Enduro test: PE175"X"

(Out of the crate)

The PE's have been around for quite a while now and have proved very popular as enduro bikes. Recently I have noticed an increasing number being used around the roads by commuters. I don't think they are entirely suitable for this purpose, but they are still cheaper than running cars and are not as noisy as some bikes on the road.

The 10.6 litre capacity tank on the X model, giving a range of at least one hundred miles per fill, makes this bike a little more suitable for trail or road work. Being closely moulded to the back bone, the tank doesn't appear obtrusive and the plastic cap and cap/tank attachment seem to work well. The plastic tank, sidecovers, chain guard and guides, airbox, light, sprocket cover and guards are good as weight savers and, being all bright yellow over which the decals are stuck, they provide a rather smart appearance against the black motor, pipe, and seat. Alloy engine mounts, swing arm and front and rear brake levers on the hubs also help. However for all this the PE175 weighing in at 241 lbs dry, is not a light bike for a small bore two stroke.

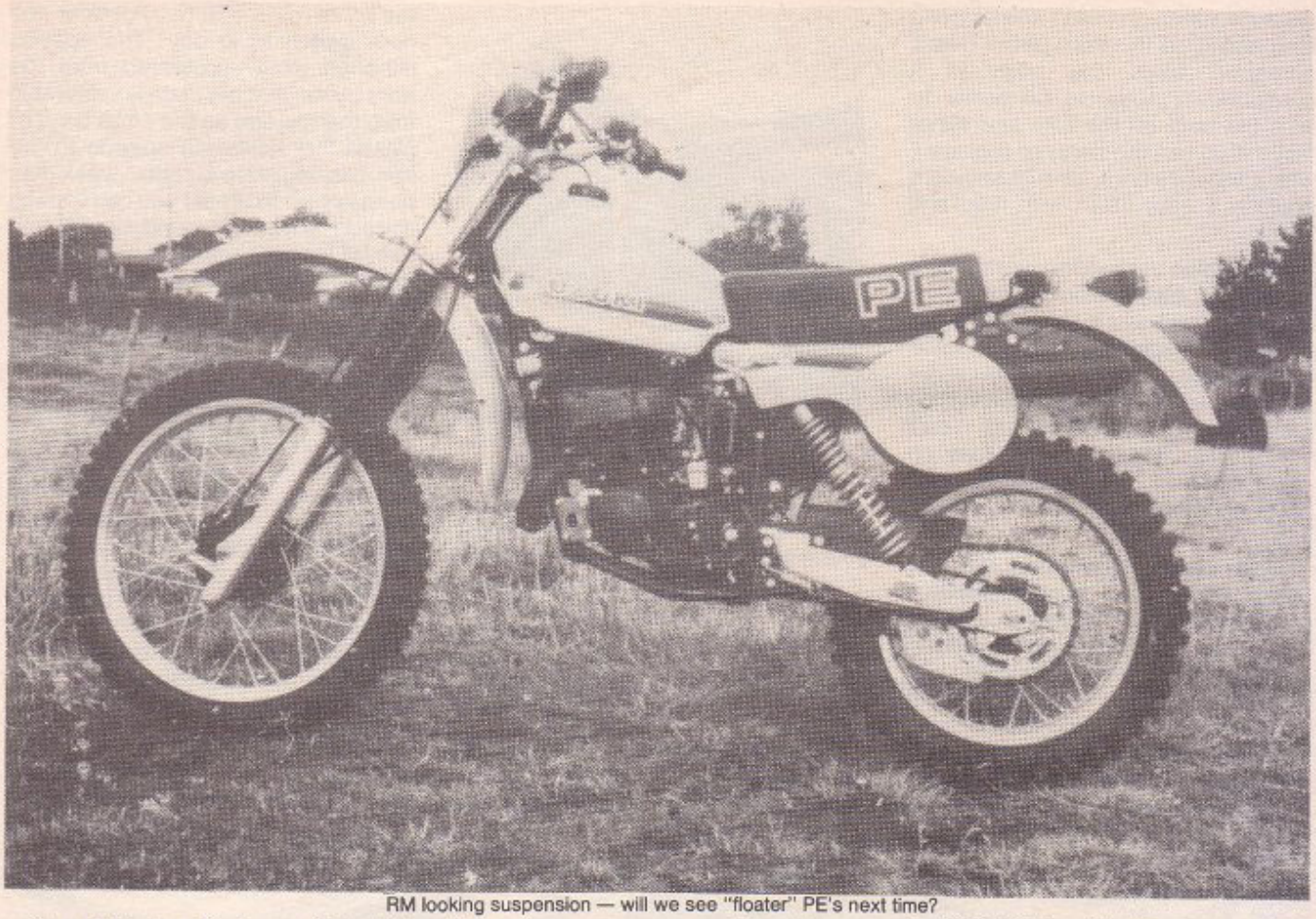
The trick-looking alloy swing arm is very solid and should work well; and it would work well, if it wasn't for the shockers being laid too far forward. What happens here is that as the swing arm rises, the shox become almost horizontal, therefore exerting less pressure on the swing arm, which in turn means the suspension gets softer. Murray Tainton has fixed this problem by relocating the bottom shocker mounts about 1½ inches further to the front of the swing arm and by using shorter shox.

