

HUSQVARNA

XC 250

“Or you could buy a Husky . . .”

For the most part riders don't buy a Husqvarna as a first bike. The average rider starts with a used Japanese bike, then swaps that for a new Japanese

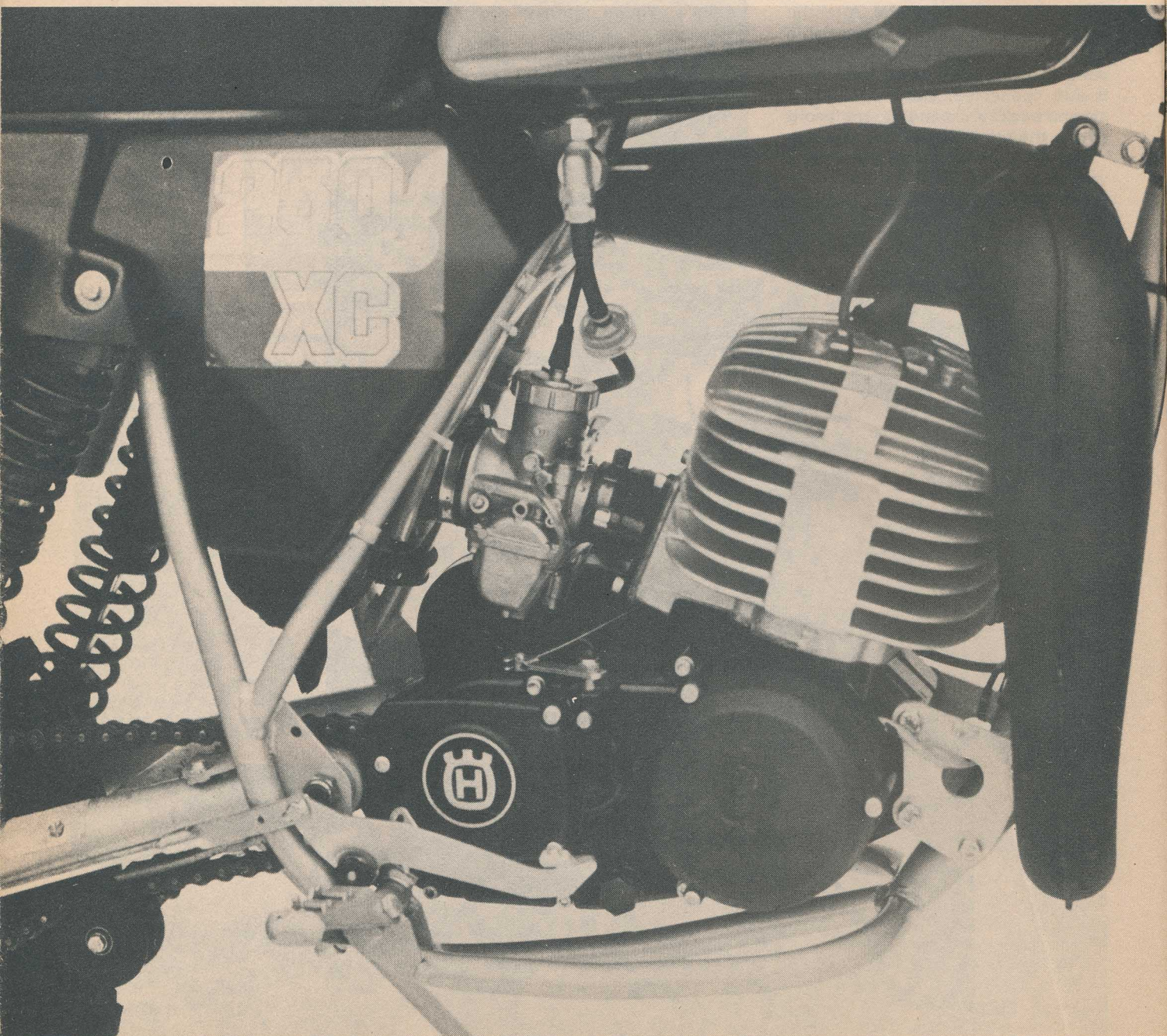
bike. Most Husqvarnas are the third or fourth motorcycle that a rider buys. It doesn't come as a big surprise that after a rider buys his first Husky, then rides it a couple of years, he trades that in for a new Husky.

