

CZ WORKS RACERS

Remember when . . . ?

By Rick Sieman

In the late '60s and early '70s, CZ ruled the motocross world almost completely. Riders such as Joel Robert and Roger DeCoster rode the twin-pipers and single-pipers to an incredible number of International wins...and several World championships.

CZ fell on hard times in the mid-'70s, mostly through gross mismanagement and a refusal to improve its bikes. By the late '70s, CZ was nothing more than an old joke in the U.S. and not much more than a casual competitor on the world motocross scene.

Still, the JAWA/CZ factory has kept its hand in the sport, if for no other reason than to keep a portion of the buying public aware that JAWA does sell small transportation bikes at a low cost throughout parts of the world.

The race team must not have much of a budget, surely no more than the average taco stand in Los Angeles, but it still hangs in there. We had the chance recently to visit the CZ pits while in Germany at the Trophee des Nations and discuss the latest bikes with the CZ mechanics.

The team members were friendly and eager to give information. Four bikes were there for inspection, all of them 250s. Three of the bikes had what looked suspiciously like 1981 Honda CR swing-arms. Closer inspection revealed that, indeed, they were just that. The arms had thick aluminum tabs welded on the end to fit the CZ wheels up, but were otherwise stock.

Even the linkage was stock Honda. One of the bikes had a variation of the Pro-Link setup. It was hand-tooled out of aluminum, but appeared to have roughly the same dimensions as the Pro-Link. Shocks were Ohlins.

Up front, the CZs had ordinary Marzocchi forks with sandblasted fork legs. Travel at both ends was 300mm (right around 12 inches).

The cases were obviously sand-cast and the engine bottom end looked fairly bulky for a 250. A typically-finned CZ barrel rode on these cobby-looking cases, with the inevitable PAL plug stuck in the top of the generously finned head.

Carburetion was by a 36 or 38mm



If you live in a communist country and race motocross, this may be the bike of your dreams. Contrary to rumors, the CZ is still alive and kicking.



Even on the Grand Prix circuit, party leaders tell their riders that the Czech-go-slo-vakian bike is as good as LaPorte's bike.

Mikuni, depending on the track. Basic reed induction let the mix into the engine. The Czechs run Castrol oil at 20:1. Ignition is Motoplat.

The bikes are painted a dull blue color on the handmade aluminum gas tanks. Plastics are a hodge-podge of Ascerbi, Falk and M. Robert. Whatever is handy at the time is used.

A left-side kickstarter gets booted forward to fire the engine. This is not for convenience, but to save weight and reduce complexity. Transmissions are five speeders and the clutch pull felt very light.

Some of the miscellaneous hardware is quite dated, such as old-style throttles and controls. Tires are Pirelli or Barum. Weight of the bikes varies a bit, but ranges from 220 to 224 pounds, which is competitive.

Watching the bikes race, one can see they are not slow, by any means, but are not at the level of the major works bikes. They do appear to handle well and looked stable over a few bumpy, high-speed straights.

No 500 class bikes are being built, but there are a few 125s, which are hopelessly slow and overweight. It seems that Czecho must make do with what is easily obtainable and big bucks cannot be spent on exotic, lightweight goodies.

All this leads one to wonder: With every possible obstacle imaginable, CZ still manages to produce a reasonable dirt bike. Yet, in the U.S., we do not have one single dirt bike manufacturer. Food for thought. □