The back shockers are not much chop anyway, and although OK for a learner, anyone who is serious will need to replace them with Konis if you are poor, or Sachs if you really want to transform the back end.

The well designed alloy chain guide is quite rigid and with the two nylon blocks on either side of the guide (similar to the XR 200 Honda) which stop the guide from being bent sideways, there is little chance of dropping a chain. This will last about twelve months of hard riding before needing to be replaced. Rollers instead of rubbing blocks would have been an improvement here. Still, it's a nice one.

A large plastic chain guard does a good job in keeping the crap and corruption off the chain, which in turn has moulded nylon blocks to keep it from chewing away at the swing arm and the gear lever shaft. Two average quality rollers above and below the swing arm help keep the chain in line as the swing arm moves through its arc. Better quality rollers would last longer here, and snail cam chain adjusters would be an improvement.

Looks much the same but there is lots of little changes



RM looking suspension — will we see "floater" PE's next time?

One of the top features of the PE, which no other Jap. bike has, is the fixed backing plate, sprocket, brake and chain, which allows the back wheel to be removed in five seconds! That's right, five seconds; and it can be replaced in nearly as fast a time. Even though this feature adds extra weight to the bike and tends to make the back brake a little stiff because the cable has to cross from the right hand side to the left side of the swinging arm, it is well worth it to have this feature.

Another standard top feature which the others don't have, is the side pull throttle. This is less bulky than the Magura and works just as well. The hand levers seem longer and a little stronger than these on other Jap. bikes and although they still break, being a little longer they have a more sensitive feel and can easily be operated by one finger.

The bash plate which at least protected the bottom cases on the older models has gone altogether. This leaves the cases both at the side and at the bottom, plus the oil drain plug which hangs out the bottom of the cases, very exposed to abuse, and having had a rock loosen a drain plug from an even less exposed position before, I was not very impressed. Some sort of protection is essential here or you could find yourself very short of oil and a few dollars.

There are no fold back pedals on either the gear or the rear brake levers. Now as the end of the brake lever is so short anyway, I can't see that a fold back lever here would achieve much, but the gear lever shaft hangs out some two inches from the cases and could be bent if solidly hit. Even though I haven't heard of this happening yet. The end of the gear lever is shorter than most, to avoid just this happening, and I found it uncomfortable to use (i.e. it stuck into my foot) and therefore think a foldback lever would be beneficial.

Being smaller than on other bikes, the blinkers simply mounted on rubbers, are hard to damage, easy to remove by hand and are probably the most practical around. Moulded in the back mudguard just behind the seat is a flat area that appears to have been made to fit a sub-frame bag (similar to the XR200 Honda). However no bag is provided, which is a pity, as apart from a ready made place being there for it, it would provide much needed extra storage for tools and spares.

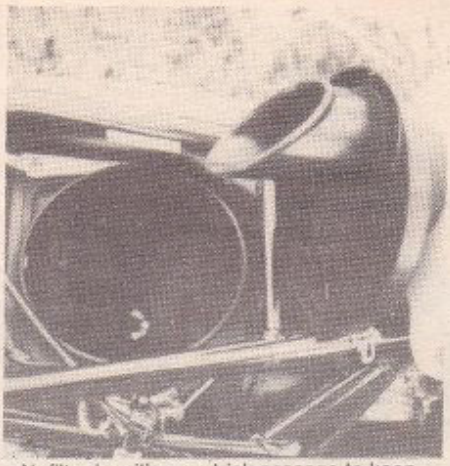
Tools you will surely need, as the multi-wrench has only a limited use. For instance you can't even change a head light globe without further tools. Still it's handy for those few things it

Bash plate is discarded for tube protectors — former is better

does do, although I can't see it lasting long sitting on the front of the bike if someone uses the bike as a commuter. You would be better to take the horn off the bike and either move it up (on the bars) or replace it with a squeeze horn, as in its standard position it gets fulled with mud and water.

