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Moto-smell

A university study recently concluded that all athletes have heightened senses. Vision, hearing, touch—all that makes perfect sense. The most interesting part of the study was olfaction. Athletes, including dirt bike riders and racers, apparently have a highly tuned sense of smell. This is good news and bad news. The world of dirt bikes is particularly smelly. My gear bag is especially strong evidence, but that's certainly not all. I think there are just as many good smells as bad ones involved in this sport. When you actually take the time and think about the various smells we all experience (or create) in the process of riding, it's clear that the world of dirt bikes has just as many widely varied smells as it does sights and sounds. Here are a few that come to mind.

Race gas. This covers a very broad range and can be mildly pleasant or alarmingly bad. The most common race gas is currently the VP U4 series. I've heard people complain about the smell, but the key factor is strength. If you catch just a faint whiff from a passing bike, it's actually OK, even pleasant. Stronger doses are less favorable. It completely turns around if you have a leaky bike in the back of a van. You actually start getting dizzy by the time you get home, heightened senses or not. I've noticed that people who swear by U4 are more likely to drive pickup trucks. They might even keep their bikes outside.

If I were to grade the smell of race gas, it would have to get two different scores. A slight hint in the air gets a +3 on the Ron whiff-o-meter, which goes from -10 to +10. A full-strength concentration in a closed area is a -7 and might require medical attention.

Premix. Old-timers all remember the smell of bean oil. Castrol R, when properly processed by a two-stroke's internal combustion engine, was delightful. It was such a distinctive smell that you would occasionally find a salad dressing that would bring you back to the racetrack. It could lead to embarrassing moments at a high-end restaurant if you started sniffing a cruets and making moto sounds. It wasn't quite right until it mixed with gas and came out of an exhaust pipe. I would give the old-time smell of premix a +5. Occasionally, a modern synthetic oil will get a +1 or a +2, but for the most part, they get zero on my personal scale.

Creosote bush. Different parts of the country have different vegetation, and dirt bike riders have surprising expertise in this field. We just use different terminology. An herbalist might use the name *Larrea tridentata* to describe a particular desert plant. We know them as "pucker bushes." To me, they smell like desert racing. The smell is always present in the southwestern U.S., Oregon, Idaho, Colorado, Texas and Oklahoma. I've spent so much time racing in those areas that the odor is virtually indistinguishable from the sport of dirt bike riding. Interestingly enough, the smell also reminds me of cleaning my bike.



I'm always picking some *Larrea* out of the radiator. I give it a +4.

Sage. When it comes to the branches and leaves that I pick out of my skid plate, nothing is as good as sage brush. It smells so good that I absentmindedly sniff any weed that I yank out of the bike. Sometimes I'm disappointed, because not just any sage will do; there's a variety that they sell in health-food stores for about five bucks an ounce. They claim it has sacred cleansing powers. I don't know about that; it's usually the object of the cleaning in my experience. I still give it a solid 8.

There are lots of chemicals and cleaners that I associate with riding. Most of them have ingredients that are included just for their smell. Some are more successful than others. In general, polishing and detailing substances smell good. Maybe it's because I associate them with a clean, good-looking bike. Chemicals dealing with ugly jobs like carburetor cleaning and chain maintenance smell ugly. The exception is air-filter cleaning. It's a horrible job that doesn't smell so horrible.

The ultimate in horrible, of course, comes back to the gear bag. My gear bag, in particular. I try to schedule its deadly contents for immediate decontamination when I get home, but it rarely works out as planned. There are kids and home duties that take priority, and that means that there will be a forgotten sock inside a boot inside a gear bag that goes unattended. The result is a smell unlike anything else legally released into earth's atmosphere. Sometimes the odor actually seeps out, through the boot and the bag, maybe even through the walls. That's why I find this news about athletes and their big noses interesting and somewhat comforting. It means that with my super smell, I might be the only one at home who is offended.

Not very likely, but I'm sticking to that thought. □

ROOST



2013 GAS GAS EC300

After coming out with a completely new frame on the 2012 EC300 model, Gas Gas decided to make minor updates to the 2013 model. Some of the changes include a 10mm-lower seat height for greater rider comfort, an improved clutch basket and updated plastic frame guards.

The Gas Gas 300 is back and is still a bike for the two-stroke purist.



HUSKY TERRA ANNOUNCED



The Terra is Husqvarna's take on the Kawasaki KLR650R

Last month we showed you a photo of a prototype Husqvarna dual-purpose bike that was rumored to be a 2013 model. The rumor is now fact. The Terra and Strada will be in the lineup, the latter being a full-street version.

