

It's going to be a whole new deal for Husqvarna.

After more than a year of concentrated developments and testing on the world's Grand Prix circuits, Husky is releasing the net result of all that testing and development as an all new motocross model for 1977.

We tested the first of these machines—the very first production model—to arrive in the United States. And our initial comment . . . It's impressive.

It's the completely new CR390.

The new motorcycle is so close to the factory GP machines Kent Howerton won the 500cc National Championship on and Brad Lackey rode in World Championship Grand Prix competition, that if you set them alongside each other, the only apparent change you'd find would be the rear shock absorbers. Husqvarna claims the engines are exactly the same as the works race bikes.

The CR390 is an easy bike to ride, but we'll tell you right now that the "traditional" Husky riding style won't do on this machine. We'll elaborate on that later.

Another very significant thing we should tell you up front is that Husqvarna has interesting marketing plans for the CR390. The price is down from what you would expect the big bores to go for. This machine is claimed to be priced right around \$1795.

That's just about the best news that Husky freaks have heard in a long time, and we tip our hats to Husqvarna for bringing the prices down.

At first glance, you might easily mistake the new CR390 for an older big-bore Husky. The 2.2-gallon aluminum tank is the same purplish color paint of last year's models and there are other features that are distinctly Husqvarna. But all in all, the CR390 is an all new motorcycle.

The newness begins right up front, with completely new forks. They are leading axle type, and give a full 9½ inches of travel. These forks are exactly the same as those that Kent Howerton and Brad Lackey have been using all year long.

New aluminum triple clamps not only change the angle of rake, but offer

rubber cushion-mounted handlebars for nearly vibration-free riding.

The handlebars themselves are all new too. They're narrower and are made of heat-treated chrome moly steel. They're quite likely the toughest production handlebars in the world. Besides being super-strong, the new bars are lighter than the "old" handlebars. Husky's reasoning was two-fold—strength, obviously, and an attempt to keep the weight down low, off the "top" of the motorcycle.

On the frame, the steering head is changed to a much steeper angle. Steering is now much faster, and to our thinking, better.

Rear suspension is via 380mm (15 inch) gas Girlings and an all new swing-arm. Travel is 10 inches. The top shock mounting point is changed, to a higher position, so that the shock angle would remain the same as last year's bikes.

New bikes will come equipped with a 4.50 Trelleborg rear tire, but our test bike was fitted up with a Metzler, admittedly because the Metzler works better here in Southern California where