The cables and wiring on the PE's are simple, easily removed and nicely routed. Adjustment is simple and easy to get at, especially with the back brake, which unlike many bikes can be achieved with your fingers even when the thread is covered in mud. You'll see the big Suzuki cable guides on many bikes, as they are strong and allow room for the cable to move easily.

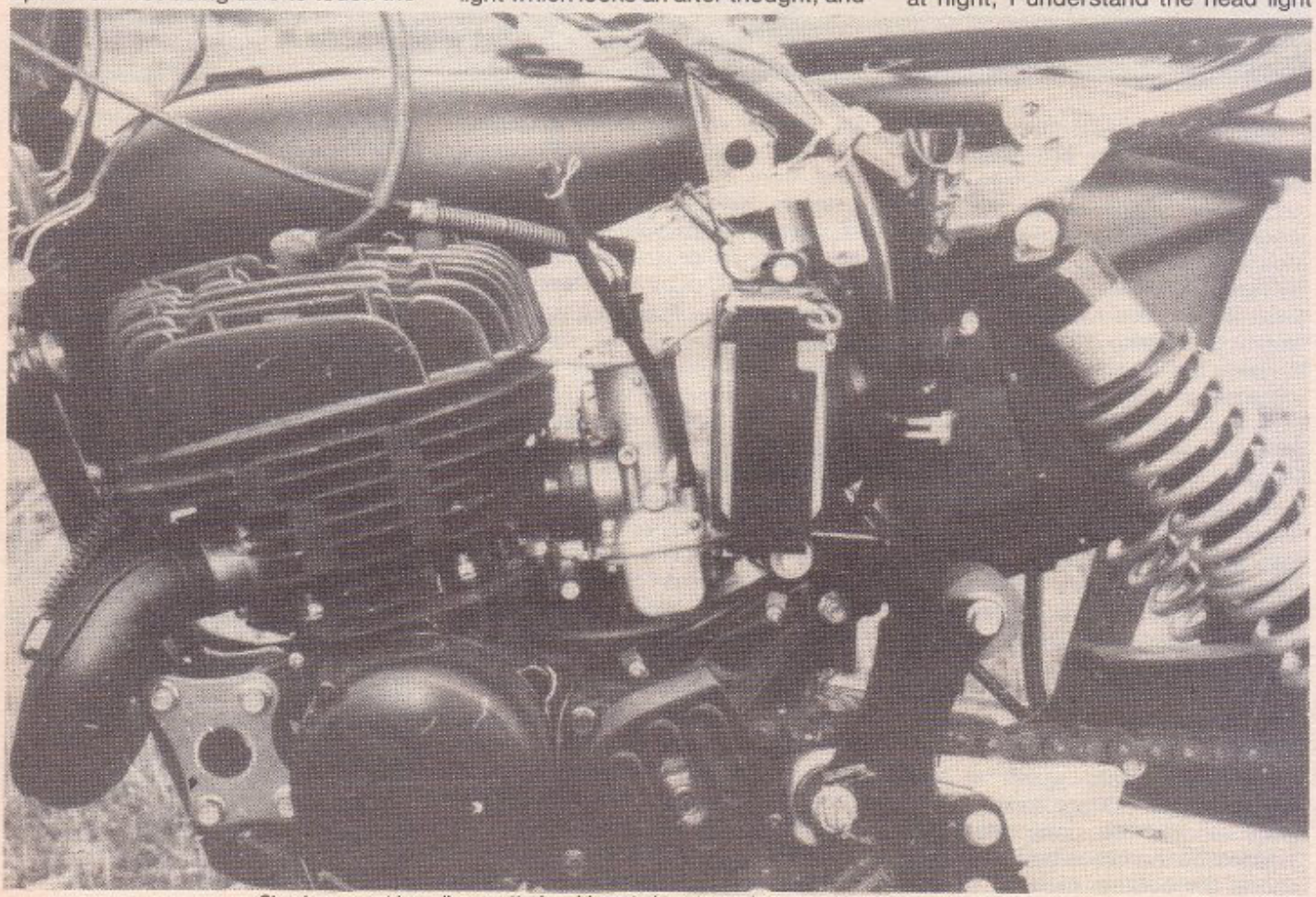
When sitting on the bike the first thing you notice is the positive riding position. It is one of the few bikes that I felt had the bars in a good comfortable angle for both sitting and standing. Your legs are not squashed up underneath you and it is easy to stand up from this position. The only thing here that I wasn't happy with, apart from not being able to touch the ground except on tip toe, was that when you stand, the side covers under which the top shocker mounts, it tends to stick into your legs, especially when riding down hill. To alleviate this, the shocker mounts would have to be moved in further, and this would mean altering the frame.