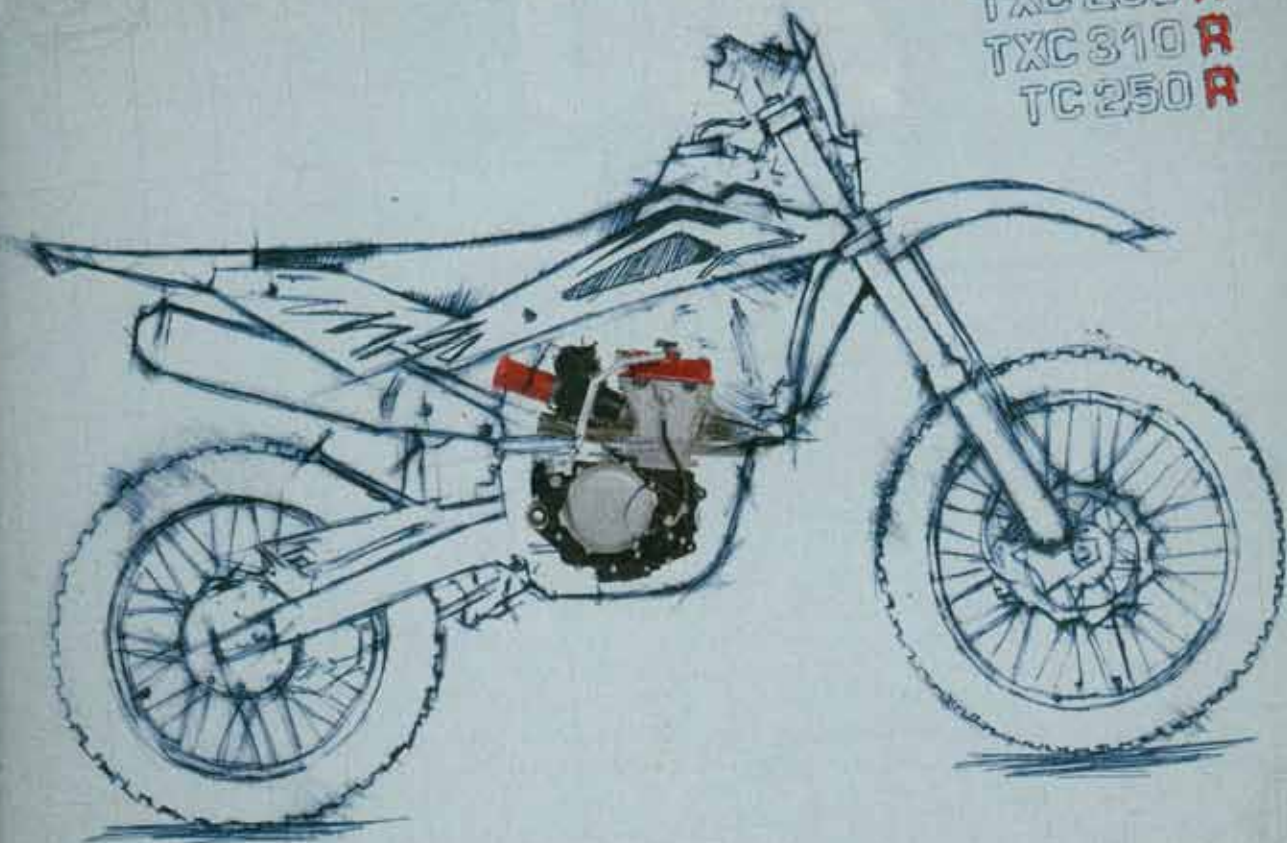


"Strada" means "pavement" in Italian. It's the same bike as the Terra, but with street tires and suspension.

Both will use the motor from the BMW Sertao, but in a hotter state of tune. The price hasn't been announced, but the inspiration for the Terra is the Kawasaki KLR650R, so we expect the price to be in the low \$6000 range.

FIG. 1

TE310 R [RACE]
TXC 250 R
TXC 310 R
TC 250 R



**HUSQVARNA 2013:
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Husky has 11 new reasons to RIDE MORE.
www.husqvarna-motorcyclesNA.com/2013.php





Lake Elsinore is a good track for the Husky, with long rhythm sections, smooth transitions and hardpacked turns.