husqvarna's all new CR390

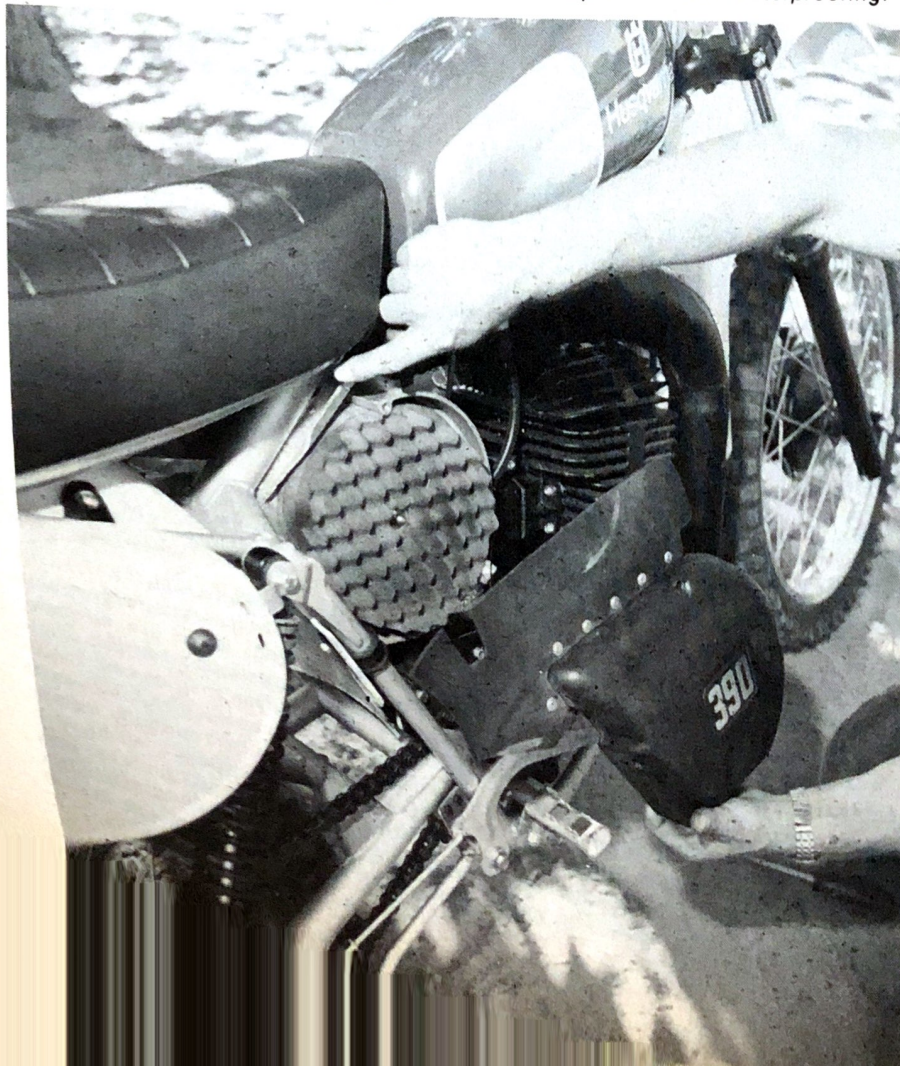
If you've been riding a Husqvarna for long, you'll think this brand new motocrosser is weird. But it just takes getting used to. It IS different.





A 36mm Bing carburetor feeds the new 390 engine. Power changes are primarily from the longer stroke and new port design, which is identical to Brad Lackey's bike.

The air cleaner is the oil/foam type, but a new plastic cover and larger element allow more airflow. Additional changes like this baffle provide better waterproofing.



Husqvarna knew the bike was going to be tested.

The hubs are the same as before, but the front backing plate is changed. It's now the same unit as the rear. The hubs lace up to super-strong "green label" Akront rims, which Husqvarna's testing department says are as strong as Sun rims. Our test machine, which was hand-assembled immediately before the production lines began rolling, had a "yellow label" Akront on the front, but production models will have the stronger rim on both ends of the motorcycle.

You'll be able to "tune" the front forks to your preference and/or size, and weight, thanks to a dual spring set-up. There are two springs in each fork leg, one long (30 inches, approximately) and one short (7-8 inches). The factory will offer three different stiffnesses in the short spring—soft, medium, and stiff for various suspension "settings."

The swingarm is stronger, longer and wider. The pivot point is moved forward, closer to the countershaft sprocket which doesn't allow the chain to flex nearly as much through the length of travel. Because the swingarm is longer, the arc of travel is greater, which aids handling.

To further keep the chain from flopping all over the place, a unique chain "tensioner" controls movement in both directions. Replaceable Teflon blocks are mounted on the bottom of the swingarm pivot. One takes up slop in the chain when the suspension is fully extended; the other when the suspension is fully compressed. Additionally, a large nylon strip is bolted to the top of the swingarm to keep the chain from hitting the arm. A spare set of blocks comes in the tool kit.

The swingarm is wider for strength and has two cross-over braces instead of the single one as on last year's models. Bearings are extremely long-lasting needles, which should be serviced about once a year.

The chain and sprockets are the same as before. Chain size is common 5/8x1/4-inch. The bike is delivered with a 13-tooth countershaft sprocket fitted, but a 14-tooth will be included in the spares kit.

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The springs on the long Girlings are trick: There are actually two springs, a short soft one (80 pounds) and the longer, heavy-duty one (130 pounds). Even under fairly hard riding, you can't feel the shocks bottoming out, but a post-ride inspection will reveal tell-tale signs that you did indeed compress the suspension the full 10 inches.

