

In past years, the announcement of a new bike from Hodaka has been greeted with the same enthusiasm as an audit from the IRS. The Volkswagen-type philosophy of Hodaka, indicating changes only when absolutely necessary and certainly not for the sake of styling, has given the Oregon-based company a reputation for dependability and dullness. It always seemed that while the

bikes were functional they were also one step behind everyone else. While we cannot find fault with the idea of incorporating only well-tested improvements, we recognize that no one wants to be an "also ran."

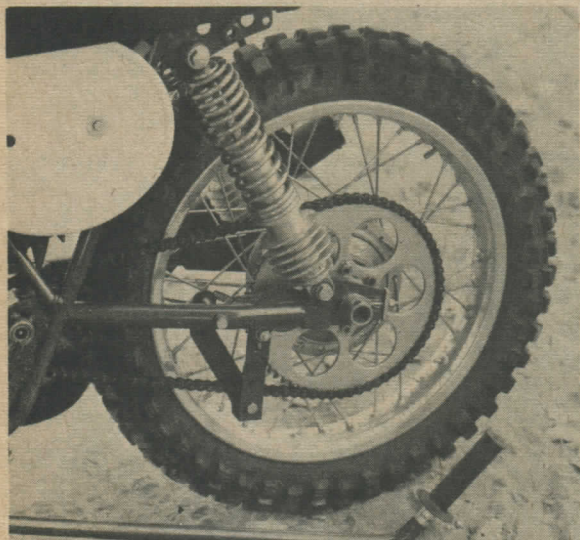
Early this year we heard that there was to be a new MX version of the 125 Wombat. We expected an old Wombat with the lights and speedo removed.

What we got was a completely new bike. Although the new 125 Super Combat has some of the same familiar lines of the old Hodakas, it is obvious that the engineers started out with a blank piece of paper.

The first thing that you'll notice about the frame (besides the fact that it's blue) is the shock location. We received the bike with the shocks slanted forward. The frame has been fitted with a bracket

