

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF THE NEW REEDED 125

HODAKA SUPER COMBAT

by the Staff of DIRT BIKE



Competition Orange Toaster

What's faster out of the hole than an Elsinore? Pulls wheelies like a Sherpa T? And bounces like a jack-rabbit that's just chewed his way clear through two acres of illegal vegetation?

The Super Combat, that's what. *Faster than an Elsinore?* Aw,

come on, you guys.

It is. We tried it.

Put it on the line with the rest of the 125 class and as long as the S. Combat can keep its rear wheel on the ground, it will be there a couple of feet in front.

We ran it off across any 125s that

happened by, and our test rider got 15 feet in front every time. Of course, he's good. But then, so were some of the other guys.

That 15 feet at the end of the start chute is enough to make all the difference in the world during the first lap.







It's all done with that same skinny engine you're used to seeing. Only this time, Hodaka has equipped it with a reed valve, a 32mm Mikuni, an iron liner in an aluminum alloy cylinder, and one of those no-flywheel CDI ignitions.

The total is an edge in the first corner.

But if a fourth- or fifth-gear straight exists anywhere on the course, the rest of the pack will eat up your edge during the first lap. The next lap, you're gonna be down a slot or two. There are a lot of bikes in the class that have it over the S. Combat on top.

And if the course is rough, they're going to blow you off so

bad that you'll think you got on an Ace 90 by mistake.

The problem is the suspension.

Out of the box, both ends were ... well, let's say that you could expect a lot more than you got. So you'd probably walk up to the forks to check them out a little; tap 'em, and find out that the sliders are still steel.

Hey, that's the problem with the front end.

Nope. The steel units are only a little heavier than the modern aluminum ones. And when we had Moly Blue medium in the tubes, they worked fine. We even tried a front wheel landing and couldn't fault them. (OK, we know that all the pros do deliberate front end

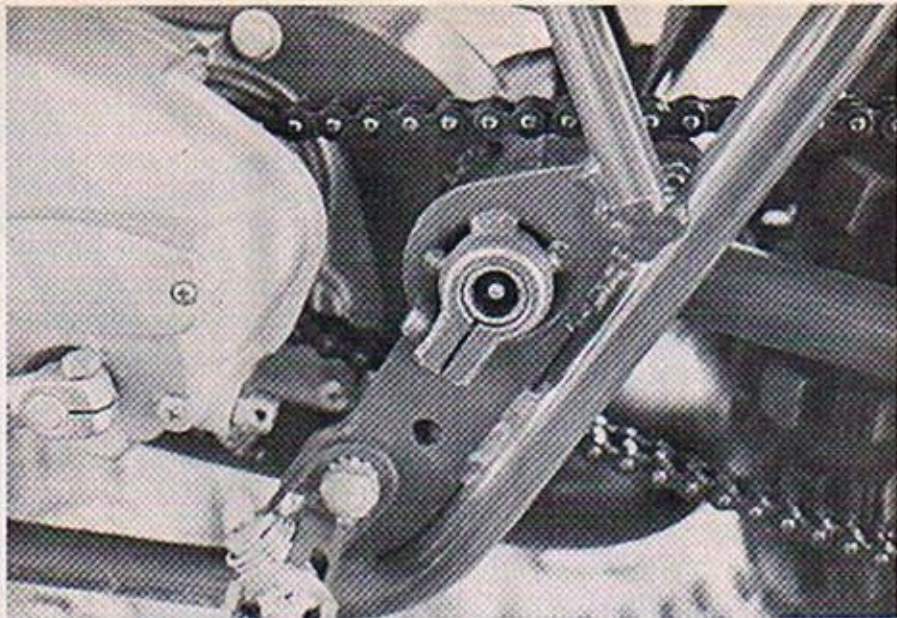
touchdowns, but it still scares us; we'll admit it.)

But the other end. Whew. Yes, the Kyaba shocks make the rear hop up and down, maybe not exactly like a stoned jackrabbit, but the analogy is close enough. Ever seen a jackrabbit make it in a straight line? You got the picture.

Hodaka's shocks used to have only rebound damping. It was cheaper and perfectly adequate for the light Rats and Aces. It even turns out that Hodaka was on the right track; lately the hot setup in shocks has been super-light down-damping and good up-damping.

But in the case of the stock S. Combat equipment, it feels like





The ankle-buster.



There's generous gussetting on Bob Rutten's swingarm.

no damping down or up. Definitely springy.

Too bad, because otherwise the Hodaka does handle. In the characteristic short-wheelbased Hodaka style, of course, but on mini-straight, multi-turn tracks, that's hot. You just jump from corner to corner, letting the pedals flutter and the engine torque you out and away.

It'll slide, too. At least, a well set up one will. Our test machinery would, but it wasn't fun. The local tracks are a bit rough in spots here, and all the spots are in the corners. You got it hung out, and then you'd hit something and the rear would go away.

It gets back to the shock problem, because when there's no compression-damping, the spring rate becomes doubly important to

good handling. Of course, we strongly suspect that there are only a half-dozen bikes in the world that still have the stock shocks on them. Which would remove the source of all this sniveling.

On to the nit-picking:

BITS AND PIECES

Like one-way shock dampening, like the steel fork sliders, Hodaka is going their own way with the air box. While everyone else has gone to great lengths to seal their air boxes, the S. Combat only has two number plates bolted over the holes. It leaves plenty of space for air passage, and while we never got the chance to run through a deep waterhole during our two test sessions, nothing the water truck left behind got down in there.

