

# australasian **DIRT BIKE**

ISSUE 84 1986 \$2.95 (\$3.75NZ)\*

# YAMAHA IT200

GOOD ENOUGH  
TO PLAY IT  
AGAIN,  
SAM!



## SUZUKI RM125

TRYING HARD TO REGAIN THEIR CROWN

## HUSKY 125 ENDURO

PRO HANDLING, BUT IS IT PRO POWER?

WE RIDE A PARIS-DAKAR HONDA!

## RALLY OF THE INCAS

JETSETTING IN THE ANDES MOUNTAINS

## TEAM PINK

HOW THEY BECAME SPONSORED

## BUMBAGS

WHAT THE EXPERTS CARRY

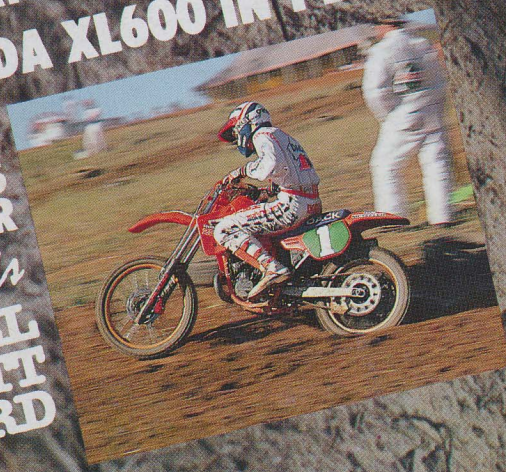
## WE RACE A HONDA XL600 IN PERU!

*Competition*

### MISTER MOTOCROSS BRISBANE 12 HOUR

*ADB's experts*

### GALL LOVETT BALLARD

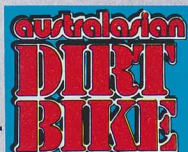


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VOL.14, NO.6



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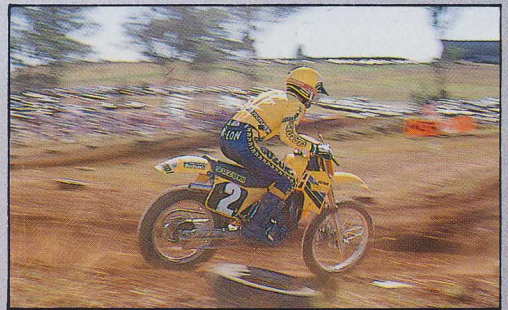
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 Australasian DIRT BIKE Magazine is published by  
**DIRT BIKE PUBLISHING PTY. LTD.** (Incorporated in NSW)  
 POSTAL ADDRESS: PO BOX 696, BROOKVALE, NSW, 2100  
 TELEPHONE: (02) 938 4155

Printed by Toppa Printing Company Pty. Ltd  
 Distributed by Gordon & Gotch Ltd., Sydney and Melbourne

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### ABOVE

Something for the Indiana Jones in us all — the Incas Rally in Peru. A real motorcycle adventure and more than just a race. ADB was there. Of course.

### COVER

Yamaha's Old Blue — the IT200 — proves that old dogs never die. We shouldn't really call it an old dog, because even though it's not much changed for '86 it's still a damn fine enduro mount.

### INSET

Craig Dack scorched 'em at the Mister Motocross opener, filling Jeff Leisk's shoes admirably.

\* Recommended and maximum retail price only. The only reason we're not jacking the price up this month is because we were cool enough to invest in German Deutschmarks and we made a killing (sic) when America bombed Libya and they floated the US dollar.





# HONDA'S XL600 IN THE INCAS RALLY

**Better than you could possibly imagine.**

*What's the last bike to select to ride a long, tough Rally? A trailbike, right? Wrong. Forced into using an XL600 by circumstance, it turned out to be my only lucky break of the Incas Rally.*

by Geoff Eldridge

**R**ight off the bat I have to admit that an XL600R would have been the last bike I'd have selected to ride in Peru. And for American Honda Dealer Sherm Cooper it wasn't his first choice, either. He wanted to ride an XR600 except he couldn't find a big capacity fuel tank to bolt right on, and the only one available was for an XL600. That became his choice.

Everything apart from the tank was stock standard. Sherm said he'd Loctited a lot of things but after having maintained it for six days of the eight I never noticed any on the bolt threads. So you could say she was a stocker.

