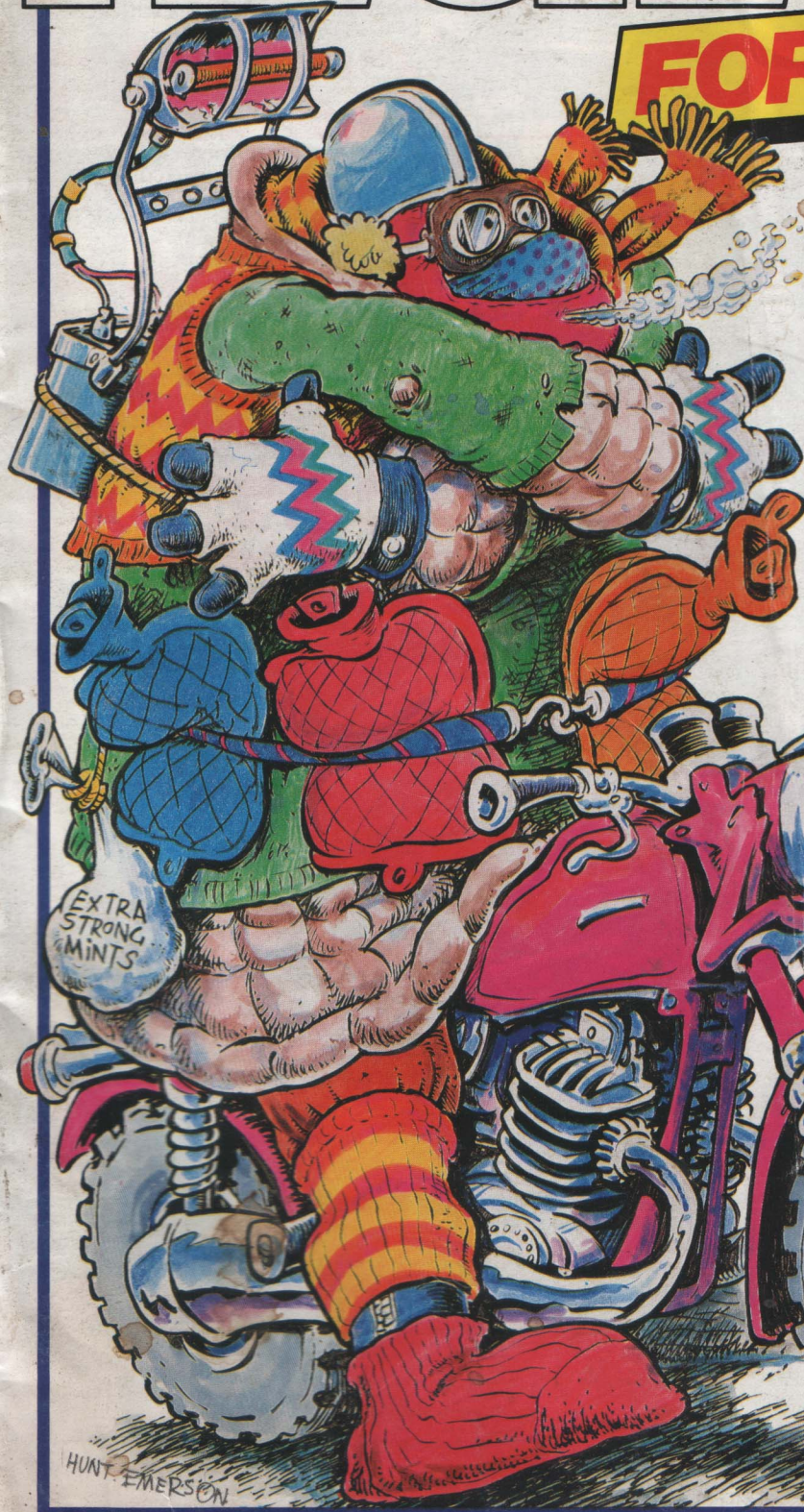


# motorcycle MECHANICS

**FORTNIGHTLY**



*Boulevard cruising*  
 Cross the Channel - FREE  
 Buyer's Guide: What bike to get  
 Honda's dirty business  
 DT175 - readers verdict  
 TZ track test

*Conquer  
 the  
 cold*



**HARSH** power, a harsh ride and harsh sound characterise Yamaha's TZ250. It's a road racing animal which has to be whipped into obedience.

Riding one is a battle of wills. If you don't maintain constant concentration the TZ takes over, straying like a wild animal.

Because of its nature the TZ presents an exciting challenge. It demands a lot from the rider. In return the rewards are high in terms of satisfaction.