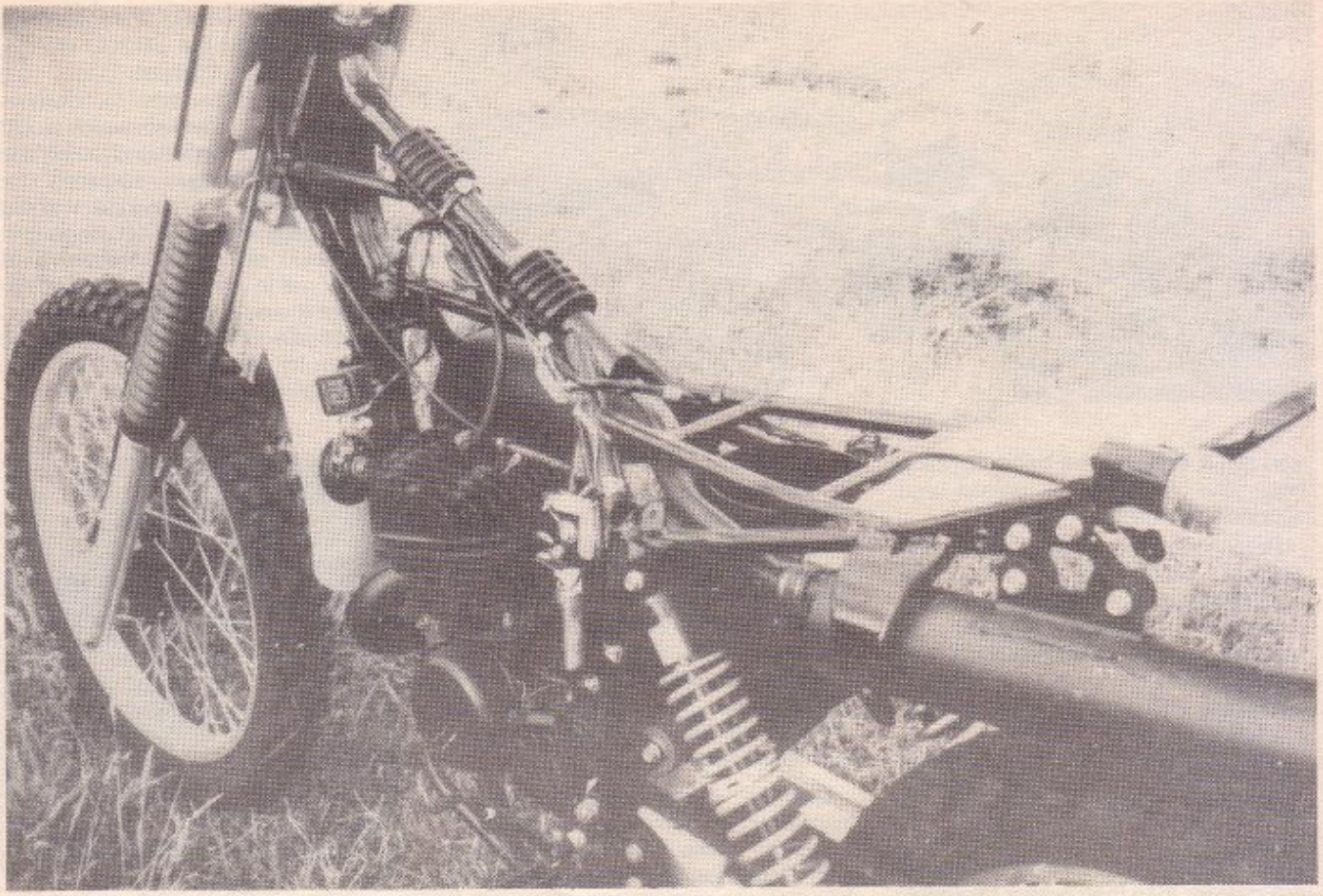
Air filter has it's own trick passage to keep water out

