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RADICAL XR200 & ALL-NEW KDX200!**



'86 KDX200

'86 XR200

DIRT BIKE

# DIRT BIKE

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MARCH 1986

**'86 HONDA  
CR250:  
IS IT REALLY A  
WORKS BIKE  
IN DISGUISE?**

**SPECIAL ATK TEST:  
WE RIDE THE  
4-STROKE OF  
THE FUTURE!**

**'86  
RACING  
CALENDAR:  
WHO, WHAT,  
WHEN &  
WHERE!**

JOHNNY  
O'MARA,  
TEAM  
HONDA



**PROJECT  
CRX250, PART 2:  
WHY DIDN'T HONDA  
THINK OF THIS?**

**'86 TY350: YAMAHA  
TAKES YOU WHERE ONLY  
MOUNTAIN GOATS HAVE GONE!**

**BARSTOW TO VEGAS:  
1200 RIDERS BEG FOR MERCY IN  
THE ULTIMATE LEGAL DESERT RACE!**

**'86 TRI-Z250: YAMAHA PACKS MORE  
HI-PERFORMANCE INTO TRI-PERFORMANCE!**

ISSN 0364-1546



# DIRT BIKE

MARCH 1986 • VOLUME 16, NO. 3



TRI-Z250



TY350



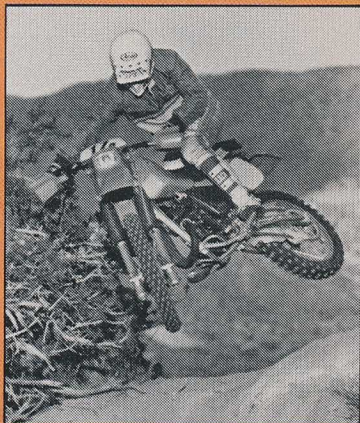
XR200



CRX250



ATK 560



KDX200



BEACH RACING



ROCK RIDING

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**ON THE COVER:**—Captain John P. O'Mara navigates Honda's '86 CR250 through the airspace over Chatsworth, California, while Mike Webb launches the latest XR200 (upper left) and Jim Holley bushwhacks Kawasaki's stunning KDX200. Photos and ground control by Fran Kuhn; cover design by DeWest; color separations by Valley Film

**WARNING:** Much of the action depicted in this magazine is potentially dangerous. Virtually all of the riders seen in our photos are experienced experts or professionals. Do not attempt to duplicate any stunts that are beyond your own capabilities. Always wear the appropriate safety gear.



# 2 FROM 4 EQUALS MORE

*Abandoning New Math for a back-to-basics approach*

By the Staff of DIRT BIKE



*We did a little cliff diving with the 200 and quickly found the limits of the suspension. Although it performs well on smaller hits, the boingers bottomed over large G-outs and jumps.*

If you're like most people, the first thing you'll notice when you glance at the latest version of Honda's XR200R is the new red, white and blue color scheme and the catchy tank and seat graphics. A closer look, however, reveals a much more important change: For the first time since 1983, the little XR comes with a two-valve engine, something that had us confused at first but began to make more sense as we thought about the type of rider who'll be interested in this kind of machine.

*While the XR's 36mm forks aren't the biggest set of tubes around, they're more than enough to handle what the 200 can dish out. Cornering is accurate, and this trait allows a rider to make surprisingly good time through the woods and along tight trails.*

