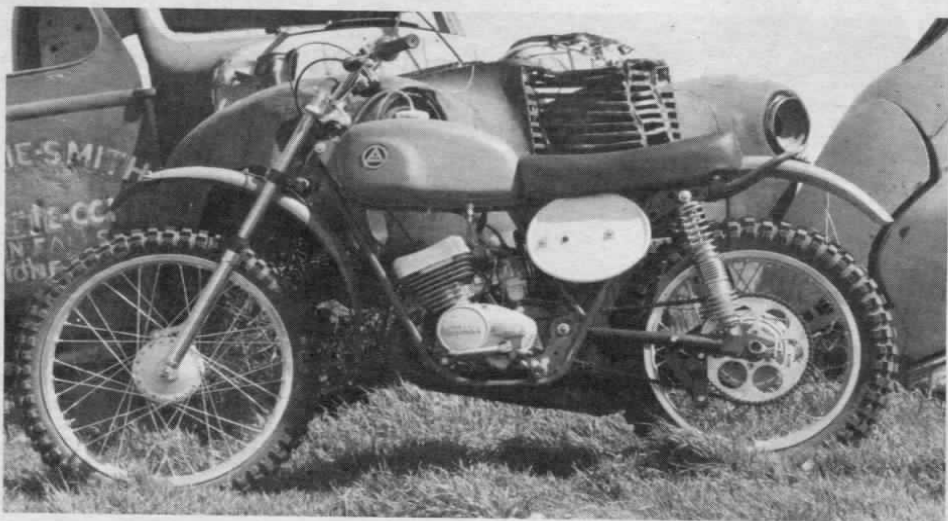


TEST PREVIEW HODAKA SUPER COMBAT

THE HODIE PEOPLE ARE JUMPING INTO THE MOTO-CROSS GAME WITH ALL THEIR SERIOUSNESS SHOWING. THE BIKE'S A HOT ONE.



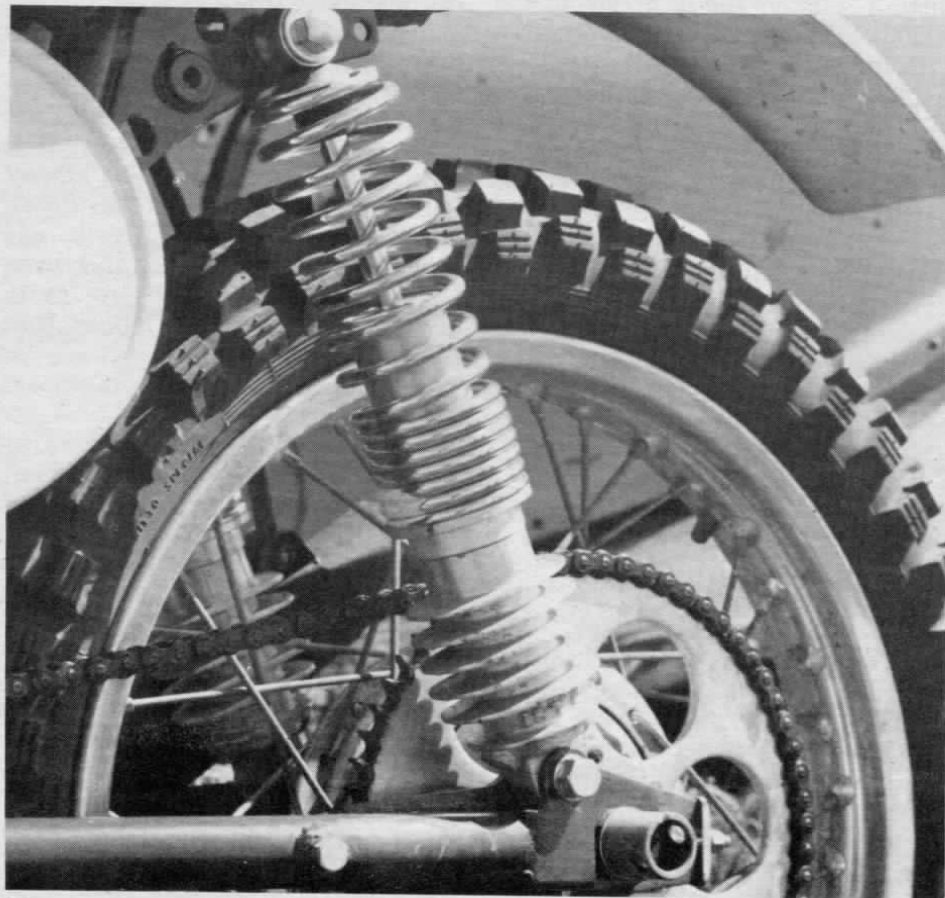
Foxy looking scoot but, egad, where's the chrome tank?