The only electrics on the bars are the kill button, the blinker indicater light which looks an after thought, and the lights (on & off), turn, dimmer and horn switch all in one. The speedo although nicely protected from the front by the number plate is vulnerable from the top and as the small band of plastic that holds the speedo to the iron backing plate is rather weak (has been known to break) you can find the speedo flopping around unattached except for the cable if hit hard. Now if there is one thing that is ridiculous on this bike, it's the way the speedo cable is hooked onto the top of the fork leg with a clamp. This clamp effectively reduces the curvature of the cable to a sharp bend (half what it is normally) each time the suspension contracts, which results in the cable breaking in a very short time. The DR400 has the same problem. A proper cable guide (as most bikes have) that allows the cable to bend in one continuous arc from the hub to the speedo is all that is required; elementary you would think. Sometimes I wonder what they do with all that money they use to "develop" new bikes and ideas!

Although I didn't get to ride the bike at night, I understand the head light



Shocker mount is well gussetted, cable get close to engine — and heat



"T" model frame was okay, so why change it

has a good beam and the tail light burns quite brightly.

One thing you can be sure of with the Suzie is that it will start under any conditions. It is a very easy starter. A ninety pound weakling could turn the motor over without effort, which was just as well as our test bike stalled quite a bit. More about that in a mo. In standard condition the PE is a very quiet bike. Because the exhaust doesn't drop as low to the ground at the front as on some bikes, it isn't dented as much; however it does collect mud badly. Mud also collects a lot on the front of the swing arm, which can be a damn nuisance to say the least.

As with many two strokes, the exhaust leaks where the exhaust exits from the motor, and dribbles down the pipe like a feeding baby.

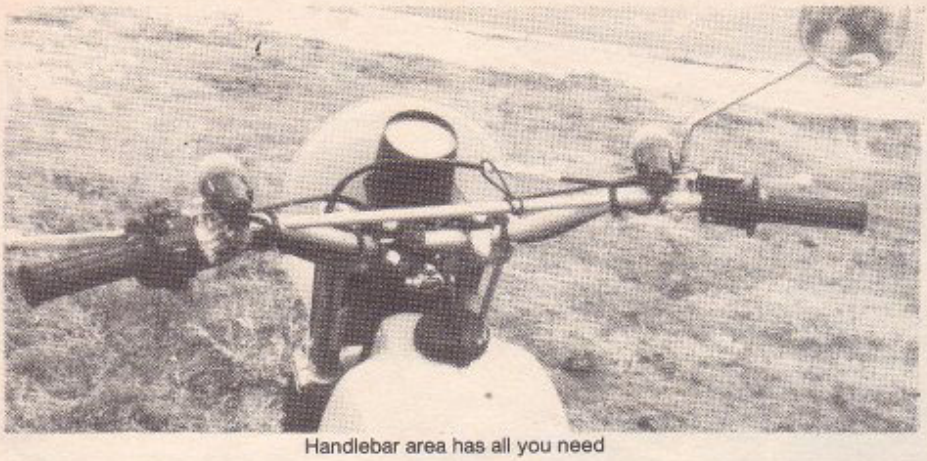
Hubs and spokes seem to be OK but the rims could be a trifle weak. The brakes are good in the dry but tend to fade in the wet. Taper bearings in the steering head give smoother turning and longer life in this area. The 9.84 inch (250mm) travel leading axle front forks are designed for oil and air/nitrogen. Unfortunately the suspension was just as the bike came out of the crate and it operated like a pogo stick! There was really no damping, and as fast as the suspension contracted, it bounced back again, making traction on rough washed out hills extremely difficult to get. A heavier grade oil and the proper amount of air would help to fix this, along with decent rear shocks.

