

LONG LEGS

Help For The CR

By Ned Owens

Way back in the December, 1976, issue of *Modern Cycle*, we installed and tested the 11-inch travel Skunk Works suspension kit on the CR-125.

If you remember then, we were impressed with the kit. The added suspension travel was extremely plush and the attendant change in geometry made the bike turn much more precisely than stock. We noticed no chassis wallow, something that long travel suspensions are prone to cause in some applications.

(Also, if you were really paying attention, then you would notice that we fitted the Gas Girlings upside down during the installation and part of the track testing. Once we found our mistake and remedied it, the bike worked as we stated. But we didn't reshoot the photos, hence, the mistake came out. A raspberry to all who chided us for the error, and a notice of a test later for those who never caught it.)

At that time we used a shock that

Skunk Works had not applied for use in their kits. After extensive testing, Ken MacPike decided to offer his kit with a choice of two shocks—original non-gas Konis and the freon baggie S&W units.

But with this happy thought still in the back of our memory, we decided to try his latest invention, the GP front suspension kit. Shades of Rube Goldberg!

If the design of the rear unit emits snickers and head scratching, the front garners guffaws. In typical Skunk Works fashion, the design is totally untypical of anything else. Popping up through the front fender is an assortment of levers, rods, brackets and a single shock that replaces all of the stock dampers and springs.

To say that it look dubious, is to be kind. But after closer inspection, it shows that the forks are actually stronger than stock. And, as we were to determine, later, they are much improved dampers.

Since, the front GP kit is designed to complement the rear 11-inch kit, we went the full route and installed Skunk equipment on both ends of a new CR-125 Honda.

AT THE REAR

This time we went strictly by the book, and installed the kit with the recommended S&Ws and springs. The last time we installed one of these kits we found that the instructions were a bit muddled. At the time, we stated that Ken was going to revise his directions. He has and they are much clearer than the original step-by-steps.

Maximum travel is eleven full inches if the proper clearances are adhered to. Travel can be adjusted to a range of about 9½ to 11 inches. Maximum travel is suggested since the bike with rider settles approximately 2-3 inches.

With the S&Ws came 95/125 springs for a 160 lb. rider. We found that this was too soft, as it bottomed easily. We switched to a 130 lb. straight wound spring, which proved to be substantially better. For fast riders or bad tracks we would suggest a heavier (160 lb.) spring.

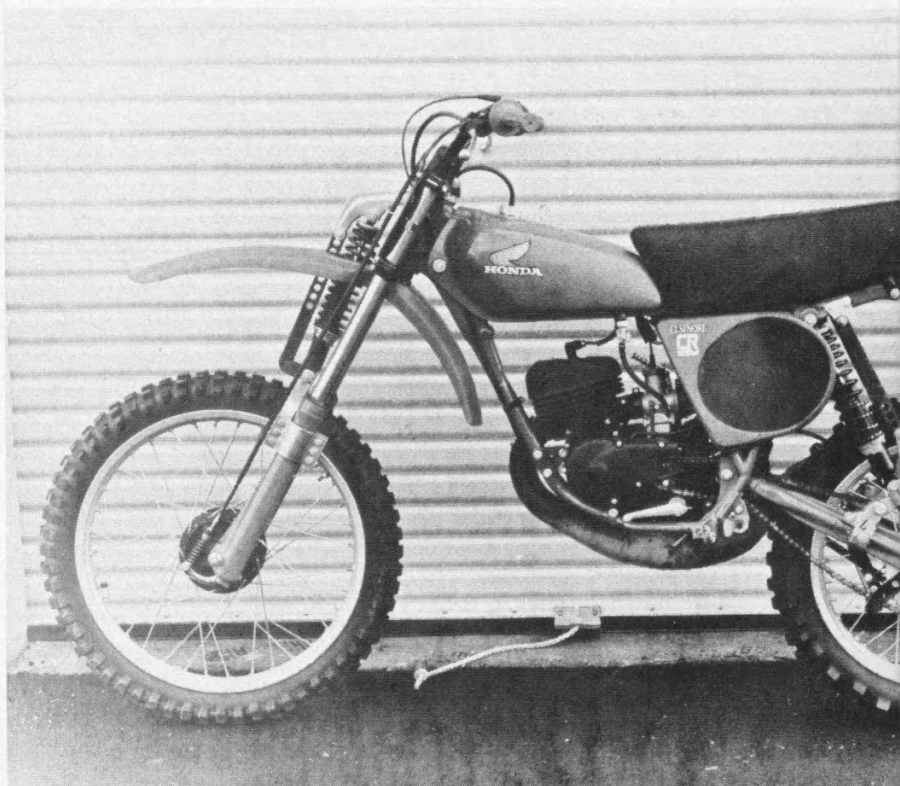
The light spring caused the bike to







If clamps are off to one side or the other, binding on the legs and misalignment of axle will occur. Using axle to help line up sliders during fitting helps keep things true.



