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SEPTEMBER
60p

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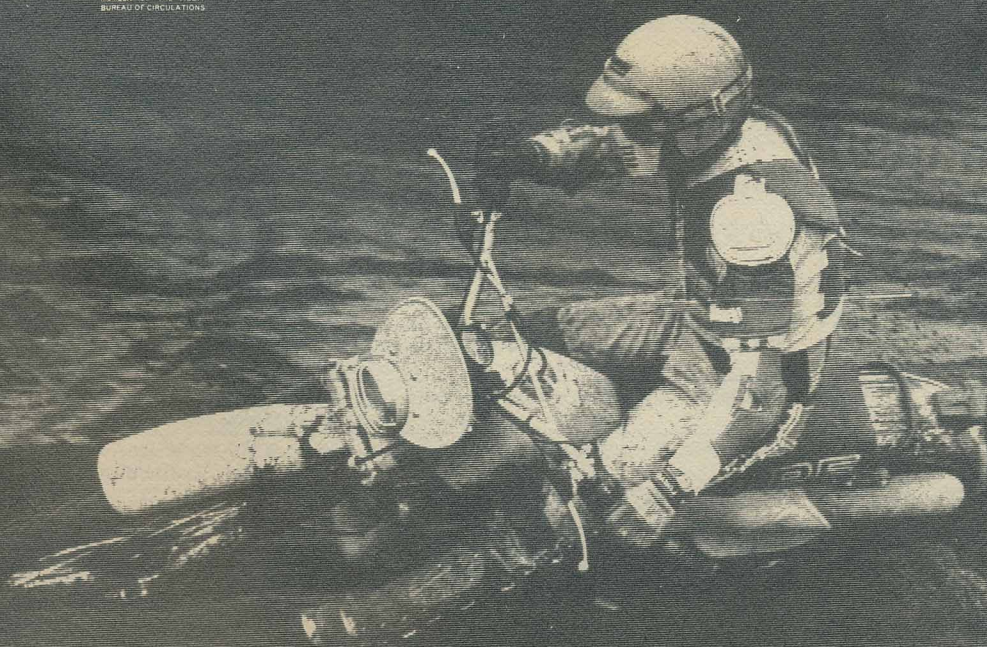
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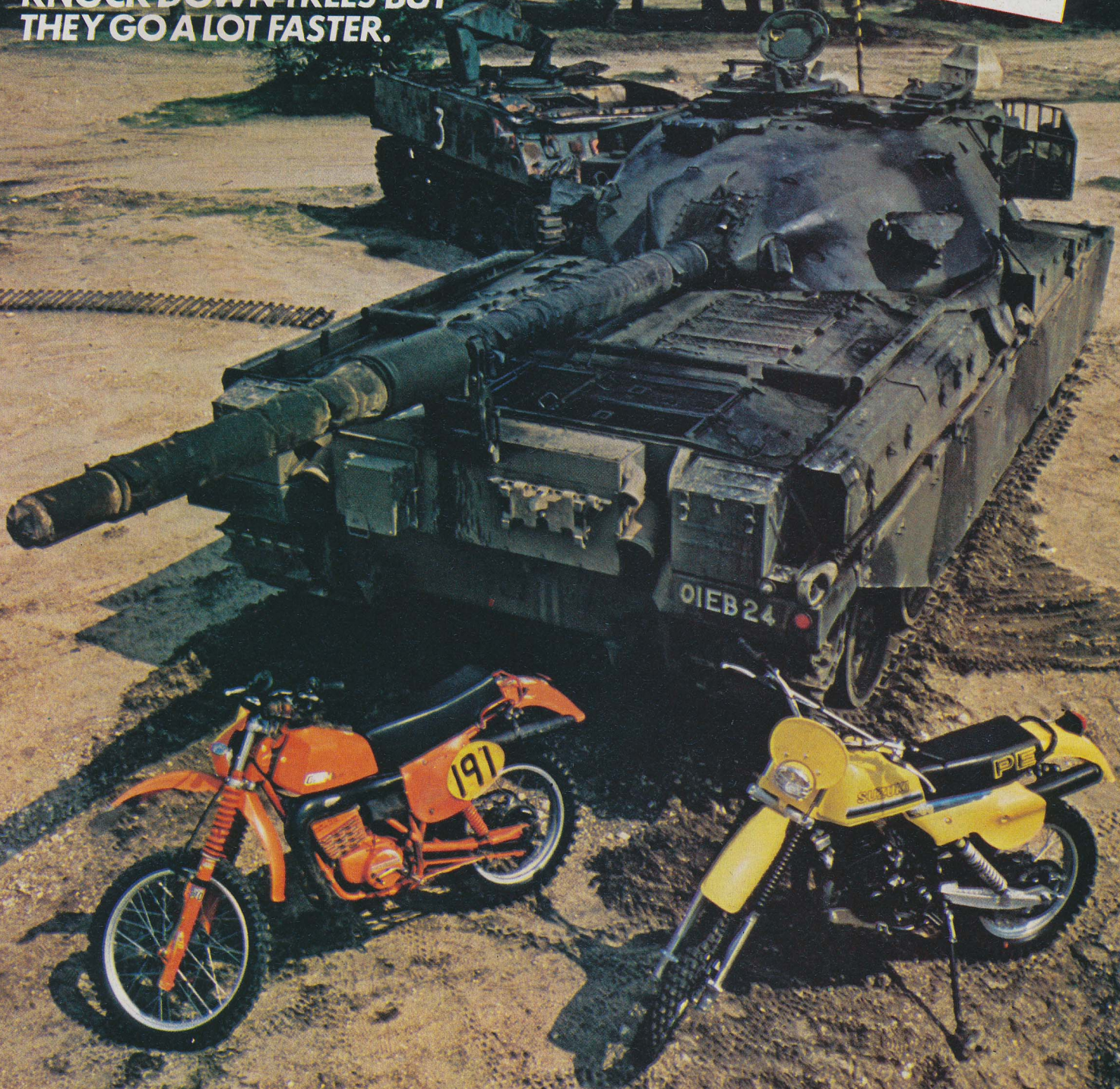
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ON THE ROUGH

