

1982 HONDA CR250R MOTOCROSSER

The word is out. It's Roger's design. He was given a clean sheet of paper and told to let it all hang out. Make the best scoot money can buy. Technology. Light weight. Power out the wazoo. Handling. Etc. Etc.

Is it true? Or is it hype?

Like most things, it's some of both.

The 1982 Honda CR250R is a very, very new bike. And one that's worlds better than the 1981 effort that fell short on both the race track and the marketplace.

However, there was simply not enough time to go totally new, from the ground up, so to speak. Some of what you see here is rethought 1981 stuff. Much of it is completely new. Most of it is good.

First off, the 250 CR is extremely fast. Even faster than the 1981 bike—

which, while not the rocket of the field, had respectable punch. Without giving you the results of our impending 250 shootout, let's just say that the Honda was closer to the 250 Suzuki in a basic to-the-first-turn drag race than any bike we've ridden. And that ain't bad. Especially considering that the RM is the hot ticket this year so far. In actual fact, the Honda will snap out of the gate a fraction ahead of the RM, only to have the RM catch it in the mid-range and pull it slightly at peak revs. If you've ridden one, you can easily gauge the other.

WHAT'S NEW?

Just about everything, according to the results of a briefing given to us by Honda R&D Department. A brief run-down of the specifics might be of interest. Here's what's changed. We'll

ROGER TO THE RESCUE?

