



RACE TEST

HONDA CR250R

Honda cares about you

□ There is a story circulating the rumor mill that says for years Roger DeCoster had resisted all urges to have his name associated with any of the past crop of Honda motocross bikes. Roger finally agreed in 1982 that he would endorse the new Honda CR250R, but only if they made every change that he asked for. As the story goes, they made the changes and the bike has DeCoster written all over it.

If the whole thing sounds too much like a corporate fairy tale, it might well be, but the improvements that surfaced with the 1982 CR250R changed the frog into the prince. Honda built a good bike — fast, stable, well-mannered and ably suspended.

Without making the bike look totally new, Honda moved, jiggled, altered and changed the layout of most of the major components. By changing the pipe, slightly altering the porting, and lightening most of the crank and gearbox mechanism, the power is vastly improved. The Honda itself is several pounds lighter than last year's red rocket.

HOW FAST IS IT?

Optimum power for a 250 motocross bike is a broad spread built around a strong mid-range. The Honda makes a solid punch with good low end and passable top end. It is not the fastest 250 motocrosser, but is so close that the difference is more in the nature of the power than the amount. Honda built a motor that comes cleanly off the bottom, bursts hard in the mid-range, and falls a little flat before it can rev out. The burst is strong enough to do whatever you want on a track, and the added low end gives the Honda that easy-to-ride style of power.