THE OFF-ROAD MAGAZINE WITHIN A MAGAZINE

GENTLE GIANTS IF 52 TONS AND 650 BHP SOUNDS LIKE TOO MUCH TO HANDLE, THEN FORGET THE CHIEFTAN TANK AND TRY CAN-AM'S 400 QUALIFIER OR SUZUKI'S PE400T THEY WON'T KNOCK DOWN TREES BUT THEY GO A LOT FASTER.





THE GENTLE GIANTS

CAN-AM 400 QUALIFIER ○ SUZUKI PE400T

Big enduro bikes are more than just a little awe inspiring, even if you are used to them. And the trend does seem to be going towards bigger bikes because of their speed – if you can make up time on the quick bits then you can afford to wally about a bit more when the going gets sticky. Also most of the enduros this year have been open class events with everyone on the same time schedule, so when it comes to special test times you've got to compete with the big boys if you want to be in the medals.

As open-class enduro bikes go, Suzuki's PE400 is big but not bad while Can-Am's 400

Qualifier is the whispering wonder. Tests by Charlie Harris and Rick Kemp. Photography by

Tim Leighton-Boyce

There's no substitute for cubes as they say. But that's all very well in theory. Actually piloting something akin to a full blown moto corsser at 90mph across a ploughed field takes more than a little skill, especially if the machine is of European origin. Big Maicos and KTMs have been doing the winning for quite some time but only

in the hands of supermen. Mortals have been content frightening themselves silly on 175s and 250s. In the last year Yamaha, Suzuki and Can-Am have had 400s available in this country and of these the Suzuki and the Canadian Can-Am are probably the most rideable. They're as near as you'll get to 400s for beginners.

Both the Can-Am and the Suzuki have two-stroke engines with split reed-valve induction which produces a very broad power band and this is the biggest single factor that tames the effect of 40 horsepower in cycle weighing around 240lbs. The Suzuki's motor is more oversquare with a bore and stroke of 85x70mm while the Can-Am's Austrian-made Rotax unit is 84x 72mm. The PE revs a bit more making its 80▶



Charlie Harris getting slightly out of control, something he finds quite easy.



