test. But unless Honda was talking about the four-stroke "A" class, we don't agree. Oh, it can be done with the right rider or a good amount of fiddling, but, as it stands stock, the XR200R isn't up to the tasks easily handled by a Kawasaki KDX200 or Yamaha IT200.

The crowd at the Quicksilver National enduro was pleased to see *Dirt Rider's* Bob Carpenter beaten to a pulp as he struggled to finish the 106-mile event on the XR200R. The year before, Carpenter took second place in the four-stroke "A" class, so he, of course, was eyeing the first place trophy this time around. But after losing about 127 minutes due to falls and hills that couldn't be climbed without pushing, Carpenter soon grew to hate the XR200R. But several hours...no, several days after the event, he was able to put things into a better perspective and recognize the good and the bad qualities of the new XR200R.

Everybody who has ridden our test bike agrees that it squirms around too much and feels extremely short. But, unlike the 1983 version of the 200, this bike does *not* have a tendency to engage itself in massive tankslappers. If we had to make a choice, though, we would do without the tankslappers altogether.

The steep steering angle, on the other hand, makes the '84 XR200R a winner in the extremely tight sections of an enduro. Sections with turns so tight that a "normal" motorcycle would have to be walked around them are easily managed by the XR200R.

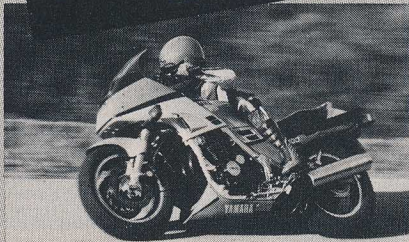
It's a matter of "you win some, you lose some." You gain some horsepower, but you also gain some weight. You get a better turning motorcycle, but you lose stability. Most testers entered into a love/hate relationship with the 200; they honestly couldn't decide if they liked it or not.

Put another way, the Honda XR200R is decidedly different, but it's not necessarily better.

DR

THIS MONTH IN

MOTORCYCLIST Magazine



YAMAHA FJ1100

Is this the fastest production motorcycle in history? Find out in this complete test of Yamaha's superb new superbike.

MIDDLEWEIGHT COMPARISON: HONDA VF500 INTERCEPTOR MEETS YAMAHA FJ600

The bikes are the two quickest middleweights ever sold, and when they come handlebar to handlebar, the results are explosive.

DAYTONA

Kenny Roberts has a funny way of retiring—or at least it's funny if you aren't Freddie Spencer or a bunch of other riders who hoped to win the Daytona 200.

SPECIAL TOURING SECTION

People who are going places should appreciate this section, which looks at the ins and outs of sport-touring, helps you gauge the capacity of your electrical system to support accessories, takes you for a ride through the Yukon and introduces you to some new touring products.

PLUS: The lowdown on Suzuki's new V-4, a bevy of product evaluations and much more.

In the June issue of *MOTORCYCLIST*. On sale May 15.

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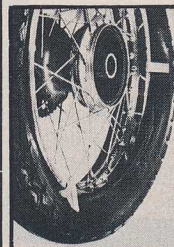
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