Stadium Honda's have been running six teeth more on the rear sprocket to take advantage of that kick in the pants. Gearing changes for different locales will help a great deal, but out of the crate the CR250R has a healthy and broad spread of power — all good, usable power.

DOES IT HANDLE?

Handling has been dialed in for a wide variety of track conditions. Of all the 1982 Oriental 250s, the Honda is the most



A hard-hitting mid-range allows the Honda CR250 to work on a wide variety of track conditions.



Roger DeCoster's hand is much evident in the new CR250 Honda. Good handling, potent power and attention to detail make it a contender in the deuce-and-a-half class.

HONDA CR250R



Honda's massive support program means there will be a lot of feedback to the factory. Setups and tech info should be more readily available through dealers.

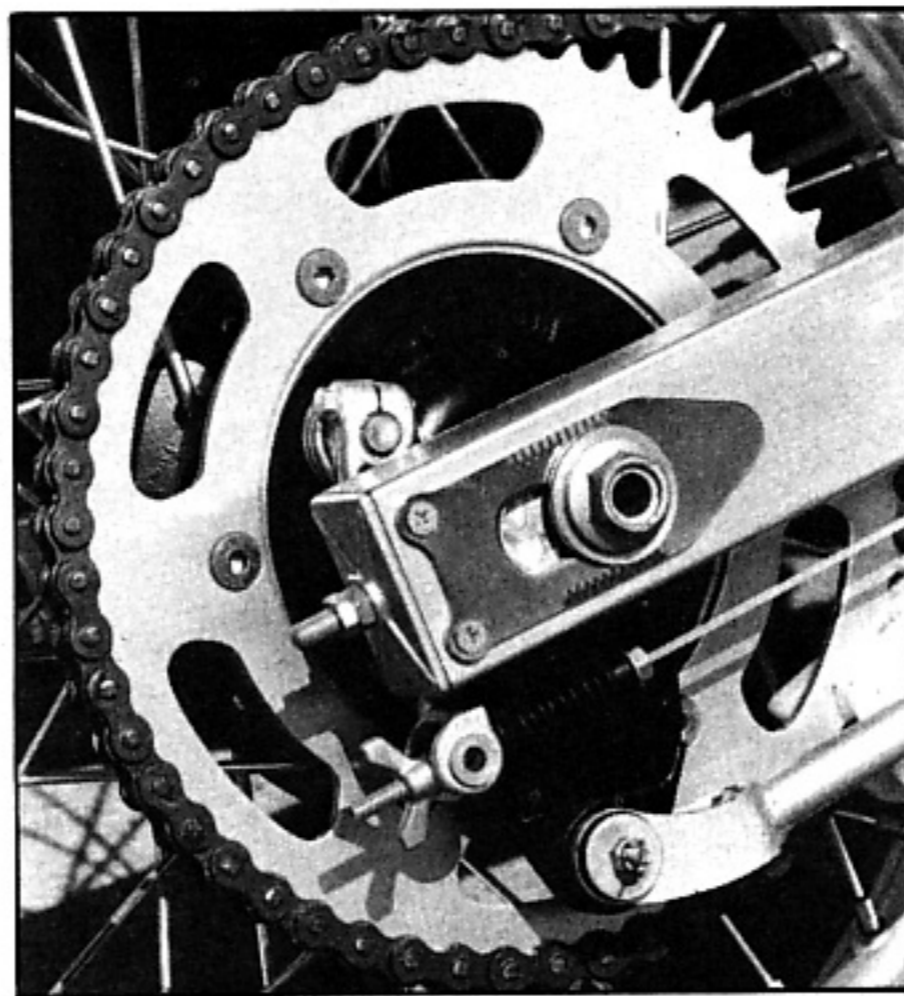
versatile. DeCoster's influence will be felt in areas of stability and utility. Not a sharp, ultra-quick turner like the other three rice-burners, it also doesn't suffer from wiggles and wobbles when taken into the bumps at speed. It has a steep rake, but never exhibits any bad manners because of the tight geometry. Honda has not gone the route of building a fine line handler, at the expense of other aspects of racing. CR250R owners will be comfortable on any track in the world (be it sand, hard, rough, or whooped out) — would you expect less from a bike designed by Roger D.?

