

Every bike rider should learn how to ride motocross at least once in his lifetime.

All you need is a particle of competitive instinct hidden somewhere in your glands and a few bucks to spare. Not because you're someday going to be a World Champion—the chances are 50,000 to 1 against it—but for the sole reason that learning how to ride motocross is an adventure. And Lord knows, the lives that some of us lead are static and adventureless. Then again, there are those who will catch the spirit of riding and get very fast, and maybe be those two in 100,000.

The various elements of motocross are probably not now a part of your life; reliance on quick reflexes, athletic conditioning, a moderate risk of physical danger, and dedication to achieving a standard that, to a beginner, may be difficult but not unobtainable. What we're trying to say is that you can easily get your head behind motocross riding, and even if you're never the fastest in the world, the effects of the training and dedication necessary might benefit your entire outlook on life.

The training, practicing, judgment, balance, and hardware that you will use in your motocross career are all developed for only one reason . . . to make you go fast. Not just fast, but faster than anyone else. It may seem crude, but once you've done it, slow just won't do any more.

YOUR BIKE

One commonly held misconception in this country is that you must have the ultra-trickest bike to start out on. There are arguments against this; a slightly less than perfect bike will teach you all the devious things that motorcycles can do when they're traveling fast, and you have to work harder on a funkier bike, so you learn the right and wrong way of doing things more quickly, and the extra work gets you in shape faster. This is the European approach, developed



Don't just say "Far out" each time a rider sails off the jump. Watch and learn. Critique each rider's style.

because all they have are funky bikes. It works.

On the other hand, riders will say that it's stupid to start out on anything but the best. Why spend all that time working when you could be developing your basic technique on a good handler?

We'll let you decide, but if you don't have the bucks for a zoot-capri MX bike, there might not be much choice. If you must start at the bottom, don't learn to ride on anything but a bike that was designed to ride in the dirt.

The Japanese Enduros are acceptable learning bikes, as are their European counterparts, like the Ossa Stiletto or Bultaco Matador. These machines are not very fast, nor do they handle well at MX speeds, but you can learn to ride around corners fast and their handling quirks force you to learn to choose easy lines around the course. This is a basic necessity in motocross that some very fast, naturally gifted riders haven't learned yet.

Good cheap genuine motocrossers

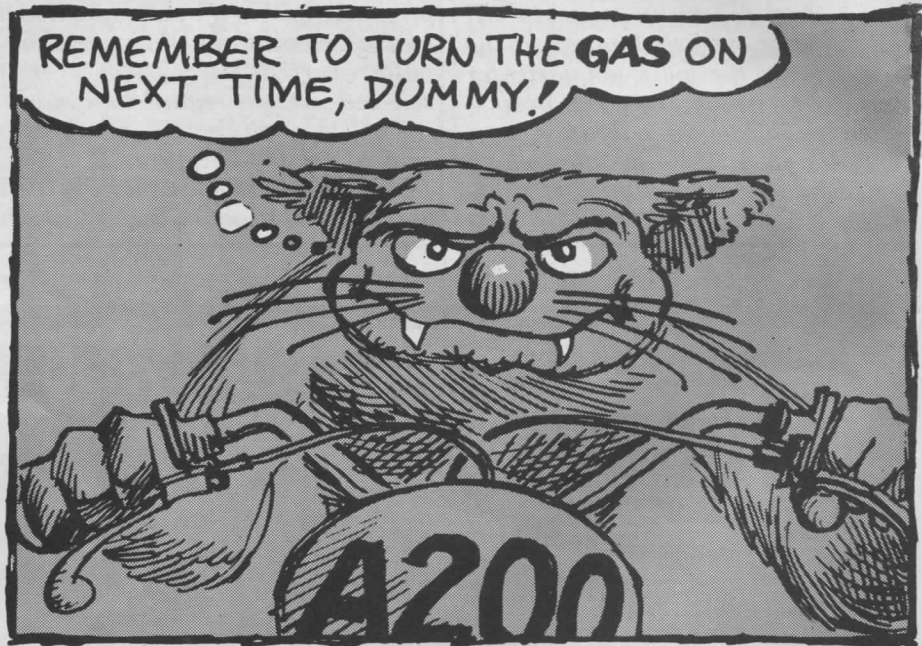
that make excellent beginner's bikes are the old up-pipe CZs, early Pentons, and two- or three-year-old Husky 250s. The spring-fork, iron head DKWs are also quite good.

