

Test: 1987 Husqvarna 250cc Enduro

LOOKING GOOD!





Cornering the Husky is precise and predictable. The new, smoother seat/tank junction makes rider maneuverability a breeze.

**By Kit Palmer
Photos By Kinney Jones**

The 1987 Husqvarna 250cc Enduro is just about the prettiest thing on two wheels. It has that spit-and-polished look that's nearly impossible to resist when eyeing the all-new

Husky as it sits proudly on the showroom floor. The Swedish-made Husky is eye-catching, to say the least.

But good looks alone don't win enduros. It takes a good-handling, quick-turning, powerful, reliable motorcycle to win enduros. Last year's 250cc Husky Enduro already featured most of those attributes, but the 1986 model did leave room for improvement. Styling wasn't one of them, but the 1987 bike got it anyway.

The Husky looks like an all new motorcycle, but when it gets down to internal changes, there are only a few. Most notable is the switch to a longer-stroke motor. Many Husky enduro riders felt the 1986 250cc En-

duro was a little too peaky; they wanted a more manageable powerband. So, both the bore and stroke have been changed in 1987 to 66.5 x 70.8mm from 69.5 x 64.5mm. To compliment the different bore and stroke, a new exhaust pipe was designed. Attached to the new pipe is an all-new aluminum U.S. Forestry-approved spark arrester/silencer, that now mounts to the frame in two places instead of one.

The rest of the water-cooled, two-stroke motor remains basically unchanged. The cylinder has slightly different porting specs, and the piston has only one ring. The engine is still carbureted through a 38mm, round-bore Mikuni (with different jetting) and breathes through the



At 231 pounds dry, the Husky is a little on the heavy side. The black gas tank makes it hard to check fuel level.

same right-side airbox.

The six-speed transmission is the same as the 1986 model, but, according to Husky, the clutch received minor refinements to improve reliability.

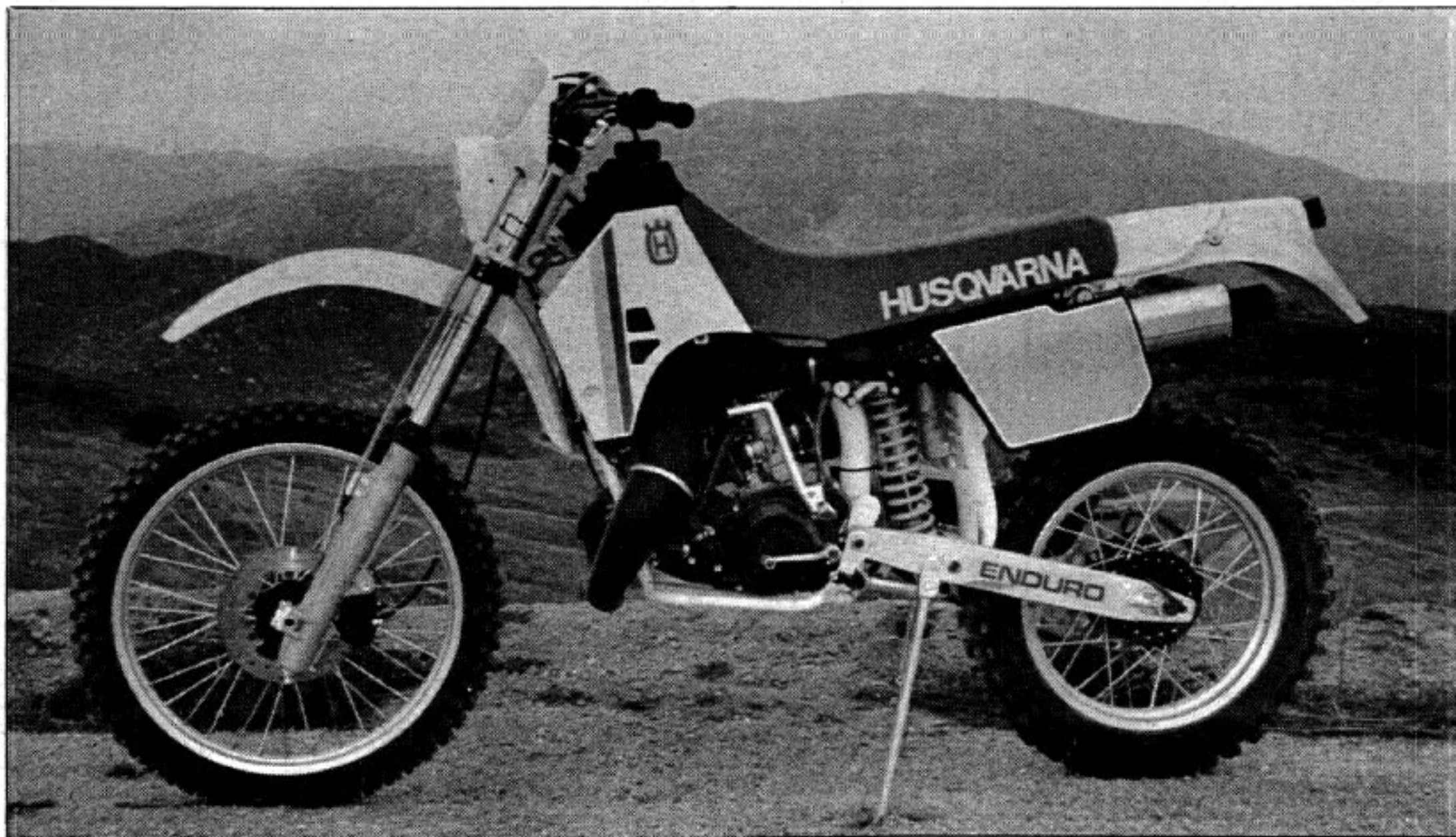
Many Husky owners last year had problems with the steel engine side covers corroding, but that problem has been solved by switching to aluminum side covers.