Definitely the steadiest on fast tracks, it still turns very well, but we did detect a slight imprecision on hard tracks. The front end is a little lazy in picking a line and holding it unnervingly.

Since the KX, YZ and RM opted for ultra-quick geometries, the Honda (ironically, the Honda has quick numbers also) is outstanding when stability and predictability are demanded.

SUSPENSION QUESTIONS

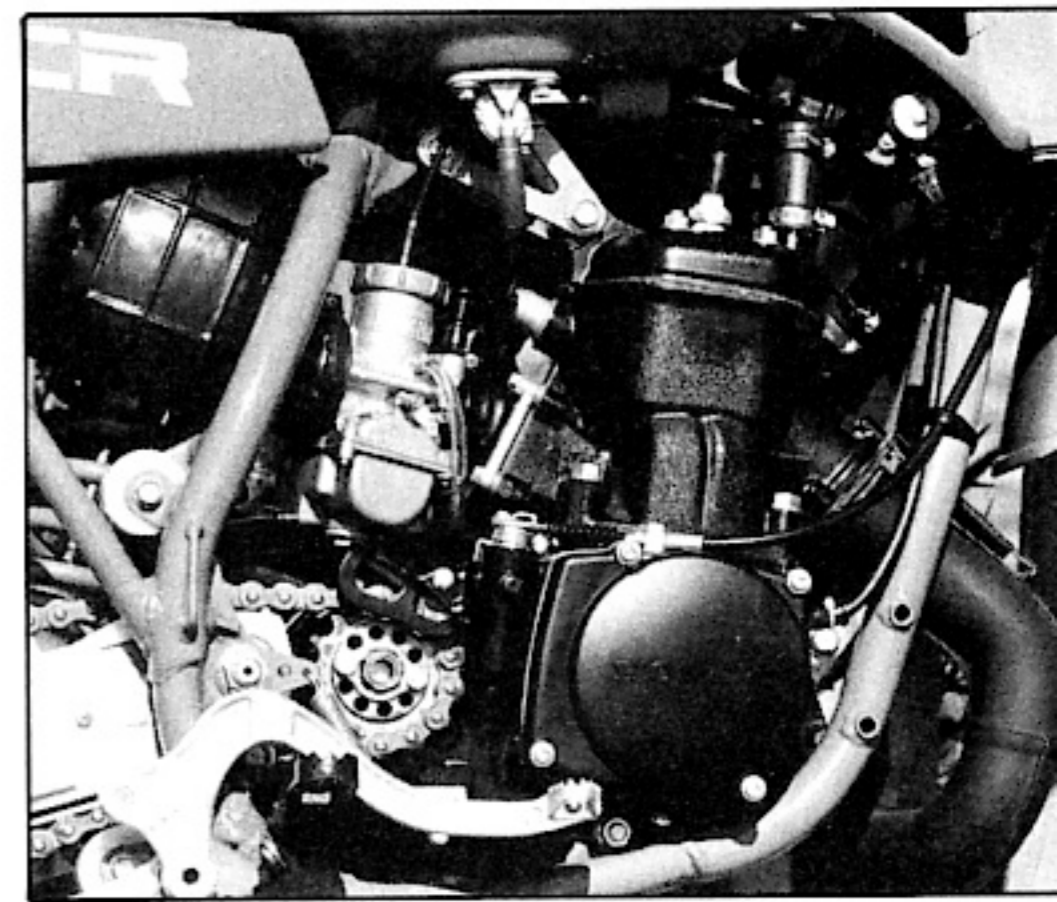
Front forks are new Kayaba 43mm units with adjustable compression damping, but we found that particular *extra* to be useless. The stock (#1) compression setting does the job, and the other two settings are like buttons on the sleeve of a sports coat.



