

CYCLE NEWS

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Test: 1986 Husqvarna 400 Enduro

**Swedish
masterpiece**

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Improvements on the rear end include a lighter swingarm, a switch to a tongue-and-groove brake retention system and a new backing plate.

Impression: 1986 Husqvarna 400 Enduro

Renamed, rewrapped & refined check-mate

By Tom Kolnowski

"They've got them so close," said former National Enduro Champion Mike Melton as he rolled the 1986 Husqvarna 400 Enduro out of the van and down the ramp, "that all you have to do to 'em before riding a National is put on rim locks and a better spark plug cap. That's all they need. It

used to take a lot more work to get a bike ready for competition."

An indication that the latest Husky is indeed more enduro-ready is apparent in its new name: 400 Enduro.



The 9.1-inch Grimeca disc is drilled and floats on its six mounts.

Gone is the old WR (wide ratio) designation, and with it the other "alphabet soup" letter combinations (WRX, CR, XC, TE, etc.) that have long been a part of Husky dialogue. The new names, such as 400 Enduro, 500 Motocross and 250 Cross Country, more closely identify the bikes with their intended roles.

In the case of the 400 Enduro, the first '86 Husky we've had a chance to sample, we'd have to agree with Melton. The out-of-the-crate bike is an exercise in competition preparedness, but the beauty of the bike goes much beyond that. It changes our perception of so-called Open-class bikes, known for their excessive power and "you'd better be careful" personalities. The 400 Enduro can be considered a coup in that it is powerful yet completely manageable, has the light weight of a 250cc bike and the nimble handling to match, and a degree of refinement second to none.

Where did Husky turn to come up

with such a package? For starters, they put the old WR dual-shock chassis out to pasture and began to build the new 400 Enduro around the single-shock, mid-year '85 400WRX (the '86 Enduro line serves as a replacement for the WRX as well as WR models). The 4130 chrome-moly WRX frame with a removable rear sub-frame was carried over intact to the Enduro, but other than that, nearly all areas of the bike have been refined.

The blue and white safety seat is well padded and now has a white Husky logo stamped on both sides, and while they were at it, a laminated Husky logo was attached to the front fender. The deeply valanced rear fender is graced with a more angular taillight than the simple round unit of the WRX, and the 3.2-gallon fuel tank is another carry-over.

In a purely functional move, the right side panel has been cut away at the frame to form an ideal handle for picking the bike up or muscling it out of the mud. The rear inner fender, previously attached with zip ties, now has integral molded grooves at the top and just snaps in place — quickly and securely.

What is probably one of the best all-around off-road motors ever to come down the trail lives in the frame of the Enduro. While basically the same liquid-cooled, center-port-exhaust, primary-kick, reed-valved engine as that of the WRX model, with the same 396cc displacement and six-speed gearbox, it has several minor improvements to make the enduro pilot's life even easier. Machining tolerances at the Swedish factory have been tightened up, especially in the area of the center cases, and the result is a motor that runs better than ever and moreover, puts out less body-pounding vibration.

A redesigned clutch pushrod and actuating arm give the Enduro a pleasingly light clutch pull — nice to have in the latter sections of a tough enduro.

The exhaust system has been modified to produce more low-end power, has stronger mounts and has been

tipped with a new oval aluminum silencer (replacing the heavy steel unit of the WRX). The bolt-on Husky Products/Krizman spark arrestor makes the bike forest legal and has an easily removable end cap for quick cleaning.

A 38mm Mikuni carb breathes through the same large, flat oval filter as the WRX, but the airbox cover now attaches with two 6mm bolts — one fore and aft — instead of simply snapping on as before.

Suspension at both ends has been reworked, with the front end the most changed. The most obvious difference is the unpainted (instead of white) fork legs, but the internals have been redesigned from top to bottom. The new fork is what Husky calls Free-Flow, which is engineered for less slip-stick (drag effect or hydraulic lock) and overall improved performance. A new guidance system with Teflon-like bushings as well as new damper rods, seals and stiffer springs are among the changes in the 40mm unit, and fork tube overlap has been increased to make the assembly more rigid. Travel is 11.2 inches compared to the 10.6 of the WR and 11.8 of the WRX.

