

SCOOP KAWASAKI TRIALS PROTOTYPE



Trials riding the sport of the future? The Japanese think so — and here come the bikes to help you keep your feet on the pegs.

JAPAN HAS the habit of whipping a breeze into a gale force attack.

They overpowered road racing and motocross. Now two factories — Honda and Kawasaki — are going all-out for the trials market, tipped by experts to be the big and important market of the future.

Former European trials champion Don Smith is developing the big K's project, and our scoop shots of Smith in action were taken at a secret course owned by Kawasaki and near their Akashi plant. The mountainous area was bought specifically to test this new bike.

The new machine is developed from one of Smith's own design



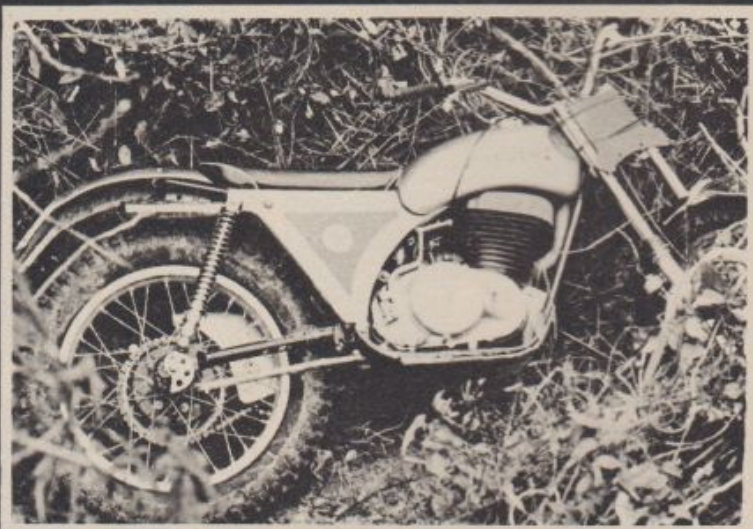


and construction. The powerplant is a development of the 450 Ole Pettersson motocross mount, around which Smith fashioned his own frame.

The bike was flown to Japan and Smith, a former factory Greeves rider known internationally as the man who developed the Montesa Cota, was invited to Tokyo for discussions with Kawasaki representatives.

"The factory men are fully switched on. They are deadly serious about the project and have specimens of all the Spanish machines," Smith told our representative (that explains his appearance on some "foreign" bikes in our shots).

"Their target is to make a good machine capable of winning the



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European Trials Championship."

But behind the title the Japanese see interesting future market possibilities. Initially the battle for sales will be waged in England — traditionally the number one market for European manufacturers — where there are an estimated 10,000 trials riders and far more than any other branch of motorcycle sport.

Is it possible that the hard-headed Japanese marketing specialists are interested in such limited-volume production?

Probably not, but the Japanese version of future motorcycling sport — though it can't be the immediate future because development work on the Kawasaki is expected to continue for some time — puts trials riding high on the list

of "populars".

The reasoning is that if trail bikes are so popular, trials bikes should be more so because more people can ride them for recreation more easily.

Trials riding (as difficult as it might be to imagine now) is viewed as a future family pastime of unlimited scope. That you don't have to be a superman in the feet up game is viewed with favor and there is evidence that the sport is coming back strongly in America.

If that's the case, it pays to be in first. Novelty always boosts sales. Our most recent example of this is the Australian appearance of the Mick Andrews ISDT replica, which, having been the machine to win the European Trials Championship two years in a row, has been sought

after by enthusiasts around the world.

Honda, also recognizing the sales potential in a big swing away from currently popular trends, has already entered the market with a "soft" campaign based on a 125 cc machine called the Bials.

There's more than straight out gimmickery in the name. The "Bials for Trials" message has become a talking point far wider than the impact of the machine itself, and there's obviously a lot of value for Honda in the 125 cc machine's message being spelt out in four-stroke configuration.

The next time you go wheeling over that hairy trail, give some thought to the fact that you might be riding straight towards the day when we'll all be going trialling — so keep your feet up!