

OUT FROM UNDER WRAPS CAME A NEW BIG BORE BLASTER!

HONDA'S WINNING RETURN!



Christian Leon (left) and Roger Bowler... and a surprise in-road for the big H in Europe!

HONDA IS BACK in the world championship race winning business!

The company debuted a new 940 cm³ works four at the Zandvoort 600 km Dutch round of the European Endurance Championship and blasted to top place with French rider Christian Leon and Britisher Roger Bowler.

The new endurance racing powerplant is based on the Honda four-cylinder four-stroke, but has twin overhead camshafts to operate four valves per cylinder. Four constant-velocity 32 mm choke Keihin carbs are used, and the bike reportedly produces 74.5 kW (100 hp) at around 9000 rpm.

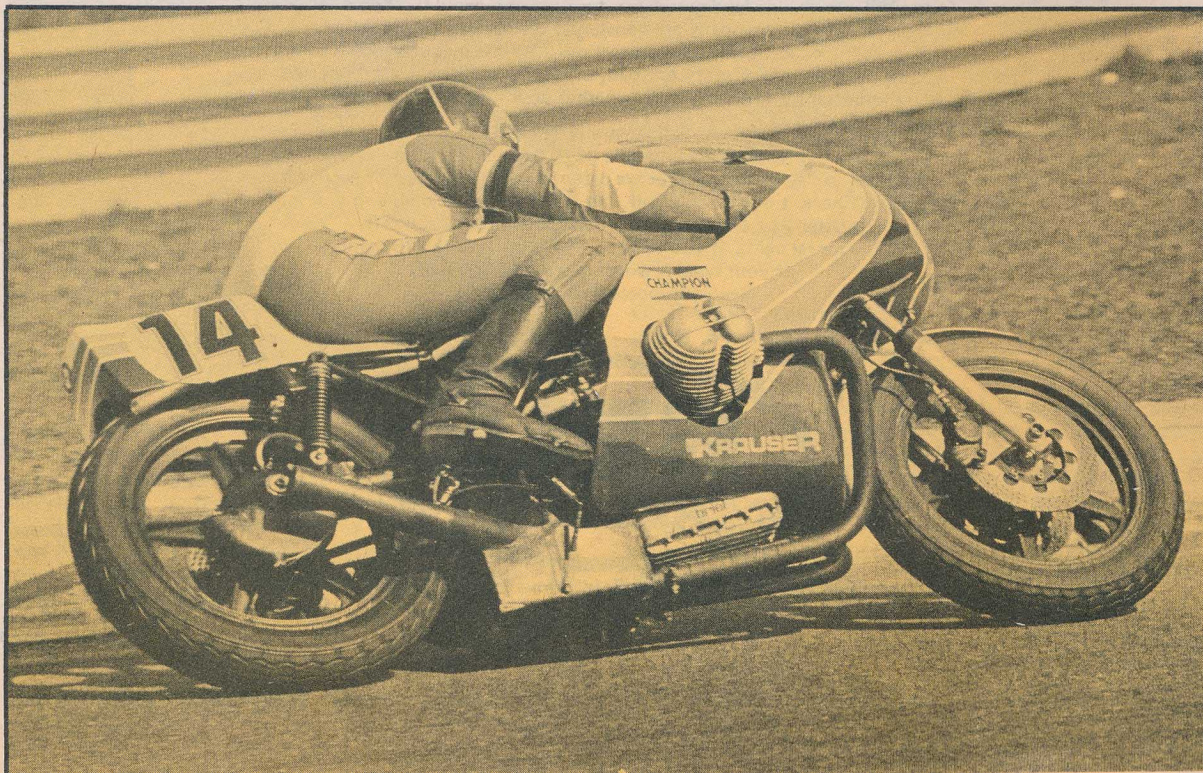
Major engine changes include magnesium castings and gear primary drive to the clutch and an ignition generator located above the clutch. Bore and stroke are 68 x 64.8 for a capacity of 941 cm³. The bike retains dry