Can-Am's suspension makes it a comfortable mount and gives it a slight edge over the PE in this department.



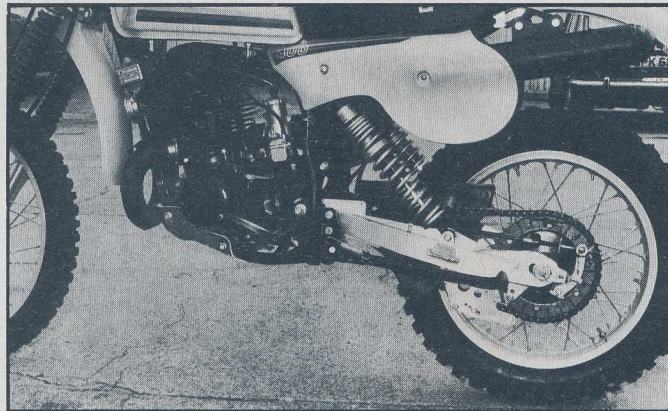
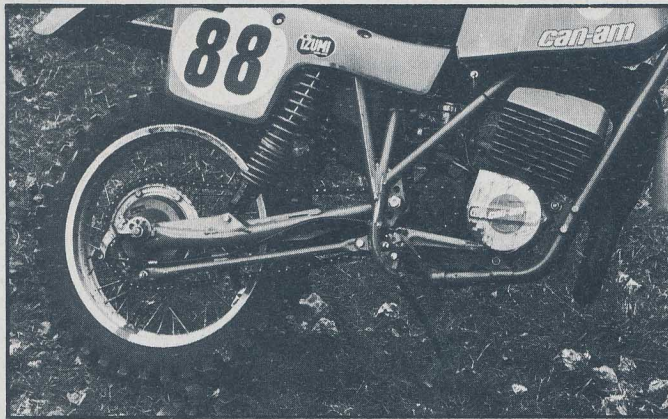
If it's yellow it must be a PE and the 400's no exception, and in this case bigger just might be better.

ON THE ROUGH

477 forty horses at 7000rpm compared to 6000 for the Can-Am. The rest of the specifications are similar too. With five speed gear-boxes and wet multiplate clutches. The method of clutch operation differs though with the PE having an arm on top of the gear-box whereas the Can-Am has its cable going straight into the left side cover and is better protected. Electronic ignition is used for both motors, Bosch CDI in the case of the Qualifier and Suzuki's own pointless system for the PE. Mikuni is the choice of carburettor for both bikes too, 36mm for the Suzy and 38mm for the Can-Am. Both manufacturers make a full range of machines, Suzuki a 175, 250 and 400 and the Canadians the same with the addition of a 350. The PE400T is in fact based on the 250 using the same bottom end but beefed up, while the Can-Am 400 isn't related to the rest of their range which all have disc-valve induction.

The Can-Am fires up easily with full choke and no throttle and after a few handfules the choke can be flicked off and the big orange lump is ready to roll. The Qualifier is high (aren't they all) and 36½ins is quite a bit to throw your leg over but the S and W rear shocks settle about an inch so you can at least get your toes on the ground. Releasing those forty horses in a straight line on the tarmac, to say the least is an exhilarating experience. The gear shift is silky smooth and you don't have to back off the throttle, just feather the clutch and lean forward to keep the front end down. With 36lb-ft of torque peaking at 5250rpm it can pull the side off the proverbial house. Gearing is low with maximum power in top gear at 63mph. However, the engine will run on, giving a top speed of about 80mph. Though this torque and the fact that maximum power is made at 6000rpm add up to a pretty potent package, the Qualifier will never be found lacking in good old fashioned grunt — it can blast its way through over or around just about anything.

