



Warren Reid digs a berm with the powerful Honda RC works bike.

Warren Reid's factory RC125 works bike and Steve Wise's highly modified Moto-X Fox CR125 production machine.

A TALE OF TWO HONDAS

By Jim Gianatsis

22/POPULAR CYCLING

Rumors have been circulating on the national motocross circuit that Honda is going to be bringing out a completely redesigned lineup of production motocrossers. Present indications are the new Hondas will be available sometime towards the end of the 1977 year and that the new bikes will be quite similar to the present RC factory bikes being used by Team Honda.

The present Honda production motocrossers are seriously outdated and not too many people race them any more. Still, models like the CR 125 are bargain-cheap in new or used condition and are readily available. There are at least half a dozen accessory manufacturers doing a bangup business selling performance parts to keep those little Elsinores competitive. The purpose of this article is to give you a look at the factory's RC 125 works bike and the top CR 125 "production" bike being raced on the 125cc National circuit. Along the way we'll provide an insight into what the new production CRs might be like when Honda does introduce them, along with some ideas on how to keep those old CR

Steve Wise's best finish so far on the Fox Honda against the factories has been a second (at the Houston 125cc National), which ain't bad at all.



125s competitive in the meantime.

HONDA 125cc RC 1977

Honda has only one rider on the 125cc National circuit this year, youngster Warren Reid, who is following the Nationals more to gain experience than to win races. Honda probably won't get serious about winning the 125cc Nationals again until it has a competitive production bike to sell. The factory RC 125 works bike, though, is one of the better designed works bikes on the circuit. It's expected (and hoped) that the new production bike will resemble the RC quite strongly with a similar frame, suspension and engine design.

The single downtube chrome-moly frame and the magnesium engine were designed together with long-travel rear suspension in mind. The countershaft on the engine is placed right next to the swingarm pivot on the frame so chain tension remains almost the same throughout the arc of rear-wheel travel.

The rear brake is a full floating arrangement that's cable operated.

Aluminum is used for the fuel tank, plastic for the fenders and number panels. The only bad idea on the whole bike is that the rear fender and a portion of the saddle to which the fender is attached, overhang off the back frame section of the bike. When the bike gets flipped over backwards the fender and a portion of the saddle break off.

The RC Honda uses Showa spring forks, without the benefit of air springing, to provide 250mm (9.8 inches) of front wheel travel. The rear suspension has an equal amount of travel. The bike is pictured with Koni reservoir gas/oil shocks, but Warren and his dad John R, who just happens to be the bike's mechanic, are now using Fox AirShox, as are the other members of Team Honda.

Honda pioneered case reed-induction on its works bikes, but the latest RCs are now using more conventional cylinder reed-induction. The carb is a 34mm Mikuni. The entire engine assembly is extremely compact and lightweight, helping to reduce the bike's overall weight to 180 pounds. An exclusive on the RC engine is placement of the

ignition on the right side of the engine. The timing can be adjusted from the outside by rotating the outer cover after three screws are loosened and an inspection plug taken out to align the timing marks. It is not known whether or not the RC type engine will be used in the new production bikes, but a good guess is that an updated RC engine similar to what Steve Wise is using will be used.

MOTO-X FOX HONDA 125cc CR

Steve Wise is the fastest privateer on the national circuit, and because his father owns a Honda shop in McAllen, Texas, he felt it was only right to race a Honda. The problem was that a stock CR 125 Elsinore is hardly competitive against the latest production and factory bikes being used by the other riders. Steve solved this problem by enlisting the aid of top tuner and bike builder Cliff White to make him a competitive Elsinore. The resulting creation is a bike that's even better than some of the factory machinery on the track. Steve's major sponsor is Moto-X Fox, with

The bikes and their tuners. Left, John R., with the Honda RC125 works bike. On the right is Cliff White and his creation, the Moto-X Fox Honda CR125.

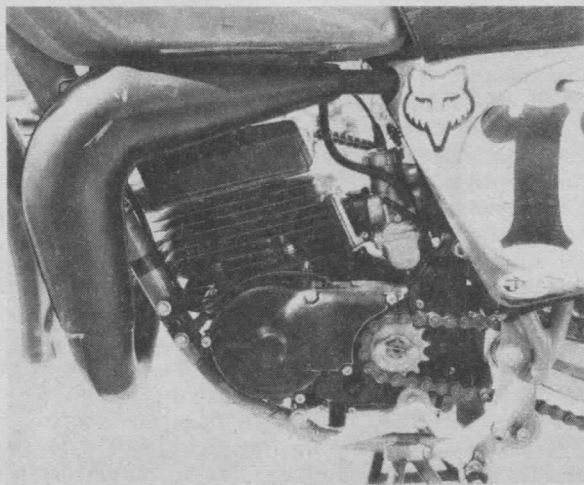
additional help in the form of parts coming from DG Performance and American Honda.

Cliff's toughest job with the Elsinore was to update the chassis by rebuilding the entire rear frame section. This change allowed the use of Fox's aluminum swingarm and 17.5-inch AirShox, increased the wheelbase for

better high-speed stability and provided 265mm (10.5 inches) of rear wheel-travel. Simons air/spring forks from Moto-X Fox are used up front for better handling. Their extra length provides an additional increase in wheelbase while the extra strong design cuts down on flex. Cliff mounted the lower triple clamp upside down to allow 265mm of travel up



The left side of the latest RC works engine. Mill uses cylinder reed induction and gearbox now has six speeds instead of five as on the stocker.



The same view of Wise's engine, with Mugen kit installed. Pipe tucks under tank nicely.

front as well, without raising the front end of the bike up too high. That would have happened if the triple clamp was left in its normal position. Complete bike weight is 185 pounds.

Things are just as trick down in the engine department. American Honda sent Steve a Japanese hopup kit by Mugen which consists of a 6-petal stock

reed-induction cylinder, head and pipe. The whole kit just bolts on the stock Elsinore engine. Cliff changed the rod assembly for a stronger one from DG Performance. The thing about the Mugen kit is that it carries a Honda part number, although it isn't available for sale yet. This might mean the kit will be available later in the year when the new

production bikes are released. If so, then the new production bike might retain the present Elsinore engine, perhaps with the Mugen kit installed. The engine assembly is finished off with a 34mm Mikuni carburetor, a good compromise for all around power. 🏍️



Close up of the aluminum swingarm and 17.5-inch AirShox kit on Wise's bike. Kit is available generally from Moto-X Fox.



Designed specifically with very long travel in mind, the RC factory Honda locates the engine countershaft sprocket right next to the swingarm pivot point. Shocks fitted at this time are Koni reservoir gas/oil units.