The engine—called a 390—is actually a 385cc mill. The piston is a second



over-sized CR360 one. There're no changes; it fits right in.

The smaller piston makes the 390 a longer stroke engine than Husky has had. The longer stroke makes it pull much better from low revs. Husky put a lot of work in on the cylinder to give the bike a powerband roughly similar to an electric motor. It comes on strong at the very bottom and just keeps on pulling. There are no surges or startling wheelies

as the bike comes "on the pipe."

Husky rates the horsepower (at the countershaft) at 43, at 6800 rpm, which is more than enough to get the job done.

The exhaust pipe is of the "snake" variety, goes through the frame and is tucked in as neatly as can be. In normal riding, you won't hit the hot pipe with your leg, but you can still manage it if you're sitting far forward on the tank with your knees closed tight. The very

quiet muffler is rebuildable.

The magnesium cases and magneto cover are changed; there are now two front motor mounts instead of the single one as before. The mag cover is redesigned . . . it's not as "square" as it was before. It's more rounded, so the bottom front corner, which used to stick out rather awkwardly and hit rocks, ruts and things (and bend the front mag cover bolt), now is sufficiently tucked in and

**HUSQVARNA CR390
SPECIFICATIONS**

ENGINE

Engine type . . . 2-stroke, reed valve
Bore and stroke, mm 83 x 71
Displacement, cc 384
Horsepower (claimed) 43 at
6800 rpm
Torque (claimed) n.a.
Compression ratio 10.8:1
Air filtration waffled foam
Carburetion 36mm Bing
Lubrication pre-mix
Ignition Motoplat CDI

DRIVE TRAIN

Transmission 6-speed
Clutch type wet, multi-disc
Primary drive chain
Final drive ratio n.a.

CHASSIS

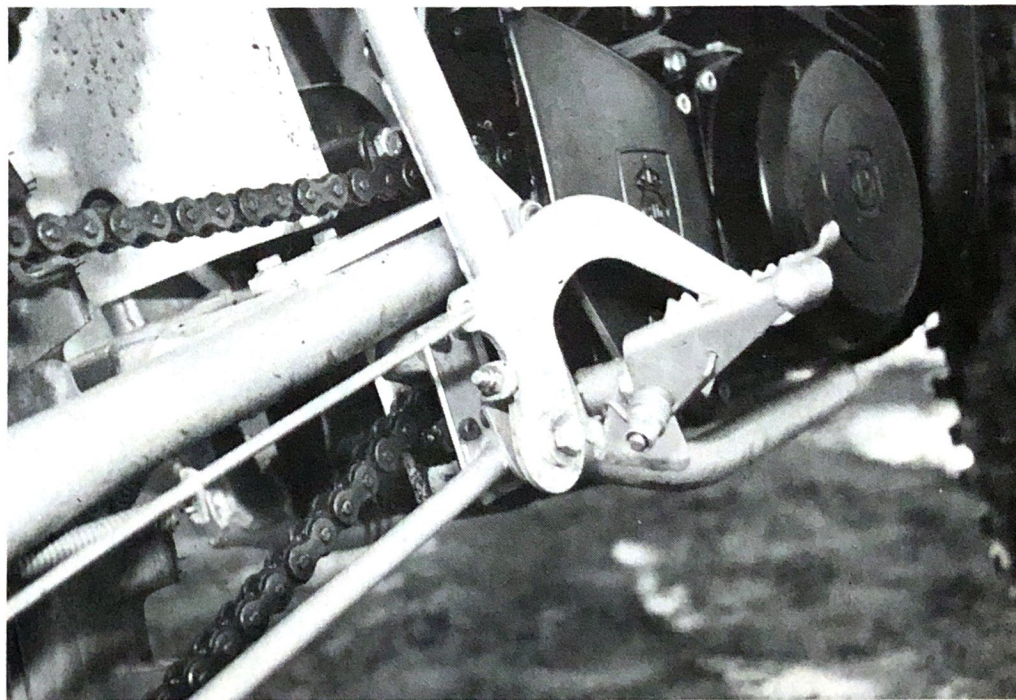
Chassis type single downtube
Overall length, in. 85
Seat height, in. 37
Ground clearance, in. 12.8
Wheelbase, in. 57.4
Weight, as tested, lbs. . . approx. 220
Tires, front 3.00 x 21
rear 4.50 x 18



The snake pipe is well tucked in, but your leg still hits it up front if you scoot up up on the seat and keep your legs in tight on the tank.