At 13.0 inches, the rear end offers the same travel of the WRX and 1.2 inches more than the 400WR. Refinement is the key word here, as the aluminum swingarm has been lightened by eliminating the forward brace (computer analysis found the brace unnecessary), while dual zerk fittings are found on the shock linkage, reducing maintenance to a quick 30-second job.

The Ohlins shock with piggyback reservoir has new internal valving (which was arrived at after extensive testing, largely by U.S. riders) and a stiffer spring, with compression and rebound damping externally adjustable via their respective click-stop knobs.

The 400 is the first Husky enduro bike imported to the U.S. with a front disc brake, a replacement for the capable dual-leading-shoe brake used for the past several years. A 9.1-inch drilled floating disc is found on the



Husqvarna's 1986 400 Enduro weighs in at 235 pounds dry and has an engine that puts out just-right power.

Grimeca unit, which was first installed on the 1985 CR and XC models. While the brake itself is identical to the one used in '85, more precise boring of the caliper attachment holes results in overall better performance. A handlebar-mounted reservoir is compact and has a sight glass and an easily-accessible lever free-play adjuster screw. The braided hose is encased in a tough, nylon guard.

The cable-operated rear brake moves closer and closer to true quick-change status each year. In the latest version, the torque arm has been eliminated and replaced with a clean tongued backing plate and grooved swingarm set-up. The lever pivot is more forward (and safer), and improved backing plate/drum tolerances result in a tighter seal and dryer brakes. A grab handle on the left end of the axle upholds the quick-change theme.

The O-ring chain is kept on the straight and narrow by a new forward chain roller (which spins on a roller bearing) and a stronger rear guide. One nice touch is a switch to recessed allen-head sprocket bolts in lieu of cap screws.

Trelleborg tires have long been standard Husky enduro fare, but the Enduro breaks from tradition in that it's fitted with new edition Metzlers. The front is shod with a metric-sized 90/90-21 MXR, with the rear a 4.50-18 Multi-Cross — an impeccable duo for woods work on a variety of surfaces. Rims are gold-anodized alloy Nordisks with rim pins, and, as Melton points out, lack the needed rim locks.

Husky has finally crept out of the dark ages and installed genuine ser-

rated steel footpegs (the former pressed steel units were slippery on their best days), which also feature stiffer springs. Other nice touches include a lighter knurled folding shifter (which lacks the prone-to-loss rubber cover); a Nippondenso speedometer/odometer which works well (and has a high-ratio reset button for quicker adjustments at corners); new, stronger sidestand mounting; and an alloy brake pedal with ball-bearing pivot.

How well does the package work? Just ask the tester that took his first spin on the 400 and came back with an ear-to-ear grin: "I was extremely impressed with the smooth delivery of power, and was amazed at how quickly I felt comfortable on the bike. The seating position was excellent, and I'm impressed with the level of refinement compared to the dual-shock Huskys. The bike felt light, more like a 250." This from a confirmed lover of small-bore bikes.

Owners of the dual-shock 400WR will immediately notice a reduction in weight and bulk — the Enduro weighs seven pounds less (235 versus 242) and the bike has a much slimmer profile thanks to the single-shock chassis. And while the Enduro and WR have the same seat height, a tall 37.8 inches, the Enduro's suspension is both longer and much more effective. As a bonus, acclimating to the new chassis is an extremely quick and painless process.

If you've come to expect turbo-like power when you crack the throttle on an Open-class bike, be prepared for a change when you board the Enduro. Oh, there's plenty of power there, but it's ever so manageable and easily metered, and that's a key ingredient



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The 400 Enduro is at home blasting through a loamy berm or weaving its way between closely spaced trees.