DeCoster updates the Elsinore

By the Staff of Dirt Bike



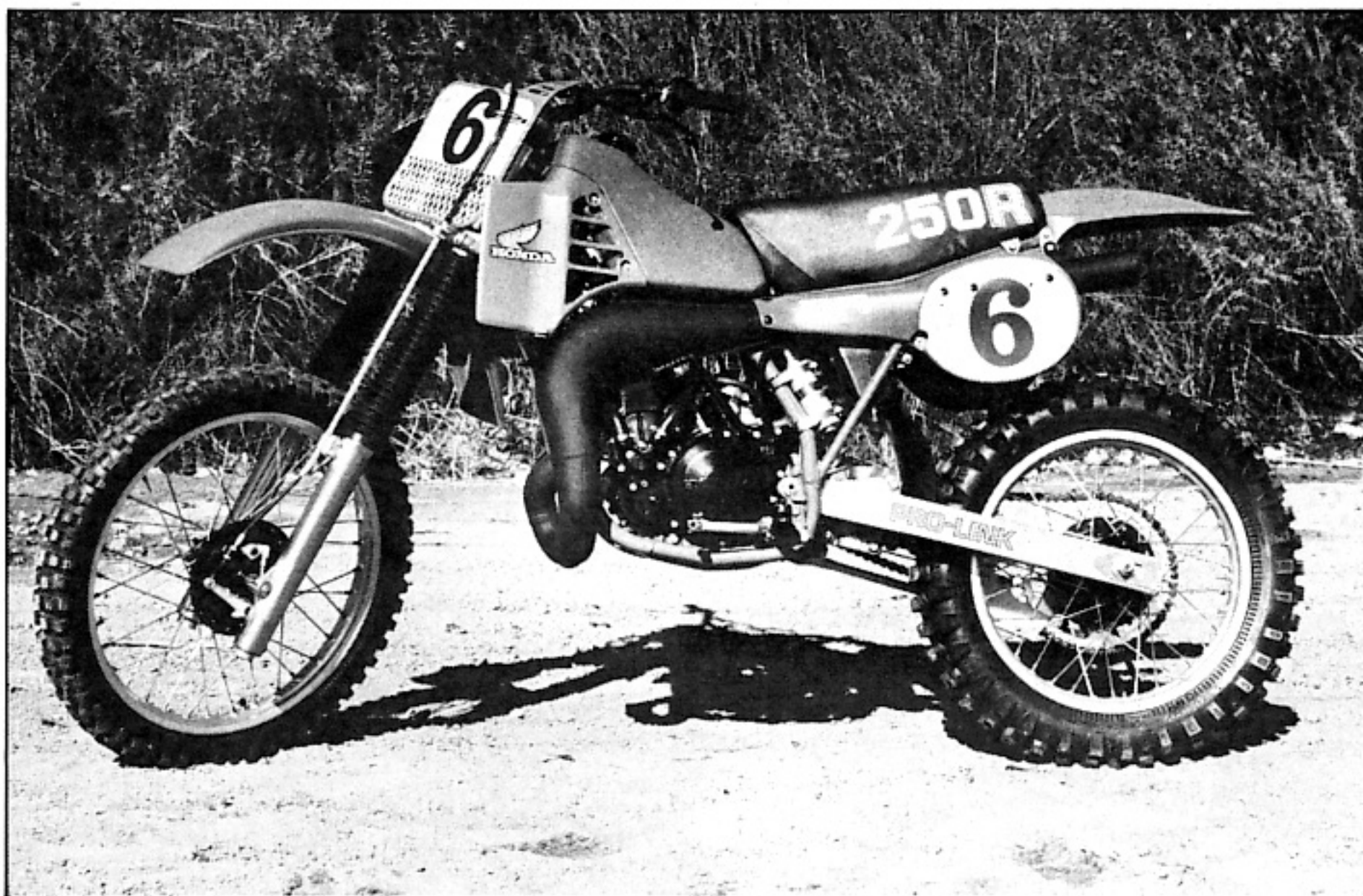


tell you later in the test whether or not it's better than last year's hardware. In no particular order, here's some data:

- The pipe is 40mm higher off the ground (headpipe area) and is tucked in closer to the engine.
- A new swingarm should be obvious to all but the terminally blind. It's a huge, rectangular deal that looks like it was taken from a bridge abutment.

- New cases. This is primarily due to a changed kickstarter location.
- The clutch now has needle bearings instead of bushings. This should improve the lifespan in that area.
- The tank is slimmer. This will keep the rider's knees from spreading apart too much when getting forward on the tank.
- Both radiators are new and

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- there's a new flow-pattern. Last year, one radiator got liquid before the other, and, consequently, ran at a different temperature. Also, the pressure was directed right at the cap on the old setup; with the new design, it is directed away. Honda tells us that the coolant flow-rate has been slowed down for a more effective and more-even cooling system. A tape reveals that the radiators are 60mm lower than last year's. You can feel it when you ride the bike.
- Massive 43mm forks replace the 41mm KYB forks of 1981. Honda has returned to Showa forks after one year with KYB. Odd.
 - The shock and leverage ratio are totally different, as is the damping adjustment setup. In 1981, there were four different rebound adjustment clicks available on the Pro-Link. This year, there are four compression damping (and no rebound!) adjustments available.
 - Up front, you'll find that the forks have adjustable compression damping via a screw that can be turned on the bottom of the fork leg. Again, no rebound adjustment here, either.
 - Spokes have been changed and strengthened and are closer to a true straight-pull pattern.
 - Rims are lighter and stronger and the hubs have been reinforced in critical areas.
 - The frame has been redesigned and now weighs only 27.5 pounds.
 - Aluminum arms are found on both brakes now.

- The lower leg extensions on the forks are 17mm shorter, to keep them from digging in the ground in deep ruts.
- Travel for 1982 is 12.0 inches front and 11.7 inches rear. Enough.
- You'll find a straight-pull cable instead of a rod on the rear brake.
- The airbox is larger and the filter is totally new.
- A new ignition advance compliments changed porting.
- The pipe is a fresh design.
- A former trouble spot, the clutch basket—has been beefed-up.
- The whole package is lighter by about ten pounds.