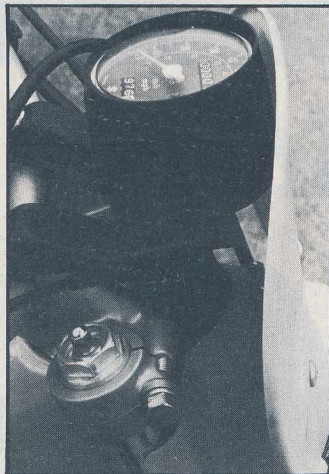
This power is only any use if the chassis can handle it



Top: Can-Am's banana swing arm and S and W shocks produce a soft well controlled back end. Bottom: Suzuki's big fabricated alloy swing arm is kept in check with Kayaba units.



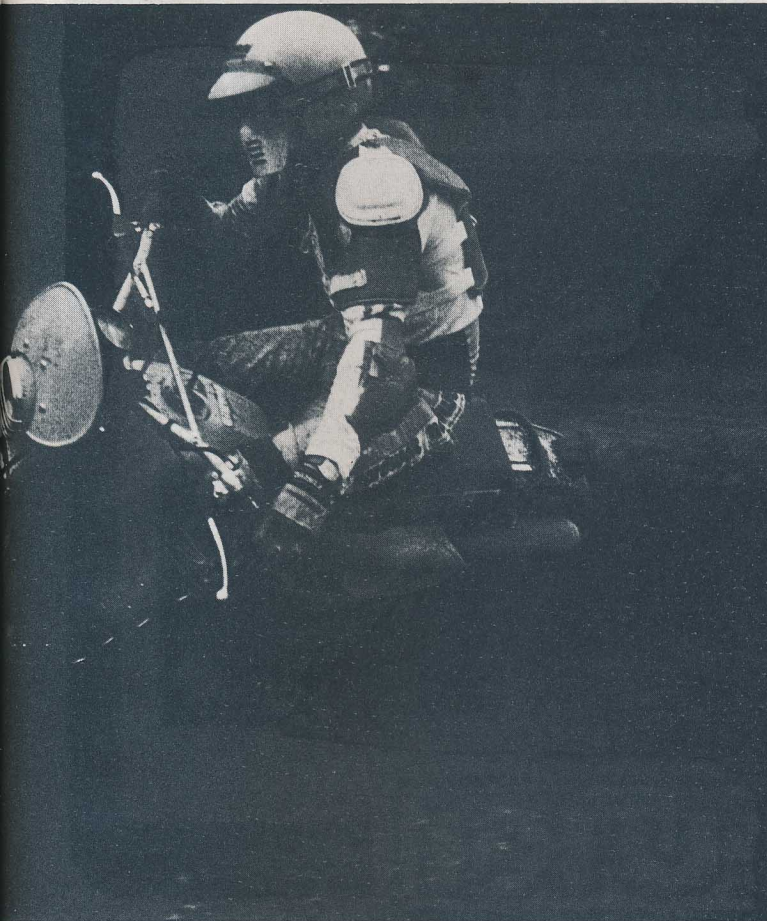
Air filter intake on the Can-Am is on the headstock.



The PE's air forks aren't linked like the Marzocchis on the Can-Am.



The Can-Am will climb up the side of a house, well almost, with hardly any encouragement.



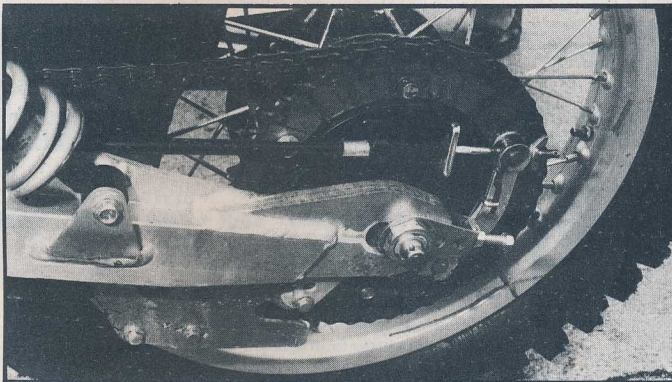
floating and its cable runs through the frame making a straight-pull action as the brake plate is on the right. This makes the brake much more sensitive than the average cable-operated stopper.