New attention was given to the Husky's front and rear suspension. In the rear, the single-shock Ohlins connects to a new linkage ratio that requires the use of a stiffer spring rate. The shock itself has a piggyback

reservoir and produces a long 12.2 inches of travel.

Last year's Husky-made fork just didn't cut it. Although the fork performed adequately in low-speed situations, it couldn't handle the rough stuff at a faster pace. The front end twitched, and any hard impact was felt harshly in the rider's shoulders. Last year, many Husky riders installed a Husky Products fork kit, which improved fork action immensely. For 1987, the Husky uses the exact same fork as last year's 250 but with the fork kit already installed. This means the fork damper assembly, springs and bushings are all new. Front wheel travel is 10.6 inches.

Huskys have always been noted for being good lookers, but the 1987 models take the cake. Three major changes for 1987 include a longer stroke motor, different fork internals and a new front disc brake.



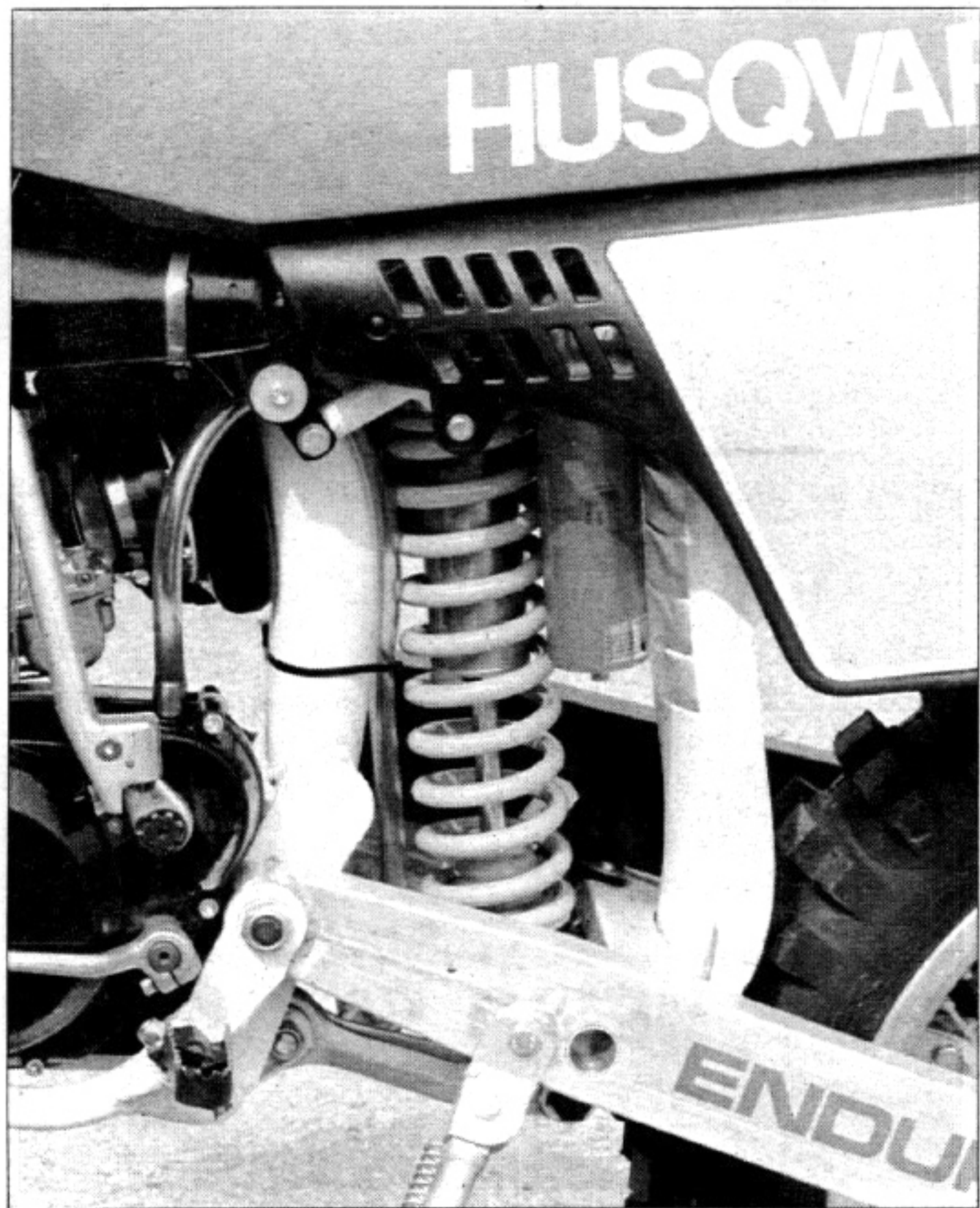
The front disc brake is all-new for 1987. Last year's Husky featured a floating disc and a single-piston caliper, but that's been changed. The disc is now mounted stationary to the front hub, but the caliper has a floating mount. Husky says this wasn't done to improve effectiveness, but to save money; the new unit is less expensive to build. To improve stopping power, the caliper now has a double-piston set up. The Husky front brake system is similar to the system found on the big 650cc Cagiva Elefant dual-purpose motorcycle.

The Husky comes stock with Metzeler tires, and the hubs are trimmed down to decrease weight. The drive chain is an O-ring type.

All-new, shiny, sano-looking Acerbis-made plastic is found on the Husky, as is a new seat. The gas tank is all black, but it's wrapped by a white, single-piece radiator shroud. This means Husky owners no longer will have to worry about tank graphics bubbling up and looking disgusting after a few miles of riding because the decals aren't applied directly to the tank. The seat blends in smoothly with the tank assembly.