(There's always something new happening here at MXA. Last month we gave you a "Test Update" in which we let you in on what went on after a formal test. This month we're layin' a "Test Preview" on ya. You see, the Hodaka people called us up all excited over their hot new racer, the Super Combat. There weren't enough of them around to release one for an official, long-term test, but they had one at the home office in Oregon we could ride. So Baz hopped a plane and spent a day thrashing the little booger around the rolling wheat fields and cow pastures in the land of Bad Rock. A full-fledged test will follow in the next issue or the one after. In the meantime, Bazzar's report:)

Startling. The tank is orange and the frame is blue, a radical departure from the chrome and red motif of Hodakas past, but right down memory lane for me, since orange and blue were my high school colors. However, paint does not the motocrosser make, so let's peel it back and see what the enduro freaks from Oregon have done to make motocross more fun for us.

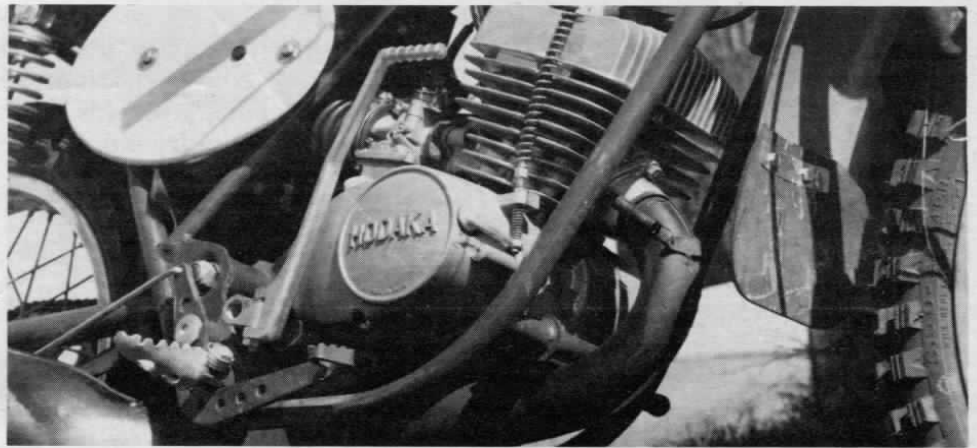
Right off, it's short; under 53 inches from axle line to axle line. This makes for a very close relationship between bike and rider, as small front-to-rear body adjustments make big changes in bike attitude. But the short base makes it corner like a hockey puck; just smash into a berm with the gas on and the bike turns itself. And even exits on the back wheel to keep you awake. Fun.

Power comes on about halfway up the rev range and delivers enormous quantities of muscle way past ten thousand. It's a scene to ride. You hold the gas on and



Monster shocks stay frosty-cool but springs are way too beefy.

Tapering head pipe and high volume cones extract many horse-powers from reed valve Combat motor.



your mind is telling you, "Shift! Shift!" but the power keeps coming on so you wait a little longer. It gets almost frightening because if you hold the gas on long enough, the little pooper gets going so fast you start to have second thoughts about using any more, but there always seems to be more there. The reed valve, many-ported single feels more like a hot Penton than a Hodaka. Really fast, but Honda and YZ freaks will miss the big mid-range punch the Super Combat doesn't have.

The Hodie handles like no other Japanese 125 I've ridden. In other words, it seems to track in a straight line, corner precisely and slide on a dime. The strong but heavy frame (the whole rig weighs somewhere around 195, wet) shows absolutely no signs of twitch, due in part to additional struts supporting the swingarm pivot against the backbone tube, an improvement over the old Combat frame.

Front forks are dialed. No topping or bottoming, good spring rates and damping, and travel checks in around six inches. Rear shocks are similar to Kawasaki hammerheads, only with fins. They run cool, damp well for the light bike and show no signs of fade. Two top mounting positions are available. Since the spring rate was way too stiff for me, we used the softest mount and preload setting. I believe production spring rates will have to be made softer.

What I find from a short day's ride is that the Super Combat is one of those bikes that will let you go as fast as your ability will let you. If you're good, that's good. If you're bad, that's good too. Either way, it looks like prospective Super Combat owners will be winners. *



The short wheelbase made wheelies a can of corn.



In a turn, the Super is extremely steady but not what you'd call a slider.