Suspension is by Marzocchi leading-axle front fork and S and W units on the back. Can-Am have altered the damping on the 38mm-leg Marzocchis to give a slightly softer ride with 10.6ins of travel. The S and W units provide a good match, the double springs being effective on both small and big stuff without becoming coil bound. The soft ride is further enhanced by the seat making the Qualifier surprisingly comfortable for an enduro machine. The seat also forms a seal for the air filter and as a result it's quite a fiddly job getting the seat on and off. But as the air intake for the filter is on the head stock running back through the frame spine this job won't be necessary all that often.

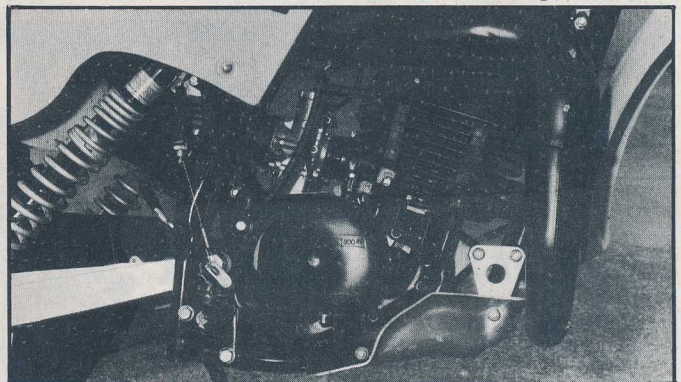
The Qualifier is well balan-

ced but it's so easy to lift the front end you feel it could do with an extra inch on the wheelbase (but that would produce a different set of problems) so you just have to take it easy on the throttle. With the torque available you don't have to be too hard on the throttle anyway, you can let the revs drop in any gear and just wind it on again with out having to cog down. This is very useful in mud as you can back off to find grip again if you're spinning to a halt. If this is not your style you can always blast a trench and hope you find grip at the bottom. Either way the Can-Am will oblige. Steering is light and the 33inch-wide handlebar feels good with enough leverage and not too wide.

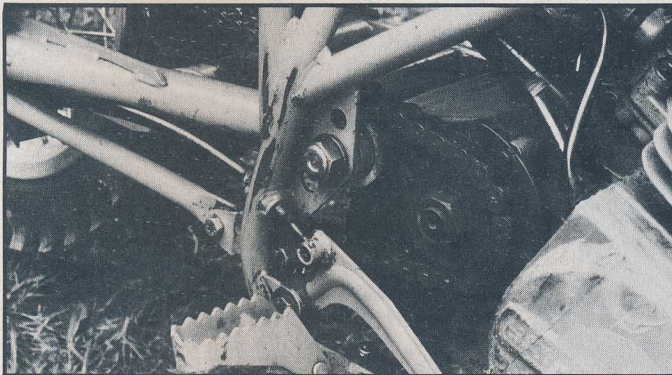
The bike tracks round corners right on line and takes ruts in its stride. If you do get locked into a groove you can lift the front out on the power and the back end will almost take care of itself. The Rotax motor provides a reasonable amount of engine braking for a two-



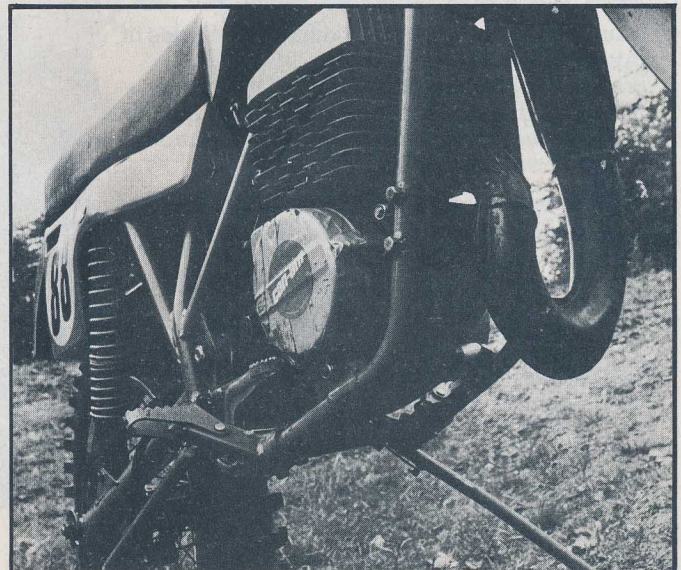
The PE's rear brake cable is rather spongy as it has to cross the frame.