On the trail

The Husky is an easy starter, but



An Ohlins piggyback reservoir shock connects to new linkages for a more progressive ratio. Rear suspension works adequately.

the left side kick lever is a little on the tall side and a bit difficult to get a leg on. Luckily, one or two good kicks usually brings the Husky to life, hot or cold.

After a short warm-up period, we hit the trails and quickly noticed a problem with the carburetion. In stock condition, our 250 ran rough at low- to mid-range, and when riding downhill the Husky would load up and barely run. We had the exact

same experience with last year's Husky 250cc Enduro.

But the cure is quick and simple. We replaced the stock 2.5 slide with a 3.0 slide, and from then on the Husky ran crisp and clean throughout the powerband. No other jetting changes were required.

Horsepower is similar to last year's 250, but the motorcycle has slightly longer, stronger pull in the middle of the powerband. The motor's strong

point is in low speed situations when you need plenty of torque and lugging power to get you through a tight, technical section. It's hard to stall the engine. It just keeps chugging away, even when things look grim, such as motoring up a long, rocky, loose uphill. The motor has a smoother, broader powerband than before, giving you additional confidence to challenge more difficult terrain. There's no worry about the Husky suddenly coming on the pipe and sending you off in a direction you don't want to go — it's predictable.

On faster trails, the Husky has no problems keeping up. It's not really the fastest 250cc dirt bike around, and a more experienced enduro rider might want a bit more power on top, but for the most part, the Husky can get the job done the way it is.

The Husky vibrates more than we liked, but it wasn't something we couldn't live with. The vibration is most evident in the middle of the powerband and is barely noticeable when the engine is revved out on top. During our first outing on the Husky, a pipe mount bolt vibrated loose, destroying the outer threads in the process.

