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DIRT RIDER



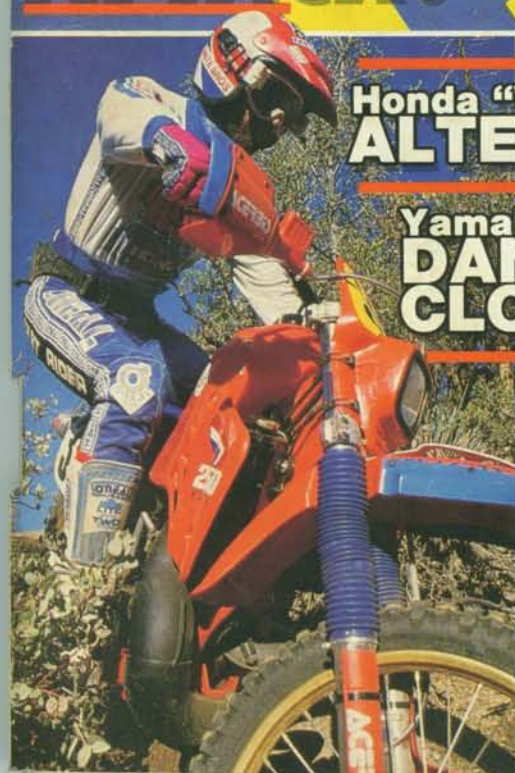
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DIRT RIDER

April 1987
Issue 53

On the Cover

One of the most exciting '87 motorcycles is the Suzuki RM250H. Willy Simons models in JT gear; photo: Karel Kramer/Olympus camera. Honda's wide-ratio gearbox and AC generator ignition kits for CRs create MX-inspired "WRs" for the woods. Grant Palenske in O'Neal apparel shows photographer Bob Carpenter/Olympus how to save time in the trees. Yamaha's YZ125T is impressive; so is Terry Swanson's riding for Mike Gaspar's camera lens. Riding gear by EP Performs.

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MAUNA KEA 200

Where the Dirt Meets the Surf in Blue Hawaii

By James W. Growney

For sheer diversity of terrain, few enduros can match the Mauna Kea 200, held annually on Memorial Day weekend on the island of Hawaii. A clue to its rigors can be gleaned from the name of the sponsoring club: Rock Island Riders.

Hawaii has rocks aplenty: Blue ones heaved up from the bowels of the earth by eons of volcanic activity and miles of lava, including smooth-as-glass *laupahoehoe* (just say "ah-ah"). If these fail to provide sufficient challenge, there are the dense rain forests that surround the city of Hilo. With more than 200 inches of rain a year, there's ample vegetation, mud, helmet-clutching vines, roots and fallen trees for the foolhardy. The best parts are where the mud and vines form a silicone-slick glaze over the shiny black lava.

Riding the Mauna Kea 200 is a great

In the jungle, the dank air was as hot as the steam room at the Barstow YMCA.

way to spend some of the vacation time you've been storing up (the family can frolic in paradise while you ride through it). As a preview of this year's competition, here are some highlights from the '86 ride.

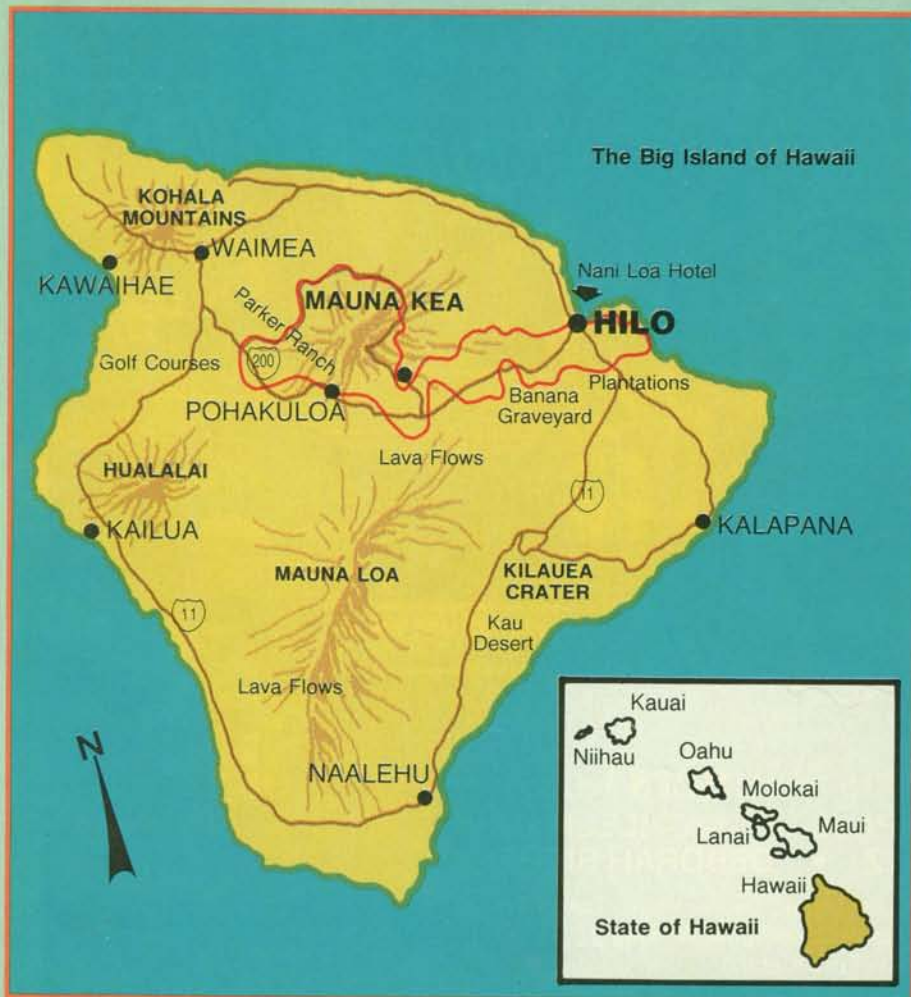
ALOHA!