The PE comes with a sump plate but it's an extra on the Can-Am.



The Can-Am has a straight pull action on its rear brake cable and more feel.



Can-Am's double cradle frame is tough enough to take an even bigger motor.

and the suspension can get it on the deck. The Can-Am has no problems in these areas. The frame is duplex cradle and very stiff with heavy gusseting and triangulation around the swing arm pivot.

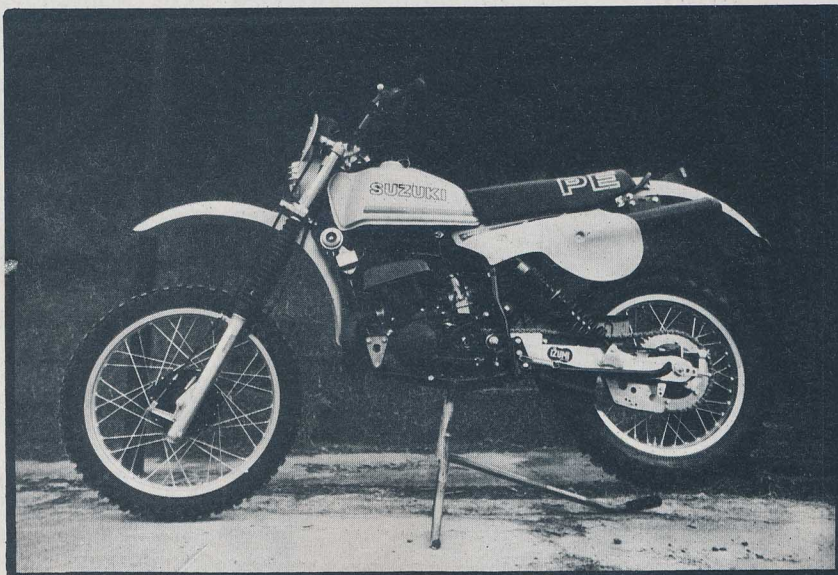
The swing arm itself is banana shaped with webbing top and bottom and the spindle runs through the back of the gearbox which is then shimmed to match the frame. The rear brake is fully