Now let me explain. Our test bike

Well made plastic headlight/number plate

Side pull throttle is again used

was one which a guy had bought from a dealer just three weeks ago. We got the bike in the condition it was given to the purchaser; straight out of the box. Except for the removal of a couple of baffles front and rear. PE's aren't worth a pinch of donkey's dung, unless they have certain mods done to them. And so it was with this bike. It wouldn't pull the skin off a rice pudding. There was no low down pull and on steep hills it wouldn't go unless



Handlebar area has all you need

you got it right on the band in which case the wheel spun unless you slipped the clutch.

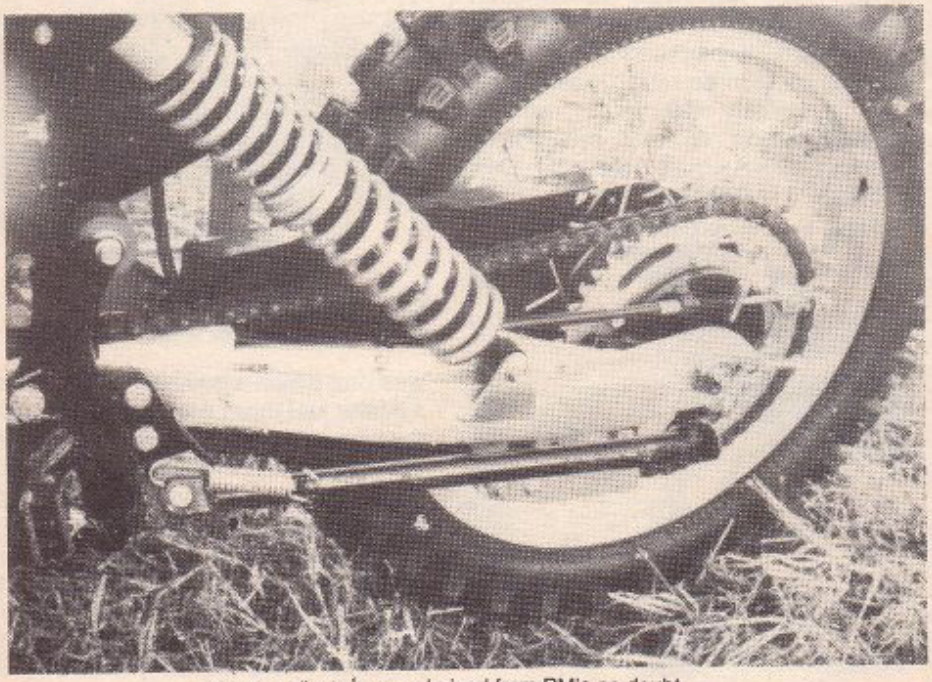
Putting the bike up against the standard XR200 Honda on the road we found they both had the same top speed of 120K's but that the Suzuki ate the Honda in acceleration and seating position. However in the condition the PE was (in which I have already explained) the Honda was superior to the Suzuki in the bush in all other riding ways. The Suzie seemed peakier than that it should have been allowing for the fact that most small bikes which put out this sort of power are peakier than their bigger brothers. The fact that there didn't seem to be much down low probably accentuated this feeling.

The Honda was easier to handle in tight going and climbed hills better. Even the suspension worked better on the Honda's, and the seat being lower to the ground made footing much easier. Unfortunately we didn't have time to try to rectify these problems with the Suzuki in order to get a more accurate assessment. For instance I'm sure the Suzuki suspension would be better than the Honda when it is properly set up, although I think the Honda will always pull better down low.

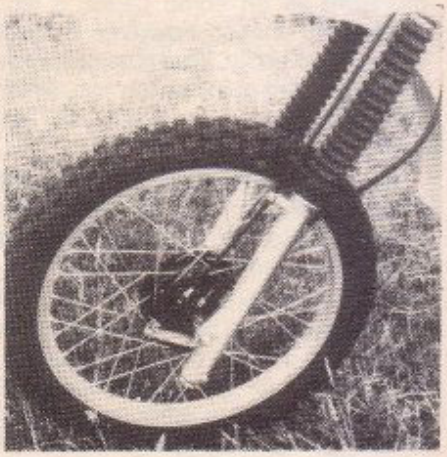
Quite a comprehensive owner's manual comes with this bike, in which it states. **"This manual will assure you of top performance from your machine under any type of competition conditions."** Now no mention is made at all of the mods which are absolutely necessary to transform this bike from a slug to a super enduro machine. I can understand problems with ADR's preventing this, but as with the XR200 Honda, surely a small manual under the heading of "Preparation for Competition" could be provided, which would list the exhaust, gasket and jetting and suspension changes required for certain levels of performance. Without these changes the PE is hopeless. This would not be necessary if all dealers made these changes in the shop for the new owner, or at the very least detailed the changes for him so he could make them at his convenience. But all dealers don't.