2013 HUSQVARNA TC250R

**The secret father
of Husky's new
success**

Of all the bikes in Husqvarna's 2013 model line, the TC250R motocrosser is the purebred—it's 100 percent Husky. It was conceived, designed and built in Varese, Italy, before BMW took hold of the company. It's also the platform that has generated all the company's greatest achievements in recent history.

In case you want a list, those great achievements include three World Enduro Championships and a string of GNCC XC2 victories, courtesy of riders like Antoine Meo, Juha Salminen, Jason Thomas and Andrew DeLong. Yes, you're right, that *is* a little odd. Those are all off-road victories, and the TC is a motocross bike. That's the twist in the story; the TC hasn't achieved much in its own name, but it has a number of secret identities that have had incredible successes. The same basic bike has been reinvented as the TXC250, TXC 310, TE250 and TE310, which are all off-road and dual-sport machines.

There are two reasons for this identity crisis. One is just a matter of the personalities involved. Meo and Salminen are the best off-road racers in Europe, and Thomas and DeLong are the hottest up-and-comers state-side. A bigger reason is the nature of the bike itself. When it first appeared in 2009, it was light, handled well and had smooth, tractable power, which made it a great off-road bike. It just didn't have the peak horsepower to compete against the Japanese 250Fs. Now that Husky engineers have had time to refine the TC250R, is it ready to do as well as its offspring?

EVOLUTION FOLLOWS REVOLUTION

When the TC250 was unveiled, it was an exciting bike. Its most intriguing feature was its tiny motor; it was actually smaller than most two-stroke engines. It had a steel chassis and a combination of Marzocchi and Sachs suspension. In the next years, changes came quickly. Mikuni fuel injection appeared, then disappeared when it was replaced with Keihin EFI. KYB suspension replaced the Euro fork and shock. But the biggest change was the Red Head. Husky redesigned the top end for the 2012 model year, giving the bike larger valves that were actuated by finger-followers. In 2011, Husky took the bike GP racing in the MX2 class for the first time in almost a decade with American Michael Leib and Italian Alessandro Lupino. The effort was plagued by problems, but it wasn't the results that were significant; it was the fact that Husky was back.

For the 2013 model year, Husqvarna did very little to the TC250R. Most of the company's R&D effort went into the off-road models, giving the TXC and TEs the Red Head and Keihin EFI. The only updates that the motocross version got were details like new grips, tougher radiators, a magnetic drain plug and cosmetics. So here's the Husky as it sits in 2013: steel frame, 48mm KYB fork, KYB shock, Akrapovic titanium exhaust, a five-speed gearbox, and a Keihin capacitor EFI system with a 42mm throttle body. Unlike the TXC and TE versions, it has no electric starter and uses a capacitor to light up the EFI system without a battery.

There are very few changes for the 2013 Husky TC250R. Last year it got a big redo, including a new head, KYB suspension and Keihin EFI.

THE RESULT

Right up front, we'll give you the bottom line. The Husky still doesn't have enough motor to run in front of the 250F class. In our 2012 250F shootout, we discovered that even with the new head, the Husky was way off the pace set by the twin-injector Kawasaki KX250. It wasn't even in the middle of the field, as the Honda, Suzuki and Yamaha all pulled harder through the middle and had more peak power. The only bike that was on the same level was the KTM 250SX-F, which had lost power the year before with its own move to EFI. The Husky was lighter than the KTM, but that was mostly the fault of the 250SX-F's electric starter. Not much has changed since then; the 2013 Husky runs just like the 2012 Husky. The Honda and Yamaha will also be fundamentally unchanged for 2013, while the Suzuki and Kawasaki got some updates. The KTM was the only bike that got a serious redesign.

But, that's not the whole story. Last year we never tested the Husky by itself. We had an early TC250R for our shootout that disappeared immediately afterward. So, we've had to wait until now to spend much time with the bike. What have we learned? Horsepower isn't everything. It's *almost* everything when it comes to racing in the 250F class, granted; but, the Husky is a great bike on all other fronts. On top of the list is suspension. The KYB fork and shock get along well with the steel frame. There's more flex in good old-fashioned chromoly steel than in aluminum, and that takes the edge off



HUSQVARNA TC250R



Pete Murray rearranges some Elsinore dirt.



This is the world's smallest 250F motor. We don't know how Husqvarna fit in all the valves, cams and gears required to make a four-stroke run.



The seat comes off with a single Dzus fastener, allowing no-tool air-filter access.