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PE250T
PE400T

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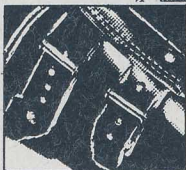
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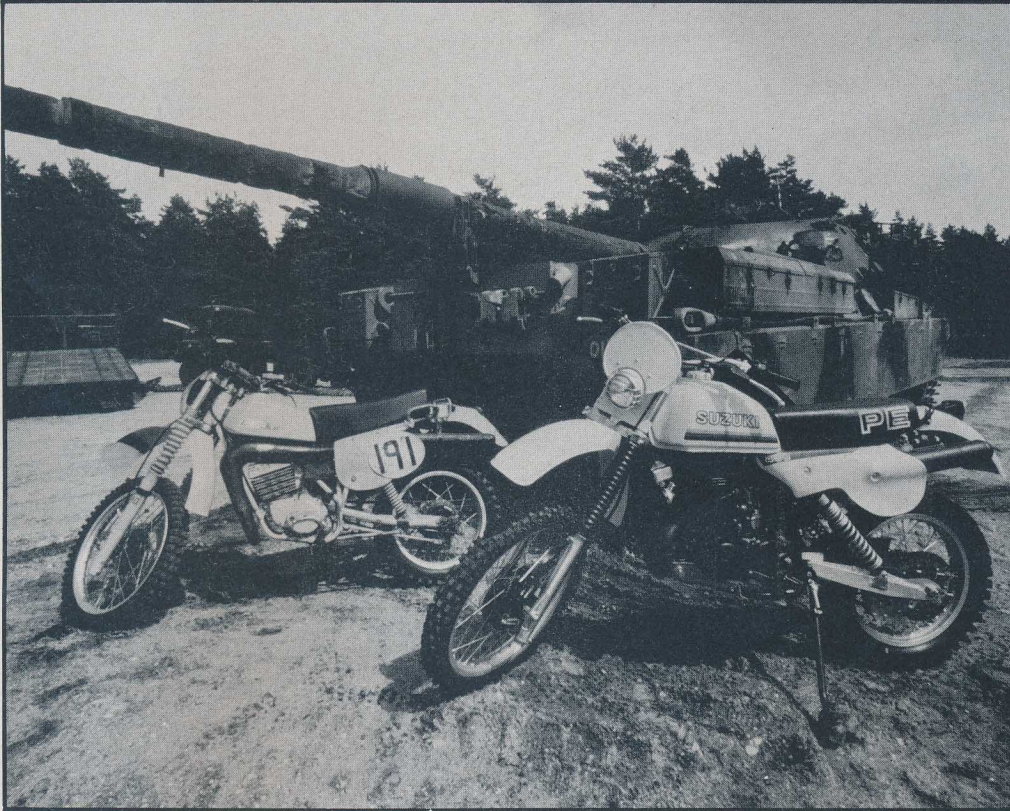
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Yes we know the Can-Am in this photo has a different number on the side, it's a different bike that's why.

stroke. Both brakes work well and are sensitive enough. Even under heavy braking the front end doesn't twist and thanks to the generous slider engagement overlap there's no patter at speed. Though 400cc is as big as you're likely to get it feels as if the frame and suspension could take more, even if the rider couldn't.

The Can-Am is built to last, and is not the sort of bike that needs an engine strip after every event. The fork gaiters are excellent and keep out virtually every thing since they're made from a new material to prevent splitting. The combined side panels and comp number plates have grab holes in them for humping the bike which makes sense as there is no frame tube exposed in this area. The Qualifier has a distinctive rectangular headlight which clips to the top of the forks but the number plate on top is a bit shallow to be clearly visible, though some could see this as an advantage in evading eagle-eyed course marshals. On price the Can-Am is between the Japanese and the European offerings and it has a definite identity of its own. It's good value on performance but simplicity isn't often seen as a bonus and this is its only real failing — it doesn't look trick

enough.

For our PE test we enlisted the help of the army, the School of Electrical and Mechanical Engineers at Bordon to be precise. They provided a Chieftain battle tank as location transport. Now that has got to be the ultimate weapon!

The PE400T slipped in almost unnoticed at the end of last year, but for a closer look at the side panel it could be a 250 or 175 but in fact it has a shorter wheelbase than the 250. But as soon as you've stepped aboard and fired it up you know you're not playing with a tiddler. The clutch is light and smooth like the throttle and with a motor that revs to 7,000 it feels quite buzzy for a big 'un. Like the Can-Am you soon find out you don't have to rev it to make it work. Overall gearing feels lower than the Can-Am and this is consistent with lower peak torque — 30lb-ft at 6000rpm. Gear selection is firm and changes can't be made without backing off. The power does peak but it's not the snarling, neck snapping variety found on German mounts, just a gentle reminder to keep the adrenalin lust at bay.

The ride is high, wide and hard with a 37inch seat height and a 34½inch handle-

bar. The front fork is an air-assisted leading axle unit but unlike the Marzocchis the air valves aren't linked so you've got to take care to get the pressures equal when setting them up. The rear shocks are gas-oil units with two springs. Despite their hard feel they keep the wheel in contact with the ground when it matters and in fact the PE finds an amazing amount of grip on its IRC tyres. The going for the test was a mixture of wet sand and mud and it coped with both equally well.

The frame has a single downtube that splits under the engine and then rises straight up to meet the seat loop. The top mounts for the rear units are on separate loops. The fabricated alloy swing arm is bolted to a plate forward of the frame tube and the rear of the gearbox is shaped to accept it, bringing it close to the sprocket.

