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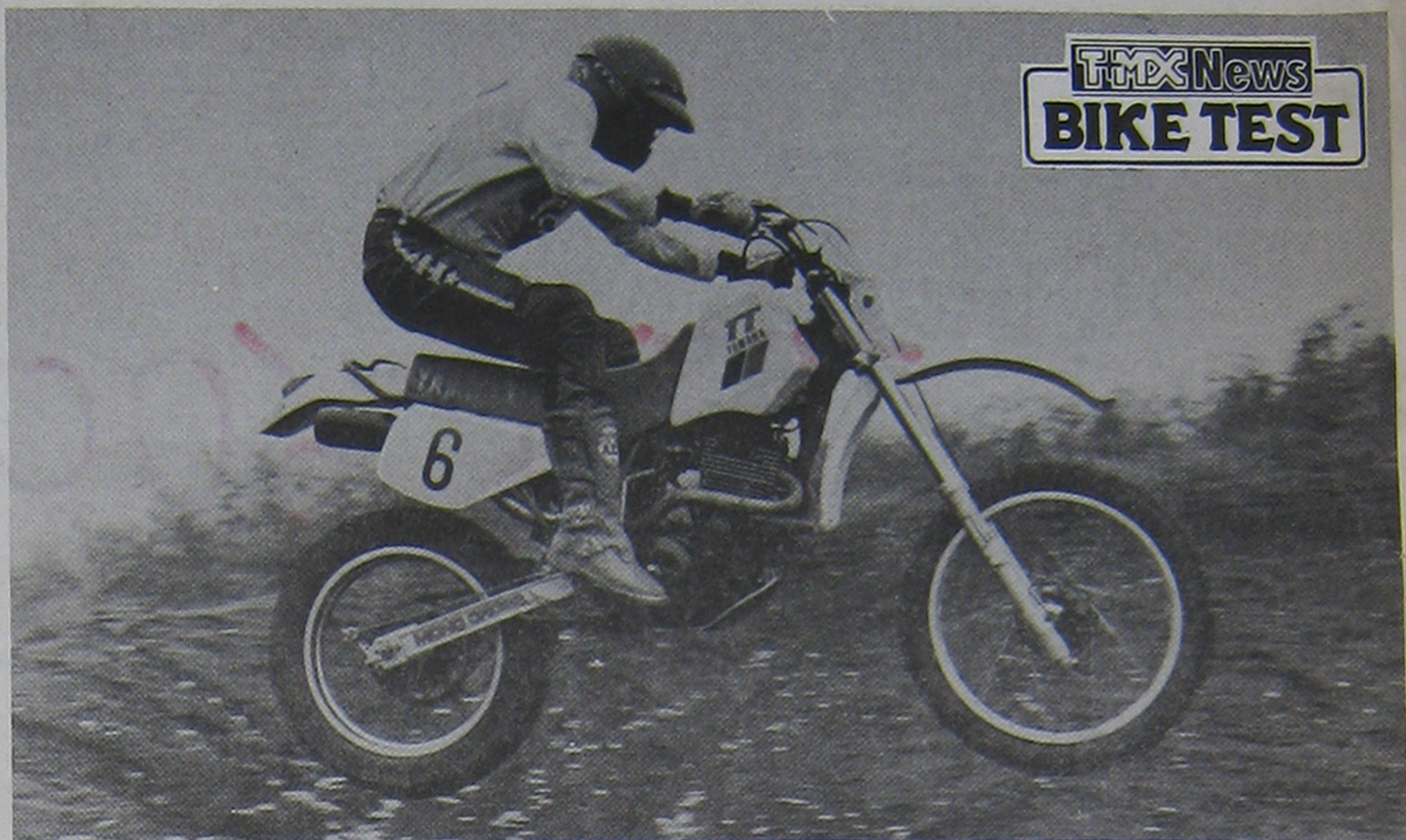
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TTMX News BIKE TEST

The TT could be flown — but Frank points out that care is needed when coming in to land . . .

TT600 sorts the men from the Supermen!

FOR such a new model, the TT600 has already developed quite a panoply of myths. You will hear stories that it has such awesome power that only one of Odin's personal bodyguards could tame it and that it would take a cousin of Superman to even start the bike.

Like all myths, there are elements of truth amongst the tall tales. Without even riding the bike, one can work out which bits of the story are going to be nearest the truth.

The number one, paramount, all important, critical and never - to - be - forgotten fact is the weight. Bone dry, the TT600 tips the scales at 280lbs: by any standards that is a big motorcycle to start throwing about the countryside. Make a mistake with a bike of this weight and one needs to be either very strong or extremely skilful — preferably both.

Yamaha do not give a power output but informed opinion puts it at around 40bhp. Now, since this is less than a 200cc Cagiva, which has some 90lbs less to carry around, clearly the

big Yamaha is not going to be a flying machine and it isn't, at least by two-stroke standards. This is not to say that it won't go quickly. Rather, that going fast is not as easy and straightforward a task as it is on a two-stroke.