Why? Mainly because after you've lived with one of the Swedish imports, you become a little bit spoiled. Husqvarna has built up a reputation for quality motorcycles. They don't scrimp on the small details. Matter of fact, part of their reputation is based

on the attention they give to the small details.

Admittedly, a Husky is more expensive than a Japanese bike when you roll it out the door. The initial investment is hard to choke down. But it starts paying off months down the road. Basically, there are very few things that you can buy for a Husky to make it better, because it works well right out of the box.

The Team Husqvarna riders have proven the bikes' box-stock abilities



This tiny little powerplant puts out more useable horsepower than anything else in its class. The engine is almost identical to the one used in the motocross machinery.

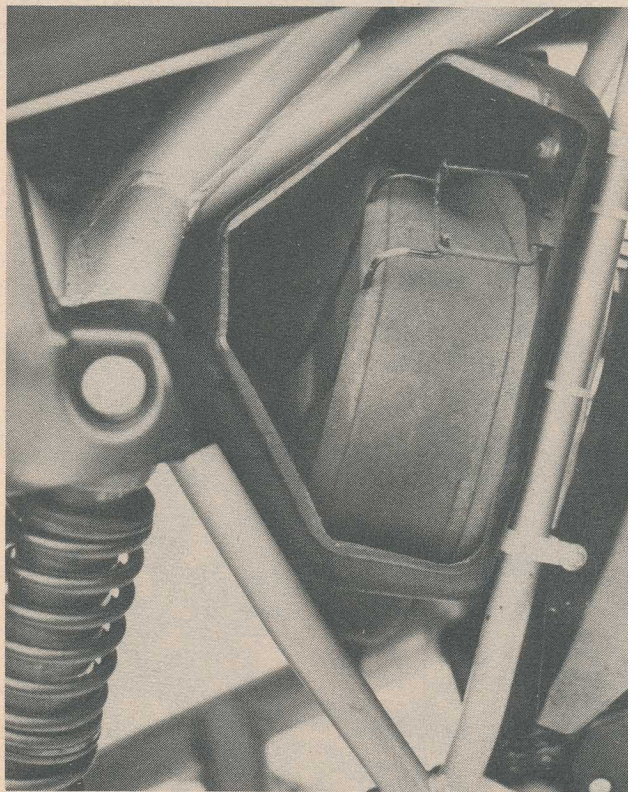


for years. The folks at Husky enjoy pointing out how well their bikes work by putting talented racers on box-stock machinery. While the Japanese flaunt \$20,000 one-off machines, Husky uncrates a bike from the warehouse and goes racing.

Dick Burleson came from his home in Ohio to the desert in California (an area he openly detests) last year, uncrated a totally stock XC 250, cut down the handlebars and went racing. He came back with a National Enduro win. Scot Harden and Brent Wallingford won the Baja 1000 this year on a fairly stock Husky. They added lights, put on different tires, a skid plate and went racing. After hours of wide, open throttle, killer rocks and non-stop punishment, their Husky was in such good shape that it could have been turned around and ridden right back to the start.

Most other machines would have committed suicide under similar conditions. Since Husqvarna designs its motorcycles for the full-on racer rather than the masses, most Husky owners find that they never can find the limits of the Swedish two wheeler they're riding.

The XC 250 shares the same common frame and suspension as the CR motocross machine. Created two years ago as a mid-point between the WR (enduro mount) and CR (motocrosser), the XC has a lower first gear than the CR for the tighter enduro spots, and has taller overall gearing (taken from the WR). It goes about 10 mph faster than the CR on top end, slower than the CR when you're crawl-



The first few hours of riding the Husky you swear the seat is too stiff. Later you find it's very comfortable. The large 2.9 gallon tank will get you at least 50 miles in a tough enduro.

This easy access air filter hides behind a pop-off side panel. The filter is extremely large, allows lots of clean intake, and can be removed by releasing the wire hanger.

ing, and has the benefit of motocross-designed suspension. The ignition system is capable of running an enduro or lighting kit, and has a heavier, more cooperative flywheel than the CR. The XC can be used for a variety of applications. It can be raced in motocross, ridden in hare scrambles, and put into enduro events.