Rigid box section swingarm is a work of art, and a cable-operated rear brake replaces last year's rod-operated brake.

Forget the tricks and learn to like the forks. They are good. We added a few more cc's of oil to stiffen them up a touch and found them a joy to use. Kayaba technology (the backyard version) abounds and no one should ever be unable to make his 43mm Kayabas perfect.

Most of last year's criticism of the Honda was aimed at the rear suspension, and it was well-placed criticism. In 1982, Honda



A plumber's nightmare? With the sophistication of watercooling also comes the added complexity.



Gone is last year's air-scoop number plate that scorers couldn't read. Sheathing around the front brake cable shows attention to detail.

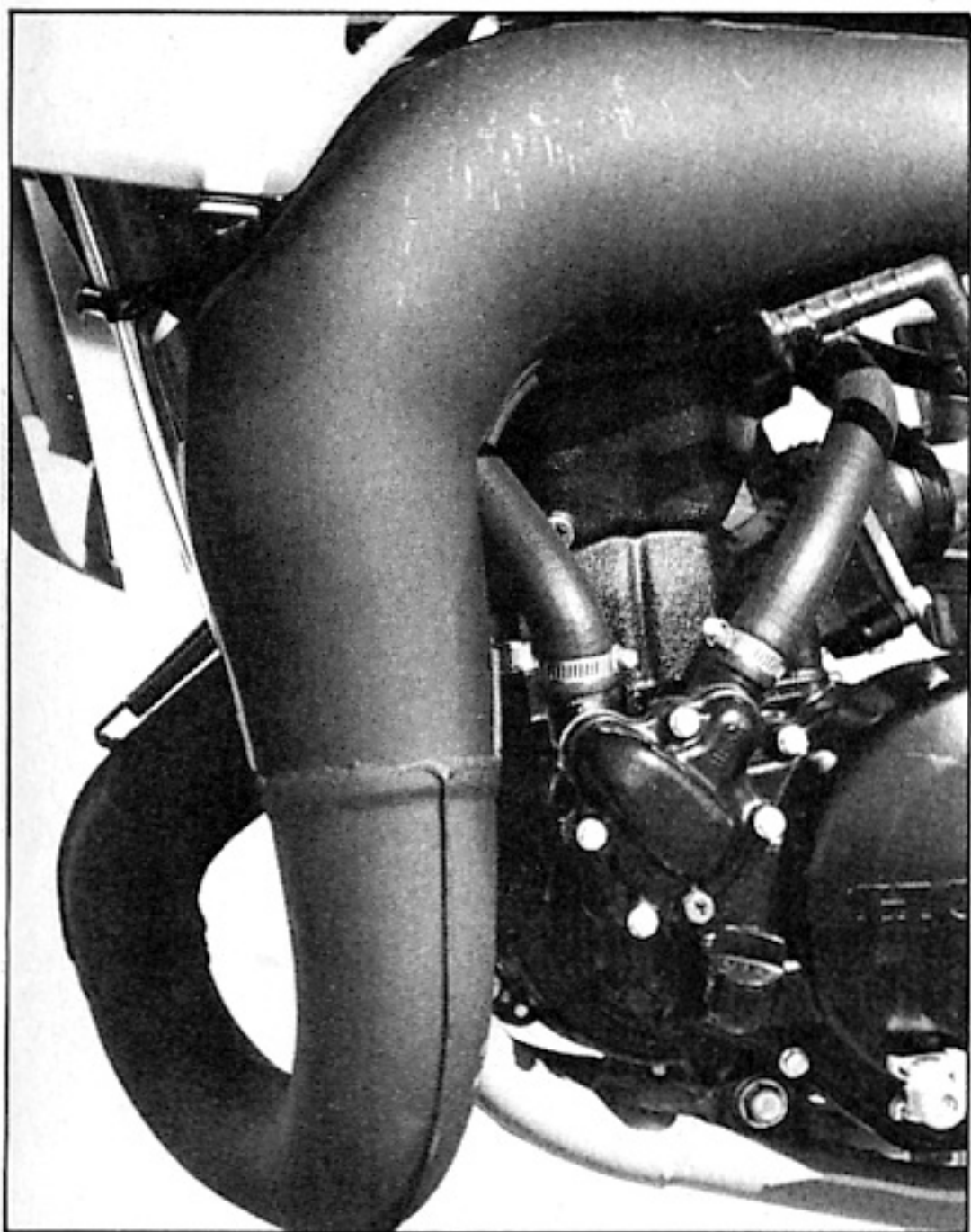
changed the linkage system, altered the leverage ratio and shortened the shock five millimeters. Surprisingly, the Showa shock and the new linkage system make the Honda feel 100 percent better than last year. Although the rear suspension is sensitive to preload changes, once dialed the rear is the smoothest working of all the Japanese bikes. Optional springs are available, and fast riders will probably need the stiffer coil, but the whole rear end was better than we thought Showa was capable of.

There is a tendency for the shock to kick going into turns, and the degree and violence of the kick varies with the shock's internal well-being. We experienced some shock problems, and riders around us reported a lack of low-speed damping, which we feel is directly traceable to quality control at Showa. We found air in some Honda shocks.

All in all, the Honda system doesn't suf-



Although it looks very similar to last year's Honda, the '82 CR250 has undergone extensive modification.