I must confess to having a personal bias towards this bike. To my eye, it looks so beautifully right. Yes, the 58.5" wheelbase and 37" saddle height do make for a large motorcycle but how else would one house that huge, SOHC engine? Even the copious 11 litre fuel tank look right on a bike where big is not only beautiful but essential.

In fact, Yamaha have done a commendable job in restricting the weight. For example, although the motor now boasts a swept capacity of 595cc, it is still 8.4lbs lighter than the XT500 engine from which it is derived.

Much of this saving comes from the new cylinder which is Nicasil coated instead of having an iron liner which can be rebored. Nicasil is excellent material for cylinder liners but potentially a financial deathtrap if it becomes scored. Riders who are not clean-air fanatics should stay well away from this motorcycle. The rest of the weight saved comes from a lighter crank, aluminium kickstart pedal and magnesium clutch cover plus some internal lightening.

ENGINE

Although developed from existing designs, the engine is absolutely up - to - date regarding current four - stroke thought. The head contains four valves — each with its own screw adjuster — and is fed with two carburettors, in the same style as Honda's XR range.

FRANK MELLING risks life and limb to bring you this test on Yamaha's mighty TT600 . . .

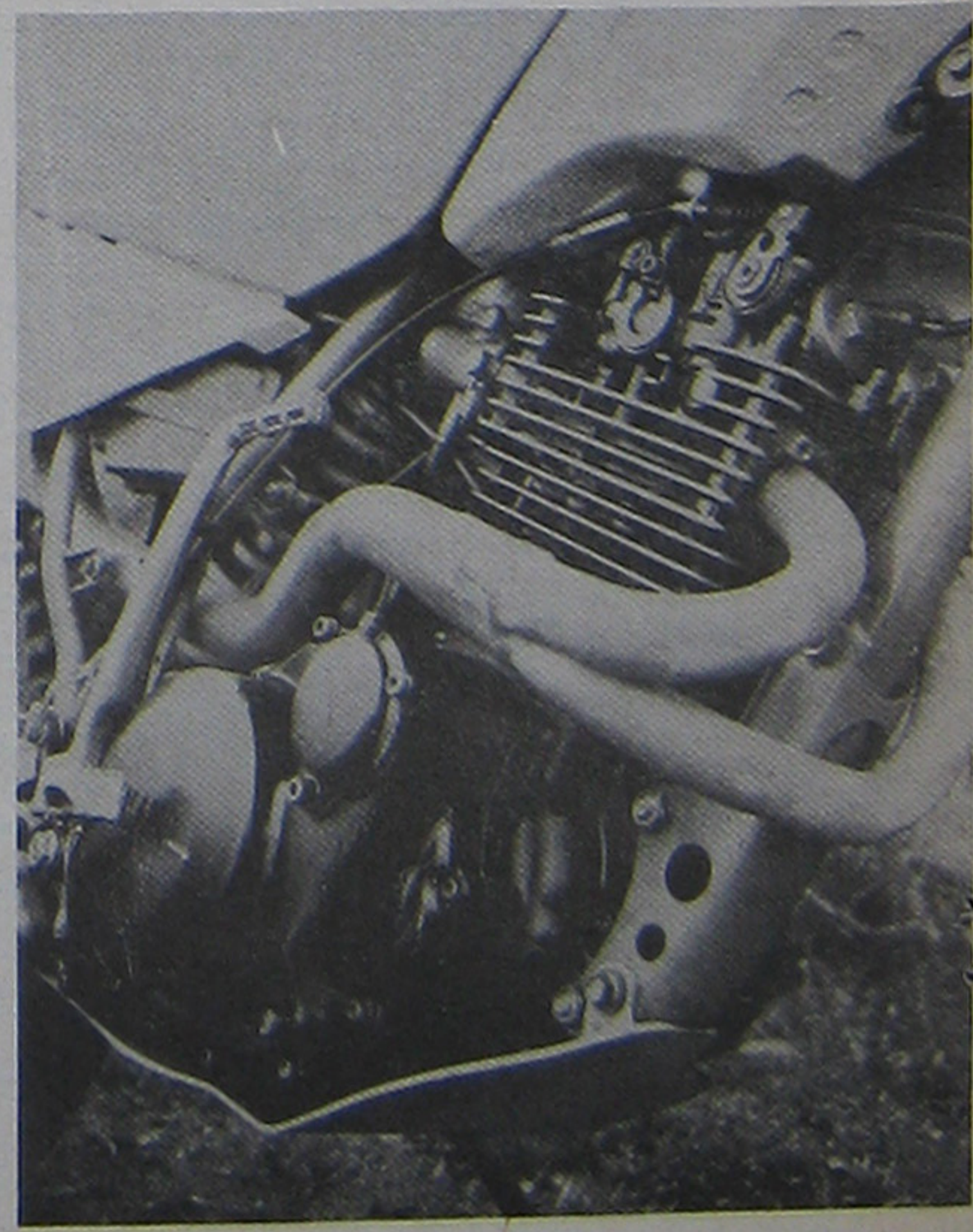
Like the Hondas, the left - hand carburettor feeds the motor at low and medium speeds and then the right - hand unit, which has no float bowl, joins in as well. Linking the two ports is a diaphragm.