Lower frame tubes must be raised at least 16 inches to provide clearance while forks and rear kit are installed.

wallow entirely too much. This in turn made the steering imprecise with a distinct tendency to wash. If the stock forks are retained this may not be as severe since the stockers have only $8\frac{1}{4}$ in. travel. With the long travel front, the bike didn't settle equally front and rear. The rake and trail were altered and turning characteristics were impaired.

Unless you prefer a super-soft suspension and are not concerned with turning, the recommended springs are fine. We suggest heavier springs.

AT THE FRONT

Four pages of instructions accompany the front GP suspension kit. If the builder fails to read all of the instructions, then he is in for a lot of hassle.

The key to making the installation of the front GP kit work is patience. To avoid any binding or sticking, a good deal of fitting, checking and re-fitting is necessary. There are a few variables involved so this constant checking is extremely important.

If you are not willing to take your time and do the job right, then expect a good deal of heart break.

Once you become familiar with the kit, it is not as perplexing as it first seems. Still, complete installation will take the average home mechanic approximately 6-8 hours. After that adjustments and reinstallation are fairly

simple procedures. It takes some time to become familiar with the system.

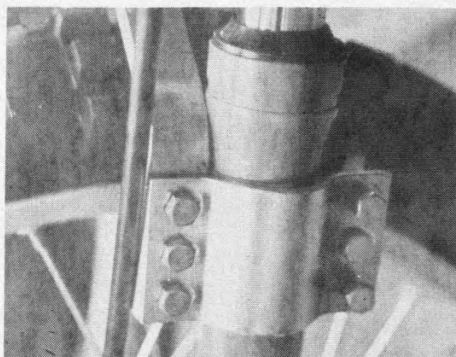
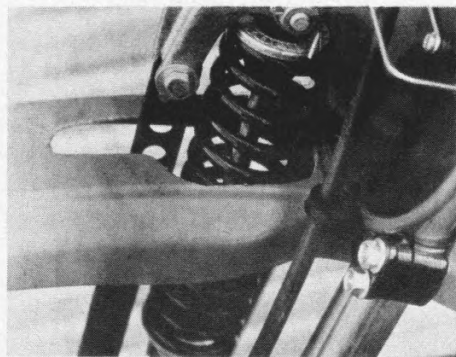
The most important parts with the greatest amount of variation in regard to location are the clamps that bolt to the fork legs. Not only is the position in relation to the top of the slider important, but setting and keeping the clamps on perpendicular to the axle is a must. Since there are no "benchmarks" to use as guidelines, installation must be done carefully with a lot of checking and fitting involved. Improper positioning will cause the forks to bind or bend an axle or both. Don't be in a hurry to install this unit.

As sent to us, the front unit outperformed the rear by a wide margin. The Koni with the spring supplied is damped well and sprung properly. The forks feel very good, and once we resprung the rear it turned well also.

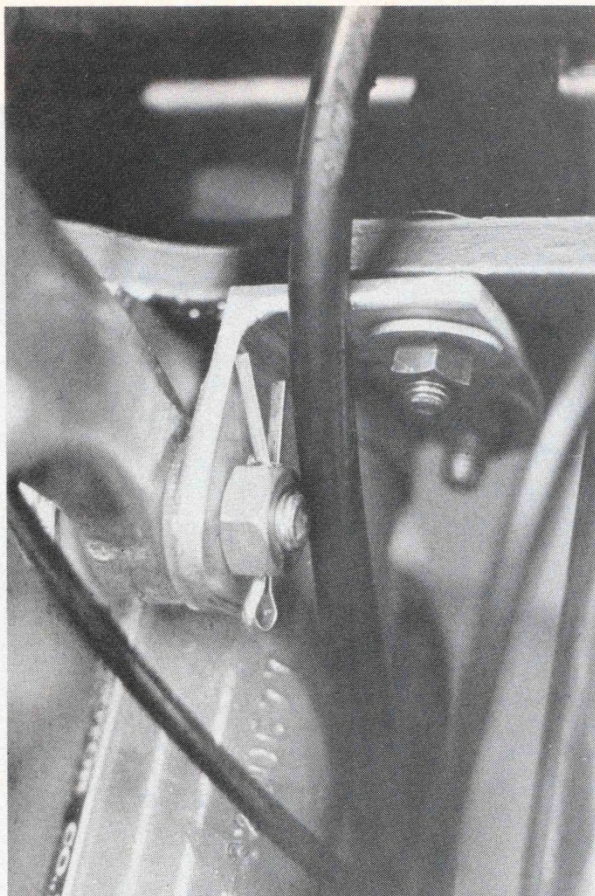
The increase in travel on the Honda is about $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. over stock. While this doesn't seem like much the increase in structural stiffness and improved damping is well worth it. There is none of the flex that is sometimes associated with forks that are lengthened with the aid of longer dampers. The lower clamps are responsible for this rigidity, acting like a fork brace for the sliders.