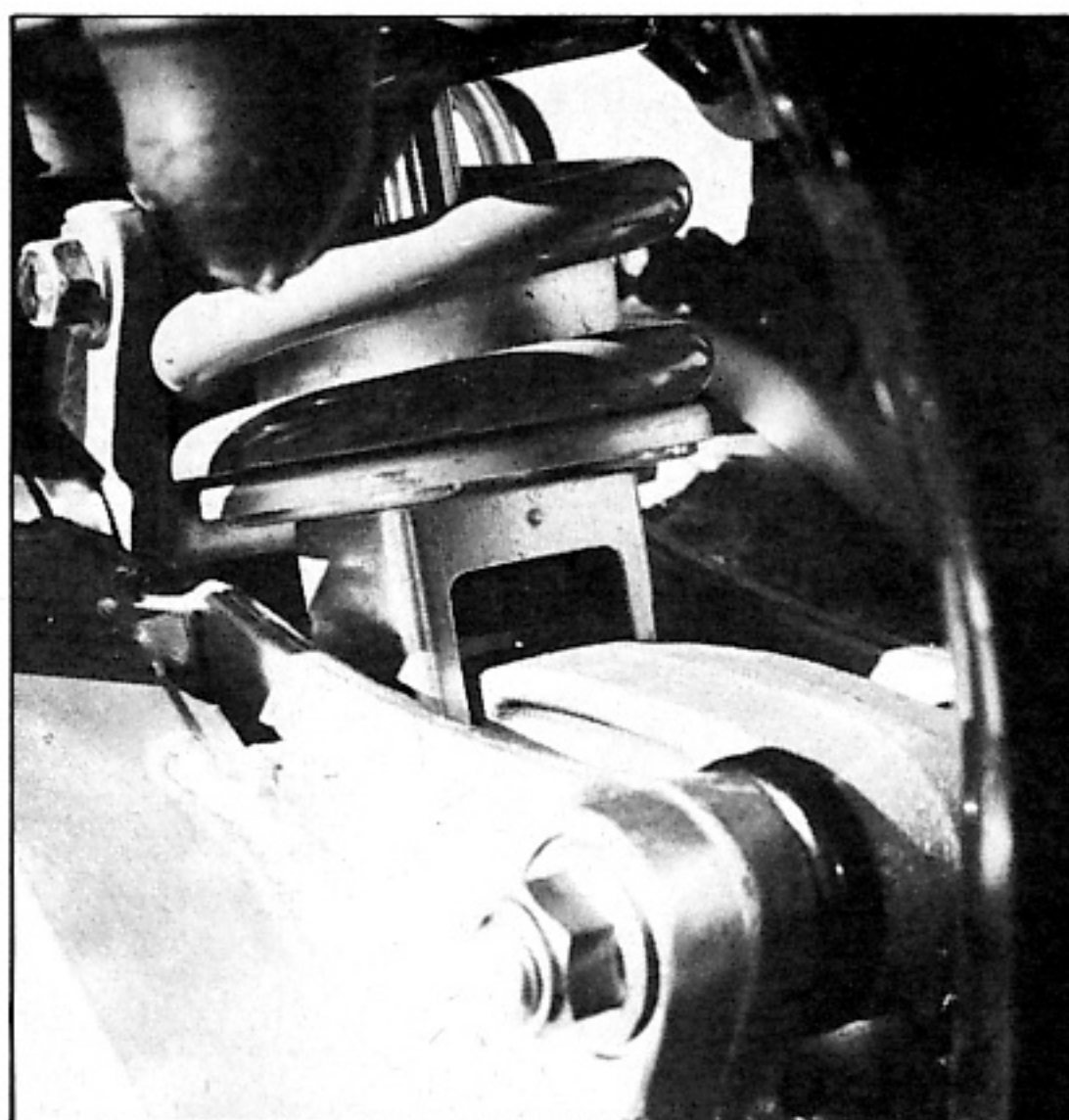
It's not the same old package with fresh decals, is it now? And we haven't covered a host of minor changes here. Decals, brackets, detailing, etc.

Yes, the 1982 Honda is most assuredly not a rehashed 1981 CR. Still, the most important question remains... how does it work? After all, "new" does not automatically mean "improved," to wit, the 23-inch front wheel of a few years ago that left the industry and consumer alike asking the musical question "why"?

WHAT WAS WRONG LAST YEAR AND WHAT'S RIGHT THIS YEAR?

Probably the single biggest flaw in the 250 Honda of last year was inaccuracy in turning. The front end was "fuzzy" and would often tend to climb up and over the berms if it was not placed just right.

Part of this was caused, no doubt, by much of the weight being placed up high. In fact, the bike had an overall



Damping changes—four of them—are available on the Pro-Link shock.

top-heavy feel about it. Much of the emphasis this year is being placed on not only reducing the weight, but getting it placed lower down in the package.

To realize just how big and successful the changes were, we rode a 1981 CR and then hopped on a new '82 bike. There was an astounding difference!

The most dramatic improvement was in the way the bike handled in the turns. While there was still a slight tendency for the Honda to stand up in the berms, by and large, it would have to be called a bike with no bad manners. As long as the rider hit the berm aggressively with the power on and any reasonable sort of body lean, the CR would snap around quickly with a minimum of fuss.