Here's what you get in a Husky XC 250. It starts with a strong hand-welded chrome-moly frame, minus

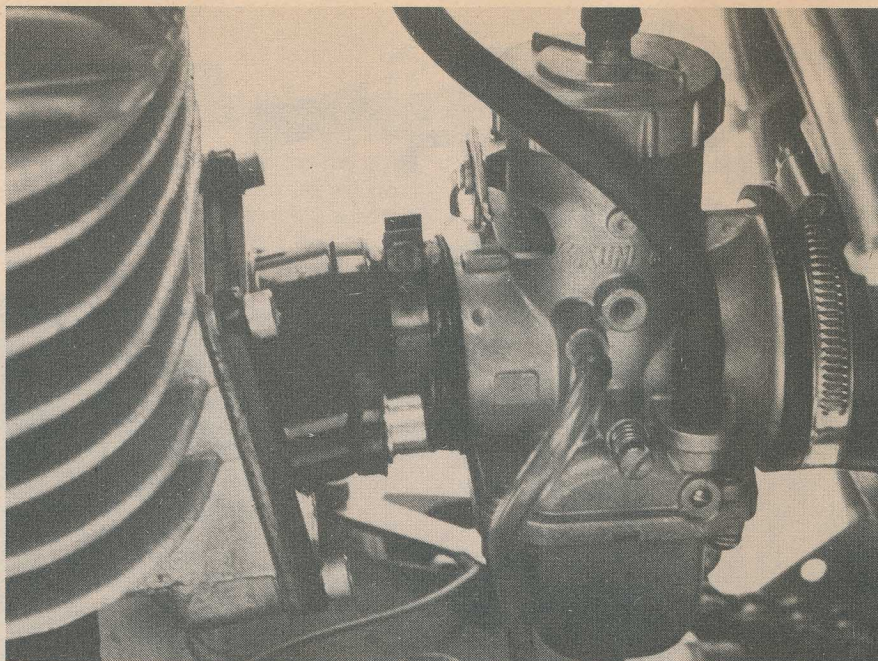
any excess brackets or tabs that aren't essential. You'll find a lot less parts on a Husky than any Japanese bike. Simplicity is the key.

The suspension on the XC has the same amount of travel as the motocross bike. The Husky-designed 40mm air/oil front forks have 11.8 inches of travel, while the rear wheel, utilizing Ohlin shocks, has a full 12.2 inches of travel. Only the WR, designed for eastern enduros where it's im-

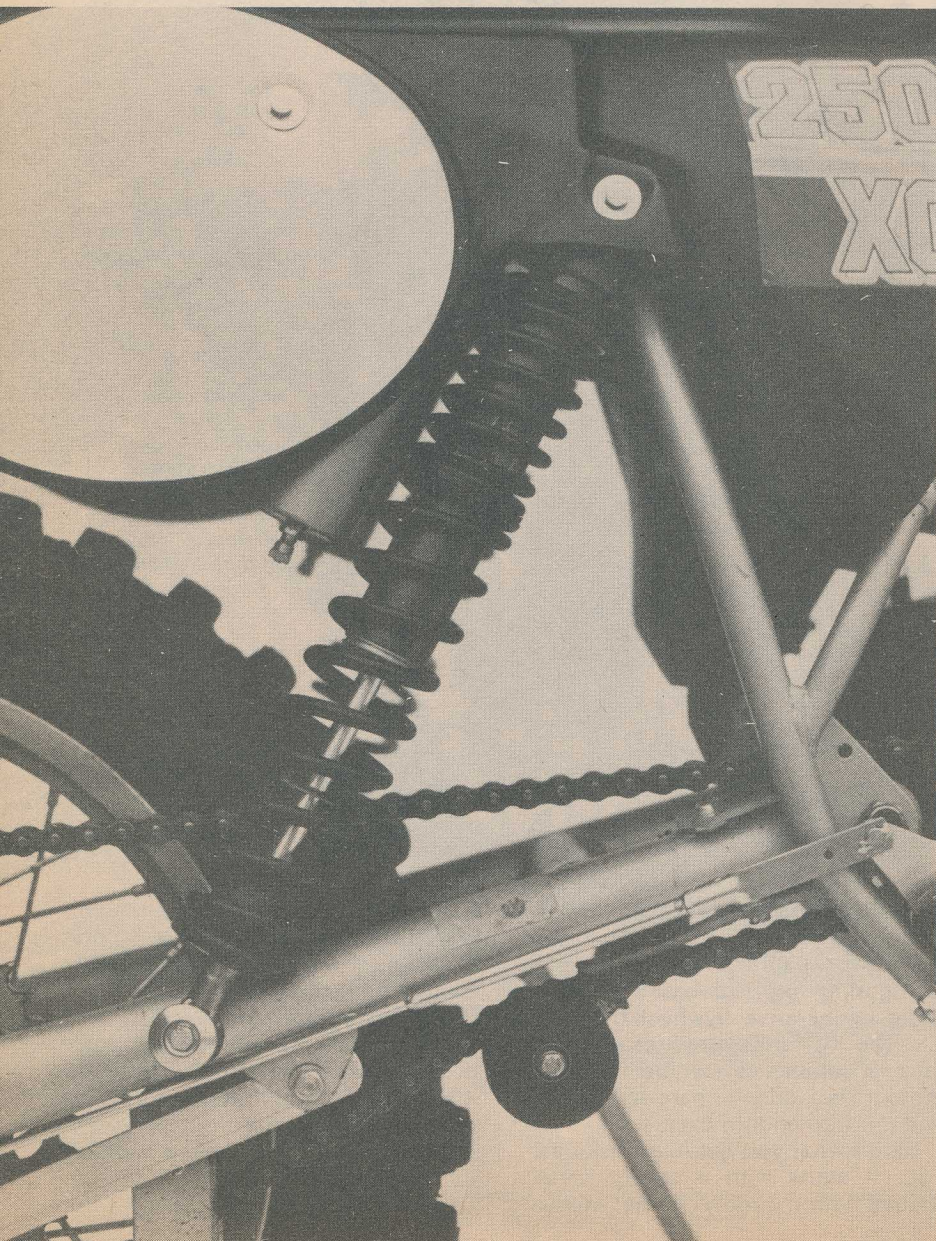
portant to stay lower to the ground, has a shortened suspension system. Husky is the only major hold-out in rear suspension. Husky designers still use two shocks, while most other companies have switched to the single shock system.