Whether you start out on a stripped enduro bike, a well-used MXer, or a super-sano CZ, Maico, Penton or what have you, the machine must be prepared and maintained regularly.

The three most basic things a motocross bike must have are a 21-inch front wheel, an effective, well-sealed air cleaner, and footpegs that won't break your ankles. These may seem like off-the-wall items to you, but they're the three areas where makeshift MXers often fall short.

A 21-inch front wheel is a must, even if your bike is only 100cc. If you doubt my word, lace up a 21-inch rim on your DT-1 and then give it a try. The handling improvement will be noticeable.

A regularly-serviced air cleaner will keep your engine running, and you can't learn to go off jumps while you're push-



LEARN TO RIDE MIX

It's good for your head

by Pete Szilagyi

ing your bike. Dirt will destroy an engine very rapidly.

Footpegs are a big part of a motocross bike. The rider is constantly shifting his weight from side to side, and moving his feet on and off the pegs, sometimes frantically. When you're standing on the pegs, they're the only things holding you up and away from the ground that's moving past at a high rate of speed. Select pegs that fold and have cleats in them to grip your boot.

Several items should be modified or replaced to suit your own personal needs: handlebars, controls, fenders, tires, etc. Don't worry about the motor, it'll be a while before you learn to use even 50 percent of what's there. Just make sure it's running right, with good punch on the bottom end.

After you've been riding on motocross tracks for a while, you'll learn a lot of things about your machine, and the changes that must be made to help you improve your riding style will become evident quickly.

Remember, fast is what you want. Not just sheer horsepower down the straightaway, but a bike that is comfortable for you to ride. Then the real fast will come easier.

YOUR BOD

You've already been out play racing, so I don't have to tell you how tiring it is to ride fast. When you're racing, you just can't stop when you get tired, that's not the way it's done. The solution is to get your body in reasonably decent shape so you won't get tired as quickly, and to develop your muscles to a point where they're not working at full capacity all the time. A reserve of strength is necessary.

Both endurance and strength can be increased through the use of a training program. Don't let that scare you off, because you won't have to do 3,000 push-ups a day and run to Chicago and back.

A few basic exercises three times a

week, some jogging, and a nice bicycle tour every now and then should suffice if you ride twice a week or more. Husqvarna has an excellent training manual that outlines basic exercises that can be performed without your having to buy expensive weights and spring-loaded doodads.

Putting your bod in shape doesn't necessarily have to be a rote schedule of boring exercises and sweaty routines. Many would-be riders overlook some everyday tasks that, with a slight sacrifice in convenience, can provide good exercise. For example: Forget you ever heard of an elevator. Climbing stairs is a good thigh strengthener. Better yet, run up the stairs. When you're tempted to jump in the car and go somewhere relatively nearby, remember your training program and walk instead. Swimming and bicycle riding are great exercise, and fun too.

Motocross riders in various cities throughout the country form groups to get in shape and have a good time with friendly competition away from the track. In Newport Beach, all the local riders go ice skating on Wednesday nights . . . good conditioning. There is a group of riders in Austin who joined the local softball league, and regularly stomp the rest of the teams. Again, good vibes and good exercise. Several racers in Malibu play volleyball on the beach; the jumping around in the sand makes their thighs like tree trunks and the lady-type scenery is almost enough to make them sink to their knees and weep.

A halfway decent diet should be combined with whatever kind of exercise you choose. Wheat germ, mango sprouts and carrot juice don't necessarily have to be a part of it, just stay away from junk foods like potato chips, french fries, too many sweets, etc. Now that you're more active, you'll feel like eating good stuff because the old bod is beginning to look and feel better, and you're proud that you live inside it.

