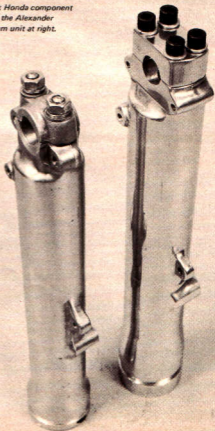


*The stock Honda component is at left, the Alexander magnesium unit at right.*



# A TOURING MAN'S CAFE RACER

Dual Disc Brakes And A Camshaft Make The 500 Honda  
A Sleeper, But Not At The Expense Of Tractability.

**I**MPROVING PERFORMANCE without sacrificing comfort or tractability is not easy. But, Checkered Flag Customs and super tuner Pop Yoshimura have succeeded in doing just that with the Honda 500 Four.

Checkered Flag Customs' bag is brakes and suspension components, and like most racing oriented people they think dual-disc front brakes are the way to go. Added stopping capability is one reason. Elimination of the torque reaction which a single brake anchored to one fork leg exerts is another benefit. Lastly, there is lighter lever pressure and more progressive engagement.

All of these reasons are valid in racing—valid enough to offset the single disadvantage of increased unsprung weight. But on the street, where less severe conditions prevail, the stock Honda single-disc set-up is more than adequate. Checkered Flag's dual-discs are for those seeking the best, regardless of intended usage.

Installation of the additional disc is simple, but modifications are a little more extensive than meet the eye. On 500 Fours, fork legs must also be changed because the stock units do not have adequate bosses for mounting the second brake caliper.

The only solution is new fork legs, and again Checkered Flag constructed them for the connoisseur. Made of magnesium alloy, the new legs offer notable improvements that will benefit road riders as well as racers. The most obvious change is a four-bolt axle cap that replaces the two-bolt stock part. The four-bolt cap offers greater fork rigidity and prevents the tire from being canted one way or the other in relation to the forks when braking in a turn. It is interesting to note that the heavier Honda 750 Four comes stock with four-bolt caps.

The new magnesium legs are also 1-3/16 in. longer (measurement taken from axle center to axle center) than stock. This smooths out the ride slightly when encountering surface irregularities like cracks where the cement joints on freeways.

The reason for the smoother ride is the increased bearing area of the longer fork legs. Increased bearing area minimizes binding, caused by the rearward force surface irregularities exert on the forks when the bike is traveling down the road. Also, fork flexing during heavy braking is reduced because there is less upper fork tube area exposed above the bearing surface of the lower leg.

The principles are simple. The engi-

neering is sound. And, results are satisfying. The forks work, even when minute bumps are encountered. The ride is smoother, and for once it hasn't been at the expense of handling. In really hard bends, steering is improved slightly, and as mentioned earlier, there is considerably more brake feel. Improvements like these sometimes mean the difference between staying on line and getting off.

Fortunately, Checkered Flag Customs is offering two kits. The No. 300 kit comes complete with every stock and non-stock component needed to install both the dual-discs and magnesium fork legs. Street riders who don't want the additional braking can purchase the No. 400 kit, which consists of the trick fork legs, and mounting hardware for the dual discs. Price of this kit is \$99.50. The No. 300 kit goes for \$158.50. All nuts and bolts supplied are of aircraft quality and the kits are available by mail order only. The address is P.O. Box 267, Simi Valley, CA 93065.

As indicated earlier, CYCLE WORLD's test bike was also equipped with a Pop Yoshimura accessory: a camshaft of unusual merit.

It's unusual because it increases power and rpm significantly without diminishing low rpm torque, as is usually the case with radical cams. In fact, if revs are kept at 6000 or below, it is impossible to tell any difference between stock and Yoshimura equipped engines.

There are differences, though. A slight clicking of the valve train at idle. A 12,000 rpm redline. A considerable


bhp increase from 8000 rpm up that results in 14.08 sec., 94.11 mph quarter-mile times. And the knowledge that you can blow off any stock 500 Four in the world. Easily.

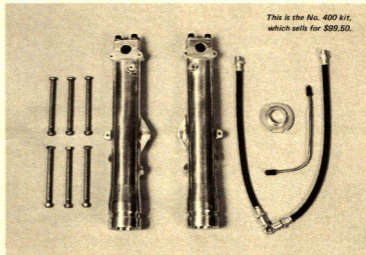
Increased performance usually has a big price tag. For once, this is not the case. The camshaft is the only part needed and it will sell, at selected dealers, for around \$75. Stock cam followers, valves, and valve springs are used.

Like the dual-discs, installation is relatively simple. All you really need, outside of a basic selection of metric tools, is a shop manual to give you specifications for adjusting the valves (valve clearances remain stock).

Installation will take fairly skilled mechanics or do-it-yourselfers about an hour. Since the head does not need to be removed, procedure is simple. Take the gas tank off, remove the cam cover and rocker arms, and the camshaft lifts right out. Some careful rejacketing is necessary for optimum performance, but other than that, nothing needs changing.

Powerflow is smooth, much like the stocker. But when the tach hits 8000, just where the stocker begins to flatten out, the bike comes alive. Rpm's climb at an alarming rate and it's all you can do to shift before exceeding 12,000; especially in the lower gears.

Whether or not the completed bike is more cafe racer or tourer is a matter open to debate. To our way of thinking, it just depends on what rpm is showing on the tach. 



This is the No. 400 kit,  
which sells for \$99.50.