We didn't have any complaints with the Husky's transmission. It shifts predictably and easy. A slight nudge on the shift lever is all it takes

to catch the next gear, with or without the aid of the clutch. The clutch held up well to many miles of abuse, but it isn't the smoothest-working clutch around. Dropping the transmission into first gear from neutral usually produced a noticeable "thud" from the gearbox, especially when the motorcycle was cold. Sometimes the motor would stall, as if the clutch lever wasn't pulled in at all. But when the Husky is in motion, the clutch is easy to slip and works okay. Although it's a long reach, one finger on the lever can get the job done.

The Husky's suspension is very good in most situations. On tight and technical trails, the Husky is extremely stable and easy to control, although the fork and shock are set up a little on the stiff side. Over rocky terrain, the Husky really shines. It doesn't do anything unexpected and it doesn't have any nasty habits.

The only thing the Husky doesn't like is whoop-de-doo, especially at high speeds. Over whoops, the back end can get a little squirrely and start swapping, if you're not paying close attention. A lot of this has to do with the mediocre front fork. It's best to keep your weight over the rear fender and keep the front end light, forcing the rear shock to do most of the work.

Turning the Husky is simple. With the new tank/seat layout, it's very easy to slide your weight up on the

tank when cornering, but the bike is very tall. Shorter riders will find it a little uncomfortable pivoting the Husky in tight turns. The front Metzeler tire sticks well when the ground is tacky, but on hard-packed, dry ground, the front end has a tendency to wash out. The rear Metzeler works well in all conditions.

Zippering through tight and twisty trails is a breeze on the Husky. The motorcycle cuts fast, predictable lines through trees, bushes and rocks. The tractable, smooth powerband makes the Husky very easy to manage. You can leave the Husky a gear too high and it will still chug its way through tight trails. You won't have to worry about fanning the clutch or spending a lot of time shifting.

Slowing down for turns is much easier than it was with last year's model. The front brake is stronger and has a more progressive feel on the lever. The brake lever feels a little mushy at first, but since braking action is so smooth, progressive and powerful, it's hardly noticeable.

The rear drum brake does the trick, but the brake pedal is a little hard to find at times. It's tucked in close to the engine case, and the pedal's foot rest is a little on the short side. Other than that, the rear brake is strong enough to control the back end through turns, over whoops and around rocks. But it still loses some power when it gets wet.

There are a few things that we didn't like about the Husky.

The motorcycle is heavy. The extra weight is really noticeable when bulldogging the bike up hills, or when pulling it out of ruts and mud holes, or when riding it over logs and rocks.