RM type front end

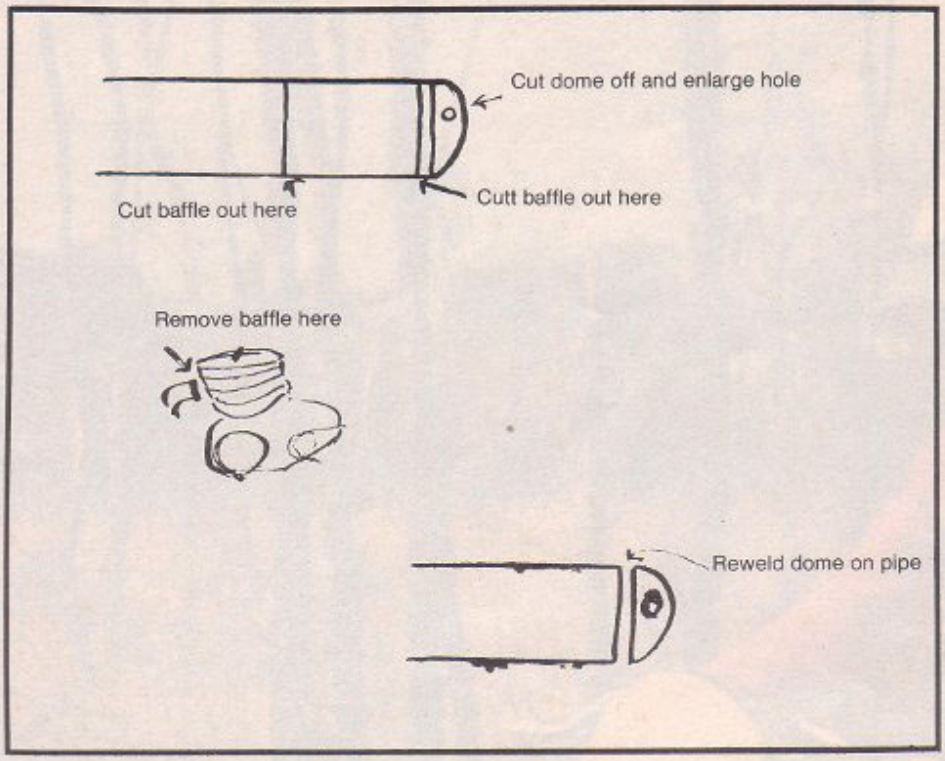
However if you buy your PE from BTX Motorcycles or Trevor Flood Motorcycles, for example, I know for a fact that all these mods are made at no charge, before the bike leaves the shop. Apart from the expert back up given, it is a good reason to buy from such dealers. In fact next year Murray Tainton is going to offer to the public a limited number of PE's which will be set up with all the many changes, exactly as his own competition bikes are. Obviously these will cost more