The XC 250's top end design is very similar to the motocross CR version. Porting is almost identical, and both the CR and XC share about 90 percent of their components. The different ignition system, in external rotor Motoplat, is heavier than the CR's internal Motoplat. This doesn't allow the bike to rev quite as highly, but the flywheel weight helps the rider in tight sections. The XC, in snail's pace conditions, will keep on chugging where the CR would choke to a halt.

Husky added the primary kick system to the XC. Primary kick starting means that you can leave the bike in any gear, pull in the clutch, and



The Mikuni 38mm carb is butted up to a reed valve system to feed the two-stroke engine. All the 1982 Huskies will come with these sand blast non-painted cylinders.



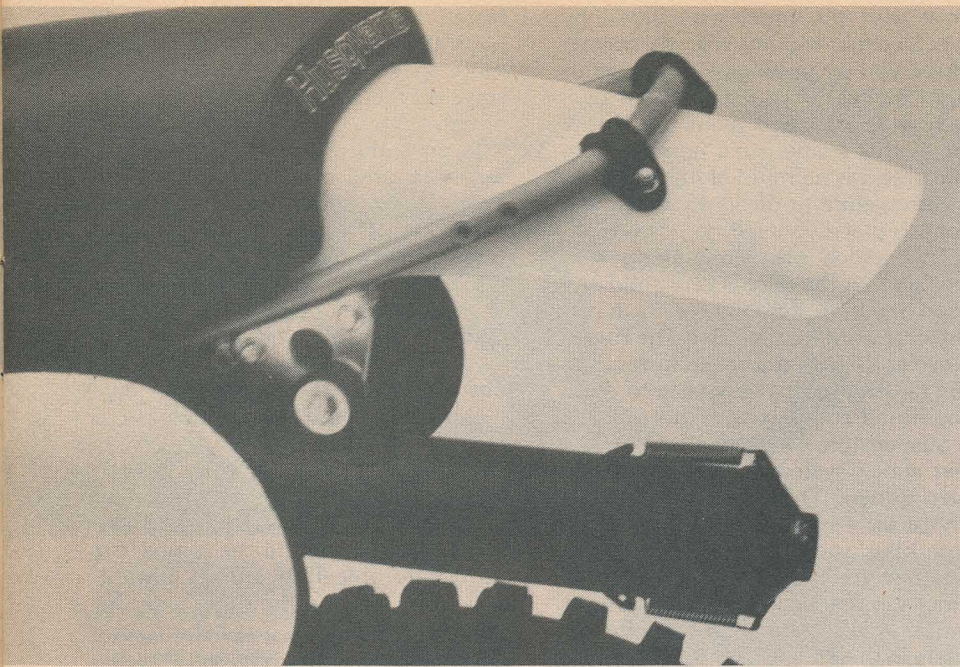
kick the engine over. Many Huskies didn't have this feature in the past, and it made more than a couple of Husky owners lose precious time in a race while they were trailside, fishin for neutral to re-start the bike.