Smoking cigarettes is not the hot setup for a motocross rider, especially when he starts getting serious about 20-minute motos and riding two classes, and going fast. A few very fast riders do smoke, but there's no telling how much faster they would go if they gave it up.

TOGETHER: YOUR BIKE AND YOUR BOD

Learning the techniques necessary for riding a motorcycle fast over gnarly terrain is where the adventure begins.



Downhills are a source of constant pucker for beginning riders. Follow another rider to pace yourself, then pass him.



Sitting down on a motorcycle in the air is a serious no-no. This is Jim Wilson, one of the few riders who can get away with it.



Work on the corners, they are really and truly where the race is won or lost.



Get this kind of stuff out of your system before the first race.



If it's approached systematically, you won't crash very often and you'll learn much faster. Most beginners just go out and gas it . . . then learn how to hold on. Yes, a big part of learning is gassing it deeper into a corner, or sailing farther off a jump, or going one gear higher through the whoop-de-dos. But if you're always a half-inch from disaster, you're probably spending all your time trying to stay alive instead of learning how to ride motocross.

The three most basic obstacles that you'll have to learn to ride your bike over are jumps, rough straights, and corners. And you'll have to learn to use your throttle and your brakes; you can do more with them than just stop and go. Each of these aspects of motocross riding will be the subject of a full-length 3-D Technicolor article in upcoming issues of MOTOCROSS ACTION, but we'll give you the basics now so you can go out and start practicing.

Going through corners quickly can only be mastered if you learn to enter the corner going as fast as possible and leave it smoothly with the power on the ground. The secret to going into a corner fast is learning to use the brakes. Use *both* brakes in each corner. It's easy to use the rear stopper, but making full use of the front brake is a pain in the wazoo, but a technique you *must* learn.

OK, you're coming up on a corner and you think it's time to shut off. Force yourself to hold the gas on for one second longer. If it's rough, the way it always is where everyone brakes, get your butt off the seat and clamp down on the binders. When you slow down enough to where you're not afraid to lean the bike over, lay it down and gas it. Simple? Yes. Easy? No. The way to practice is to pick one type of corner, then go through it over and over again, gradually delaying your braking and increasing your speeds. This sounds easy on paper, but each type of corner-sweeper, off-camber, switchback, etc., requires a slightly different approach. What works best on one type might put you on your ear on another type of corner.

Probably the single technique in cornering that should be mastered first is sliding. Crossed-up slides are usually not the fastest way through, but once you learn that your life doesn't have to flash before your eyes when the bike's rear end breaks loose, you will be able to pick up on the more stylish ways to approach cornering.

Some beginners are afraid of jumps. They think when they leave the ground, their bikes are controlled by some mys-

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This is how you'll feel during your first race. Alka-Seltzer won't help. Gas it.

HOW TO LEARN

Cont'd. from page 16

terious force that attracts the front wheel to the ground first. What attitude you have when flying through the air is strictly controlled by the rider, and don't forget it. Keep your weight back and your body supple, so you are prepared to make any corrections necessary to achieve a picture-perfect rear wheel landing. Most importantly, don't let your mind seize up. *You* are in control.

Feel the front end dipping, ease back on the bars.

Front end too high, ease your weight forward. As soon as the rear wheel touches down, gas it. If power is delivered to the rear wheel on touchdown, it will get you back in shape if the bike is doing something scary.

How do you think the experts can land all crossed up and still live? They

gas it when the wheel touches down. The first time you go off a jump and accidentally kick the gearbox in neutral while you're in the air will further illustrate this principle. You probably won't crash, but a certain part of your anatomy will pucker up to fl6, if you get my meaning.

Your success at jumping a bike is partially dependent on how you approach and leave the ramp. Never decide that you're going too fast at the last minute and jam on the binders. You'll go off sideways and no amount of gassing it when you land will straighten you out. If you're going too fast, well . . . go ahead. You'll learn that you can go off a jump higher and faster than you thought.

Just as your rear wheel is about to leave the jump, a burst of throttle will launch the rear wheel and snap the

front end of the machine around if it's slightly sideways.