There is no doubt that the system works since the TT will pull like a train from zero rpm but I must confess to being disappointed with the lack of top - end power. Much above 5,000rpm and the TT will make a lot of noise but not much else. It demands to be ridden off the pilot jet all the time, using high gears to get maximum drive.

A very sweet and positive five speed gearbox is fitted and is accompanied by a fade - free clutch with typically light Japanese action.

Yamaha have abandoned the traditional oil bearing frame of wet - sump engines and instead have opted for a small oil tank in order to concentrate the mass and lower the centre of gravity. All this effort is very meritorious but play at hauling the Yamaha through the trees for ten minutes and the full impact of almost 300lbs of motorcycle soon becomes apparent.

Other than abandoning the traditional oil - bearing frame, the rest of the TT's chassis is conventional, motocross technology. YZ-type forks, complete with 43mm stantions and 11.8" of travel are complimented by the latest Monocross rear suspension. Our test bike was the personal



The 595cc engine is State of the Art with twin carburetors and four valve head.

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machine of ISDE hero, Arthur Browning, and he had replaced the standard KYB rear damper with a remote reservoir Ohlin unit which performed beautifully.

SADDLE

Once in the saddle, the very soft initial springing brings the bike down to almost trail bike proportions until, that is, one tries to start it. To do this, the rider naturally has to take the bike's weight on his left leg. The TT then rises up and suddenly becomes quite a large motorcycle.

Instructions from big Arthur were to give the bike a full kick when starting it. However, since I am a rather puny 5'11" tall, I found it a difficult task to get my foot above the top of the kickstart pedal. As a result of my shameful failure, Arthur says I broke the kickstarter. This trick earned me the title of a "Bloody Bike Wrecker", and several more earthy epithets besides by Britain's best four stroke enduro rider, accompanied by the cheers from massed onlookers. It isn't the first time my riding ability has been called into question but I must confess to being pleased at receiving the abuse from a man with as much experience of verbal nuclear warfare as Arthur.

In fact, I encountered no problems in starting the Yam at all, whether it were hot or cold - providing I stopped it deliberately. When it was stalled, then there are only two ways of rescuing the situation. One is a group of willing assistants and the other is big Arthur. For me, this one trait immediately negates all the bike's other virtues as an enduro machine, for even the best rider will occasionally stall his bike in a rut or through locking a wheel going into a shale bend. Any such trivial error is going to cost an amount of time out of all proportion to the mistake and this is clearly unacceptable.

A manual decompressor in addition to the automatic one fitted, might help but certainly Yamaha have got to give this problem top priority.

BALANCE

Once on the move, the beautiful balance of the TT becomes apparent. The low saddle height, quiet exhaust note - even with the lightweight non-standard silencer fitted - and woofing tractor-like power



The beast at rest. Yamaha's TT600 is certainly no machine for the faint hearted.

make this one of the nicest super-sports trail bikes one could find.

Soon, the temptation to go faster became irresistible. The front fork's action was firm and somewhat harsh but I accept that they were set up for a rider heavier and much faster than I. The rear was superb, eating up bumps as if they did not exist and all the time, the creamy smooth power was available from zero revs to catapult us out of corners at very respectable speeds.

By now, I was imagining myself as the heir apparent to King Arthur's throne and so was not much concerned when I landed awkwardly after a slightly misjudged jump. Imagine my horror then when the front end slid away, chuckling as it did so at my puny attempts to straighten out the tangle. The rear end kicked up and suddenly, I was very well aware that nothing I was doing was having any effect whatsoever on the bike. Eventually the TT straightened itself out and allowed me to take charge once more.

Hence the birth of a legend. Put Arthur or Roger Harvey in the saddle and the TT has sufficient virtues in terms of power and handling to permit them to do very clever things with the bike. It is when the Noddy element try to be impressive too, that the trick starts to look very difficult indeed.

Although nominally sold as an enduro bike, I feel that the TT600 makes a better motocross machine than a woods bike. Providing the rider can plan ahead and knows what he is

going to do, the TT will allow him to ride very quickly.

The long wheelbase and comparatively long suspension travel mean that the bike will gobble up motocross type going with delight. The TT will also turn every hill into a flat straight, for there is literally nothing it cannot climb with ease and it is also a delight to power-slide - the low saddle height making for an ease of handling which motocross bikes rarely offer today. Only the brakes are questionable

when used hard repeatedly.

Now, examine the enduro side of the coin. First, stall it and you are going to die trying to get the thing going again. Second, 300lbs - plus a helping of Crychan mud - is a big lump to drag in and out of the trees for six hours. Third, and most important, enduros are all about making snap decisions about un rehearsed obstacles and the TT is not a bike with which the average rider should try any unplanned manoeuvre.



The monocross rear suspension was excellent whilst Arthur's home-brewed silencer was much lighter than standard.

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