Some of the high cost of a Husky comes from the quality of construction. The Husky comes stock with aircraft quality bolts and locking nuts. There are Allen head screws in the motor and handlebar clamps, tapered roller bearings in the steering head, handy lubing caps on all the cables, needle bearings in the swingarm and Heim joints on the shock. Even the control levers, a Gunnar's Gasser and Magura levers, are the best money can buy. The engine uses magnesium cases which are light and strong, and magnesium backing plates on the brake hubs. The alloy rims are gold anodized—and unlike previous machines, the anodizing doesn't flake off.

There are even a few American-made components—like the Boyesen reed pedals in the cylinder intake. And, not to appear prejudiced, it's fair to point out that even Husqvarna uses a Japanese component—the 38mm Mikuni carburetor.

Because of its long-legged suspension, the Husky XC 250 sits a little

The Ohlins shocks and swingarm design result in over 10 inches of rear wheel travel. So far the Husky has the best suspension of any dirt bike we've ridden since 1980.



A short fender is just long enough to catch the mud flung by the rear wheel. The silencer is fairly quiet, but must have its screen cleaned routinely for good performance.

taller than you may be used to. At first most Husky riders worry that it may be too far from the ground for good, stable control. For riders at the 5-ft. 7-in. level or below, it tends to be hard to touch the ground. The height is actually a very reasonable trade-off because it allows the extra suspension length. After your first 100 miles you quit thinking about how far you are from the ground, because you're busy being impressed by the bike's ability to soak up bumps and smooth out ruts.

As far as horsepower and speed performance are concerned, the XC 250 Husky is no more than just a few percentages slower than its motocross counterpart. If you can't keep up the pace on a Husky XC 250, you'd better re-evaluate your riding abilities (or maybe buy the XC 430).

The gearbox ratios are the best we've experienced. First gear is low enough to crawl your way up complicated slow uphill, or get over logs and boulders. Up at the top of sixth gear, with the throttle wide open, you can get through a sand wash somewhere in the vicinity of 60 to 75 mph. Plenty fast for us.

All the gears between the two extremes work hand in hand with the

With almost twelve inches of travel in the Husky-designed forks, there's no wanting for more wheel movement. Breaking Husky tradition, the seals on the air assist forks have refused to leak on this year's bike.

powerband of the Husky. In most bikes, there is a "horsepower hump" that the engine must overcome to pull itself into the powerband. In most bikes you'll find the space between either second and third, or third and fourth. In racing conditions, these little gaps in the gearbox can be a real time consumer.

The Husky doesn't have any of those gaps. It's almost impossible to remember which gear you're in because there aren't any major blemishes to use as a reference point. Second works as well as fourth, and so forth.

There have been traditional quirks with Huskies, but most of them are gone. At least one—the brakes, remains. Although they work great for 99 percent of your ride, there is noticeable brake fade after numerous water crossings. Most Japanese bikes also suffered from brake fade, but the



Husky takes a little longer to dry itself out. Some Husky riders are slotting the brake shoes, which cures the fade.

Husky fork seals used to leak. For years the folks in Sweden fought to find fork seals that wouldn't leak. A few times they even gave us bikes saying "The forks don't leak anymore." Sure enough, a few hours of riding time later, the forks would start weeping.

Well, strangely enough, the fork seals on our 1982 XC 250 don't leak. No kidding. And this time Husky didn't even promise. They just gave us the bike. After the forks didn't leak, we called them up and asked if there was a problem with our bike—because the forks didn't leak. Their response was "We were told this year by the factory back in Sweden that the forks won't leak. This time we just kept quiet about the claim, because they've been wrong in the past. But with all the good feedback, apparently the forks really don't leak this year. We're pleasantly surprised too!"

The riding experience you get on a Husky is very different from that of a Japanese enduro mount. Everything is calmer and terrains seems to go by at a lower rate. The rider has more control, but at the same time, must

work with the precision offered by this Swedish mount. It goes exactly where you point it—not within six or eight inches. If you pick out a two-inch wide trail and plant the Husky there, that's where it's going to go. The bike has no mind of its own when it comes time to deciding where you want to place yourself on a trail.