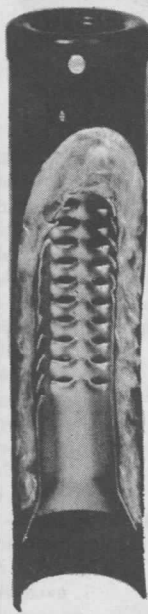
Again, there are several types of jumps, and each one is different, so familiarize yourself with each jump on the track before banzai-leaping.

Bumps, ruts, and whoopdies, whether you're traveling at five or 50 mph, will beat you to death if you slam into them instead of floating over them. Again, weight back and use the throttle and body weight shifts to get the front wheel light. Learn from the beginning to keep your arms and shoulders relaxed, or you'll get tired prematurely and won't go very fast. Loose and easy, keep in mind that the bike is controlled by you, not by the ruts and bumps that are trying to bounce you off.

HOW TO PRACTICE


The best place to practice riding motocross is, of course, on a motocross track. But if it's more convenient for you to go to a nearby vacant lot or trail riding area, you can set up turns and jumps to practice on. Mark off a right-hand turn, for example, and work on going through that corner as fast as you can. When it starts to get boring, come from the other direction and learn how to take the same turn as a left-hander. Most people feel more comfortable going through turns of one direction only. Say you can really blaze through the left-handers, but feel clumsy on right-hand turns. Don't be lazy and just play around sliding through left-handers. You're not learning much. Work on the right-hand turns, because that's where you need the practice.

If you have access to a motocross track, please don't be a nuisance and block the other riders' lines. When you hear a faster rider approaching from the rear, hold your line. Don't block him, either intentionally or unintentionally. After he passes, then take up the chase if you wish. Following fast riders for as long as you can is a great way to learn lines and technique. It also makes you feel like a fool for going so slow. But most importantly, you can learn what *can* be done, much more so than if you




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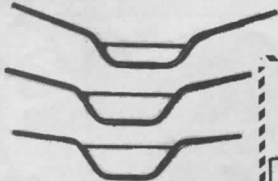
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were just a spectator watching a fast guy ride.

When you're out practicing, always wear as much protective gear as you can fit on your body. Besides serving the obvious purpose of keeping bone and sinew together, the peace of mind all that body covering affords will make you feel more secure and think less about crashing. You'll *never* learn to ride fast if you worry about crashing. That's why I haven't mentioned it until now; I don't want you to be preoccupied with the thought of plaster casts and strawberried elbows. It can happen, but only if you cause it by riding over your head continually and not paying attention to the business at hand.

TARGET FIXATION

There is something deep down inside of every human being that draws him to danger. In motocross, this little bug is manifested in a phenomenon called target fixation. Remember back to when you first started riding bikes in the dirt . . . trail riding, and you came across a log that was partially obstructing the trail. What did you do? You hit it, of course. Not because you wanted to—instead you stared at that stupid whatever it was and the bike magically drifted over and crunched it.

To the beginning motocross rider, a target fixation can be extremely dangerous and will impede your progress until you learn to recognize it and ignore it.

Novices always seem to hit the big holes in a motocross course, and they always go through the deepest part of the mudhole, and usually centerpunch a bike that falls in front of them, though all these obstacles are easily avoidable. Look past the obstacles and you'll miss them . . . stare at them and you'll crash. Simple.

TIME TO RACE

Don't enter your first race until you feel you can place better than dead last. Watch the motos in the class you'll be racing and try to compare your ability to some of the other riders' you'll be competing against. True, the best way to learn something is by actually doing it, but if you're still a clumsy beginner, you'll make mistakes under the pressure of competition that you normally wouldn't make. Worse yet, you'll be a hazard to the rest of the riders in your class.

Relax, learn, go easy, get in shape, make sure the bike is in good condition, and when you're ready, don't enter your first race and try to win. Enter for the experience. The experience of using the skills you've developed, now put to use in competition. Get your mind tuned in to the pressure, the frantic riding that you'll have to do, the handlebar to handlebar contact . . . then on the second Sunday, smoke 'em.

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