## TAKING A CLOSER LOOK

To fully understand the reason Honda abandoned the higher-performance RFVC four-valve thumper that powered the XR200R for the past few years, it helps to look back on the development and marketing history of the XR200 series. The story of the 1986 XR200 is actually that of two parallel development programs coming together. For the past five years, Honda has, in fact, offered two XR200 models—the 200 “R,” and a less expensive, less technologically sophisticated “playbike” version—the “standard” XR200. The latter was a composite of parts left over from previous “R” model production runs, and as such was always a year or two dated when it came to engine and suspension tech. When the 200R got the Pro-Link treatment, the “plain Jane” made do with a standard two-shock setup. When the R got the four-valve high-performance RFVC engine, the playbike continued to be

offered with the old reliable two-valve motor which, while less powerful, was easier to ride and maintain. The funny thing was, Honda's sales figures indicated that the standard XR200 playbike was far more popular than its more expensive high-tech brother. This fact, coupled with the prospect of the increasingly high R&D expenditures needed to keep the RFVC R model competitive with the two-stroke competition, led to Honda's rethink of the XR and production of the 1986 “hybrid” thumper. The dirt riding public, it seems, liked the power, tractability and ease of maintenance of the old-style two-valve engine but were no longer satisfied to plonk around with the less sophisticated chassis. The 1986 200R is essentially a composite of its two predecessors, offering the simpler engine design in a high-tech wrapper.

## GIVE 'EM WHAT THEY WANT

Combining the high-performance Pro-Link chassis with the two-valve engine was an interesting idea, and in reality the package works exceptionally well in the right environment. Honda made only minor changes to the already proven 1985 rolling stock—the '86 bike has the same forks, shock and frame components that worked so well last year, with only a few new plastic parts here and there. The “new” engine is essentially the same powerplant that's serviced a long line of street, dual-purpose and off-road iron, as well as a few ATVs. It's a breeze to start, the only problem being the kickstarter's tendency to tuck in at the end of the stroke, where the lever catches on the frame, preventing its return. Weird.

Once under way, the motor thumps out power that's mellow, tractable, and, in the case of newer riders, forgiving. There's no tendency to bog when the throttle is rolled on, even when you've been lugging along the trail at just above idle.

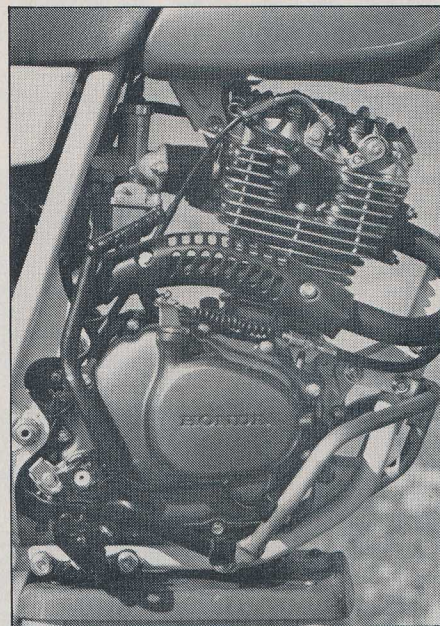
## TRAILSIDE MANNERS

Riding the XR along tight trails and through wooded sections is an absolute pleasure. The suspension action is sit-down plush, and the comfortable riding position combined with accurate steering let the thumper dart through saplings like a frenzied bobcat. The overall suspension package is more than a match for the kind of situations that many riders are likely to get into, though more accomplished pilots will quickly push both front and rear suspenders to the limit. About the only complaint the beginner through intermediate riders had was the forks' tendency toward harshness in the initial portion of the stroke, the rest of their movement being almost ideal for those in the 140-to-160-pound range. They work smoothly from mid-stroke on, and bottom

# 1986 HONDA XR200R



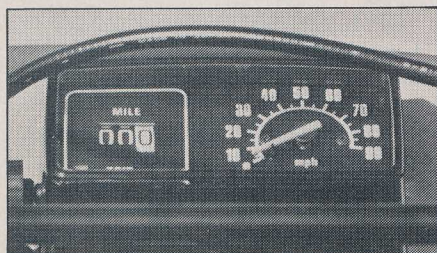
Honda waterproofed the XR better than a carp in the Caspian sea. The brakes never got wet, the engine never sputtered, but Mike Webb got a runny nose following the photo shoot.