This added precision, along with the fact that the bike is very solid and good handling, actually results in less physical work for the rider. The Husky is easier to ride, at a speed faster than you're used to. It's very easy to get a Superman complex with this bike.

Suspension, even though it's a dual rear shock system, is the best we've ever ridden. The front works, even with a little more drag than a Japanese bike, soak up more bumps and ruts than you'd ask for. The rear Ohlin shocks in the back have just the right damping design and spring rate for riders in the 160- to 185-pound range.

The Husky suspension allowed us to go faster and smoother over difficult terrain than we ever have before. It's strange to go over extremely nasty sections on the Husky after you've been riding another bike. On the Husky you find yourself a full gear higher, going about 15 mph

faster, and feeling like you should hook the next gear and pick up even more speed. The bike remains calm, stays on the trail, and never gets out of hand.

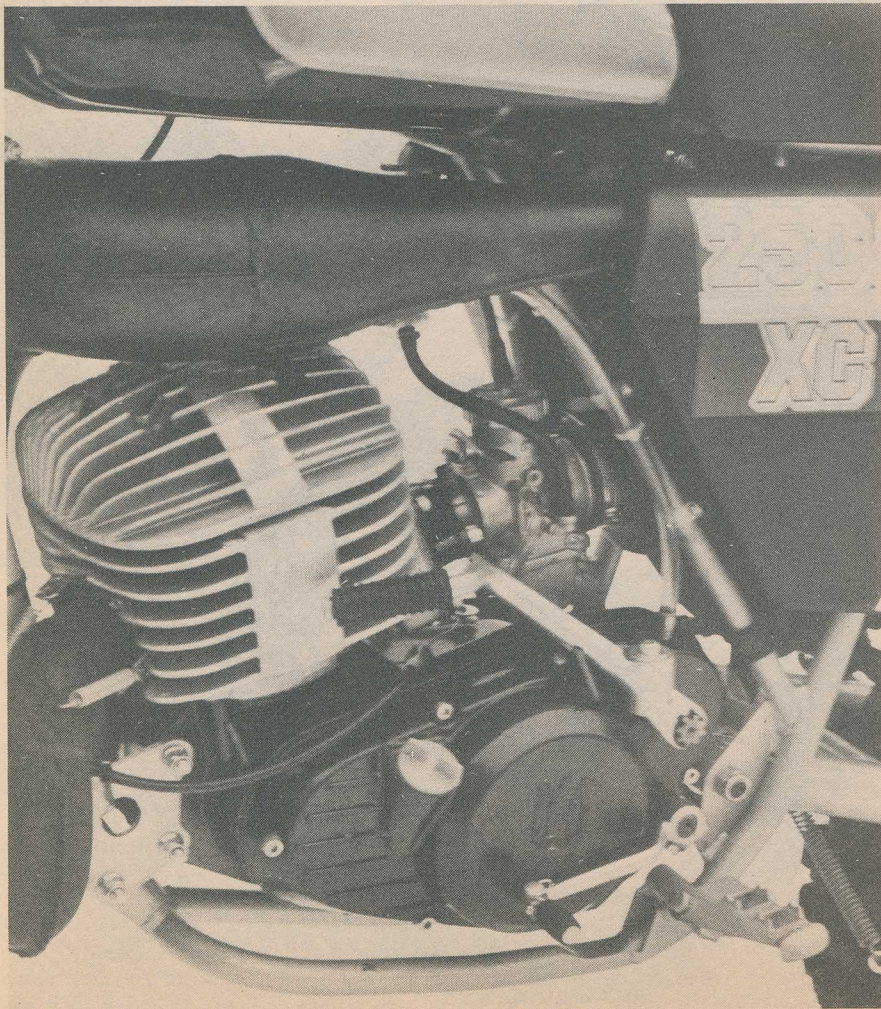
In an enduro last year one of our testers shared a riding minute with Team Husky enduro rider Rick Munyon. One of the fastest of the West Coast off-road racers, Munyon was mounted on an XC 250 Husky. Riding at serious wide-open throttle settings, Munyon was blasting down a two-tracker with giant water bars, an obstacle similar to stadium jumps that puts rider and bike a good four to six feet skyward.