The 125 Super Combat

By Rick Valasek

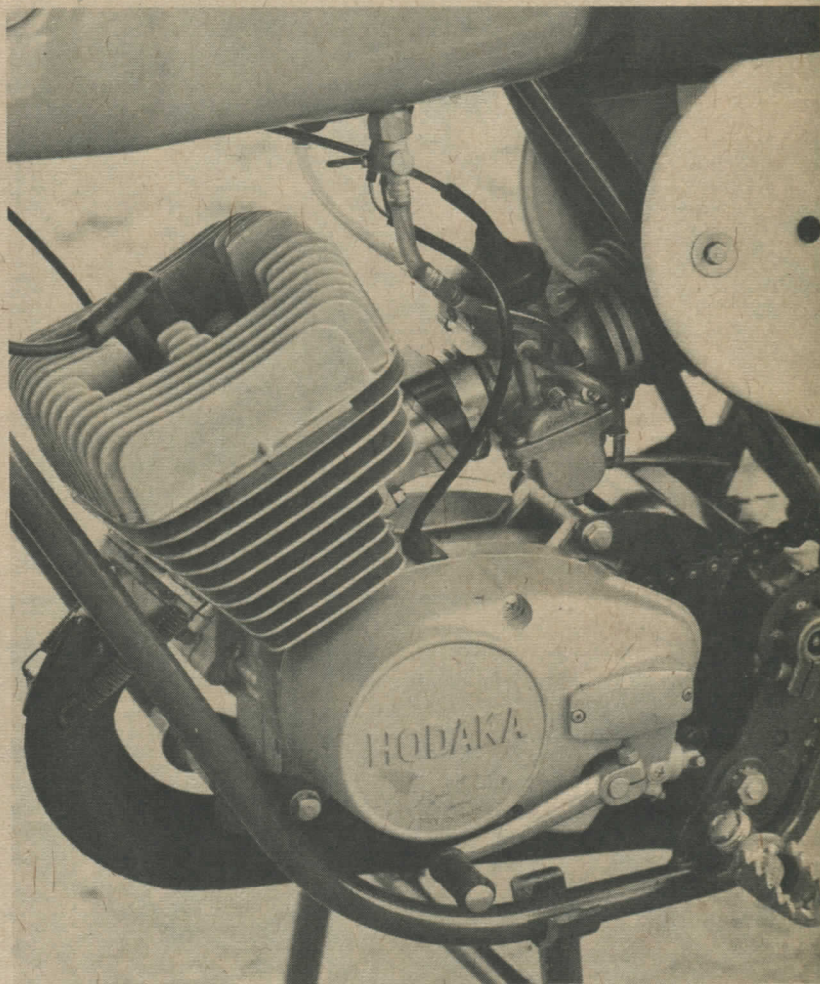


Swing arm has two positions. This one worked best for all of our test riders.

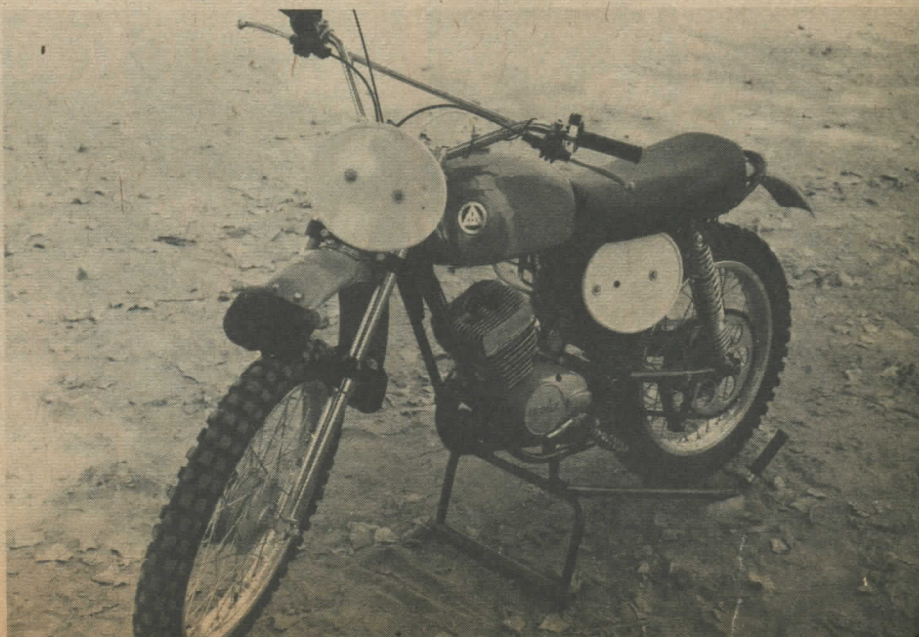
The new 125 Super Combat doesn't even look much like the older, mild-mannered Hodakas.

Not just a face-lift,
this is a brand new
racing machine.

The heart of the matter, an all new 125 powerplant, puts out plenty of power aided by the 32mm Mikuni and reed valve assembly.



Photos by Steve Reyes



that allows you to mount the shocks in either a near-vertical position or the forward slant.

If you've ever gone through the labor of taking your bike halfway apart, just to lube the steering head bearings and the swing arm, you'll love the Combat. With the half dozen or so grease nipples on the frame and engine, it's a simple matter of getting out the old grease gun and firing

away.

The front forks on the Combat seemed to be the same as last year's. More about that later.

The engine is described as having an alumiferric cylinder which incorporates the best of two worlds. We were also told that the newly designed two-stroke had a reed valve and a trick button mag. The clutch plates are made of steel and fiber,