A kickstarter-activated compression release makes starting easy for younger riders. The lever itself needs a redesign—it catches on the frame rail at the bottom of its stroke. Footpegs are a little low for picking your way through the rocks or stumps; the bolt-on engine guard protects the cases from abuse.

◀ Momentum is the key to cleaning tough sections aboard the little XR. The 200cc thumper doesn't crank out massive amounts of horsepower, but it still makes enough to keep a good rider on time through semi-tough sections.

◀ Easy to read and accurate, the XR200's speedometer/odometer combo registers mileage up to 99.9 and is resettable in tenths.



with a soft hydraulic cushion over the largest obstacles. Likewise, the rear Pro-Link offers exceptional performance for a machine of this size, delivering a smooth ride in the slow sections, while maintaining its poise over rim-bending hurdles.

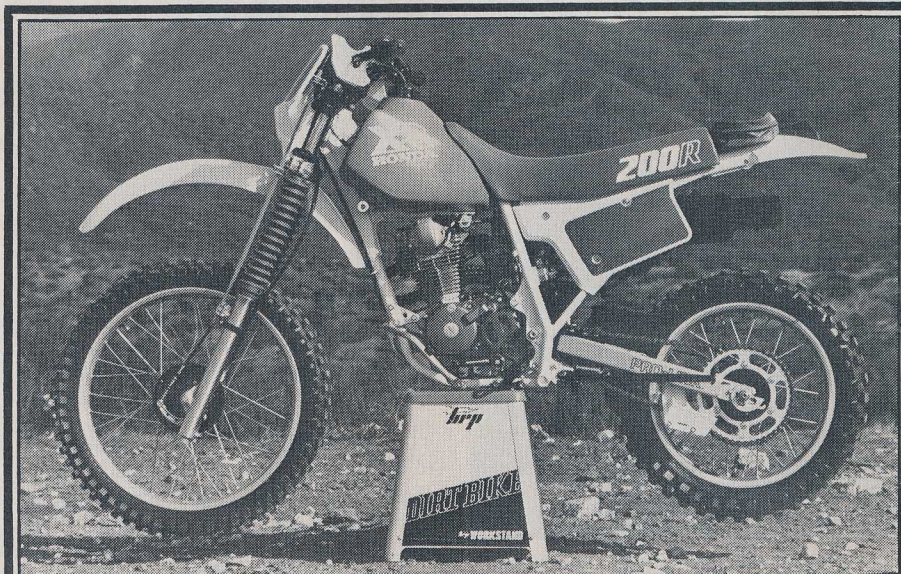
### SLOWING THINGS DOWN

As with last year's XR, the 1986 model sports drum brakes at both ends. The front binder is excellent: It's progressive and packs enough "stickum" to lock the wheel if the rider is so inclined. The rear is good, but feel at the pedal is mushy, and the pedal rides a little low for our tastes, even when adjusted to its highest position, where it hits the engine case and prevents further upward mobility. Grinding a small section of the lever allows it to rise enough to keep your toes out of harm's way.

### MISCELLANEOUS TIDBITS

Seating position and control layout are superb. No one had a single comfort-related complaint, and aside from the aforementioned brake pedal gripe, the XR's rider-input devices all scored high marks. Shifting is just a little notchy, though it is precise. Overall, the XR's gear ratios are good, but on killer hillclimbs we'd like to see less of a jump from second to third—the 200 just doesn't have enough zing to span the gap when the going gets really ugly. Overall power output isn't earth-shattering, but this

(continued on page 83)