## POWER

After the poorly jetted KTM300 I'd begun the Rally with, the XL's engine was a real blessing. Altitudes of 4,000 metres didn't upset it too much, even though some technically minded person had told me that for every 1,000 metres you rise above sea level you lost so many percent of your power, but all the same it went far better with a clean airfilter.

And that was where problem number one came from: Sherm had cleaned the filter after day two but hadn't slid the sandwich filter element back in properly, leaving a huge gap for dirt to pass through. By the time I checked it there was so much dirt caked on the inner wire mesh screen that I couldn't believe the engine still ran.

But run it did, and even on the final day where we were blasting across deep, soft sand for what seemed like a thousand kilometres, the XL outran both a TT600 and the Rotax powered Armstrong of the Pommy rider Mike Sweeney.

All the same I became increasingly paranoid about oil consumption, especially after one special test of only 180 kms where it used nearly three litres of oil, and along the beaches on the final day I

# THE DIFFERENCE

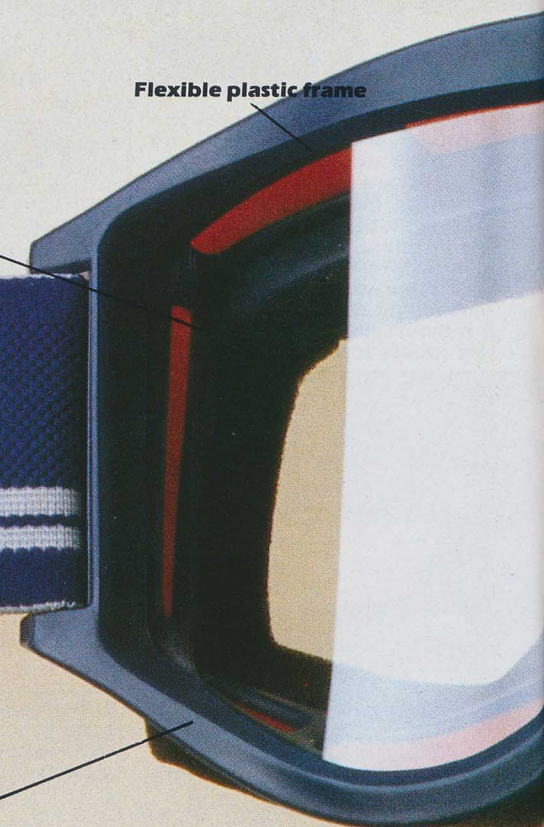
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figured I was going to cook the engine for sure. The funny thing was, I checked the oil at the finish of that final day and it hadn't used anything much at all.

The day we were running at 4,500 metres and the XL felt down on power, and maybe some leaner jetting would have helped, but by that stage (day 6) the riders had sorted out a consistent performance record and those around my position had all lost plenty of penalty time anyway, so we weren't all that concerned about a sluggish engine. Just so long as the thing kept running. But the Honda nevertheless was still powering along the fast sections as fast as or faster than the other 60cc four-strokes (except Balestrieri's works Honda) so I wasn't worried. An outright result of sixth on the long fast 450km special stage between Puno and Arequipa confirmed that the Honda was one of the best in the race, engine-wise.

It started either first kick or second if I wasn't concentrating, a better record than I'd ever achieved at home with one. You needed to listen for the valve lifter click as you turned the engine over, but that was all.

Fuel economy was great: where the two-strokes were running dry the XL didn't even need refuelling. And it vibrated less at higher rpm than the KTM, made less exhaust noise and was generally easier on you than what I figured some bikes probably were. There was one guy on an Aprilia with a straight



through megaphone exhaust and I can't understand how he faced riding it each day. The noise was deafening.

#### HANDLING

Back home all I could remember of an XL600's handling was that it was big, heavy, awkward and had minimal suspension. In Peru there was no tight riding – mostly it was formed dirt roads with stretch-

es of virgin desert thrown in for good measure. In other words, just the sort of stuff an XL600 is made for.

As far as I was concerned, right from the instant I hopped on it and completed the remaining 400 kms of day three I had a blast. It ate the road stretches easily and if you pressed me on it I wouldn't ask for anything more.