Gearing will be more critical to the rider now, as the engine produces so much power and torque that lifting the front end is very easy, even while in a power slide on such slippery surfaces as this (at left).

A new swingarm along with a new chain tensioner, should eliminate all the chain problems that long travel suspensions have been known to create.



protected that if you hit it on the ground, you've probably got a serious problem going.

The airbox and air filter are changed. The filter is a "waffle" type and it's considerably heavier duty than the old ones. The air filter cover is made of plastic and is bigger to allow more air volume for better performance.

Carburetion is via a Bing 36mm unit which pumps more than enough fuel/

air into the combustion chamber. The jetting, as the motorcycle came out of the shipping crate, needed to be changed, but this is largely a matter of local demand anyway. You'll probably need to experiment with jetting to get it spot on for your locale anyway.

RIDING THE 390

In the beginning we said that the new 390 was different; that the "traditional" Husky riding style wouldn't cut it on

this motorcycle. Actually, a rider could get off any other brand of motocross machine and get along with the 390 just as well as the guy who just climbed off his last year's CR360. It's that different!

The first thing you notice when you climb aboard the bike is that it's very high. At least it gives you a high feeling. The handlebars are much narrower than earlier Husqvarna motorcycles, which

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makes you feel like you're reaching up to get position. Your hands are higher than on older Huskys. The handlebar mounts on the triple clamps are further back.

The seat has a feeling like a "cradle." You find yourself sitting closer to the tank, in what almost seems like a "hole." Veteran Husqvarna riders will find this hard to get used to. You will find the front end much easier to get airborne (if you want it to), but at the same time, you'll have a harder time keeping the front wheel on the ground when it SHOULD be there.

The seating position combines with the abundance of power to make this a very capable "single-wheel" motorcycle. It's no trouble at all to get the front wheel pawing the air. The problem is that there is no traction up there.

You can compensate somewhat by lowering the handlebars as much as possible. That'll help hold you (and the front wheel) down some.

Our test CR390 was equipped with the "soft" suspension, but we found it to be excellent. Most impressive was landing after jumps. The bike was completely smooth. There was no savage impact, no matter how high in the air you went.

There is so much suspension travel that the wheel drops down into the "trough" on whoop-de-does. No matter how fast you're going, it's still fairly smooth, but you're very much aware of all that suspension working beneath you. You'd have to get going faster than we care to ride to get the bike up on top of the whoops.

We didn't have any mechanical problems or trouble with the suspension on the motorcycle. The shocks didn't fade, the fork seals didn't leak and everything worked 100 percent the whole test (and that included several pretty hard riding sessions).

The hardest thing for the experienced Husqvarna rider to get used to is turning the bike. Generally, you turn a Husky by just laying it over into the corner. The farther you lay it over, the easier it turns. When you're dragging the ends of the handlebars on the ground is when the older Husky would be turning best.

On the CR390, though, the steering is different than most other bikes we've ever ridden. You don't just run into the corner and turn it like a Maico, it's definitely different.

We feel that this bike is going to take a fair amount of "getting used to." Number one, the seat holds you into a far forward position, and with the higher bars, you tend to sit more upright on the bike.

When we first started riding the Husky, we had a lot of trouble keeping the front end on the ground, probably because of the incredible amount of torque. On older Huskys, you kind of

had to bend at the waist and lean over the bars.

It's not as positive on the front end as we expected. If you go into a turn, you really have to be set up and plant the front end and then power out of it, just on the brink of bringing the front end up. You have to really concentrate on the throttle.

That's where the CR390 is vastly different from older model Huskys, and where the "traditional" style won't do you much good. You can still lay the 390 over, of course, but you have to be more emphatic about setting it up and planting the front wheel for the turn.