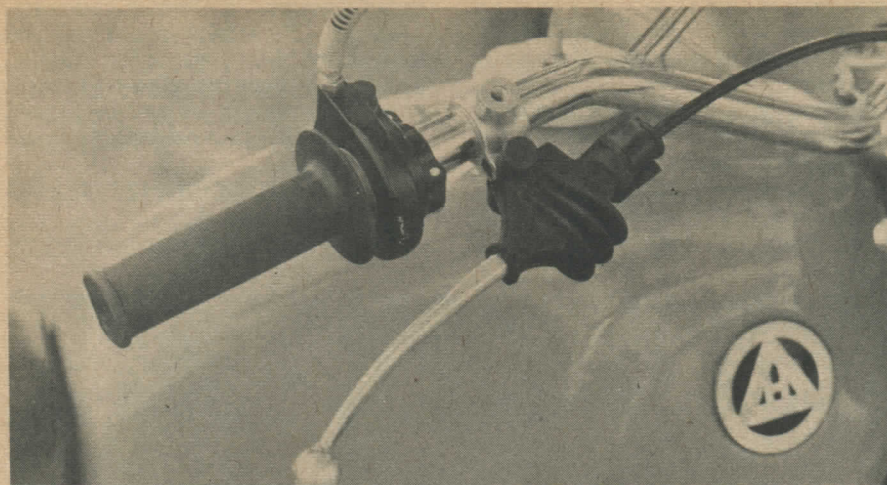
rather than the solid fiber of past years.

Gone is the traditional chrome gas tank on the MX version of the Hodaka. The Combat has a fiberglass tank that is painted orange to match the plastic fenders, and has twin petcocks feeding a 32mm Mikuni.

SO WHAT HAPPENS AFTER YOU FIRE IT UP?

After we mixed up a batch of fuel for



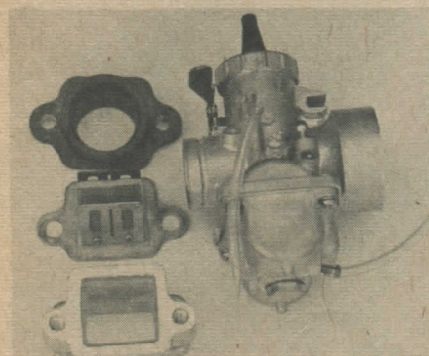


the bike, we all stood around wondering when our photographer, Mongo, er, Steve Reyes, would finish shooting stills of the machine. Reyes delights in frustrating test riders—"just a few more."

The bike fired over on the second kick, and we waited a few minutes for the engine to warm up. Once on the track we began to sort the bike out. At first you will feel awkward on the bike and wonder what the problem is. We found that the faster you ride the bike and the harder you push it, the more it cooperates.

While you might have trouble convincing the bike to turn in a tight corner

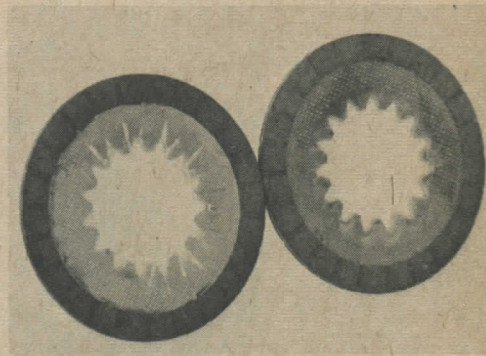
Quick turn throttle, spring protected throttle cable and dust covers are simple and hassle-free.



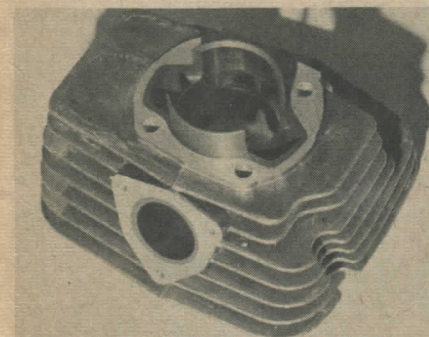
The reed valve assembly for the 125 is made by DH Industries and incorporates their famous fiberglass petals.



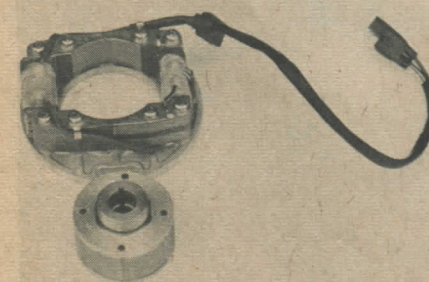
The piston looks like it has escaped from a swiss cheese factory, but it works.