The forks were far superior to the

shock, though. By the second last day all damping had disappeared from the shock, leaving the rear end chattering all over the place. So badly, in fact, that the rear frame loop ended up cracking in half and required welding one night. I left the rear carry rack and tool pouch off the bike from then on, to lighten the load on the frame. Owners would be well advised to take the shock to a Honda dealer and get

# IS CLEAR



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the oil changed before even riding the bike (if they can do it).

By the last day the rear end was behaving so badly that I was getting worried about being flicked over the bars by anything bigger than 25mm high, so I just slowed down to compensate. Luckily the terrain wasn't all that unpredictable.

One thing that was fun was watching Mike Sweeney's English-made Armstrong not handle anything on the final day. The two of us rode together to help each other navigate and his bike was the pits. It was sideways everywhere when it wasn't kicking his arse high in the sky. Poor bugger. That's where patriotism gets you, I guess.

### THINGS I NOTICED

High on the list was the excellent seat. Aboard the KTM I had a sore bum halfway through the first short day; by the end of day two I was crawling all over the KTM trying to find a spot that wasn't agony, and the people at KTM should me made sit on a KTM seat for twelve hours straight, I figure. They'd have a new design on the drawing board by five past nine the next morning.

But the Honda was a delight. Wide enough, soft enough and shaped just right for extended riding.

Same with all the controls. everything operated easily and predictably and even the tripmeter was helpful, with big numbers and an

easy rewind knob.

I finally came to understand the value of those extended lugs on the end of the swingarm, too, although they only work if you can haul the bike up on a sturdy crate (takes two people to do it). The axle sits nicely on these tabs while you get things lined up for rear wheel installation.

I loved the brakes until the rear brake rod wingnut started jamming, so I spaced it with washers. The rear brake shoes lasted well, too, because I'm hard on brake shoes.

Having a horn that keeps on working to toot at all the Peruvians was fine, and the peace of mind that comes from knowing your electrics are so bulletproof that the headlight will work all the time was something

I came to appreciate because of the two hour penalties they gave riders whose lights were out.

One thing I didn't like was the small profile rear tyre. The Organisation only had one size rear tyre—a humungous great Pirelli thing that barely squeezed in between the swingarm sides, and the first time I changed a tyre on the Honda was late at night when everyone was busy catching up on sleep. By the time I'd got the whole mess back in the bike—puffing and panting in the 3,600 metre high altitude of Cuzco—it was too late to find a new chain to space the rear wheel back enough so the knobs could clear the front of the swingarm. I had to be content with stretching the existing chain as tight as a piano wire and hoping that the knobs would wear down OK.

They didn't. Next day, by the time I'd finished the 120km transfer stage to the start of the special test, there wasn't a single knob left and the tyre was down to the canvas in too many places for comfort.

The thought of getting a string of flats at 4,300 metres altitude during the special stage, which they'd warned us was going to be tough, was more than I could bear, so I took the 14 hour penalty and rode down the road instead. Sunnavabitch. I didn't get a flat anyway, and there were probably more rocks on the road. By the time I finished the day I was spitting chips, especially since I was faced with another difficult overnight tyre change at high altitude.

Only a couple of bolts came loose. First were the muffler bolts, but I'm getting used to loosening muffler bolts so I got them in time. And both sidecovers kept coming loose repeatedly, the main problem being the plastic lugs popping out of the rubber grommet in the frame. One even fell off but, like my bum-bag which also fell off one time, someone found it and delivered it to me later.

I was lucky and had no flats, but the 20 psi and a lot of care about swiping sharp rocks probably helped. The speedo never seemed to correlate with the route sheets, but then neither did anyone's. One time I forgot about the key and flailed away at the kickstarter till I was blue in the face and gasping for breath.

Strange, isn't it? A stock standard trailbike for the ride of my life, and I loved it. I can't think of anything that was really a problem except that useless shock absorber, so I figure that riders who buy an XL600 for long dirt road trips are doing themselves a favour. I liked it.

And when I finished safely, I loved it.

### NOTE

This is the US model, based loosely on the XL600R which was available in Australia during 1985. For 1986 we are blessed with the new European model minus the Dakar tank and dual headlight. I'd like to express my gratitude to my Peruvian sponsor, American Honda dealer Sherm Cooper, for his generous offer after he hurt his leg: "Yeah, you take the goddamn thing. Better than trying to jam it in this Toyota with me..." And to Barbara Fox who loaned me a helmet when mine failed to arrive.