The source of the "problem" is that the engine is so strong. There is so much torque, and the powerband is so smooth, that you don't get the feeling the bike is doing very much (until you get in a drag race with another bike).

One thing we didn't really care for was that the gear ratios were way too close for an engine with this much horsepower, spread over such a wide band. It almost seems like you could shift straight from first to fourth without missing a beat.

Consequently, on coming hard into a turn, we'd leave it in one gear higher than we'd normally expect to take that corner in. The bike was beautiful.

You could pull several lengths on somebody out of a turn because of the fact that the bike has the power to pull from way down low—real low—and it'll

just keep on going.

Then again, you've got to practice your body position on the bike, to keep the front end doing what you want it to do. If you're going to power through the turn, you need the front wheel firmly on the ground to steer. But if you're going to slide it (the bike is a fantastic slider), there's no problem there.

Gearing is really critical. We used the 13-tooth sprocket at Saddleback Park, which is a very tight course. That gearing reduced the torque somewhat, to where we could control what power was getting to the ground. We weren't shifting that much to begin with, but we had to keep the front end from rolling up so quickly, and by going to the 13-tooth countershaft, we were able to keep the front end down easier.

At the longer Indian Dunes course, we used the 14-tooth countershaft because there was more room to pull through the gears.

The gearing is critical because the bike has so strong a low end that if you do try to pull too tall a gear, the bike has so much torque that the front end immediately wants to come up.

We felt that the gear ratios were more appropriate for a 250 or even 125 than for a 390.

The exhaust pipe is tucked under pretty well, but if you really slide forward

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Riding style and turning on the new Husky are different from what devoted Husky riders are used to. With the leading axle front forks, even powerband and new suspension, you can easily wrap the machine around the tightest corners on the inside, a trick only Maicos heretofore seemed able to accomplish with ease. Off the berms, down shifting isn't critical as the power dips way low into the rpm range.



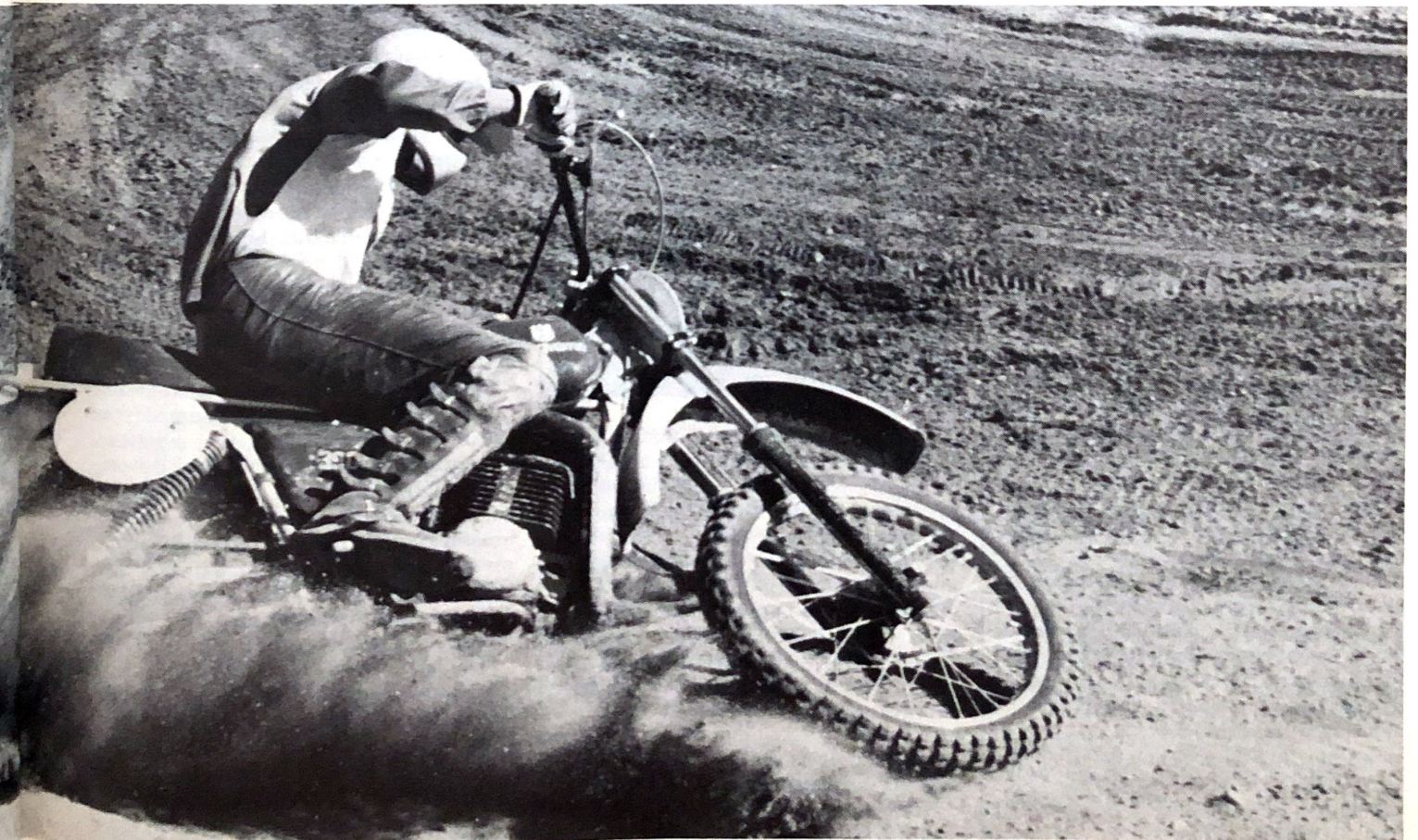
Chrome moly handlebars are used, which are narrower, and are housed in new rubber-mounted offset clamps. Super good Magura levers and waffle pattern Oury grips were definitely to our liking.