You can't do much better than the stock exhaust system. The Husky comes with a titanium Akrapovic.

all the impacts. The Husky gives you an initial feeling of being very soft, but you quickly realize that's a good thing. The usual drawbacks of soft suspension are excess dive, chassis movement and hard bottoming. The TC doesn't do any of that. The cushiness makes you anticipate all sorts of crimes that never happen.

Most of our testing was done with riders in the 160-pound range. They generally wanted more compression damping in the rear and less in the front. Heavier riders will probably need stiffer springs, but overall we give a big thumbs up to Husky's move to KYB. And, we've always loved the way the bike turns. The Husky has somewhat quick steering, which takes some adjustment time. You can easily give the bike too much input at low speed, and if you aren't being aggressive, the bike can seem like it hunts for its line. But, that's only

because you're working too hard. If you relax, you generally find the bike turns itself. You just start the process by pointing, then open the throttle and it does the rest. At 229 pounds, the bike weighs about what it should weigh, but it handles so well that you might think it's the lightest in the class. In fact, the Husky is such a good-handling machine that you get the feeling that you aren't trying hard enough. Everything comes easily; you don't get very tired, and you feel like you could ride all day at full speed.

That brings us back to the motor. Part of the secret to the Husky's handling is the fact that it's down on power. How much? That depends on the track. A dyno might say it has about three horsepower less than a Kawasaki, but on hard-pack dirt, that doesn't matter much. If you're struggling for traction, the Husky hooks up well and can run with anything

HUSQVARNA TC250R

in the class. The motor has a lot of flywheel effect, which means that it runs at a fairly constant rpm even when little bumps and holes break the rear tire's contact with the ground, and that results in good, consistent bite. That's what makes the bike so effective for off-road racing. If the dirt is deep and loose, though, it's a different story. The power gap can be devastating. In those conditions, it's all you can do to keep up with the faster bikes in the class. We don't yet know if there are any easy modifications that can bring the TC motor up a notch. Last year we rode Ty Davis' EnduroCross Husky 310, and it was a rocket after getting head and crank mods. We're willing to bet that the same treatment would work well on the 250.

A LITTLE OFFBEAT

There are a lot of things to like about the Husky. The hydraulic clutch has a super-light pull, the Brembo brakes are strong, and the Dzus fastener that holds the seat in place is very cool. The bike is designed so the tank can be removed in seconds. On earlier models, you had to be very careful not to break the plastic fuel fitting at the bottom of the tank, but this has now been redesigned.

Another offbeat design that requires attention is the left-side exhaust pipe. Most riders load, push and mount their bikes from the left side (for reasons that remain a mystery). The head pipe can burn a hole in your riding pants if you aren't careful. Starting the Husky is also a bit quirky. Most of the time it fires right up. If it doesn't start on the first or second kick, use the hot-start knob on the side of the throttle body. It will save you a bunch of kicks.

You have to like quiriness to be interested in the Husky TC250 anyway. It's not a mainstream motocross bike. Like other bikes in the Husky line, it's slightly mislabeled. It's much better off-road than on a motocross course. That means it invades turf occupied by other Husky models, most notably the TXC250. The TXC is essentially the same bike with electric start and a sixth gear. The TC is lighter, less expensive and has more peak power than the TXC, so it's actually a very difficult decision between the two. But, if you're making that choice, you already understand the Husky. It's a little offbeat, and it's meant for riders who are the same way. □

These are the best brakes in the dirt world, whether they are on a Husky or a KTM.



HUSQVARNA TC250R

Engine type.....	DOHC 4-valve 4-stroke
Displacement	249cc
Bore & stroke.....	79.0mm x 50.0mm
Fuel delivery	Keihin EFI
Fuel tank capacity	1.7 gal. (6.4L)
Lighting coil	No
Spark arrestor	No
EPA legal.....	No
Running weight, no fuel	228 lb.
Wheelbase	57.5" (1461mm)
Ground clearance	12.8" (325.1mm)
Seat height	38.8" (986mm)
Tire size & type:	
Front	80/100-21 Michelin Starcross
Rear	110/90-19 Michelin Starcross
Suspension:	
Front.....	KYB inverted cartridge, adj. reb. comp, 11.8" (300mm) travel
Rear	KYB aluminum piggyback, adj. hsc, isc, reb., 11.7" (298mm) travel
Country of origin	Italy
MSRP	\$7199
Importer	www.husqvarna-motorcycles.com

SMILES

- Cushy overall suspension
- Compact motor
- Light clutch pull
- Turns well
- Quiet
- Excellent brakes

FROWNS

- Not fast
- Occasionally hard to start
- Left-side exhaust
- More off-road than MX