On flat corners, it was best to just place weight over the front end and



Our very own Mr. Know-It-All raced the Honda at DeAnza Park and pulled a hole-shot, only to humiliate himself later with an awkward crash.

square the turn off. The Honda was not too happy sliding the rear end out to any degree. Over rough stuff at higher speeds, the Honda was at its best. It was stable, with no quirks, other than a head shake when coming down from those speeds.

FORKS/SHOCKS

Both ends have new hardware. And, as mentioned earlier, DeCoster let his influence be felt by changing the damping concept, both front and rear. Gone are the rebound adjustment clicks on the Pro-Link shock. In its place are compression damping adjustments. This is a debateable approach. We at



From corner to corner, the CR was a hot charger. O'Mara feels that the stocker is almost as fast as the works machinery.



To adjust the compression damping on the forks, all you have to do is remove a rubber plug and twist a screwdriver. It's a lot easier with the bike on its side.

Dirt Bike tend to feel that rebound damping adjustments are needed on a shock, if for no other reason than to let the rider adjust the rebound for normal wear on the internals.

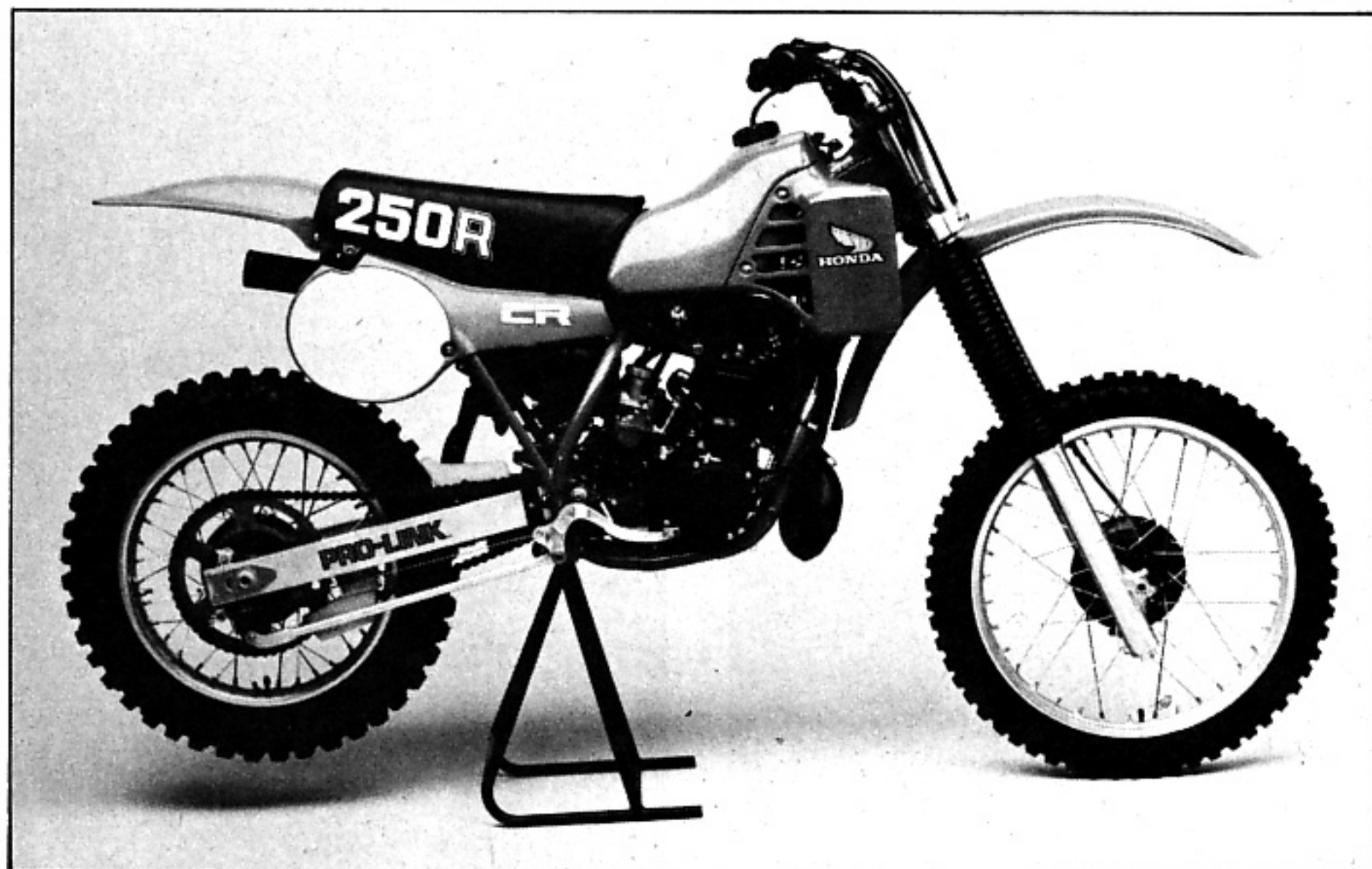
Still, we felt that the rear end of the CR250 worked just fine, theories aside. It was the kind of action that's best. In other words, it worked so well that none of the riders even noticed what was happening back there, paying attention, instead, to other facets of the machine.