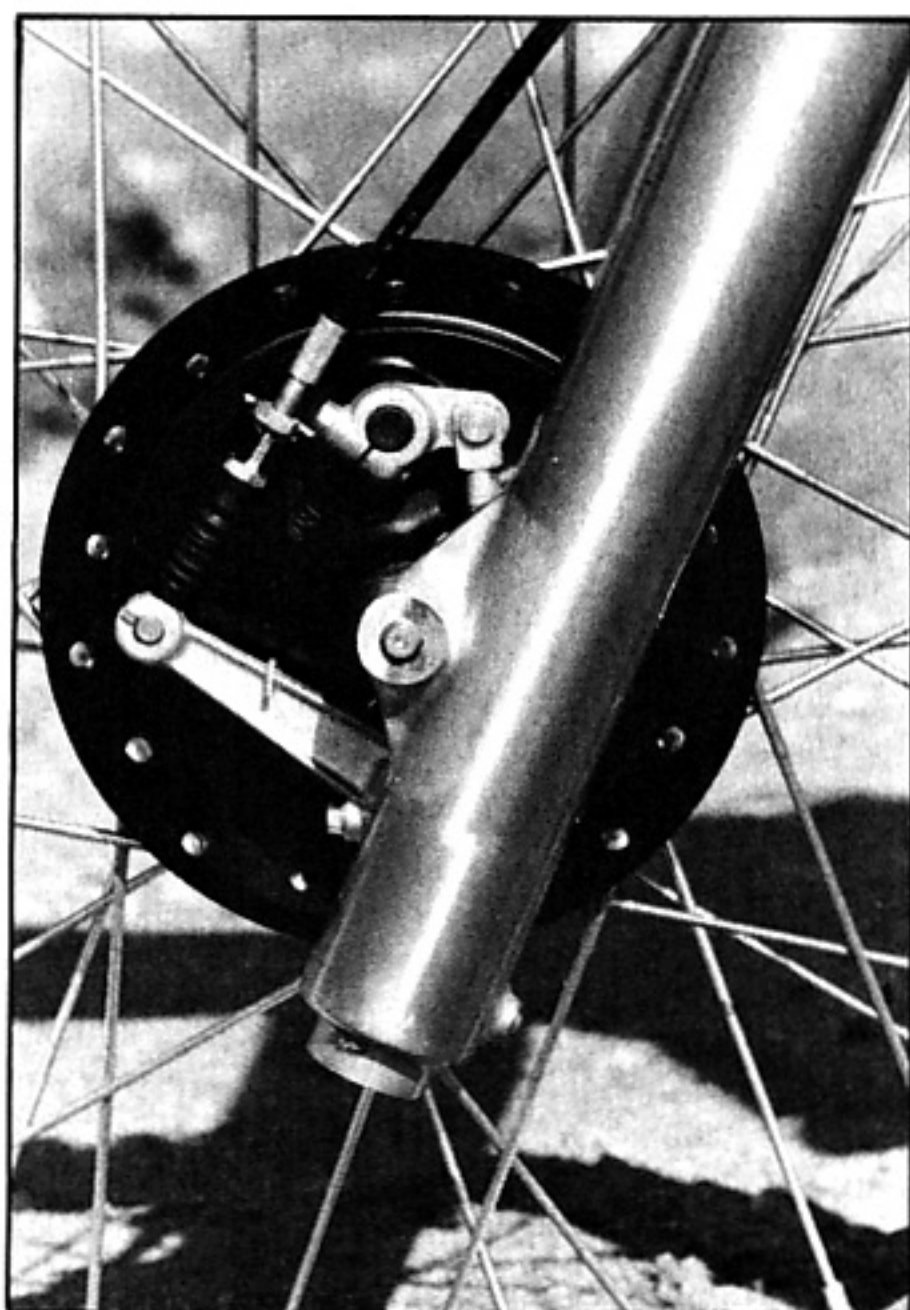
A redesigned pipe eliminates the problems of last year's model's hitting and breaking.

fer out of the crate with problems of stiffness or softness like the other deuce-and-a-halves. Shock life-span is questionable, but the rear suspension design works.

BITS AND PIECES

An amazingly good 250 motocrosser, the Honda, CR250R has two plausible flaws: weight and shock quality. Our Honda CR250R tipped the scales about ten pounds heavier than its closest competitor. That weight is noticeable because it is high on the frame and seemingly placed well forward. As reported, shock life — especially quality shock life — is not comparable with Kayaba units.

Everything else on the Honda CR250R is



Dual-cam brake shoes work well slowing down the Honda. Even the leading axle fork leg overlap was shortened to prevent it from dragging in berms.

above reproach. It is fast, hard-hitting, good-handling (even better in sand and rough, fast tracks), well suspended and good-looking.

SHOULD I BUY ONE?

Honda has finally come to life. It has been an up-and-down road for *Mr. Big* of the motorcycle world. Because Honda was so big, the MX market didn't mean anything in terms of total sales, but now Honda realizes the buyer of one individual model doesn't care how many of another model is sold — only how good his is. Honda has really gotten serious, and the result is a 250 motocross bike good enough to let the buyer know Honda cares. □