The two riders were working their way through miles of road consisting of at least 100 of these jumps. Munyon's Husky would hit the jumps, the two would gracefully launch upward, and softly land on the other side. No problem. Our rider, just behind on a Japanese machine, was working his butt off to keep the two in sight.

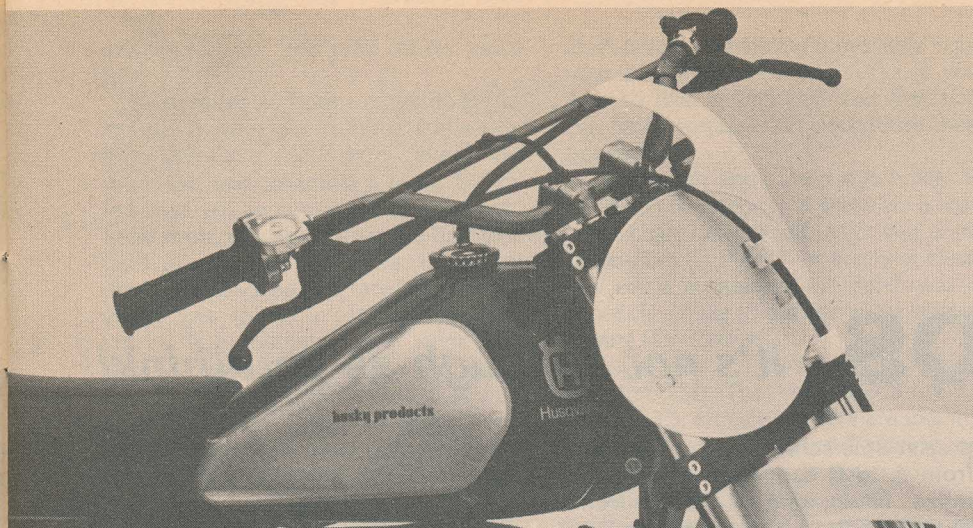
Then it happened. Munyon hit a water bar that he didn't see. The Husky wasn't prepared either. Both launched into the air without warning. The Husky went tail high, stretching Munyon out almost straight up and down. With the front wheel pointed down, poor Rick was so vertical that his back was touching the rear of the seat. Only his left hand was still on the bars—and at that he only had a poor grasp of the crossbar pad. It looked like the beginning of an extremely nasty and memorable endo.

But unlike most other bikes, the Husky didn't go through contortions and twists through the air. Once it started arcing upward, it didn't flick from side to side. The suspension had been taxed to its limit when the water bar was hit incorrectly, but because the bike doesn't react violently, Munyon's trip through the air was smooth enough and calm enough to allow him to re-collect toward the end of his flight, get a better grip on the bars, and continue down the trail. Any other bike would have pitched him a few yards off the trail, then probably pounce on him in the bushes. The Husky, although it pointed out his mistake, didn't punish him for it.

Watching that little incident was the main reason why we wanted to test a Husky this year. From our vantage point, all indications were that Munyon was about to end his riding season. Yet the bike pulled through. We figured that any machine capable



A six-speed gearbox and primary kick starting allows you to ride competitively in anything from a motocross race to an tough slow speed enduro. Gear ratios work well in both cases.



Engine Type	single cylinder 2-stroke
Bore and Stroke	69.5 x 64.5 mm
Displacement	245
Compression Ratio	12.3:1
Transmission	6-speed
Carburetor	38mm Mikuni
Wheelbase	86.2 inches
Seat height	38.1 inches
Ground Clearance	13.5 inches
Front Suspension	air/oil, 11.8 inches travel
Rear Suspension	Ohlin shocks, 10.6 inches travel
Gas tank capacity	2.9 gallons
Riding range	approx. 65 miles
Front tire size	3.20 x 21
Rear tire size	4.50 x 17

Good handlebars, strong levers, lever covers, cables with lube outlets and a sturdy alloy gas tank are just some of the touches that make the box-stock Husky a race-ready mount.