We weren't quite as pleased up front. It appears that Honda still has an unbroken track record of not being able to make a superior set of forks. For years, they had Showa create one disaster after another for their bike. Then, in 1981, they gave the job to KYB, who normally makes excellent forks. However, they were made to Honda specs and ended up at a questionable average... no better.

This year, they're back with Showa once again, and while the forks are the best ever offered on a Honda, they still are not equal to the offerings of Yamaha and Suzuki units.

On the bottom of each fork leg is a little black rubber plug. Under that plug is a slotted screw. Turning this gives the rider a choice of compression damping adjustment. We settled for the lightest (number 1) and felt that there was still too much compression damping. So, we switched to a two and one-half-weight PJ1 fork oil and ended up with a much better feel. While not perfect, it was nonetheless dramatically improved. We also experiment-

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HONDA CR250R

ENGINE TYPE	Two-stroke, water-cooled, reed valved, single cylinder
BORE AND STROKE	66mm x 72mm
DISPLACEMENT	246cc
HORSEPOWER	N/A
CARBURETION	36mm Keihin
FACTORY RECOMMENDED JETTING:	
MAIN JET	160
PILOT JET	72
RECOMMENDED GASOLINE	Premium 92 to 100 octane
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	7.6 liters (2.0 U.S. gallons)
FUEL TANK MATERIAL	Plastic
LUBRICATION	Oil in gas, premix
RECOMMENDED OIL/RATIO	Honda two-cycle oil
OIL CAPACITY, TRANS.	0.8 liters (0.84 quarts)
AIR FILTRATION	Oiled foam
CLUTCH TYPE	Wet, multi-plate
TRANSMISSION	Five-speed, constant mesh
GEARBOX RATIOS:	
1	1.800:1
2	1.471:1
3	1.150:1
4	0.955:1
5	0.833:1
GEARING, FRONT/REAR	14/54
IGNITION	CDI
PRIMARY KICK SYSTEM?	Yes
RECOMMENDED SPARK PLUG	NGK BR8EG/Champ QN-86/ND W24ESR-V
SILENCER/SPARK ARRESTER/QUALITY	
Silencer only, average noise	
EXHAUST SYSTEM	High pipe, left side
FRAME, TYPE	Single downtube, split full cradle
WHEELBASE	1490mm (58.7 inches)
GROUND CLEARANCE	340mm (13.4 inches)

SEAT HEIGHT	975mm (38.4 inches)
STEERING HEAD ANGLE (RAKE)	27.5 degrees
TRAIL	108mm (4.3 inches)
WEIGHT WITH ONE GALLON GAS	234.2 pounds (221 pounds dry)
RIM MATERIAL	Aluminum alloy
TIRE SIZE AND TYPE:	
FRONT	3.00 x 21 knobby, Bridgestone
REAR	5.10 x 18 knobby, Bridgestone
SUSPENSION, TYPE AND TRAVEL:	
FRONT	Telescopic, air/oil, adjustable comp. damping, 12.0 inches
REAR	Pro-Link, single-shock, adjustable comp. damping, 11.7 inches
INTENDED USE	Motocross
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	Japan
RETAIL PRICE, APPROX.	\$2048