If you can get it right by striking a balance with the machine so that you work together rather than fight each other you can build up a rapport of mutual respect. It gives you an inner glow in your stomach and the bike an inner glow in its crankcase.

My chance to get my hand bitten by a TZ was presented to me by 19-year-old Chris Pearson. He loaned me his F model which has a rubber mounted engine conversion but doesn't have the broader power band of the later power valve G model.

Chris works as a mechanic for Webb's Yamaha Centre in Lincoln. He's sponsored by Chris Bett Car Sales, Lincoln, and during '81 rode a single cylinder Yamaha as well as the TZ.

The occasion for the test was the Bantam Club's final meeting of the 1981 season at Snetterton, near Norwich in Norfolk.

The Bantam Club's chairman Ned Quirey is anxious to point out that the club not only runs races for Bantam riders. Production, open class and single cylinder are among the other classes catered for.

I had entered my own RD250LC Yamaha in the production races and Chris's bike in the open 250cc races.

After practice I climbed off Chris's bike sweating from the sheer physical effort of getting this unknown animal round. It had clearly won the first battle of wills.

My biggest problem was being too accustomed to my LC production bike with its softer ride, smoother controls, different riding position and more flexible power, not to mention the fact that the gearchange was the other way round.

The TZ vibrated in comparison, it made a terrible din, it was an awkward cuss to start, it wouldn't take a blind bit of notice of my right hand until the rev counter needle hit 8000rpm, the riding position was uncomfortable, the suspension gave a buckboard ride and the front brake was too harsh.

Clearly I had to approach the TZ from a completely new standpoint compared to the LC. But I was so surprised at the difference that I came back into the pits both confused and disappointed with myself because my lap times were a lot worse than my production times.

Obviously with well over 10bhp more at the back wheel I was expecting to be able to comfortably shave a few seconds of my production times.

The difference in bikes was so great I couldn't think straight. Dave Walker who had prepared my LC had to think for me.

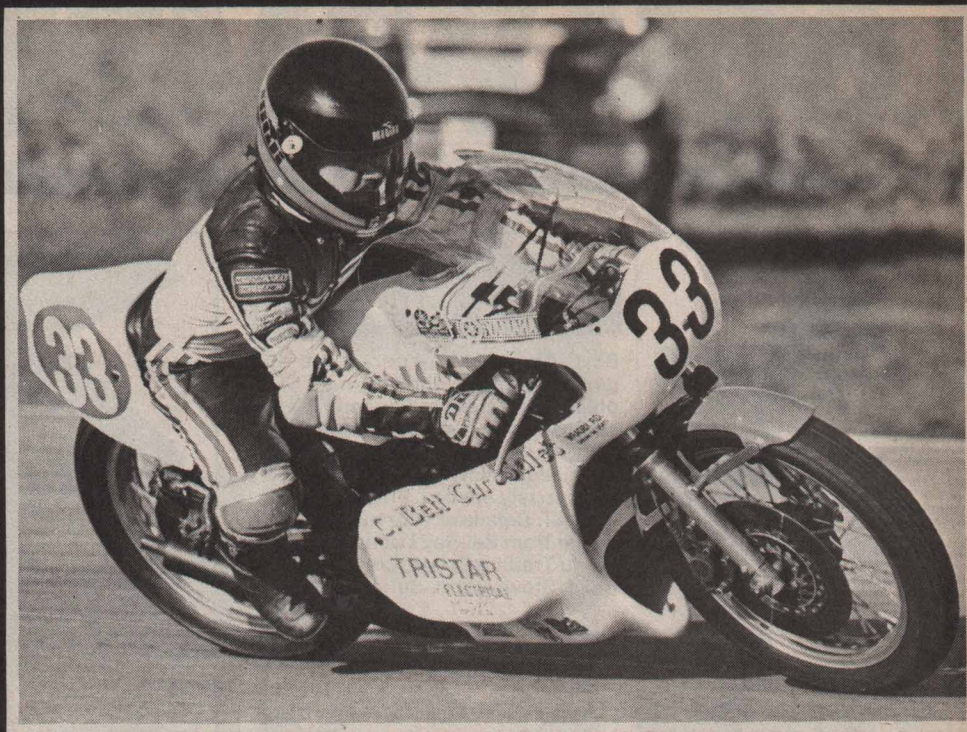
"Do you want the bars raised and the front brake lever eased back a bit?" he asked. "Yes, please," I answered, wiping the sweat from my forehead. My helmet was almost dripping with it.

I said "Yes" because I would have agreed to any alteration.

Why had riding the TZ been such an effort?