## 1986 HONDA XR200R

Engine type	Single-cylinder, air-cooled, SOHC, 4-stroke	Wheelbase	1365mm (53.7 in.)
Bore and stroke	65.5mm x 57.8mm	Ground clearance	315mm (12.4 in.)
Displacement	194.8cc	Seat height	905mm (35.6 in.)
Carburetion	26mm Keihin	Rake/trail	26°/105mm
Fuel tank capacity	8.0 L (2.1 gals.)	Wet weight, no fuel	224.9 lbs.
Lubrication	Dry sump	Tire, size and type:	
Gearbox ratios:		Front	80/100-21 21M Bridgestone
1	2.769:1	Rear	100/100-17 58M Bridgestone
2	1.941:1	Suspension, type and travel:	
3	1.450:1	Front	36mm Telescopic fork, 254mm (10.0 in.)
4	1.130:1	Rear	Pro-Link, single Showa shock, adj. comp./reb., 245mm (9.6 in.)
5	0.923:1	Intended use	Off-road, enduro
6	0.785:1	Country of origin	Japan
Gearing, front/rear	13/47	Retail price, approx.	\$1648
Ignition	CDI	Distributor/Manufacturer:	
Recommended spark plug	NGK DR8ES-L or ND X24ESR	American Honda Motor Co.	
Silencer/spark arrester	Yes/yes	100 W. Alondra Blvd.	
		Gardena, CA 90247	

**FROM THE SADDLE**

(continued from page 7)

g. Start saving money for the bike, even though they say you can't have one. Get odd jobs and ask your parents to put the money in a bank account for you. When they insist that it won't do any good, just look wistfully off into space and reply, "Well, Mom, I can dream, can't I? Some day, maybe in the distant future, all my fantasies might come true. Even if it takes 20 years. I want to start now." She should be in tears at this point.

h. When you come home from your job, show a great deal of fatigue. Flop down wearily on the floor and breath heavily. A heavy sigh and a groan or two add to the realism. Some dark shadows under your eyes can be obtained by carefully smearing some ashes. They'll think you're working yourself to near exhaustion, and they might relent.

i. Tell your parents stories about guys who have been saved from a life of crime by getting involved in dirt riding. If you don't know any stories, make up a few. Examples? "Say, Dad, didja hear about Danny down the street? Seems he was arrested for selling dope and beating up his grandmother last year, but since he started riding, he's been getting straight 'A's' in school and is now president of the Jaycees and got a blue ribbon from the Future Farmers of America for an essay on Americanism. Yup, and he swears it was his involvement with bikes that changed his whole attitude." The sternest parent should crumble at this kind of a story.

j. Point out that soon bikes will be the only form of transportation allowed in this country and the price of bikes will more than likely triple in the next year. Buy now and beat the rush, etc. . . .

k. Hold your breath until you turn blue and pass out. This should only be considered as a last resort.

If none of the above ploys work, then we can only offer you our sympathy and a copy of *Dirt Bike* each and every month to help you while away the time. Good luck. You'll need it. □

**HONDA XR200R**

(continued from page 36)

is, after all, a lightweight 200, and we'd say the machine is ideal for beginners right on through to B-level enduro riders, who frequent the kind of tight, twisty terrain for which the XR was designed. In this type of situation, the machine is hard to fault. We'd also like to point out that there are probably more hop-up parts available for this engine than any ever built, just in case you decide more power is needed later on.

**AND IN CLOSING . . .**

The bottom line is this: If you're looking for a lightweight, reliable, easy-to-ride machine that's not a throwback to the technological Stone Ages, and is big on fun while being easy on the pocketbook, the XR200R is hard to beat. Even with two fewer valves than last year's bike, it still looks like Honda has a winning number. □

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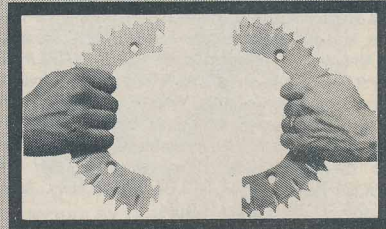
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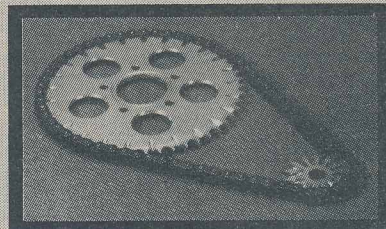
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