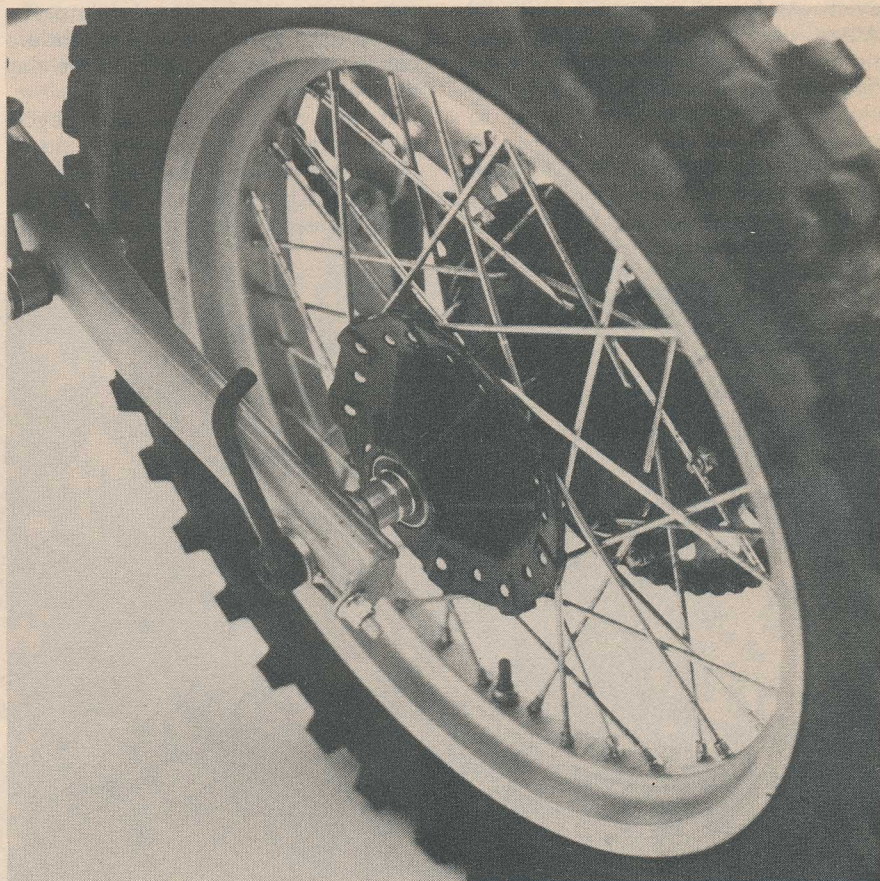
This strong 17-inch rear wheel is laced to the standard motocross Husky hub. Breaking or bending wheels on a Husky is rare.

of letting you get away with giant mistakes like that has got to be a dream to ride when you're in control.

Another thing we noticed on our test XC 250 is that the amount of options you have on a trail are greatly increased. Most bikes, because of one default or another, have to stick to the main trail on a course or back country area. The Husky doesn't really require a trail because its suspension, handling and horsepower let you ride just about anywhere. If it's shorter and quicker to cut across some nasty ruts and bumps rather than go around, just dial on the throttle, point the XC 250 and go. It will get there.

Of all the bikes we've tested recently, the Husky XC 250 is the only machine we can confidently point at and say "Ride this—it will make you go faster." Of the half dozen riders who took turns on the Husky, there wasn't one of them who didn't feel he rode faster, better and with more control than ever before.

If all this sounds like we're in love with the Husky, you're not far off. Other publications have claimed that this machine is the best 250 off-road mount you can buy. We were skeptical. There are a lot of good bikes out there. But after a few hundred miles, we have to concur with the general opinion. If you're looking for the very best 250 you can buy for enduros,



hare scrambles, desert races and just plain great riding, this is it.

Like all good things, you're going to pay the price. As you might expect, the best 250 you can buy is also the most expensive. Add about \$900 to the price of a Japanese 250 and you can buy a Husky. The price difference is hard to choke down initially. But then again, it's worth every penny. There isn't an option or extra goodie needed for this bike. It wins right out of the crate. You won't spend half your maintenance period rounding off nuts and bolts. Parts don't fatigue easily, and nothing falls off. Two years down the road, when the average Japanese bike is showing

signs of retirement, the Husky is still fresh and ready to race.

A properly maintained Husky can last the regular serious racer a good three seasons before it's time to sell it off and get a new one. Most Japanese bikes will be lucky to see two good seasons. That alone justifies the price. The bonus of great handling, good suspension and reliability beyond reason are extra benefits.

The only problem you'll have if you buy an XC 250 Husky will be explaining to your buddies why you didn't win that last enduro, or constantly lead the pack out on a trail. If you can't win on this bike, you just can't win at all.