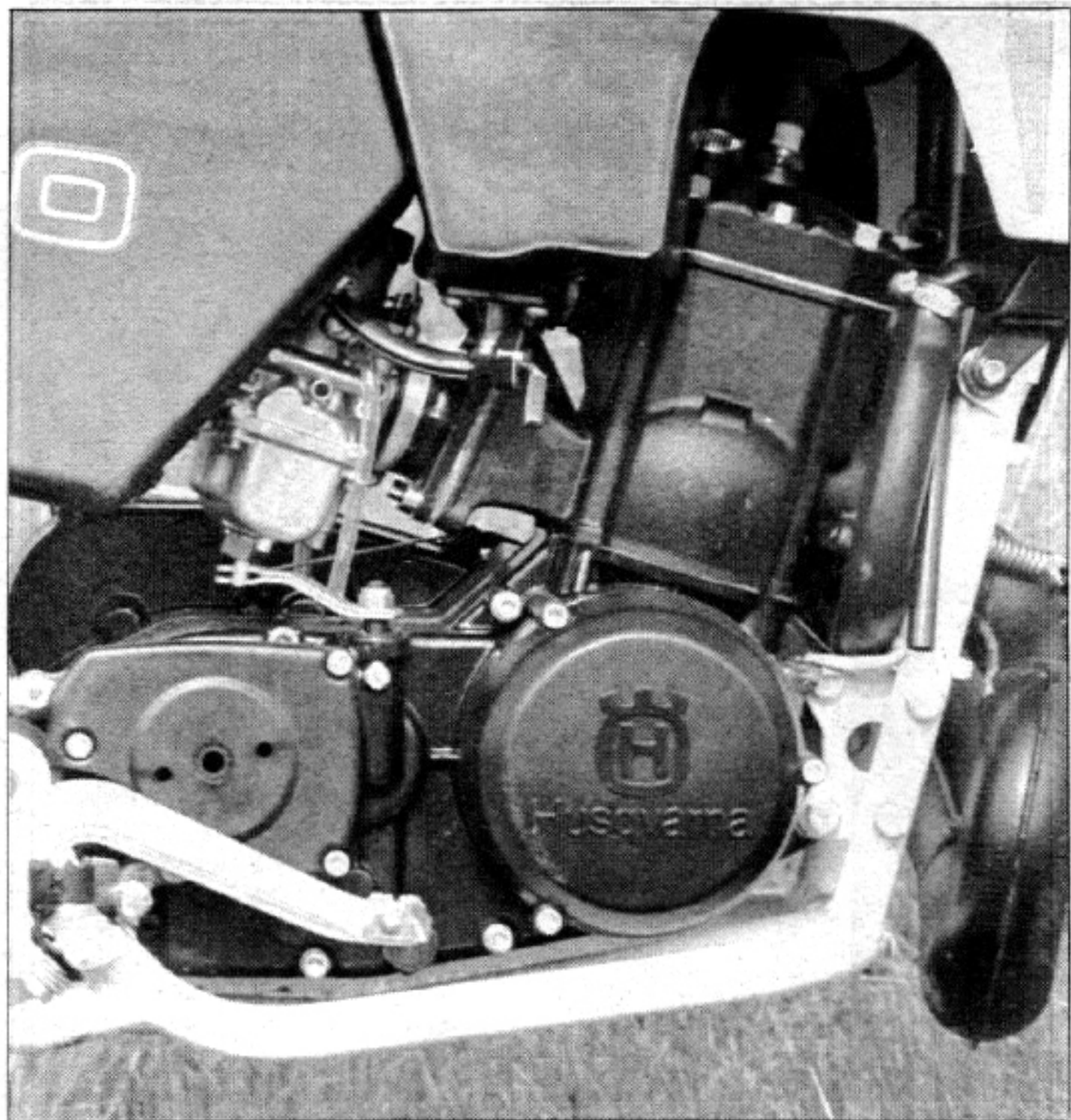
We also don't like the black gas tank because it makes it difficult, if not impossible, to see and check fuel level when looking down the filler hole. If the tank is less than half full, you can't see how much fuel is actually left.

We didn't have any major mechanical problems with the Husky, but a fork seal did start leaking after we rode about 150 miles, and the pipe-mount bolt backed out. Other than that, our Husky held up well with little servicing. To date, both the kickstand spring and the odometer cable are still intact and operating.

The 1987 Husqvarna 250cc Enduro is definitely an improvement over last year's model, but it could still use less weight and beefier forks. Other than that, the Husky has what it takes to zero checks and make it to the finish. ●



The fork is much improved for '87 but still needs some work.



The longer stroke motor and porting changes gives the new Husky Enduro a stronger and broader powerband, but it's still slow on top.



The Husky works best in tight, technical and low-speed situations. In the whoops and at speed, the Husky can get a little squirrely.

Husqvarna 250cc Enduro

Engine type	Liquid-cooled, two-stroke, single	Rake	27°
Bore x stroke	66.5 x 70.8mm	Trail	4.7 in.
Displacement	246cc	Front suspension	Telescopic fork
Compression ratio	14.8:1	Fork tube diameter	40mm
Carburetor	38mm Mikuni	Front wheel travel	10.6 in.
Horsepower	N/A	Rear suspension	Single-shock, swingarm
Torque	N/A	Rear wheel travel	12.2 in.
Starting system	Primary kick	Front brakes	Disc
Ignition	CDI	Rear brakes	Drum
Lubrication	Premix	Front tire	3.00x21 Metzeler
Primary drive	Straight-cut gears	Rear tire	4.50x21 Metzeler
Final drive	Chain	Claimed dry weight	231 lbs.
Gear ratios		Overall length	86.6 in.
Primary	79/30; 2.630	Overall width	N/A
Final	52/14; 3.710	Overall height	48.6 in.
6th	20/27; 0.740	Wheelbase	59.9 in.
5th	22/25; 0.880	Fuel capacity	3.2 gal.
4th	24/23; 1.043	Ground clearance	13.4 in.
3rd	26/20; 1.300	Seat height	37.2 in.
2nd	29/17; 1.706	Colors	White
1st	33/14; 2.357	Retail price	\$3275
Frame	Single downtube, split double cradle		