DISTRIBUTOR:	
American Honda Motor Co., Inc. 100 West Alondra Boulevard Gardena, California 90247 (213) 321-8680	
PARTS PRICES, HIGH-WEAR ITEMS:	
PISTON ASSEMBLY, COMPLETE	\$49.90
RINGS ONLY	11.40
CYLINDER	180.40
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BRAKE PEDAL	28.90
FRONT SPROCKET	13.10
OVERALL RATING, 0 TO 100, VARIOUS CATEGORIES, KEEPING INTENDED USE OF MACHINE IN MIND:	
HANDLING	93
SUSPENSION	Front/92; Rear/95
POWER	97
COST	93
ATTENTION TO DETAIL	98.5
EFFECTIVENESS, STONE STOCK	94

ed with all of the available compression adjustments and kept returning to the lightest setting. There was simply no reason—in our opinion—to offer the additional settings. This appears to be more of a gimmick than a useful function. Adjustable rebound? Yes. Adjustable compression? Questionable.

HANDLING

Undeniably, the newest Honda turns better than any of its forerunners. While there are no serious vices in the turns with the new bike, it still cannot be called sharp in the corners. Every-

thing is a bit on the ponderous side, compared to the way the new Suzuki turns. Not bad... but not at the level of sophistication of Big Yellow.

At higher speeds over rough ground, the Honda works better than the Suzuki. No question about it. The trade-off in turning has manifested itself in straight-line stability.

WEIGHT AND SEE

Pounds have been shaved off the red bike this year. Claimed weight... bone dry... is 219.4 pounds. Our sturdily made and alarmingly accurate *Dirt Bike* scales (accurate to plus or

minus .001 cullion per fecal) showed that that Honda actually weighed in at 221.25 pounds. A slight variation of the claimed weight, but a variation, nonetheless.

This leaves the Honda about seven pounds heavier than the Suzuki. In the ballpark, to be sure, but still a beefier ballpark.

POWER

The Honda will have to be labeled one of the quick 250s for 1982. It comes off the line good and hard and appears to have more grunt right off the bottom than the Suzuki. Lest this turns into a CR/RM shootout, let's just say at this point that the RM will pull the Honda in a drag race, but not by much. To find out exactly how much, you're going to have to stick around for our aforementioned 250 shootout that's coming up later on this year.

As geared, the Honda doesn't have much top-end speed. In drag races with several other 250s (which will go unnamed at this point) the Honda gave a good account of itself through the gears, then fell on its face as all of the other 250s pulled it by at least five to eight miles per hour. Most riders would probably benefit from a bit of experimenting with gearing, perhaps adding one to the countershaft sprocket, or dropping two at the rear. Either way, it would smooth the power delivery out and make the usable power in each gear wider and longer. Still, the Honda has an impressive powerplant and must be considered among the cream of the crop in the horsepower race.

BITS AND PIECES

This is probably the best-shifting Honda gearbox yet. While not as supple as a Maico, through the gears, there nonetheless are no gaps, holes or dead spots. Shifting is a bit firm, but not notchy. Good gears.

Even though the saddle height is listed as over 38 inches, riders of average stature could plant both feet on the ground with the bike at rest. The saddle only gets tall when it goes away from the tank. At the tank/seat juncture, it's comfortably low.

Taller riders will feel more at home on the Honda than on the Suzuki. Here we go again, making yet another of those inevitable comparisons, way ahead of schedule. If anything, the Honda is set up and laid out in a more conventioned manner. Bars could be a fraction flatter and back a bit more, according to most of our test riders, but they were the correct length, as

delivered.

Lots of nice touches can be found on the CR250R, including tapered bearings in the steering head and needle bearings on the swingarm pivot.

O-ring chain comes standard on the Honda. This is expensive stuff and should last a long time, especially if you run in any sort of mud or water situation. Enduro riders have known about this stuff for years.

THE BOTTOM LINE

While we have to recognize the fact that the Honda CR250 is greatly improved, we also have to see that it isn't a finished product yet.

Some more refinement is needed in the handling and turning department. If Honda can improve the steering, get rid of the head shake and lower the high-up weight even more, they'll have it all.

We have no arguments with the powerplant. It's plenty strong as delivered and will give away very little to any other 250 from corner to corner.

It looks like Roger's homework and Honda's willingness to listen are starting to pay off. If they've made this much improvement in one short year, who can even guess what a few more years will bring? □