Following what seems to be standard practice these

	Suzuki PE400T	Can-Am Qualifier 400
Price inc. VAT:	£1249	£1375
Warranty:	Sale of Goods Act	Sale of Goods Act
Engine:	Reed-valve two-stroke single 397cc (85x70mm)	Reed-valve two-stroke single 399cc (84x72mm)
Capacity:	Petrol mix	Petrol mix
Lubrication:	7.3 to 1 corrected	10.7 to 1
Comp. ratio:	36mm Mikuni	38mm Mikuni
Carburetion:	PEI	Bosch CDI
Ignition:	40bhp at 7000rpm	40bhp at 6000rpm
Max. power:	30lb-ft at 6000rpm	36lb-ft at 5250rpm
Max. torque:	Gear	Gear
Primary drive:	Wet multiplate	Wet multiplate
Clutch:	5-speed	5-speed
Gearbox:	520 chain	520 chain
Final drive:	2.5 gallons	2.2 gallons
Fuel capacity:	6-volt flywheel magneto.	6 volt flywheel magneto
Electrics:	25/25w headlamp Single downtube	25/25w headlamp Single downtube
Frame:	Air assisted telescopic fork, 9.8ins travel(f), Swing arm, gas/oil shocks with 5-pos preload: 10.1in travel (r)	Air assisted Marzocchi fork, 10.6ins travel(f) Swing arm with S and W units: 10.4 ins travel (r)
Suspension:		
Brakes:	Drum (f & r)	Drum (f & r)
Tyres:	IRC enduro 3.00x21 (f) 4.50x18 (r)	Dunlop 3.00x21(f) 5.00x18(r)
DIMENSIONS		
Wheelbase:	57.1ins	57.5ins
Seat height:	37.5ins	36.5ins
H-bar width:	34.6ins	33ins
Grnd crnce:	11 ins	11.5 ins
Rake/trail:	n/a	n/a
Dry weight:	251lbs	236lbs
EQUIPMENT:		
	Enduro lighting, horn, tools, comp no. plates, side stand, speedo, trip meter.	Enduro lighting, tools, comp no. plates, side stand, speedo, trip meter.
PERFORMANCE:		
Top speed:	80mph	80mph
Speeds in gears at max. power revs:	20mph, 29mph, 41mph, 52mph and 63mph	29mph, 38mph, 49mph, 63mph and 77mph
Importer/ Manufacturer:	Heron Suzuki, Camden St., Portslade, Sussex	Andover Norton Ltd., 63 Charlton Rd., Andover, Hants

ON THE ROUGH





◀ days, there is no chain tensioner. Instead there is a plastic slipper on the swing arm with top and bottom rollers. Also as the gear selector shaft is very near the lower chain run it is endowed with a plastic sleeve, something learned from the earlier models.

The PE's rear wheel can be removed very quickly but you pay a price. As the drive chain and the brake drum are on the left the brake cable has to cross over and as a result it lacks feel. Fortunately the front stopper is excellent.

Though the frame may look light it certainly has no detrimental effect on the handling. If you let the machine go its own way it will get you out of trouble more often than not which is all you can really ask. On very tight berms you have to use some oversteer to stop it riding out but only when using all the power. Suspension travel is slightly less than on the Qualifier at 9.8ins front and 10.1ins rear but it is firmer, making it more uncomfortable landing off jumps. The rear will bottom if you try and emulate Eddie Kidd.

The 400 comes with all the usual PE plasticware and the do-everything spanner that straps to the fork. The air filter box has a neat one way drain hose which collapses when the engine's breathing, so it can only let water out, not in.

The ignition control box is mounted in a seemingly vulnerable place on the front down tube but the smaller PEs get away with it. So the 400 has no secrets, it's just a bigger PE and there's nothing wrong with that. If you think your 250 isn't fast enough a 400 could be the answer — it only weighs 6lbs more and at £1249 it's within the reach of most people who are prepared to give up a little to pursue their chosen sport.