For a start I had to concentrate extra hard on not gearchanging the wrong way. Also the bike needed a more determined tug to pull its head round corners.

Sliding from one side of the bike to the other meant standing up on the rests. On my LC, which now belongs to Chris Spicer of Copford in Essex, I was able to slide smoothly from one side to the other.



# Born to be

Because my 5ft 2in was stretched out on the TZ it made leaning off the bike more difficult. The rearsets were also alien to my road bike upbringing. Though I had ridden a few race bikes before, they were all road based machines. The TZ was the first pure road racer I had fought with.

So far it had been a fight, and I was losing.

I seemed to be doing everything in slow motion. Because the front brake lever would only budge slightly I couldn't operate it properly and blip the throttle for downchanges. Also the gearchanges felt terribly slow. Hooking the lever up for down, if you see what I mean, took forever. It was painful.

So was the ride. Where my LC soaked up the bumps the TZ bucked me out of the seat. The riding position stymied standing on the rests comfortably so my centre of gravity was fully concentrated through my backside.

Snetterton has a few bumps which could be pinpointed when I was bodily jolted in the air.

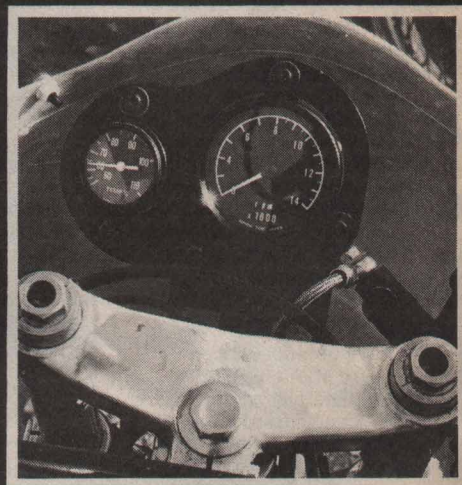
Once or twice I caught the chinpiece of my helmet on the screen, and then there was the small problem of trying to keep the engine on power.

Only used to the gentle whispering from my silenced LC which would happily tick over on a closed throttle, the TZ's raucous rasping sounded like the whelpings of a maltreated dog.

Chris Pearson had shouted to me through the paddock noise and oil-hazed atmosphere: "Don't be afraid to rev it!"

He must have been beside himself with frustration at my kid glove treatment of the TZ. My LC powers from 6-9000rpm. The TZ needed to be between 8-11000rpm. This is a considerable difference and I needed time to adjust.

Coming out of corners in the wrong gear resulted in dropping off the power. The engine would make that deep hollow sound



strokes give out when the carb slides are up and the power is down.

The motor even stalled on me at the end of the straight. Running with the throttle off for more than a couple of seconds loaded the motor.

I freewheeled off the track and tried a practice start on the slip road.

I had to push it for ages before it would fire. Once the engine fired it then had to be coaxed to rev out.

So I was in a sweat after practice, mentally and physically.

Judgement time inevitably arrived. There were three classes on the grid to set off at timed intervals. We were first.

Trying to keep the water temperature at about the 60 deg C mark as per instructions we moved on to the grid. Feeling as if I needed a large withdrawal from an energy



bank my meagre reserves were further taxed by the nervous energy I was expending.

The flag dropped. Some pushed, some paddled. Engines screamed and the sounds diminished with the bikes in the distance. You've guessed it . . . I was still pushing.

The second wave wailed into life and flooded past either side, followed a few seconds later by the third wave. I was still pushing. Then the motor thankfully caught. I feathered the throttle to get the revs up, climbed on board and carefully slipped the clutch to move off without stalling.

Desperate to catch the pack, I left the braking rather late at the end of the straight. The insensitive rear disc locked the rear wheel and obliged me to go straight on.

This meant I had to turn round to rejoin the race. More time lost. I was well out of the picture so I tried to concentrate on getting smooth.

Gradually I started to get the partnership together. Having the bars higher and the brake lever further in allowed me to two-finger brake while throttle blipping and changing down.

Adjusting the lever had also given the front brake more feel, allowing me to use it harder because of the better control.

The bike felt rock steady but needed more setting up than the LC which could adjust lines quicker. Down the straight I started revving past 11000rpm in the lower gears. At last I was learning how to be master.

I made up quite a few places and got my times down to consistent 1m 25s. The winner set a fastest lap of 1m 21s.

With a bit of time for experimentation and alteration to improve starting and set-up the suspension, I felt I could make a useful team with the TZ. The spark of an inner glow had been struck. □

TRACK  
TEST

# wild

**Brian Crichton discovers that uncaging a TZ Yamaha needs a firm whip hand**