Close to 100 riders gathered for last year's event, which started and finished at Hilo's Nani Loa Hotel, situated on the edge of Hilo Bay. *Dirt Rider* publisher Dick Lague arrived with a

duffel bag full of cameras to photograph Hawaiians at play on their motorcycles. Hugh Kelley, former president of a motocross club in Tahiti and founder of the Bali Hai Hotel, jetted in sporting his new knee replacement and looking fit and eager. Malcolm Smith and co-rider Gary Dreaan, both regular participants in the past, couldn't be kept away, either.

All the Hawaiian islands were also represented. John DeSoto, the "Flyin' Hawaiian," came to prepare himself for the Aloha supercross, as did the local hopeful Matt Kresser. Even the Outrigger Canoe Club entered a team. As usual, the team to beat was Hilo's Rubber Ducky, led by Steve Zoll, the 200cc *kahuna* (shaman) of muck and guck.

There are always surprises at the Mauna Kea 200. One year, it was snow



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: David Amorine (6A), Silverio Pedeger, Jr. (6C) and Michael Gregory (6B) prepare to exit the lunch stop. Minute six at the start. Riders had this hole to look forward to after lunch. Jim Pfeleger (left) benches with John DeSoto's father (right). Among the motorcycle-industry celebs riding were Malcolm Smith (7A) and Gary Dreaan (7B).



PHOTOS: DICK LAGUE

and a downhill section that started at the top of the 14,000-foot Mauna Kea volcano. Another year, the race had to be cancelled when molten lava blocked access to most of the course and threatened Hilo itself.

BANANA GRAVEYARD

Last year, the usual spring deluge stopped several days before the event and—of all things!—race day was clear and sunny. In the jungle, the dank air was as hot as the steam room at the Barstow YMCA. Even those wearing T-shirts were overdressed.

The course led through culverts, drainage ditches and abandoned sugar plantations until the riders came to a trail marked by tons of rotting bananas (some wag had scrawled a sign reading "Banana Graveyard"). On to the lava bordering the Pacific, back to the dust of the cane fields, then a final plunge into the jungle muck to earn lunch. After lunch, it was more muck and mud, then the roads leading to Pohakuloa, the big rock, and the end of the first day's fun.

Day two was a run over the dusty trails leading to the road (elevation: 11,000 feet) that runs around Mauna Kea. At high altitudes, the 200cc bikes, which had run in the rain

Riding the Mauna Kea is a great way to spend vacation time. The family can frolic in paradise while you ride through it.

forest like swarms of gnats, got emphysema; Open-class bikes, which had struggled through the mud and tight trails of the forest, strutted their stuff on the fast, rock-strewn roads. Jackets were needed to keep warm in the cool air. Back in the lower elevations, riders were treated to a run over the lava (to remove any traces of knobbies from their tires) before backtracking over powerline and tree-planting roads to the finish at the hotel.

BIG SUR-PRIZES

When the totals were in, Zoll was the overall winner, followed by David Amorian and David Hahn, all on KDX-200s. Malcolm Smith got fourth on his Husky 250, and Hawaiian surfer Gerry Lopez (a.k.a. Mr. Banzai Pipeline) earned fifth on a Husky 400. Rubber Ducky—Hahn, Zoll and Dick Wilson—

won the team event.

At the awards dinner, the audience was stunned when the prizes were announced. In what may have been a first for enduros anywhere, the sponsor (Big Island Kawasaki of Hilo) gave Zoll a brand-new KX250. Second- and third-place riders received KX80s. One of the finishers muttered, "If I'd known we could have won motorcycles, I would've ridden to kill!"

This year's race will be held over Memorial Day weekend, May 23-24, and should be very competitive. It should also be well-attended since the Rock Island Riders plan to make special hotel and travel arrangements for mainland entrants. Deadline for entry is May 1. If your appetite has been whetted, contact the Rock Island Riders, P.O. Box 631, Hilo, Hawaii 96720. Or you can call either Herb Dawrs at 808/935-2470 or Wayne Blyth at 808/961-3033. They will send you information and entry materials.

The club is working out a guaranteed booking plan to help mainland riders ship their bikes to the island. To be a part of this, you must contact the Rock Island Riders by the first week in April.

Hope you can make it! Until then, Aloha!

DR