Basically, three seals keep dirt from damaging the fork action. The top boot has a liner that serves as a mud wiper, and then two seals are in the fork leg.



Totally compressed, $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches of suspension travel on the front and 10 inches on the rear. You still have better than three inches of ground clearance.



HUSKY

on the bike, like for really tight turns, you'll hit the right side of the pipe with your knee. But we more often hit the left side of the pipe towards the rear of the bike, when sliding back over jumps.

The levers and grips are excellent, especially for riders with small hands, who'll really appreciate the Magura "bent" control levers. The controls, together with the outstanding brakes (both front and rear) make this a two-finger bike. With a couple of fingers, you can lock the front brake.

The bike rates top-notch on brakes. You can't ask for better brakes. We'd have to say that nothing we've ever ridden or seen is comparable.

During the whole test period, we didn't have to put a wrench on the engine once. It appears that this'll be a very reliable motorcycle. All we did was adhere to the normal break-in requirements, kept the spokes tight and so on.

If you're an expert rider (not necessarily pro), this bike is definitely ready to go! You could just pick whatever tire you like, climb on and go for it!

A novice will have his hands full. His major problem will be keeping the front wheel on the ground. We expect you'll see novice Husky 390 riders waving the front wheel in the air all the time, until they realize how you correct it, by gearing and body position.

For the intermediate, or amateur rider, which is perhaps the toughest class to win, the potential CR390 rider will find this bike more competitive than most of the big-bores.

That's how we'll sum up the Husqvarna CR 390 . . . it's more competitive than most of the other machines in its class, in the hands of a rider who will carefully respect the bike and work up to its capabilities.

It's a very forgiving motorcycle, but like any really high performance machine, you can get into trouble in a hurry if you don't use your head, or treat the machine with respect.

What you primarily have to remember is that essentially, this is the very same motorcycle that Kent Howerton used to win the National Championship, and that Brad Lackey used on the Grand Prix circuit.

You could hardly expect such a capable motorcycle to be a mild-mannered pussy cat, could you?

Oh, there's one other brand new feature on the Husqvarna CR390 that we forgot to mention. There's a new decal for the rear fender. It differs from last year's in that it says that Husqvarna motorcycles have won 11 World Championship titles, instead of ten.