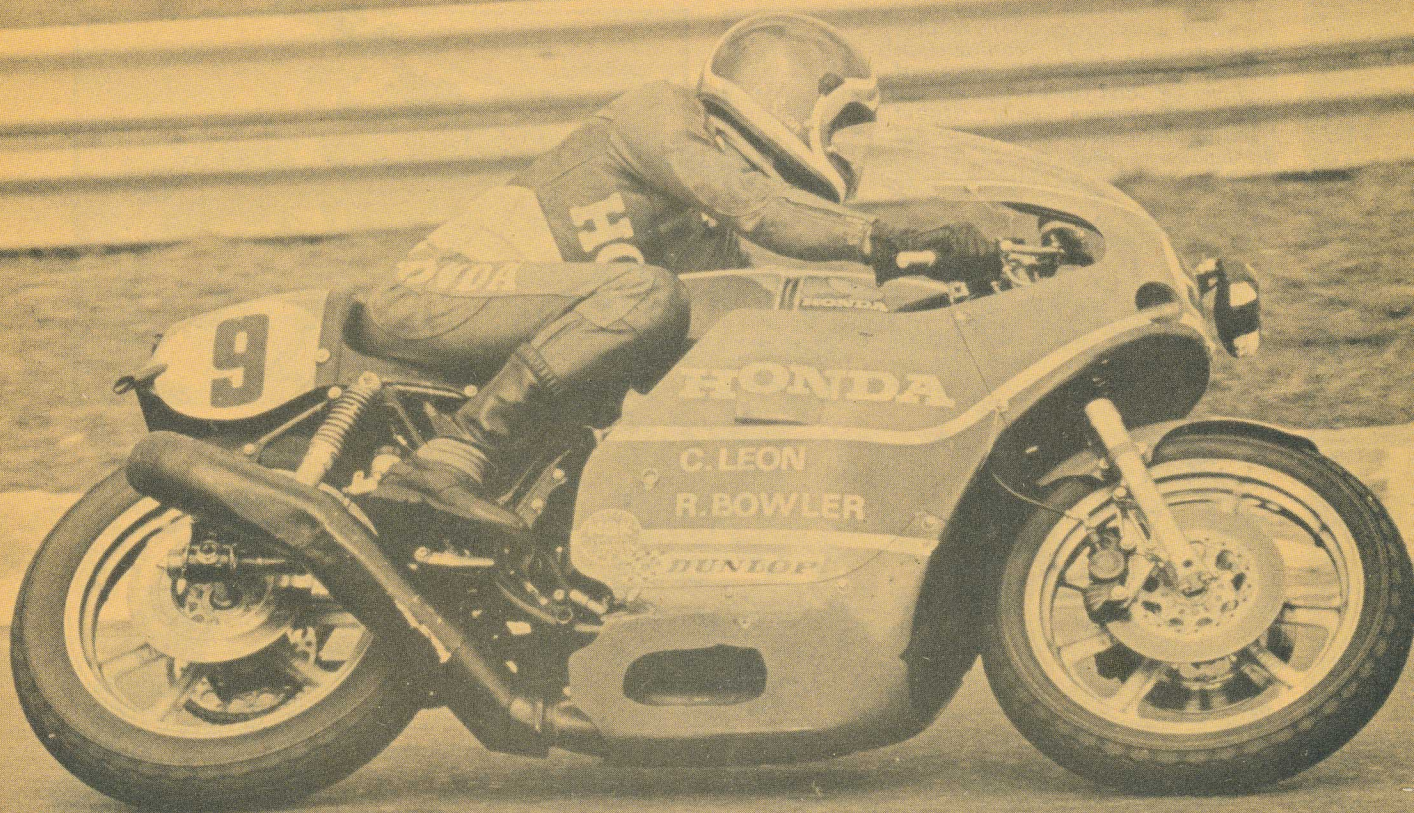
sump lubrication, but is backed by a five-speed box.

An entourage of factory mechanics surrounded the two works machines at the 4.3 km Dutch coastal circuit, recalling instantly the halcyon days of Honda World Grands Prix competition in the '60s. By the first hour the Leon/Bowler bike was in front, but a second works machine had dropped out of contention with faulty ignition, followed by a puncture and gearbox problems.

The bikes were reported to be racing under a power disadvantage because of last-minute alterations

Below: BMW's gathering strength in endurance events was made clear in the results, despite problems encountered by this "semi-factory" bike which finally bested ignition problems to finish 14th. Wonder how many development hours went in the muffler setup?





Factory hopes rested on the Leon/Bowler bike from the quarter-way mark. It took the lead — and stayed there! Muffler shows evidence of hasty work. Bike used three discs, cast wheels and a 24-litre tank. Weight was said to be around 190 kg (420 lb).

Right:

The works endurance powerpack includes dohc and four-valves-per-cylinder and gear-driven clutch and ignition generator. Note chamfering on alternator cover.

made to the silencers to meet stringent noise regulations — initially so low no machine passed. With the noise limit raised to 110 decibels the Hondas scraped through (like several others) with deflectors welded in the exhaust.

The Leon/Bowler works machine covered the race at an average speed of 127 km/h. Zandvoort is regarded as a “shakedown” event for the European season of long-distance races and Honda’s impressive early win throws the normally European-dominated series wide open.

BMW seems equally sure of featuring in broadly-based production competition this year. The marque’s slashing domination of Daytona (covered in detail last issue) was followed up by second, third and ninth placings at Zandvoort, second being scored by British-based BMW team entered by Gus Kuhn. *