For our 160 lb. rider we dialed in about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a turn increase in damping on the Koni. We would also suggest the use of air caps to give a wider range of adjustment to the springing characteristics. Although the forks have the

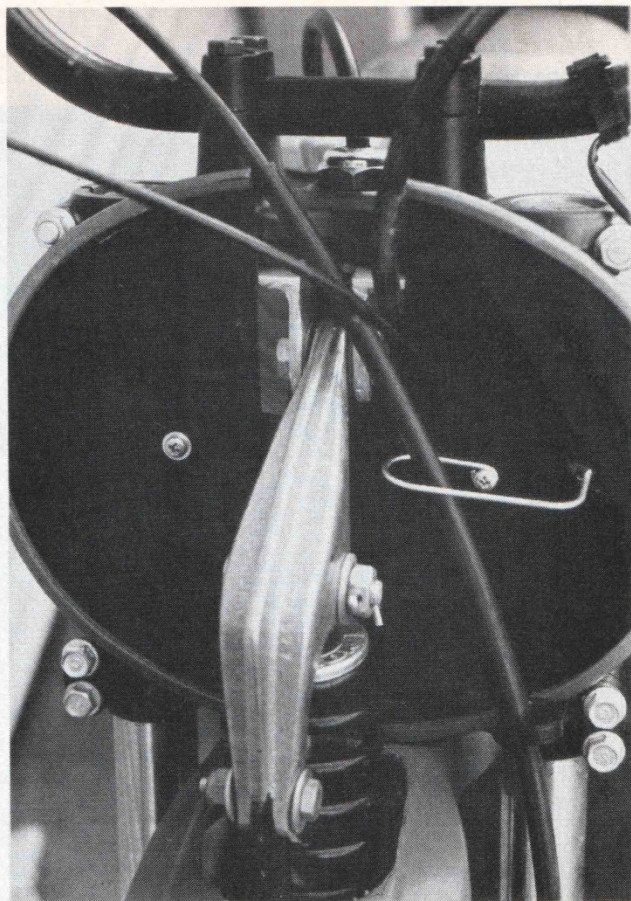
Rear edge of hole in fender is located 15mm from the front edge of the lower triple clamp. A three inch hole with a two inch slot will give the shock enough room to move around. Draw on fender with a felt marker, drill a hole at one edge and cut out with a jig saw.



Position of the slider clamp halves is critical. Proper measurement is 45mm from the top edge. This may require removal of the cable clamp casting on the slider or clamp on the left slider can be trimmed.



Shock eye and pivot bolts must be drilled and pinned to prevent loosening.



Cutting slot through the top of the number plate is helpful for installation and eventual removal of plate without unbolting main lever. Clutch cable must be routed to the left side from right side of the steering head.

internals removed they are still filled with a specified amount of oil, and the air chamber left at the top of the forks is instrumental in the spring rates.

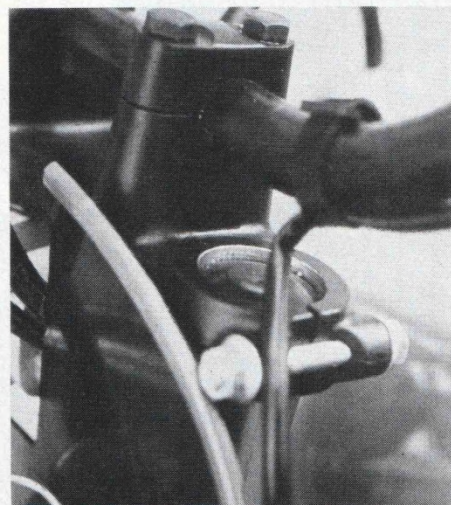
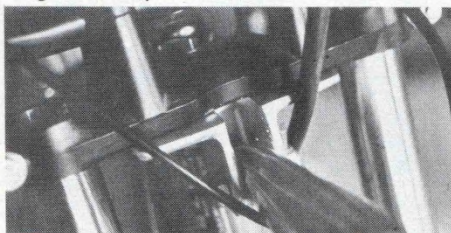
IS IT WORTH IT?

At just about \$115 for the front kit, it is a better solution to that much long travel than just a standard fork improver kit. Also it is about half the price of a pair of accessory forks. That makes it a reasonable alternative. It not only increases travel, but improves the damping and strength of the stock fork assembly.

With a little juggling on the spring rates, the rear kit complements the front increase in travel. Once the rates are brought up and the chassis wallow is overcome, the rear works admirably. With a tab of around \$155, the rear kit gleans a great deal of travel with less stress on the individual shock component than say, a much longer shock. A good pair of extra long shocks can be had for about that much money so it is a toss-up dollar for dollar.

If you purchase the Skunk Works Super GP components plan to do a little dialing on your own. Give yourself plenty of time for installation and shaping to your riding style. Once this is done, the Skunk kits are worthwhile additions to your machine. ●

Underneath side of triple clamp may need to be drilled or ground to permit long bolts to protrude.



Improper location of the clamp halves causes too little engagement in the top clamp. Tubes must be bottomed in compressed sliders to prevent damage to shock or kit.



Axle should install easily if everything is right. If a good deal of pounding or tweaking is necessary to fit, then the clamps are off, loosen them and try again.