Considered with a certain regard, that decal might well be one of the most significant changes on the new model from Husqvarna.

INSIDE EUROPE

in half the rounds plus one were counted) was scrapped. From now on, every point a rider collects will matter, as in AMA racing.

The old, rather cumbersome system meant, for example, that in the 1976 250cc motocross GPs, only a rider's best six performances from the 11 rounds counted towards his end-of-season total. In other words, a rider who had scored



Ebulient Nixon puts his case to trackside interviewer.

three wins and three third places by the half-way stage in the season, could only improve his net total by finishing second or first in the remaining rounds.

This method had various consequences. It did, for example, help riders who may have been temporarily injured, often through no direct fault of their own. They could afford to miss two or three rounds and still remain in contention once they returned to racing. But if a rider was in a position in which only, say, seconds or first would increase his net score, he could be tempted to pull out of a race if he made an appalling start. Thus, the race would lose spectator interest—and it's the paying people who keep the whole show rolling. It seems the switch to the everything-counts system was touched off by Barry Sheene, who declined to ride in the last three rounds of the 500cc road racing GPs after clinching the title in Sweden.

Checking through the final points tables of the 125, 250 and 500cc GPs for 1976, the new system would have made no changes in the two smaller classes. But among the 500s, Herbert Schmitz on the factory Puch would have moved up to joint fourth, as he had 96 points net, but 103 gross. Brad Lackey would thus have been pushed down from fifth to sixth.

One follow-up from the revised scoring method is that it will be harder for riders to attempt what Marty Smith tried last year, and split a summer season between American and European racing. Missing two or three GPs, as Smith did in the last 125 GP series, will hardly be a realistic tactic from now on.

BAJA

wheel fell off the motorcycle!

Toward the finish, Bishop and Harper were handicapped by having to change the ignition flywheel on their Suzuki. They'd had problems with the crank breaking on the practice machine, so decided to change the flywheel just before they needed lights, to minimize the time they'd have to run on the risky ignition. As they were doing the job, Bishop noticed that the swingarm bolt was missing on one side, but they limped in to the finish, third place for the bikes.

Fourth place finisher (second 250cc) was the Honda entry of Wayne Cook and Steve Holladay. Cook and Holladay had a gas-guzzling motorcycle and ran out of gas at least once. The chain tensioner fell off, and Cook, one of the smallest of the top off-road racers, fell in the mud at Laguna Salada and lost 15 minutes getting going again. He then spent more time helping ISDT ace Carl Cranke, who had suffered a broken piston ring on the 125cc Penton he shared with Eric Jensen. Cranke had been running fourth overall and was way ahead of the other 125cc entries, when the breakdown occurred. Cook towed Cranke for some distance but finally had to carry on with the race.

With Cranke/Jensen out (their first DNF in the last seven major off-road races. They won their class the other times), the 125cc class win went to Ed Rodine and Eric Spaeth on a 125cc Yamaha. The class win was good enough for fifth overall, a notable accomplishment on a 125cc motorcycle. Obviously the biggest handicap the little bikes suffered was the deep mud of Laguna Salada and the long straight sections.

Carl Hailey, an executive in the advertising/public relations department of American Honda, teamed with Steve Bailey on a big-bore Honda to finish sixth overall of the bikes and last open-class bike.

The last bike to finish was in the only class to have a 100 percent finish. Two bikes started the "Over 38-years old" class, and both finished.

Bryon Farnsworth rode solo on a borrowed Yamaha TT500 thumper to finish in 17 hours, 40 minutes. Farnsworth was supposed to have driven a car in the Baja 1000, but the vehicle was involved in an accident, so he looked around for something to race and ended up with the borrowed Yamaha. For his efforts, Farnsworth was awarded the Ironman Award for running the whole race by himself.

The last motorcycle to finish the race on time was Dave Jacobsen (aged 41) and his partner Leonard Scott (a long-time Baja rider, aged 50). They finished just under the 25-hour deadline, in 24 hours, 56 minutes!

Those old-timers are really tough—just like Baja itself.