New for this year is the steel and fiber clutch plates. In the past, Hodakas have used solid fiber plates.



The alumiferrous cylinder has a unique porting design which provides a long low end.



New for the Combat is the button mag which is altering the power of many small bore engines. You'll see this style mag in many new engines.

We have no doubts that everything is water-tight on the bike after our many river crossings.



at half speed, when you crank the throttle open and feel the punch, you know it will lay over and blast on through.

Another thing that is deceiving is the powerband. The engine has the traditional 125 punch in the back when it is on the pipe, but the Combat's long low end build-up makes you wonder if it is ever going to come on. Once we learned that the engine would not blow up when we got to the powerband, we had no trouble keeping it buzzing. The long low

problem unless you've ever been in the last lap of a race and traded a second for a sixth, while you find the little click between first and second. Hodaka assured us that the new version of the Combat would correct this problem.

Tighten everything on the bike after you've ridden it for about half an hour. For some unknown reason, everything loosened up in the early stages of testing. Once everything is tight again, you don't have to worry about it as much.

The bike comes stock with a center-

stand instead of a side-stand. A lot of people think that it's the greatest thing since the invention of the outhouse, but we ended up leaning the bike against a lot of trees.

NICE TOUCHES

Now for all the good news. How about 193 lbs. wet? Even though the brakes look too small, they work all day without going away. Footpegs, levers, dust covers, kill button, rims and tires are all first class and hassle-free.

The air box is large, has a foam element and is well protected. We tried a few of our infamous high-speed river crossings, and found we couldn't drown the machine out.

SO WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

After the first day of testing, we thought we would recommend the Combat as a fine beginner's MX'er. We still do recommend it as such, but we also found that the Combat could find a place in just about any of the classes and win. Many of the people who started out in racing began with a Hodaka, and with the advent of the 125 Super Combat, a lot of people are going to stay with Hodaka.



HODAKA 125

Suggested Retail Price: \$995.00

ENGINE

Engine type 2-stroke, single cylinder
Bore and stroke, mm 56 x 50
Displacement, cc 123
Horsepower/rpm (claimed) n.a.
Torque/rpm (claimed) n.a.
Compression ratio 8.6:1
Air filtration foam element
Carburetion 32mm Mikuni
Lubrication oil in gas
Ignition CDI

DRIVE TRAIN

Transmission 5-speed, constant mesh
Clutch type wet, multi-disc
Primary drive spur gears
Final drive ratio 14:64

CHASSIS

Chassis type double downtube
Overall length, in. 79
Seat height, in. 32
Peg height, in. n.a.
Ground clearance, in. 7 1/2
Wheelbase, in. 52.3
Weight, lbs. (as tested) 193
FR/RR wt. bias, percentages . F-43%, R-57%
Tires, front 3.00 x 21
rear 3.50 x 18

Max. Pts.	NUMERICAL EVALUATION	
10	Power	8
10	Powerband	8
10	Acceleration	9
10	Transmission	
	(5) Ratios	5
	(5) Operation	5
10	Suspension	
	(5) Front	5
	(5) Rear	4
10	Brakes	
	(5) Front	4
	(5) Rear	4
10	General Handling	9
30	Miscellanea	
	(5) Starting	5
	(5) Rider comfort	4
	(5) Quality of craftsmanship	5
	(5) Riding maneuverability	4
	(5) Tires	4
	(5) Noise level	4
100 pts.	Overall Rating	87 pts.

end actually helped us out, once we learned how to use it.

Handling was quite surprising. We didn't expect the front end to handle as well as it did, and are pleased to report with a little body English, you can get the bike to do just about anything you want it to. The Hodaka people mentioned the fact that there will be an inch-and-a-half longer swing arm available for the Combat soon. The new swing arm is supposed to eliminate all side hop that you might experience on long, bumpy straightaways. We never were bothered with that much side hop, and hope that the longer swing arm doesn't hinder the turning ability of the Combat.

PROBLEMS

The one thing that you'll hate about the Combat is that it isn't a primary kick machine. That means if you kill the engine in a race, you have to find the elusive neutral to fire the bike over again. This doesn't seem to be much of a