Massive alloy s/arm — derived from RM's no doubt



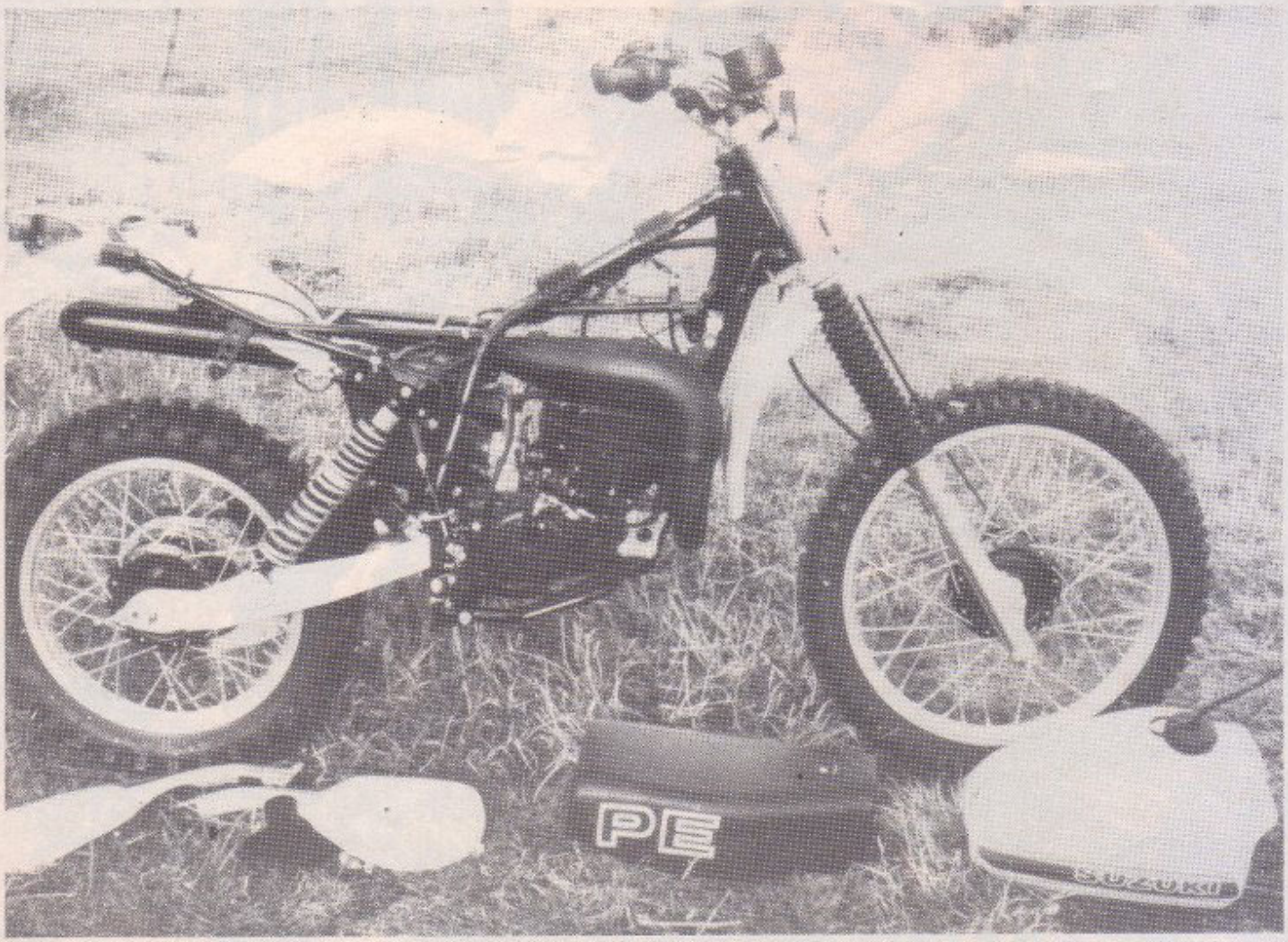

PE175 "X" Suzuki



than normal, but they will be a lot cheaper than trying to do it yourself; that's supposing you know what to do. The advantages here apart from having a properly set up bike, ready to race is that it will last a whole lot longer than a standard bike.

The basic mods necessary to make this bike go best are: 1) Removal of baffles in spark arrester and muffler. 2) Removal of baffle as exhaust exits motor. 3) Removal of one of the two head gaskets. 4) Rejetting of the Mikuni carby richer. 5) Making sure the forks have the right grade oil and air so that the damping works properly.

There are many other things that have to be improved or changed if you want a top enduro (like the one Murray Tainton rides). One that will be reliable and not break you in repairs. This is the case with not only PE's but ALL Jap. bikes. Once again the need for all these mods is another example



Little effort is needed to strip down

of why many riders are considering changing to European bikes that don't need such extensive mods. The PE motors seem to last longer than their Japanese competitors. However, the suspension hasn't enough travel when you consider the height of the bike. Compared with other Jap. enduros around, P.E:s would be as good if not better value for money at $1379.

Unfortunately we didn't get to test this bike as we would have liked before the deadline. However you can be sure that the 28hp six speed 175XPE Suzuki has some great features and when properly when set up is a very competitive bike. Without these mods above mentioned, the best you could say is, it has potential.

Later on we will bring you a full test on an enduro prepared PE.

Bike needs altering a lot to really get the best out of it — potential is there though